

THE SPECTRUM

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. PAUL-REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH

APRIL
2024

Liturgy
10:30 a.m.

Sunday School
Confirmation
9:30 a.m.

Adult Forum
9:10 a.m.

Nursery
Kids with Parents
10:15 a.m.

Livestream video via
SPR's FB page or look
in your e-mail on
Sunday mornings.

Visit us on the web!
www.stpaulref.org

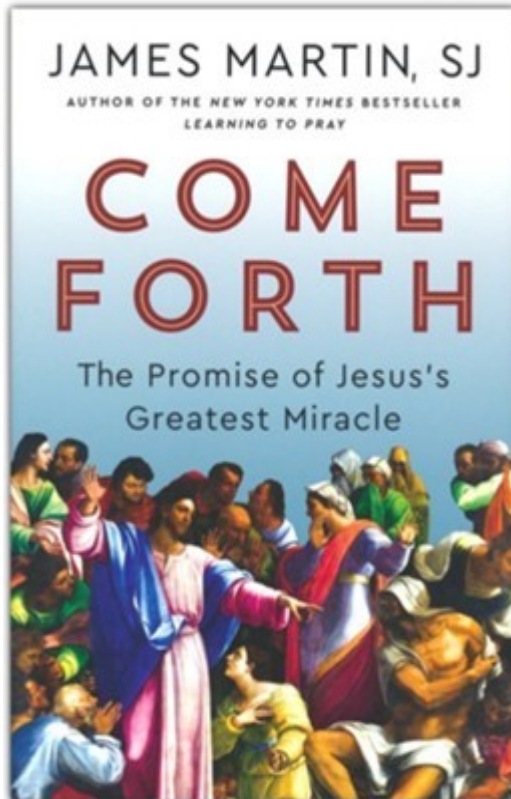
St. Paul-Reformation
is a congregation of
the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in
America (ELCA).

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The Spectrum items, articles and columns need to be to the Parish Office by the 12th of the month. The Spectrum goes to print on the 15th and this date is hard and fast. Articles received after the 12th may or may not be included. ter.

LAZARUS. COME OUT!

Adult Forum For the Remainder of the Spring

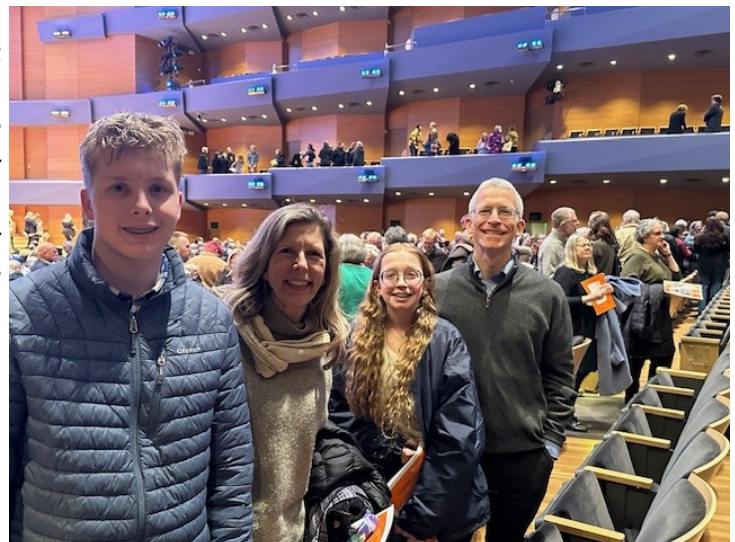


For the remainder of the year, SPR's Adult Forum will read James Martin's "Come Forth: The Promise of Jesus' Greatest Miracle." James Martin is a Jesuit priest and editor of *America* magazine. He is widely regarded as a leading voice on American Christianity, and is the author of several New York Times best-selling books, including "Learning to Pray" and "Jesus: A Pilgrimage."

In this work, Martin leads us through what—in his view—is Jesus' greatest miracle, and the one that informed all others. It is a fascinating and very readable look into the world of biblical archeology, theology, and spirituality; it is completely accessible. Books are available for \$17 in the narthex with a reading schedule. You are

welcome to join us as many times (or the whole time) as your schedule allows. Adult Forum meets starting at 9:10 a.m., and we will kick off with Martin's book on the Sunday after Easter, April 7.

Each month, SPR's Confirmation Class joins with other St. Paul Lutheran Parishes for "Deep Dive." In March, we traveled to Orchestra Hall to hear Vocal Essence's "Witness: Leading with Love" with Grammy-winning composer Melanie DeMore. The performance included music from around the world, with a special highlight on African American spirituals.



AS THE CHURCH CELEBRATES EASTER

this spring, we also join with neighbors of other faiths who are celebrating and observing the great festivals of their faith, namely Passover among our Jewish neighbors and Ramadan among our Islamic neighbors. Each of the great monotheistic faiths celebrates something during the spring, and many adherents of other religions—as well—celebrate religious festivals dear to their hearts.

As we prepare for what promises to be a super-fun election cycle coming up (*Kyrie, eleison...*), it is a good time to revisit the Lutheran understanding of religious freedom and how our faith calls us to care for our neighbor. I hear quite frequently that Christians are under attack in the United States (we are not); that the United States is a “Christian nation” (it is not), or that—in various words—we need to return to some kind of Christendom that once existed. All of these are symptoms of Christian Nationalism which is a danger not only to the larger society, *but also the Church.*

Church historians and theologians have long debated the ways—and meaning of—the Church’s relationship to political power. Since Constantine declared Christianity tolerated (read: not the official religion of the Roman Empire, but a *tolerated* religion) in 313, Christian people have had to negotiate carefully how they proclaimed the kingdom of Jesus while they still lived in the various kingdoms of the earth. These exist together, but are not the same, and each fulfills a necessary function of God’s governing power. Luther recognized this as “the two kingdoms,” wherein a civil government is an instrument of God’s benevolence, and the sacred sphere becomes the proclaimer of Christ’s reign.

Luther believed (and wrote!) vehemently that these two realms should not be confused.

Luther writes: “Worldly authority cannot force us to believe...that is that task of bishops, to whom this authority has been delegated, it is not within the sphere of princes.” (*On Worldly Authority*, 1523).



“This means that it is also up to us to defend the consciences of those who believe differently from ourselves...”

This means that it is also up to us to defend the consciences of those who believe differently from ourselves, and to protect them from the “sphere of princes” who would seek to enforce religious conformity on a pluralistic society.

For Christians (and Lutherans, especially), this lesson has sometimes, admittedly, been one that is hard won. Repeatedly, we have ignored or trampled on the religious beliefs of our neighbors. But to do so is, also, a violation of the catechism’s dictums on the commandments, in which we seek the good of our neighbor “...and support them in all life’s needs.”

Christian nationalism is a danger to this. It is also a danger to the Church itself, and while there are others whose job it is to protect the state from Christian nationalism, it is up to clerics to protect the *Church* from it. When Christianity makes a dangerous arrangement with power, it loses its prophetic ability to critique injustice, simply confirming the political decisions that have already been made. The prophet Elijah had to deal with this in contending with the priests of Jezebel and Ahab, and over and over again the scriptures provide us examples where “false” prophets are those who confirm the status quo.

And that’s just the beginning. The list is long of other examples (Germany, 1933, anyone?) where the church has baptized evil powers and missed the opportunity (with disastrous consequences) to speak out in defense of those who believe differently. A forced religiosity is not true faith at all, and our tradition goes on to remind **Pastor, continued on the next page....**

Pastor, continued...

us that the true church is where the church suffers. Status, grasping at power, greed, or craven political motivations are good indicators (we are always learning!) that that is where the church is not. Power corrupts the message of the Gospel: why? Because the Gospel comes—among other things—to challenge power and proclaim a different kind of kingdom.

So, as spring continues on, I hope you will bless all who are celebrating...whatever they are celebrating. God is with them because God made them. By standing in solidarity with them, we learn again the Christian virtue of mercy, of patience, and of joy. And in so doing, we resist calls for some kind of state sponsorship of any religion which...corrupts the faith.

Happy Easter (and all the other things!)

+Pr. Patrick H. Shebeck

FROM THE CANTOR

April 9 is the commemoration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian. He was born in 1906 in Breslau, a historically German-speaking city that has belonged to various monarchies over the centuries and is now part of Poland and called Wrocław. He grew up in an intellectual family and graduated from Humboldt University in Berlin with a doctorate in theology at age 21. He is best known for his outspokenness and active resistance to the Nazi regime before and during World War II. He was executed at Flossenbürg concentration camp on April 9, 1945, just two weeks before Allies freed the camp. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer wrote,

“The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which everyone must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old self which is the result of the encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our

lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ... The call to Jesus, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, is death and life.”



Did you know that there is a text by Bonhoeffer in our hymnal *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*? Hymn #626, “By Gracious Powers,” started out as a poem written in a letter to his mother in 1944, which was smuggled out of prison. The World Council of Churches wanted to include the text in their 1974 hymnal *Cantate Domino*, so noted hymnologist Erik Routley invited Fred

Pratt Green (my favorite hymn writer!) to create an English translation suitable for singing. The tune in our hymnal, *Telos*, was written by Robert Buckley Farlee, who recently retired from Christ Church Lutheran in the Longfellow neighborhood of Minneapolis. The hymn exudes Bonhoeffer’s deep faith in the grace of God, even in the face of immense suffering. In this Eastertide, let us rejoice in the abundant life given to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus and rest in the assurance that we are held always in God’s grace.

*By gracious pow'rs so wonderfully sheltered,
and confidently waiting come what may,
we know that God is with us night and morning,
and never fails to greet us each new day.*

*Yet is this heart by its old foe tormented,
still evil days bring burdens hard to bear;
oh, give our frightened souls the sure salvation,
for which, O Lord, you taught us to prepare.*

Cantor continued on next page

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Cantor, continued...

*And when this cup you give is filled to brimming
with bitter suff'ring, hard to understand,
we take it thankfully and without trembling
out of so good and so beloved a hand.*

*Yet when again in this same world you give us
the joy we had, the brightness of your sun,
we shall remember all the days we lived through
and our whole life shall then be yours alone.*

*By gracious pow'rs so faithfully protected,
so quietly, so wonderfully near,
we live each day in hope, with you beside us,
and go with you through ev'ry coming year.*

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+ Sr. Stacie Lightner

COUNCIL CORNER

The Parish Council met on Tuesday, March 12, 2024 to discuss and take action on the following.

John Rent, Treasurer, presented financial results from January 2024. Revenue tracked ahead of projections, somewhat due to accelerated giving, ending the month 13K above expectations. Expenses were in line with the budgeted amounts. A percentage of this year's proceeds (55K) from the Tower sale was invested in a short-term CD at 5.61%. The Council discussed looking into future investment opportunities for the Tower sale proceeds that could provide higher yields.

Pastor Shebeck presented an update on new members. The church will receive the new members at a service sometime in June. Based on feedback from those interested in membership, the vibrancy and welcoming community of our church were mentioned as significant factors, as well as the quality of the worship and music experience. Discussion centered on how we can do even more to build membership and welcome newcomers.

Alyn Bedford, Council President, led the

Council through a discussion of the goals of the Council for the upcoming year. The goals were organized into the following categories: Finances, Membership In-reach/Outreach, Committee Operation and Work, Worship, and Other. Within those categories, timelines, ongoing progress and assignments were identified. For example, the Kitchen Committee is working on improving the staffing for Sunday Coffee Hour; the Endowment Committee continues its work on establishing clear guidelines for the Endowment Fund. Some goals will require more discussion and information. Updates will be provided to the congregation as the Council continues its work.

Susan Martyn provided an update on the Warming Hub. Discussion centered on how the congregation can provide opportunities for the guests of the Warming Hub to be included in activities. The Warming Hub will cease operation for the season as of April 1.

Ongoing discussions on reducing expenses. Work continues toward identifying new vendors/contracts for phone and internet, janitorial services and insurance coverage.

+ Kristin Benson, Parish Council Secretary

ADDITIONAL EVERY MEAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

More than 300,000 children in Minnesota live with food insecurity. We're on a mission to change that. Every Meal fights child hunger by focusing on filling the **food gaps** children face on **weekends, extended breaks, and summer** when they're not able to access school meal programs. When they don't have consistent access to enough food, the risk of hunger is very real.

You can have a hands-on, direct impact on children living with food insecurity in St. Paul. Volunteers are needed from St. Paul-Ref to place Every Meal food bags directly and discreetly in children's backpacks at Capitol Hill Magnet School each Friday, so they have food every weekend.

Email Krisi Matenaer at kmatenaer@comcast.net or speak with her to sign-up or for more info.

LEARNING FROM STUDENTS IN EL SALVADOR

Jose Maria Aguilar Bonilla



One of the original members of Christ the Liberator who graduated from technical school in Auto Mechanics last March. He writes: "I am eternally grateful to you for making it possible for me to be trained in work that I really enjoy. I have received a scholarship from you ever since I was very young, and I am so thankful that, with your help, I was able to achieve my goal."

8:00 A.M. ON HIATUS

SPR's 8:00 a.m. liturgy will go on hiatus until the fall. We are reevaluating the need for this service, and would love to hear your thoughts. See you in the fall (maybe?)!

BIRTHDAYS

02 Henry Hanson, Wendell Webster
05 Laura Carrero
07 Carsten Slostad
08 Sandy Archer
09 Alyn Bedford

10 Amy Rouillard, Margaret Webster
14 Marjorie Ruth
19 Brenda Froisland
22 Charles Petersen
23 Patty Banks, Sara Gjerdrum, Lisa Mathieson
26 Victoria Smith
28 John Knapp

ANNIVERSARY

08 Brenda Froisland and Mary Chilvers

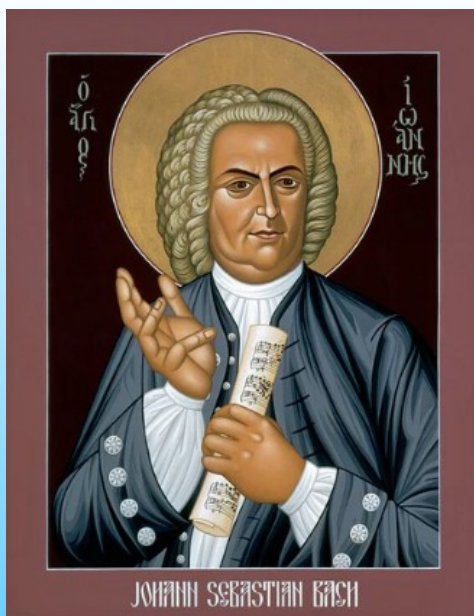
MAY HAPPENINGS

Cantata Vespers for the Ascension + SPR's choir presents J. S. Bach's *Gott fähret auf mit Jauchzen* with orchestra and soloists on Ascension Thursday, **May 9 at 7:00 p.m.**

Theology on Tap: Thursday, May 16 at Blackstack Brewing, 755 Prior Avenue North, Saint Paul.

Pentecost with the Rite of Confirmation will be held on Sunday, May 19 at 10:30 a.m. A reception follows.

The Last Sunday of Sunday School will be Sunday, May 19. Weather permitting, kite flying will happen that day. Watch for more information!



Cantata Vespers for the Ascension

with J. S. Bach's cantata
Gott fähret auf mit Jauchzen

Thursday, May 9 at 7:00 p.m.
a light reception follows.

APRIL MINISTRY SCHEDULE

Thank you to all the volunteers who help make the 10:30 a.m. Sunday morning services “run.”

April 7, Second Sunday of Easter

Joe Voss, Ian Block, *Asst. Ministers*
Cynthia Peyton, Diane Aase, *Lectors*
Sebastian Badilla, *Acolyte*
Dawn Klesk, *Cantor*
Kristen Damberg, Margaret Schuster,
Jim Halgerson, Bonnie Olson,
Laura and Lay’ani Stuart, *Greeters/Ushers*
John Johnson, Karen Allard, *Coffee/Treats*

April 14, Third Sunday of Easter

Jessa Anderson-Reitz, Luke Hanson, *Asst. Ministers*
Jan Swenson, Kristen Damberg, *Lectors*
Lu Beckman, *Acolyte*
Jamie Block, *Cantor*
Dorcas Adedigba, Kristin Benson, Margaret
Schuster, *Greeters/Ushers*
Margaret Schuster, Marilyn McGowan, *Coffee/
Treats*

April 21, Fourth Sunday of Easter

Kathy Thomford, Amy Rouillard, *Asst. Ministers*
Kayla Ulsby, Joe Herbert, *Lectors*
Open, *Acolyte*
Patrick Coleman, *Cantor*
Cheri Gohr, Anne Halgerson,
Ed Stuart, *Greeters/Ushers*
Eldora Pearson, Linda Dahlen, *Coffee/Treats*

April 28, Fifth Sunday of Easter

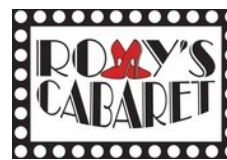
Victoria Smith, Bonnie Olson, *Asst. Ministers*
Carla Hagen, Susan Martyn, *Lectors*
Open, *Acolyte*
Chris Lyman, *Cantor*
Jan Swenson, Kristen Damberg, *Greeters/Ushers*
Carla Hagen, Teresa Ortiz, *Coffee/Treats*



A dedicated crew from SPR gathered to tie 10 blankets for the Women’s Warming Hub guests.

COMING SOON: A NEW COHORT OF THE WAY

SPR is seeking members who would be willing to serve as mentors for new members in our Adult Formation program, “The Way.” We are not completely certain of dates yet, but most likely this group will begin with our group of new members after Easter and conclude sometime in the early summer. We are excited to welcome these new parishioners, and thrilled that God has called them here. If you are interested in serving as a mentor, please email our Cantor, Sr. Stacie Lightner at: music@stpaulref.org This program is as rewarding for mentors as it is for our new folk, and we seek to grow more deeply into Christ...together.



BIG GAY BRUNCH

Join us on Saturday, May 11 at
Roxy’s Cabaret

SPR will travel to Roxy’s Cabaret in Minneapolis for their Saturday Drag Brunch starting at 11:00 a.m. Tickets are \$15 (food and drink additional), and a sign-up is located in the narthex; we have room for 10 in total. We invite all SPR’s GLBTQIA+ members to join us...and anyone else who simply wants to join us to celebrate community (and hilarity!); all are welcome!

QUILTING for Charity Join us on **Saturday April 6, 10:00 a.m.** You can sew, arrange blocks, iron, tie layers together, cut fabric! Work on your own projects. Join in on the fun! Bring a snack to share. Coffee provided. Contact Gwen Peyton at gwenpeyton5@gmail.com.



MEALS MINISTRY!

Once a month, SPR members help each other by preparing and delivering meals for members who may find it challenging to always have a home-cooked meal. Meals cooked in the church kitchen at **9:00 a.m. on Saturday April 21.** Volunteers needed; please join us. The alley door will be open. Your contributions for this ministry are greatly appreciated. For more info please contact Gwen Peyton, gwenpeyton5@gmail.com.



BREAKFAST CLUB +

Join us Sunday April 7 at the Louisiana Café on Selby Ave after the second service. All are welcome to join this time of fellowship, good conversation and food. No agenda: just fellowship!

BUILDING UPDATE + The Tuesday Crew and others continue working on multiple repair, improvement projects.

Projects:

- Rake and clear leaves outside
- Move piano in Tidemann
- Repair lights inside and outside
- Hang flags and vinyl signs outside
- Change all analog clocks

- Repair door closer mechanism.
- Put up and take down tables in lower level.
- Manage issues with overfull recycling and trash dumpsters for cost savings. See below.
- Meetings to discuss upcoming building fire safety inspection and water meter change
- **Staff:** Met with Building Committee to discuss items noted above. Prep for inspection. Continue searching internet/phone and janitorial for cost reduction.

Thanks to all who volunteer to keep this building and spaces inside in condition to use and rent out.



Tuesday Fix it Guys stomp down trash so church is not charged extra for an overflowing dumpster.

BIBLE MATTERS

Please join us **on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.** In the lower auditorium for this time of study, fellowship, and learning as we look forward to the coming week's lectionary texts.

No Bible Matters on April 3.
In person begins April 10.

DONATE TO SPR USING YOUR SMARTPHONE! A great way to donate whether you are at church or out and about! Now you can give from anywhere in the world! It's fast, easy, and secure. Search your app-finder for "GivePlusChurch," download it, click "sign up," and follow the instructions. You can donate to either the Good Samaritan Fund or the Parish General fund (in addition to your regular pledge). Give it a try! **Thanks to all who are using this quick and easy way to donate!**

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I N T H E C I T Y F O R G O O D

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PARTING SHOT



Lights from SPR's lower auditorium light up a dark night as the space is filled with women from Ramsey County's Warming Hub. The Warming Hub came to a conclusion on Easter Sunday.