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The Good News

January 2023

PASTOR K.C.

At last 2023 is here! How many of you are excited about the novelty of the new year? This is one of my favorite times of the year because it offers all of us the opportunity to start anew. Doesn't a fresh start sound good right about now?



In my December newsletter article, I stated, "As we are all on our individual journeys led by the Holy Spirit, just as the Shepherds did, I want you to follow the star God puts along your path." Are you following the star God has in your life? Are you having trouble seeing it? As we enter into the new year, I want to help you discover your spiritual compass and find your way.

In Revelation 21:5, our Lord Jesus said, "Behold I make all things new." What could this mean for you today? Let's begin this year with vision, intention, and a deeper commitment to Christ. With this in mind, following a star means you have to use your eyes and see what the Lord is doing right before you. Are you ready? Let's begin.



We extend our deepest
sympathy to the family of
Gary Coleman

Sunday, January 29, 2023
following Service



Taking Down the Greens
Sunday, January 15
after service

Women's Fellowship
Overall Meeting
Wednesday, January 11
10 am



Happy Anniversary—January 29
James & Ellen Fox



January

- 4 Mikey & Tori DeMarco
- 5 Adelaide Ammon
- 15 Kurt Gardner
- 19 Mike Demarco
- 26 Marge Murrell

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Wow! In just a few short days, 2022 will come to a close and 2023 will be upon us! Where did the year go? We've done a lot with the children this past year. We have also seen the addition of a few more kids for which we are eternally grateful. I hope this trend carries over into 2023 and our Sunday School grows!

I will be getting our Christian Ed committee together real soon to do some brainstorming for new ideas and things to work on and do with the children. I'm looking forward to it! After all, the children are our future! Stay tuned for further updates!



CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY WORKSHOP





“You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23 NRSV). What could be more appropriate for the new year, but to be born anew, to start over? Scripture is full of such references. After all, we call it the *New Testament*, or *New Covenant*, which simply means

the new agreement between God and humankind. The First, or Old Testament, was based on the Law, as given to Moses, a way to make our approach to God acceptable by following the laws set down by Moses. The New Testament enables us to approach God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His resurrection, bypassing the law. So what happens under this New Testament? “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17 NRSV).

To transform ourselves, we must first understand how revolutionary this new covenant with Jesus is. It is not based on the law; it is based on Jesus himself and his sacrifice. “...the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’” (1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 NRSV).

Jesus’s sacrifice through the Crucifixion and the Resurrection established our covenant, under which we are made new. What do we do to be made new? Scripture provides a road map.

First, keep the lines of communication open to God. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances...” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NRSV). Second, don’t worry about nonessentials. For instance, the scribes and the Pharisees spent a great deal of time worrying about what food was “clean” and “unclean.” Yet Jesus points out that it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles us, but what comes out of it. (Matthew 15:11). In other words, dietary laws are not what is important; *how* we live is what is important. Don’t spend your time on non-essentials. Being made new means focusing your attention on the way of Jesus Christ.

What is that way? The best road map appears in Matthew 5-7, which we know as the Sermon on the Mount. To summarize the main points of this, Jesus’s core teaching, we can boil it down to a few basic principles. All of these appear in the Sermon; for ease of reading I will not indicate chapter and verse for each one. Firstly, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Secondly, do not only love your neighbor (which you should do), but love your enemies as well. If someone strikes you, turn the other cheek, and give to anyone who asks of you. Do not judge others, for the judgment you use is the judgment that will be used for you. There are a number of other principles involving interpersonal relationships; they all are based on love and charity. Finally, don’t hide your “light.” Let it shine before others so that they may see your good works and glorify God in heaven. And lest we forget it, pray simply and in secret, and not to glorify yourself in front of others - the Lord’s Prayer is given by Jesus in this section of scripture.

Another section of scripture that provides a core teaching of Jesus is Matthew 25:31-46. It lays out the primary obligations of a Christian, such as feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. There are others listed, with the conclusion, “...just as you did it to one of the least of these...you did it to me.” (verse 40). These tasks are the gateway to heaven.

So to be born again, to be made new for the new year, we need only look to a few key sections of scripture for a template of what Jesus Christ requires of us. Then we can face 2023 confident in the knowledge that we are the “new creations” of Christ.

It was just another gloomy day and I was just puttering around wishing the sun would come out to brighten the long day. Too cold to go out and the hours just seem to drag. It's almost Christmas and also my Birthday month, so the mailbox is full. Usually you know who the card is from when you see the return address, but today there is one with an address I don't recognize. It is a Birthday card! We usually get Birthday wishes from those we know (family/close friends), but this one is from someone in my Church family. Of course I know them, but I didn't expect a personal card. I must admit I am remiss in the card sending area, so this one was a complete surprise and very welcome. I am not a shut-in by any means, so I can just imagine how welcome getting a card or phone call can be. Let's not forget our friends that cannot be with us every week. To the person who took the time to send the card—THANK YOU!

ERICH

St. Paul held its monthly Consistory meeting on Dec 13. We approved the 2023 church budget along with scheduling the annual meeting for January 29, 2023. Please remember we will be voting on the changes to the Constitution. The Children's Holiday Workshop was a lot of fun and felt nice getting a little back to normal. A big thank you to Trudy for organizing and putting on a fun event for the kids. There is a small group of members that have gotten together to start talking about

remodeling the lobby area. This will consist of new flooring, furniture, paint and many other updates. They have been meeting and going over ideas. I can't wait to start seeing some of the improvements that will happen. The next project will be removing the green coverings of the Ed. Building and repainting the window trim (the coverings are starting to break off when it storms). This will most likely be started in the Spring. We had to deal with the cold and wind and a little snow, but the Christmas Eve service was very nice. We had some plumbing and electrical work done over the month—nothing major, just a few fixes. We also had the fire suppression system brought up to code over the stoves in the kitchen. I want to keep people updated on what we have planned for the coming years. It is a quick list that Consistory and members of the church have brought up that they would like to see done.

- Repaint the gray metal railing outside—SPRING 2023
- Remove the green Plexiglas & repaint windows on the Ed. Building—SPRING 2023
- Remodel the lobby with new furniture, flooring, etc.—WINTER/SPRING 2023
- Update more lighting in rooms—ONGOING
- Fix and repaint the ceiling in the Fellowship Hall
- Repaint and fix plaster in Sanctuary—AFTER MOUND ROAD PROJECT
- Look at the possibility of a covered vestibule that will block the wind when entering in the Ed. Building

Please remember if there is anything that needs attention (building, service, etc.), please let a member of Consistory know, so we can address it at our meeting.

Dear Members of St. Paul UCC,

As a new year approaches, a new life for me does as well. Every single thing of my life will change. In less than a month of you reading this, I will be a free man after doing 13.5 years in prison. To reread that is breathtaking to me as I really have to convince myself that it is actually real. But I assure you that my outdate is set, my parole officer has visited my residence, and everything else is going accordingly for me to be released. I've always said and realizing even more, God never intended for my purpose to be spent here for all these years; yet only God can create a purpose through it. God truly works everything together for the good. God will even work the horrific experiences and enlighten our vision to see the good in it.

Sitting here thinking of the vast amount of lessons I've learned over these years, the fact that God works everything together for the good for those who operate in love is one of the best lessons I've learned.

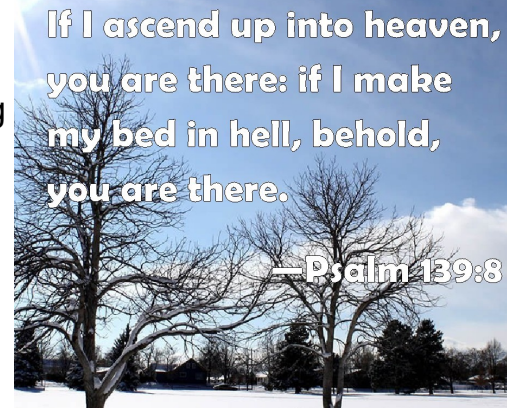
I have been trying to think of ways to summarize all of these lessons I've learned and then I thought back to the only advice I ever give the youth I taught or a friend going home from prison and that is; whatever you do without God will surely fail. Those are the words just resounding in my mind over these past few weeks. Not only has this been the best simplistic advice I could muster up to the ones going home that had a mind full of wonder; this advice is very fitting to remind myself of as well.

And that brings me to one of my favorite passages above. The fact that I never ever have to do anything without God is my motivation to include God in it all. I love how the Psalm says "if I make my bed in hell" which indicates a form of accountability. As I absolutely made my bed in hell for over 13 years, yet the presence of God remained so faithful and active in my life.

This time has been fruitful for my life and I must try to convey how very thankful I am to have another chance to create a purpose outside of here. I know God will be laying out the steps I need to take and I'm so excited to see where that takes me.

I must also convey my thankfulness for the example so many of you have been in my life. I've received endless support, encouragement, motivation, and grace. Please know that I would never be the man I am today without St. Paul United Church of Christ. I mean that wholeheartedly and I hope you feel the gravity of that statement for me.

God bless you all and Happy New Year!! I'll have my LAST newsletter next month!



Thank you—\$672 was donated to Women's Fellowship.
A special thanks to Ellen, Betty Jean, Dawn, Trudy, Joy, Sue, and Dave for donating the prizes!