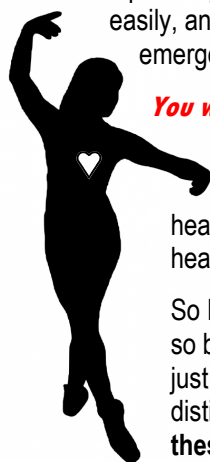


JOY in the Presence of God

As we were planning worship for the month of April, we all agreed that the theme for worship must be JOY. After a few months of feeling the pain of the deaths of very dear loved brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to be reminded of the joy of the Lord that is our strength. (Nehemiah 8:10) Then today, I read this excerpt taken from *Day 14 of "God in the Dark: 31 Devotions to Let the Light Back In"* by Sarah Van Diest, which clearly described what we were sensing:

"I hope that you're doing well, that your heart is resting in the love of our Father in each step, that rest comes easily, and that food is satisfying. The simple things in life seem to be the basis from which many joys emerge, so I hope these things are in place for you today.

You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy. – Psalm 16:11



Joy, though, we both know, is sometimes hard to find. I'm tired and my hand hurts from the cancer removed yesterday—the stitches pull and my skin is tight. New medication to slow my heartbeat makes me feel fatigued and weary, and a night of little sleep, thanks to fading anesthesia, heaps on that. Yes, I'm complaining today.

So I take my complaints and lay them out there, lifeless as they are, and look at them. They aren't so bad. They don't really do anything. Like all the other feelings I've put out there to observe, they just sit there. I recognize what they are, but they don't define me. And that is a more important distinction to make than any other I can think of right now: **I know pain and discouragement, but these feelings are not the sum of who I am.**

I'm not defined by these trials. They're simply part of my experience, places I visit along the way but leave behind as I keep walking. Hardship reminds me of my frailty and puts to rest (again) my faulty beliefs of invulnerability and self-sufficiency. I'm reminded of my bond with this earth and of all life and death that circles and cycles through here. And my compassion grows when I see others pained in similar ways. These are good and needed messages for my soul, if I choose to take them as such.

My complaining reminds me of my expectations of health and satisfaction, as if those are the ultimate goals of life. Really? At the end of my life, am I going to hope that above all things I lived a life of health and satisfaction? How tragic that would be! May that not be my epitaph.

I hope instead that the words spoken at the end of my days are these: faith, hope—and most important—love. Those truths. Those sentiments and aspirations. **To live a life defined in such terms would be a glorious thing!** To walk in this life of pains and afflictions with faith, hope, and love is a beautiful, graceful way to step along the way.



And then the walk becomes a dance. The burdens stemming from being bound to this world become teachers of new dance steps as the Father plays the music: the pebble on the path, a *skip*; the chilling wind, a *twirl*; the heavy weight, a *bow*. Life's trials bring a deeper joy than simple pleasures are capable of producing. The body may be failing, and yet its associated pains aren't sufficient to drown out the music he plays for us or the joy of dancing in our Father's arms.



I'm still tired and my hand still aches, but my heart is lighter now. I'm thankful for my teachers and even more thankful for the music my Father plays in my heart. Those feelings that I know but aren't me are still there, but faith, hope, and love enliven the movements of my soul. This is simple. This is practicing the presence of the Father. This is remembering and seeing life in the depths of the gradual and daily dying. This is the dance."

(Continue on next page)

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EARLY CHILDHOOD
Dr. Kelly Ogialoro

SERVICES
Sunday Morning
8:30am—Worship & Children's Church
9:45-10:45am—Children's Ministries & Adult Bible Studies
Ten47am—Contemporary Worship & Children's Church

HMONG SERVICES
Sunday Morning
9am Choir & Bible Study
10:45am Worship

"CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY TO CHRIST"



scan for website



How Taxes Effect Generosity

We've seen a lot of press in recent months about tax reform. If you formed your views from the media's coverage, you might think that charitable giving is doomed as we head into the future. The reality will be quite different than these prognostications.

For sure, tax issues are important considerations for people when considering the ways that they give. Taxes can also affect the types of gifting, amounts, and property contributed. Planning such gifts consider taxation and often result in gifts of significance.

However, taxation ranks lower on the list of motivating factors and incentives for charitable giving. The decision to be generous and willing to share flows from a source connected to a person's heart and spirit.

All people, by the power of the Holy Spirit, have the capacity to love, do good and be generous. This is evidence of the Creators' image planted within all human creation. But because we live in a fallen world, this generosity is often not recognized nor fulfilled. Often, our giving is at cross purposes to God's infinite kindness.

For Christians with faith to understand their need for redemption, God's gift of repentance produces fruit leading to gratitude to God for salvation and all earthly blessings. Such love of God is the source inspiration for all generosity. This 'agape' love of God within people fuels a 'philo' love towards fellow humans and compassionate desire to help others. God in Christ is the source of all kindness! We are urged to not keep this to ourselves.

Many donors counsel with professional advisors to plan their gifting. The encouragement of a Christian gift planning counselor will connect their intent and passion to the Giver of all good and perfect gifts.

For more information, contact Jim Pennington, SPLC Gift Planning Counselor, at 863-370-0305 or james.pennington@lfnd.org.

New Tax Law Seminar

Sunday, April 15 9:45 AM to 10:45 AM
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Music Suite

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 was signed into law in December and includes many changes that could impact your 2018 tax return that you will file in 2019.

What's Changing?

- Seven Tax Brackets remain, but rates for some of the brackets are lower.
- With the Standard Deduction nearly doubled, (\$24,000 for married taxpayers and \$12,000 for single taxpayers), fewer taxpayers will itemize deductions.
- Some itemized deductions have been eliminated and others are limited.
- Changes in a number of other areas including charitable contributions, 529 plans and Gift, Estate, and GST exemption.

Please plan on attending to learn more about the 2018 tax changes and how including a Donor Advised Fund in your Gift Plan may be an opportunity to take advantage of some of these changes.

If you are unable to attend and would like more information, please contact Jim Pennington, SPLC Gift Planning Counselor, at 863-370-0305 or james.pennington@lfnd.org.






"JOY in the Presence of God" continued...

May this next season in the life of our church family spring up with Faith, Hope and Love. Our new preaching series begins on April 8. First, we will speak of the Joy in Jesus, followed by the Joy in Faith and the Joy in Hope and finally, on Confirmation Sunday, we will speak about the Joy in Love. May we be drawn deeper into the arms of our Father and enjoy the dance.

—Pastor Ron Pennekamp



APRIL

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 1 EASTER 7am WORSHIP - ☑ 9am WORSHIP - ☑ 9:30 Hmong Bible Study 11am WORSHIP - ☑ 10:45 Hmong Worship	2 EASTER MONDAY Church office closed NO SCHOOL ECEC & Kid's Club Open 5pm Spring VB 6:30 Knitters	3 9am Heritage 10:30 Prayer Group 3:15 Genesis BB 6:30 Trustees	4 8:25 CHAPEL K-8 9:15 CHAPEL PK 9:45 CHAPEL ECEC 6pm Choir Party @ Klockziem's 6:30 AL-ANON 8:30 Young Adult Gathering	5 7:15am Men's Group 12pm Ladies Share 5:30 CancerCare 6pm Church Properties 6:30 Men's Bible Study	6 6-9pm MS Youth	7 9am Genesis BB Games
8 8:30 WORSHIP - ☑ 9:30 Hmong Bible Study 9:45-10:45 CG & CM 10:45 Hmong Worship ten47 WORSHIP - ☑	9 5pm Spring VB SPLS ACHIEVEMENT TESTING WEEK	10 9am Heritage 10am Prayer Group 11:30 Lunch Bunch @ Olive Garden 3:15 Genesis BB 6:30 Lay Ministers	11 8:25 CHAPEL K-8 5pm Bells of Joy 6:30 AL-ANON 6:30 Choir 8:30 Young Adult Gathering	12 7:15am Men's Group 9:15 CHAPEL PK 9:45 CHAPEL ECEC 6:30 Katie's Ladies @ Ruby Tuesdays 6:30 Men's Bible Study 7pm Marty's Men	13	14 9am Genesis BB Games
15 8:30 WORSHIP 9:30 Hmong Bible Study 9:45 Tax Impacts Class 9:45-10:45 CG & CM 10:45 Hmong Worship ten47 WORSHIP	16 5pm Spring VB 6:30 Knitters 6:30 GriefShare	17 9am Heritage 10:30 Prayer Group 6pm NJHS Ceremony 6:30 School Board	18 8:25 CHAPEL K-8 9:15 CHAPEL PK 9:45 CHAPEL ECEC 6:30 AL-ANON 8:30 Young Adult Gathering	19 7:15am Men's Group 6:30 Theology Pub at Cob & Pen	20 8:15 PTO Meeting Women's Retreat @ Cedarkirk Camp 6pm MS Lock-In MAY Newsletter articles due.	21 9am Lock-In Ends Women's Retreat @ Cedarkirk Camp
22 Women's Retreat @ Cedarkirk Camp 8:30 WORSHIP - ☑ 9:30 Hmong Bible Study 9:45-10:45 CG & CM 10:45 Hmong Worship ten47 WORSHIP - ☑	23 12pm Esther Circle 5pm Spring VB 6:30 GriefShare	24 9am Heritage 10:30 Prayer Group 5:30 Endowment Fund	25 8:25 CHAPEL K-8 9:15 CHAPEL PK 9:45 CHAPEL ECEC 6:30 AL-ANON 6:30 Choir 8:30 Young Adult Gathering	26 7:15am Men's Group 6:30 Men's Bible Study 7pm SPLS Spring Musical	27	28 6pm Confirmation Dinner & Rehearsal
29 CONFIRMATION 8:30 WORSHIP - ☑ 9:30 Hmong Bible Study 9:45-10:45 CG & CM 10:45 Hmong Worship ten47 WORSHIP - ☑ 12-7pm Pictorial Photo Sessions	30  1-8pm Pictorial Photo Sessions 5pm Spring VB 6:30 GriefShare	<div>  Guys 21 and older meet with Pastor Andy at the Cob and Pen on S. Florida Ave., Thursday, April 19 at 6:30pm. Come, have a drink if you wish and some food or just join in the conversation as we look at what it means to be a Christian man in the world today. </div>				

BB = Basketball
 ☑ = Communion
 CG = Community Group
 CM = Children's Ministry
 ECEC = Early Childhood Enrichment Center
 HS = High School
 MS = Middle School
 VB = Volleyball

2018 VBS JUNE 18-22

Venture onto an uncharted island where kids survive and thrive.
 Anchor kids in the truth that Jesus carries them through life's storms.
 To register your child or to volunteer, go to our website:

www.stpaulakeland.org

or contact Nick Moss at nmoss@stpaulakeland.org.





Schedule your photography session

PHOTO DIRECTORY UPDATE

We are updating our photo directory and have scheduled another photography shoot with Lifetouch, on April 29 & 30. This is for anyone who would like to update their picture or who missed out on our last two photography sessions. You do not have to be a member of our church to make an appointment for a FREE professional photo session, so invite your family, friends and neighbors and tell them to call us for an appointment. All newly photographed families will receive a FREE 8x10 photo and every member who has their photo in our directory will receive a FREE updated directory. Online sign-ups will begin starting Easter weekend. Go to our church website, www.stpaullakeland.org and click on the scrolling picture (same as above). We will also have sign-ups before and after services on April 8, 15, & 22, in our church lobby.

FEED the NEED

LAKELAND 2018

unifying Lakeland against hunger

Last month, our 6th Annual Feed the Need event was certainly blessed by God! Those who attended both our SPL services as well as Christ Community Presbyterian, were given the opportunity to go and be the hands and feet of Jesus as part of their worship by going to Lake Miriam Publix to buy food for two local charities: kidsPACK & VISTE. Food sales totaled over \$25,000! Praise God!



ANSWERED PRAYERS



Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

We are so thankful to God for answering our prayers for another successful eggroll fundraiser last month, and for answering my personal prayer for another major fundraiser supporter to replace our beloved John Shannon. A colleague of John's, Mr. Robert Stanz, P.A. ordered 20 dozen and gave them away to individuals who knew and loved John Shannon. John's love for Jesus, through this simple act of kindness, continues to touch people's lives. Thanks be to God!

Thank you, for your support! May God bless each of you. —Pastor Yang, Hmong Ministry

GRIEF SHARE®

It hurts to lose someone. Find help at GriefShare with a friendly, caring group of people who will walk alongside you through one of life's most difficult experiences. You don't have to go through the grieving process alone.

A 13-week session will begin on Monday, April 16 at 6:30pm in the Conference Room. Pastor Ron will facilitate this group.

If interested, contact Becky:

bhowell@stpaullakeland.org

863-644-7710 ext: 423



Talks with Luther

Vol. 21

March 20, 2018

Coffee?... Got it!

Bible?... Of course!

Weiner Dog?... Wait! Where is Luther?

He's still in bed and it's time to get up and get going! Come on boy! Luther raises his head and looks at me like I must somehow be kidding.

On the chilly mornings we have had recently, he does not want to get out of bed until he absolutely has to. Trust me, Luther, it's going to be a great day! God is with us!

I started thinking about trust. We are to trust God in all things and know by faith He is with us in our walk through life. But sometimes, given our sinful nature, it is hard to have the faith which surpasses all understanding and trust God. We are faced with trials, problems and concerns that feel like they will do us in. And there is nothing the Evil One wants more than for us to give in and turn from our Lord.

Time and again, I get questions about why did God let this or that happen? Why do the things in this upside down world we are living in keep coming and coming? The answer is sin. It is just that simple. In this day and time, as fewer people turn to God for guidance and comfort, more and more troubles keep happening. Church attendance nationwide is on the decline. People are seeking answers in all the wrong places. People are not believing and trusting in God the Father.

Martin Luther states, "God often plays with us as a father plays

with his infant from whom he takes what he has given in order to test the attitudes of the child and to stimulate its desire. For he gave it in order to produce confidence in Him; He takes it away in order to test this confidence."

"If the little child gladly gives the gift back, it creates a greater affection for itself in the father by such trust," continues Luther. "But if it does not want to surrender it and cries, it arouses the indignation of the father and deserves the rod. So God acts with all the visible blessings of this life, even with the very life He has given us." Luther concludes this with the most important part of the statement.

"He gave all in order to teach us to trust in Him; but He also takes everything back in order to test this trust."

As you face these difficult days, rely on our faith and trust in our Lord to see you through. He is always there and is always in control. That never changes.

It is funny how Luther the Dachshund looks to me for all his needs and trusts me to be there for him. For those of us who are pet owners, we learn this. They have complete faith and trust in us. We should do the same with God our Father. Have a blessed month and Happy Easter! He is risen! He is Risen indeed!

Now, if Luther would also rise this morning...we can get going! —In Christ, Chaplain Pete & little Luther

WHEN YOU HOST A STUDENT, YOU WILL



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JULY 20-29, 2018

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Show God's love to others



WHERE WOMEN BASK IN GOD'S PRESENCE
Longing for time to slow down, wiggle your toes in the sand, and bask in the warmth of God's presence? Join us at SeaSide Escape. It's a beach-themed retreat where you'll experience meaningful Bible study and worship, connect with other women, and have time for quiet reflection and plenty of laughter!

Womens' Retreat
April 20-22, 2018

Cedarkirk Camp, Lithia, Florida



Registration forms are now available in the lobby of the church.
Contact Kyle Glossick 863-797-5278 or Theresa Wilhelm 863-838-2446



HOLY WEEK

MARCH 29 @ 7PM - Maundy Thursday Worship (communion)

MARCH 30 @ 7PM - Good Friday Worship

 **MARCH 31 @ 10AM - Easter Egg Hunt** 

EASTER SUNDAY, April 1st

7am - Sunrise Easter Worship with communion (Outside)

9am - Traditional Easter Worship with communion

11am - Modern Easter Worship with communion