



# SPIRITUS GLADIUS

## ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

### Join us for Christmas!

We will celebrate Christmas at 4 pm on December 24 with the Family Eucharist and Pageant and at 10 pm with the Choral Eucharist featuring a brass quintet and congregational carol sing at 9:45.

On Christmas Day at 10 am the service will be a Eucharist with sermon and carols. Make St. Paul's part of your Christmas celebration.

### Sermon podcasts now available

Just a reminder that Sunday sermons are now available on Soundcloud. com, Apple iTunes and Google Play as well as through a link on the parish website.

Bill Havlena, Editor

Our calling as a congregation is  
to live our faith as deeply  
and devotedly as we can,

and to be a house of prayer  
for all people.

Services are open to the public,

and we welcome you to worship  
in this holy space  
in the heart of Westfield.

## Remote control by The Rev. Dr. Duncan Johnston

Some call it the 'doobly', others the 'podger', still others the 'blipper', the 'twitcher', the 'melly', the 'ponker', or the 'didge'\*. The less creative might name it the 'clicker', the 'flipper', the 'changer', or the 'buttons'; while, for traditionalists, no fancy, synthetic word can replace its proper name—the remote control'.

As it happens, legions of imaginative people who don't get out much have invented 57 nicknames for the little gadget that is used to change the channels on your TV. Near the top of the list is the 'Zapper'. This was the name we used in my family, before some wit changed it to 'Frank' (Zappa...get it?). So, if you're ever watching TV in my house and you want to turn up the volume you have to press Frank. The poor chap is black and blue.



But, whatever name you baptize it, the remote control enjoys a prestigious place near the apex of human beings' greatest inventions. Almost as good as the TV it controls. What other \$5 household trinket can instill in the holder absolute power over an entire room of people? Think about it. Is there anything in your home that can create conflict, and resolve it, as quickly and effectively as the remote? What else can pacify your screaming toddler, inspire your bored teenager, frustrate your elderly mother (who can't work out how to operate it), and push you close to acrimonious divorce quite like this Holy Grail? Throughout the land it is the focus of household power struggles, and a symbol of omnipotence. He or she who grasps the zapper really does control the world. Keep it close to you, my son, and the earth will be yours, and everything in it.

*(Continued on page 2)*

\* These are the findings of the research organization, *The English Project*,

## Mark your calendars and cancel all other appointments

On April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 3pm Bishop Chip Stokes will visit St Paul's to conduct two joyous events – in one service! Those events are the induction of Fr Duncan as our new Rector (officially termed 'the Celebration of a New Ministry') and the Confirmations of all our young and adult candidates. You won't want to miss this.



## Remote control (continued from page 1)

For millions of people, God is like a cosmic TV viewer, manipulating the world with a zapper. *God is in control, remotely.* He doesn't get too involved in the affairs of daily life, but reclines in a LA-Zee Boy, light years away, watching and occasionally pressing the buttons to ordain his will to be done.

For others, God's zapper is temperamental. Maybe the batteries need changing, or perhaps there's some dust in the connections. Either way, God keeps pressing the buttons, but nothing happens. He shakes it, taps it against the arm of his recliner, and even holds it up to his ear (why do we do that?) but still it doesn't work properly. *God is not remotely in control.*

God has a strange relationship with power. At the first Christmas he gave it away. The Lord of all things became completely powerless, submitting to the wishes and actions of human beings. As St Paul says, Jesus "did not consider equality with God as something to be clung onto, but emptied himself, taking the role of a servant."

It's a self-giving that he calls his followers to emulate. Yet sometimes human beings try to snatch power when they have no right to it. A sobering lesson for many Christians to learn is that God has not given us control over others – their actions, words, decisions, direction in life, or feelings. We can use manipulation, blackmail, covert operations, and even outright threats to get people to do the things we want. We can even call it 'love'.

Because we love people we desire their safety, we pray for their health, we yearn for their prosperity. Sadly, those same people reject these things in a whirlwind of harmful choices and foolish decisions. Then, our 'love' (the best possible motive for anything) tips over into 'control' (one of the worst). We can try to make decisions for the people we love, thinking we are protecting them. In fact, we are preventing them from learning valuable lessons, like the child who cuts open a caterpillar's cocoon because she has pity on the struggling butterfly within, only to deprive the creature of the muscle and resilience that it needs for life and which it only develops in the fight to be free. Before we realize it, we are pressing buttons on the zapper, hoping to assert our wills, because we believe that we know better than God what they need.

At Advent, as we prepare our hearts of the coming of Christ, let us rest content that the God who seems remote is actually in control. Trust that he has a perfect plan for each of us. We don't have to manipulate him to do what's best, and neither do we have to control the people in our lives.

### RECTOR

The Rev. Dr. Duncan Johnston

### ASSISTANT

The Rev. Nathan P. Ritter

### WARDENS

Julia Walker

Geoff Dunham

### VESTRY

Mary Lynn Crozier  
Tim Hamway  
Terence Hegarty  
Rob Hostler  
Steve Kircher  
Donna Laterza

Kathy McElroy  
Alec Reynolds  
Kate Rogers  
Andy Rovito  
Aldo Scrofani  
Kathy Stotler

## Coming in the New Year... Opportunities to grow your faith and explore your spirituality

### Young people's Confirmation Class

This class will begin on Sunday January 7<sup>th</sup> at 8:45, and end on Palm Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup>. It will be a lively, stimulating, interactive course with Father Duncan. There will be discussion, teaching, and video on twelve vital aspects of the Christian life. Anyone from 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grades who has not been confirmed is warmly invited to come. (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Graders who have not been confirmed will feel more at home in the adult group—see the Welcome Course below.)

### Welcome Course

This is a seven-week introduction to the Christian Faith which has been written for newcomers to the Episcopal Church. It has been vital in leading many thoughtful adults to a place of belonging. Because of this, it also makes an excellent adult Confirmation class. It is open to all adults, not just those wishing to take a step of faith (like Confirmation or Reception into the Episcopal Church). Experienced Christians who simply want to go deeper in understanding their faith also find it rich and rewarding. The course will take place on Wednesdays from 7:00 to 8:15pm, in two blocks. The first five sessions begin on January 10<sup>th</sup> and end on February 7<sup>th</sup>. We then take a break for Lent, before starting again after Easter for the final two weeks, April 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.

### Lent Course

Each Wednesday evening in Lent (not including Ash Wednesday) we will have a lively and transformational series of studies and presentations on a topic yet to be decided. For people who are unable to come to church after dark, the series will repeat on Thursday mornings at 10:30 in place of the regular Bible Study. Standby for more news shortly!

### Stewardship Neighborhood Gatherings



### Flower Guild Tea





## Blessing of the Animals 2017



## A pledge alert from the Stewardship Committee

A hearty THANK YOU to all who have made pledge to support the ministries of St. Paul's in 2018. We truly appreciate your commitment and support!

A REMINDER to all those who have forgotten or not yet made a pledge for 2018. PLEASE PLEDGE NOW so that the Vestry can plan and create the budget for next year. Your prayerful consideration is very much appreciated. Please contact Stewardship Chair Alec Reynolds at [alec.c.reynolds@gmail.com](mailto:alec.c.reynolds@gmail.com) with your pledge or check the website. You can also contact Lora at the church office (908-232-8506 or [parishoffice@stpaulswestfield.org](mailto:parishoffice@stpaulswestfield.org)) for a pledge card.

Please pledge now to ensure that St. Paul's continues to grow and thrive in 2018!

## What is the Evangelism Committee?

The Evangelism Committee works to spread the news about St. Paul's both within our parish family and to the wider community. Led by Aldo Scrofani, the committee membership includes Dan Collins, Mary Lynn Crozier, Geoff Dunham, Mike Ellison, Bill Havlena, Carolyn Smith, and Meg Smith. It meets the second Tuesday of every month from 7:00 to 8:30 pm.

In addition to publishing this newsletter four times a year, the committee oversees and maintains the parish website and social media presence on Facebook. It also publicizes parish events through press releases in local print and online publications, such as the *Westfield Leader*, *Patch*, and *TapInto*. You may have noticed the new outdoor banners coordinated by the committee to increase visibility of St. Paul's activity to the Westfield community. Over the past few years the committee has organized St. Paul's presence at Spring Fling and FestiFall, and it is currently considering other community events in which St. Paul's might participate.

The committee is always looking for new members or any ideas that you might have for future initiatives. Suggestions for content in future issues of the newsletter or for the website are also welcome. You can always reach out to any current member for more information.

## God's abounding love—for 150 years

### The neighborhood gatherings

In conjunction with the 2017 Stewardship Campaign, the committee held two neighborhood gatherings at the Wolitzer and Hostler homes. As part of the evening Father Duncan shared some thoughts on St. Paul's and stewardship:

After thanking the parish for the warm welcome given to him and Gelind, Father Duncan related that during an interview in the spring he was asked, 'What's your vision for the parish?' He answered that he didn't have one yet; for now, he wants to learn to love St Paul's by meeting people, listening to their stories, absorbing himself in the history and life of the parish, and learning where God has been and what he has been doing for these 150 years.

Acknowledging that he is following in the footsteps of great ministers such as Father Andrew, he summarized the parish's storied history. In 1963 we had a total of 73,880 worshipers—1,400 per week. In 1970 we had 5 clergymen on the staff, 1,100 children in the Sunday School, 2,300 worshipers on Easter Day, and over 3,000 members. We were in the top 1% of Episcopal parishes in the country.

*"The bad news—those days are not coming back. The good news—those days are not coming back!"*

Those worshipers in the 1960s and 70s came to church for many reasons, some of them probably related to being considered a good, decent, moral, and patriotic person. Now (thankfully) everyone knows that you can be all those things and never go to church. So, today St Paul's is smaller, but everyone comes to church for good reasons—they really mean it.

In 2001 our average Sunday attendance was 301. It is now half that. Why? It is no one's fault. No one planned this, and everyone has battled hard to reverse the decline. There has been a seismic change in the culture around us. Huge decline in religious observance, especially in the mainline churches, like ours. In the 1980s fewer than 10% of U.S. adults said they had no religious affiliation; now 23% describe themselves as atheists, agnostics or "nothing in particular." Churches are, by and large, conservative organizations. We tend to resist change and are slow to admit the scary fact that what we are doing is not succeeding at bringing people into the church as fast as they are leaving. This realization is even harder for clergy, most of whom were trained to minister in a church and a culture that has not existed for many years.

Sunday mornings at St Paul's are outstanding—brilliant music, beautiful space, magnificent liturgy, good preaching. If being amazing on Sunday mornings were enough to create growth, it would have happened by now. What we do is excellent. It has to be more than this.

### *Things we need to do*

- Honor our Sunday traditions. Don't be panicked into changing things in the hope of attracting people. Father Duncan foresees no substantial changes to the content of Sunday morning worship. For example, our high quality music program will continue to be a priority.
- Admit the reality. Society has changed, and very few mainline congregations have adapted well to it. Most Episcopal parishes are still geared towards merely providing worship opportunities for the faithful and caring pastorally for them. When we had a thousand regular worshipers that was fine, but that limited vision can't work now.
- Move from 'Attractional' (come to us) to 'Missional' (we're coming to you). Become missionaries, with the call to engage with people.
- Even though people are less religious, they are still spiritual—they still hunger for meaning and long for the transcendent. Connect with those who are open to God or spirituality, but not open to coming to church.
- Risk and experiment. Create new opportunities, often outside Sunday mornings, to reach the generations who have lost touch with church.

### *The Church of the future*

In the future we will probably see more online and remote ministries. We may be one parish, with many congregations, even multiple locations, with adaptable worship venues and styles. There may be small groups, classes, discussions, outreach. It may require partnerships across denominations and with secular agencies to meet needs in the area. A fundamental task is asking, "What is God doing in the neighborhood?" and joining in. This means being less concerned with average Sunday attendance and more with the impact we're having on the lives of the people in our community.

## Welcome to the family

Congratulations to Pippa Campbell, Lucas Rindos, and Alexander Beyer who were baptized on November 5<sup>th</sup>. “We welcome you into the Lord's family. We are members together of the Body of Christ: We are children of the same heavenly Father: We are inheritors together of the Kingdom of God. We welcome you.”

### Calendar of Events

Sunday, December 17	10:00 am	Festival of Advent Lessons and Carols
Sunday, December 24	4:00 pm	Christmas Pageant and Holy Eucharist
Sunday, December 24	10:00 pm	Holy Eucharist Congregational Carol Sing at 9:45
Monday, December 25	10:00 am	Holy Eucharist with Carols
Sunday, January 7 - Sunday, March 25	8:45 am	Confirmation Class
Wednesday, January 10 - Wednesday, February 7	7:00 pm	Welcome Course
Sunday, April 22	3:00 pm	Confirmation and Celebration of a New Ministry

**SAVE THE DATE**

### Weekly Schedule

Sunday	7:45 am	Holy Eucharist - Rite I
	10:00 am	Holy Eucharist with Choir - Rite II Church School at 9:45
Monday-Thursday	9:10 am	Morning Prayer
Thursday	9:30 am	Holy Eucharist with Healing
	10:30 am	Bible Study

### Remember to check our website

The website is where you can find updated information about all parish events and organizations. The site has been refreshed and navigation has been streamlined—check it out at [www.stpaulswestfield.org](http://www.stpaulswestfield.org)