



**Special Interest Articles:**

Salvation Army 2  
 Youth Quake 3  
 Library News 3

**Regular Features:**

Thank You Notes 4  
 Gift of the Month 2  
 Ashley's Letter 5  
 Pastor's Letter 6  
 Celebrations 4  
 Sermon Titles 7  
 Minutes 8  
 Bishop's Letter 10  
 Calendar 11

## Annual Meeting To Vote on Capital Improvements

The Annual Meeting is February 9<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM in the Community Room to receive the 2013 Financial Reports, vote on two Guardians, vote on a Capital Improvement Project, vote on the 2014 Proposed Budget, and to hand out the 2014 Jerry Lang scholarships.

So that everyone can be fully informed of the decisions that we will be making at that time, Chris Laux, our lay leader, and Paul Martin, our Financial Resource Provider, will be conducting four Informational Meetings. These meetings are designed to give everyone a chance to see how the Finance Team, Ministry Leaders, and Guardians came to the 2014 budget that will be presented. The Finance Team spent many hours looking at various options before arriving at the budget that is being proposed. We know there are time constraints when we have the Annual Meeting and sometimes the process can feel rushed or "forced". The goal of these informational sessions is to have as many people as possible understanding the information going into the Annual Meeting. The dates are:

- Sunday - January 26th: Downstairs Social Room - Sunday School hour (9:30 - 10:20 am)
- Wed - January 29th: Downstairs Social Room (6 pm - 7:30 pm)
- Sunday - February 2nd: Downstairs Social Room - Sunday School hour (9:30 - 10:20 am)
- Wed - February 5th: Downstairs Social Room (6 pm - 7:30 pm)

## It's Un-Birthday Time

Oh, ho, ho---it's back! Remember how everyone enjoyed the Un-Birthday Party last year? We're doing it again on **Sunday, February 16 at 9:30 am** in the Community Room. We'll have the usual party stuff—decorations, balloons, cake, punch, coffee and tea—but the birthday presents will be your smiles and laughter as you enjoy the company of folks you know and meet a few people you don't know yet.

The *Meet and Greet Team* invites the people at the *Arise! Worship Service* to

stay and the folks who go to the *Rejoice! Worship Service* to come early for the fellowship. And we invite the ones who don't come regularly to come this particular Sunday to feel especially welcome as a part of our Ministry Body.

We will be "assigning" you to a table different from the rest of your family so that you can get to know other members of our church. You're probably not likely to sit with a family member. There'll be conversation-starter questions—again, different from last year's—which we hope people will find fun.

And do you remember the words to the second verse of "Happy Birthday"? We'll all celebrate our brotherhood and sisterhood as Children of God by serenading each other.

Y'all come and enjoy!

Carolyn, Judy, Nancy, Nancy, Ron and Ruth Ann



## Gift of the Month: BNOC, Big Red Book, & Reach & Read

The gift of the month for February is oil, sugar, flour, detergent for the BNOC. We also will be collecting books for the BNOC “Big Red Book Shelf” and the “Reach Out and Read” programs. These programs are a part of some pediatrician’s offices to encourage young mothers to

read to their children. Board books and stories for the very young are most welcome.

The noisy offering this month will be collected on the last Sunday and will be used for oil, sugar, and flour for the BNOC.

**The Year for the GOTM:**

**March:** Operation Buckeye

**April:** Flood Buckets for local disaster response

**May:** Tools for Work Camp

**June:** Bird Sanctuary & Gorman Nature Center

**July:** School Supplies

**August:** Toy Time

**September:** Ronald McDonald House

**October:** Diamond View Gifts

**November:** The Giving Tree & The Children Resource Center

**December:** Gifts for Cheer Baskets.

## Rummage Sale 2014



Katie Will and Barb Peiker at last year’s Rummage Sale.

It’s time to start collecting items for **St. Paul Lutheran Church Annual Rummage Sale** which supports our work campers. It will be the week of March 9—March 15, 2014. Our youth and staff will be traveling to Brighton, Tennessee.

During the next couple months we hope you will offer your cherished items, time, and support to this outreach. We will begin accepting donations on Sunday March 9th, following the second service. Please consider donating your items that are clean and in good conditions.

Items we are not able to accept this year are non-working electronics, i.e., computers, printers, video cassette players, nonworking appliances, Christmas trees and nonworking televisions. If you are donating clothing, please remove items from hangers.

Your support is our success!

## Salvation Army Kettle Drive

The Clear Fork Unit of the Salvation Army had its most successful Red Kettle Campaign ever! The people of the Clear Fork Valley demonstrated again how generous, kind and caring they are. The kettle campaign collected over \$5,500! While this was indeed a community effort, the members of St Paul Lutheran Church again led the way. St Paul members covered the first five days, and some members covered many other shifts during the campaign. Those first five

days produced almost \$2,500 in donations. All monies collected in the Valley stay in the Valley to help our neighbors and friends in need. The Clear Fork Unit thanks all those who volunteered to man the kettle and those who donated so generously.



Avery Wend enjoys some yummy hot chocolate at the December 22nd **Happy Birthday Jesus!** party.

## Youth Quake Reminder

This is a friendly reminder to parents of middle school youth who are going to Youth Quake 2014, you will need to make your second non-refundable \$50.00 payment. Thanks!

We are looking forward to our weekend away, February 21st thru 23rd. We will be

leaving on Friday, February 21st at 4:00 from the church parking lot. Please arrive 10 to 15 minutes early to give us time to load up the van.

Please pray for safe travels and a wonderful weekend for our youth and chaperones.



Above: Jhayda Ammons enjoys her doughnut during the birthday party for Jesus!

Left: Madelyn Seibel, Pastor Doug and Avery Wend sitting by the fireplace at the party for Jesus.



### Walk For A Healthier You!

Monday through Friday at 8:00 AM walkers gather in the Community Room to walk. When the weather turns nicer they will move outdoors.

## Library News

Valentine's Day is this month. Greeting cards of red hearts with lacy white edging and a few lines of romantic poetry inside will be lovingly sent and happily received. Bouquets of red roses, boxes of chocolates and dinners out are ways of expressing affection to those dear to our inner hearts. The book, *Love Stories of World War II*, from our library, will help put you in the mood.

*Love Stories of World War II* was compiled by broadcaster and journalist Larry King. Each chapter features one couple's true story and include photos from their courtship and later years. "Though this book contains many historical moments, it is not a history book. Although it demonstrates the courage of the men who fought around the world, it is not a book of war stories; it is a book of love stories. These men and women all believe that in the end, the most important facet of World War II wasn't the battles fought but the very simple fact that in the midst of war, they found each other."

To borrow it or any other items in the library for two weeks, just sign them out on the clipboard you'll find on the shelf. The library committee welcomes donations of appropriate materials.

## Fellowship Days

The Women of the Church will be having their Fellowship Days from 9:30 to 3:00 all the Wednesdays in February. During these days the women put together quilts for Lutheran World Relief, make Cheer Baskets, make finger puppets, tie Linus Blankets, and do other projects to aid the needy. A Hot Soup Lunch is served at noon. It is a great time of fellowship and service.

Come join the ladies!



## Happy Birthday

1 Austin Boyd	16 Ethan Zimmerman
5 Stacy Wright	17 Diane Hammett
5 Lacy DeFrancisco	17 Ken Riling
7 Tom Boyd (Jr)	21 Gary Brenneman
7 Dennis Tenison	22 Zach Schmidt
8 Lloyd Hull	24 Amos Fry
9 Gary Lantz	26 Barbara Peiker
12 Jean Leedy	28 William Hartley
13 Cliff Worner	

## Happy Anniversary

February 15, 1975 Russ & Lynn Ousley  
February 25, 1974 Dan & Joyce White

Throughout Epiphany you are invited to repeat the following statement at least once a day:

**I am God's child, worthy of love and respect,  
and God is using me to change the world for good.**

## Thank You Notes Received

Thank you very much for the Cheer Basket. It was really appreciated.  
Sincerely,  
Gladys Oyster

Dear Fellow Christians  
Thank you so much for the 12 Days of Christmas basket. It was a special treat and clever ideas. The letters are very inspirational. Thanks for the cards and visits.  
God Bless  
Roberta Loescher

Thank you to our church family for your prayers, cards, and heartfelt thoughts during our time of loss.  
God Bless  
Steve & Lisa Weaver

Thanks to all for your prayers during my recent hospital stay. Also thank you for the cheer basket sent to Dad and me. Thanks to Pastor Doug and Carol for your prayers and hospital visits.  
May God bless you.  
Vicki Hull

Dear Friends at St. Paul,  
I thank you all so very much for your generous Christmas basket. I enjoyed everything. Your kindness is very much appreciated. May GOD, OUR HEAVENLY Father Son and Holy Spirit bless you all richly.  
Sincerely,  
June Little

Thank You for the 12 Days of Christmas. I enjoyed them. Thank you for your thoughts and prayers.  
God Bless  
Duane Maxwell

Dear Church Family,  
I would like to express my thanks for the prayers, cards, cheer basket and a special thank you for the Twelve Days of Christmas gifts delivered by Pastor Doug, Dan and Evan Shaffer. Thank you for being such a caring and thoughtful church family.  
Dick Echelberger

To My Church Family,  
Just a small note to say a BIG "Thank You" for your concerns for me, All your cards, visits, prayers and hugs. You all know how much I like your God given hugs.  
In my daily devotions I lift you all up to the Lord for all your care and concern.  
Bless You all  
Romota Ridenour

I'm grateful for the elves at St. Paul's who make cheer baskets. I enjoyed every morsel.  
May God Bless All, Elsa Cullen

Dear St. Paul Members,  
Thank you so much for all of your prayers, thoughts and hugs over the past 5 months. Loving hearts are such an important part of the healing process.  
Special thanks to those of you that provided meals during my radiation treatments. It was wonderful to just reheat and eat!  
Thank you also to everyone involved in the Twelve Days of

Christmas project. It was so much fun to read each note with the Bible passages and then to open a fun surprise each day!  
Thanks for always being there for each other.  
Blessings, Sabrina

Elderberries,  
I wanted to take a moment to thank you for the care package you sent me last semester! It was such a boost to remember that people at St. Paul still care regardless of where life takes me! I shared the cookies with my floor mates as well and I think you made their days brighter as well because the cookies didn't last long!  
Thanks Again! Callan Pugh

Thank you so much for the Twelve Days of Christmas. We looked forward to reading the inspirational letters and it was something we could do as a family.  
Tom, Trey, and Sydney Boyd

## Children's Ministry Coordinator's Letter

The 2014 Winter Gathering of the Northeast Ohio Synod Lutheran Youth Organization (NEOS LYO) held their winter youth gathering on January 3-5 in Independence, Ohio. We had four youth join in on the fun weekend. The gathering was focused on God's most amazing gift to humanity; forgiveness of all the sin through His son Jesus. The band **Ward 9** was the musical talent and did an awesome job leading us in praise and worship throughout the weekend. The key note speaker was Nadia Bolz-Weber, who is an ELCA pastor in Denver, Colorado. The girls enjoyed the weekend and took part in a service project making blankets for Project Linus. It was great to see how well attended the event was, and to spend time and get to know other youth from our synod.



From Left to Right: Abbie Albert, Micaela Fidler, Meghan Strickling, and Molly Strickling.



Wrapped up in the blankets they made, from left to right: Micaela Fidler, Molly Strickling, Meghan Strickling, Lacy DeFrancisco, and Abbie Albert.

Blessings,

*Ashley DeFrancisco*

## Pastor Doug's Letter: January 22, 2013

**January 22, 2014**

Brothers and Sisters,

Light be yours this Epiphany season. We celebrate that Jesus is the light of the world that illuminates our darkness and that—through him—we become the light of the world.

For years I have joked that when corporations have a business meeting they fly their people to Florida or Las Vegas but when pastors have their annual Professional Leaders Retreat, they go to Lake Erie...in January! Not that I am really complaining. Despite the high of 12 degrees, up from minus 7 degrees, I am typing this in a beautiful room at the Sawmill Resort Center after having a \$20 lunch of French Onion Soup and the Chicken Salad on Grilled Pineapple with Grilled Flat Bread. The only thing I have in common with Jesus when he led his disciples away for retreat is that it was by the sea and they had flat bread. I am pretty sure the temperature was around 100 degrees higher. They also had sand fleas, and we will not even think about the how they did their bathroom business without bathrooms.

We are two thirds of the way through the conference and have heard two presentations each by Dr. Anna Madsen and by Dr. Wally Taylor on discipleship. Anna is a theologian who delights in soliciting unvoiced questions and responding to those questions—not answering them—by seeking out where God might be in the question. Anna is particularly interested in connecting with folks who have the kind of questions that they dare not ask in church or are afraid to ask in church or that might make church people mad or that church people ask each other...in whispers...after a few drinks...when the pastor is not around.

Wally is a New Testament scholar who teaches at Trinity Lutheran Seminary and who came to the seminary my second year there. He began yesterday by listing some of his former students who are now...sharing the podium with him...his bishop...the president of his seminary! As much as he jokes about it, he truly has had a huge influence on many people, and still does. He is engaging as well as thoroughly scholarly, which is indeed a rare combination.

**January 24, 2014**

Now it is Friday afternoon at 4:30. I quit writing you on Wednesday afternoon—the one break time in the whole conference—when my roommate—the Rev. Dr. Clyde McGee, my good friend and mentor—suggested that it might be nap time. I am easily persuaded.

I also stopped writing because I was not sure what to say. Both of them spoke of discipleship, and how do I pull out what is most important? I could write you a scholarly letter synthesizing what they taught about being a disciple and listing ways and means that we might be better disciples. Instead let me speak about who they are and how they impacted me.

Anna taught us the German word “doch.” Germans use it frequently in everyday speech. Sometimes it is used like we use the word “um.” It means “generally.” It means “I think you are wrong.” It means “You are *adult-language* wrong.”

For example, when she called back to her Dad in Sioux Falls, Minnesota from her conference in Kansas City and says, “I hear it is a bit nippy up there.” His response normally would be “Doch!” However, because she called when Sioux Falls was in the midst of the Artic Vortex and the temperature was minus 75 degrees, the response was “Doch! Doch! Doch!” That is the adult-language response.

For example, when her husband was killed in a car accident in Germany, and her three year old son Carl was so badly injured that the doctors told her that Carol would not live, Ana said to them and to God, “Doch!” And when he lived she said it when the doctors told her Carl would always be a vegetable. And again she said it when he awoke from the coma and was told he would never speak again. And again when she was told that he would never walk. Doch! Doch! Doch!

To be a disciple of Jesus is to look Good Friday square in the face and say, “Death is real. Death hurts. Death destroys.” To be a disciple of Jesus is to hope in Easter, to know that the resurrection IS happening and that “Jesus lives/Carl lives/We live” is the final answer. Therefore, it is to say to death, “Doch!”

Wally did not grow up in a home that was Christian and did not read his Bible until after a man down the street made a friend of his father, talked to him of matters most important and most real, and brought his Dad to church. Wally started reading his Bible during the commercials of *I Love Lucy*. He reads it more now. When he spoke to us this week it was clear that we were receiving the fruit of thousands of hours of study and dozens of hours of preparation. He said, “I literally would not be standing before you today is it were not for a disciple of Jesus who lived down the street from my Dad.”

Their stories of God making disciples of them encouraged me to return here to invite you to continue the work of making disciples among you who have been making a disciples of me.

Peace,

*Pastor Doug*



# Worship Services for February

## Feb 2 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Micah 6:1-8 Psalm 15 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 Matthew 5, 6, 7

### The Future of the Church: Authentic Followers of Jesus

The prophet Micah is most well-known for this verse: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Since our world wearies of false promises, inflated hype, and empty words, people yearn for authenticity in themselves and with whom they associate. The church of the future will be authentic followers of Jesus. Pastor Doug will tell the whole of *The Sermon on the Mount*, which is a description of how to live authentically.



## Feb 9 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 58:1-12 Psalm 112:1-10 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 Matthew 5:13-20

### The Future of the Church: Providing Justice

Isaiah has an answer for those who wonder at the silence of God but it is not an answer that most of us want to hear. The church that exists to benefit itself will find the same fate as the nation Israel received when its piety was a masquerade for injustice and oppression. Our nation claims to adhere to the principle of "liberty and justice for all." We would do well as individuals, as a church, and as a nation to make sure that the words "for all" do not miss anyone, for the ones that we overlook are the ones God sees most clearly.



## Feb 16 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

Deut. 30:15-20 Psalm 119:1-8 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 Matthew 5:21-37

### The Future of the Church: Chooses God

The future of the church depends on our choices. Every choice in the past brings a consequence to the present and to the future. Moses calls us to pay careful attention to our choices. Be aware that you are choosing. Be aware what the choices are. Be aware of what the consequences will be. Most importantly, choose God and not god.



## Feb 23 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany *Chris Laux Preaching, Pastor Doug At YouthQuake – No communion*

Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18 Psalm 119:33-40 1 Corinthians 3:10-23 Matthew 5:38-48

### The Future of the Church

"You shall be holy." The Lord God speaks these words to his servant Moses, and to the Hebrew people, and to the whole church. These words can be heard as both command and promise. The church of the future will be a holy church.



## Remember Our Shut-Ins

<p><b>Wedgewood Estates</b> 600 South Trimble Road, Mansfield, OH 44906 George Ridenour, Bea Tawse</p>	<p><b>Country Meadow Care Center</b> 4910 Algire Rd, Bellville, OH 44813 Barb Noblet</p>
<p><b>Oak Grove Manor</b> 1670 Crider Road, Mansfield, OH 44903 Jean Reed</p>	<p><b>Homebound Church Family:</b> Ella Jane Fry Roberta Loescher</p>

## Joint Guardians & Ministry Leaders

Present: Chris Laux, Stacy Wright, Mindy Wood, Lisa Brooks, Mike Murray, Pastor Doug  
Nancy Martin, Judy Coppersmith, Barb Hoover, Doug Shirk, Paul Martin

Absent: Janis Marhenke, Paul Garn

Pastor Doug provided opening devotions and prayer.

**Reports -** Minutes - Guardians minutes were reviewed. Mike Murray moved to accept; Lisa Brooks seconded. Approved.  
Treasurer's Report – 2013 Year End Financial Report was reviewed by Chris Laux;  
Mike Murray moved to accept; Pastor Doug seconded and all were in favor.

### Old Business:

The Journey Forward Initiative (Stacy, Lisa & Doug): Pastor Doug has emailed the committee to see who will serve and to who is willing to come to a conference meeting on January 28th. Stacy and Lisa are willing to serve and will go to the meeting on the 28th.

### New Business:

Paul Martin presented the 2014 Budget Proposal from the Finance Committee. A discussion was held as each line item was reviewed with some items adjusted based upon the discussions. Paul suggested that the full budget proposal be written up and included in The St. Paul Epistle for the Ministry Body to review. Lisa Brooks made the motion that we amend the finance team's recommended general fund budget per the attached documents. Nancy Martin seconded. All were in favor.

Chris Laux made a motion that we present the amended recommended option from the Finance Team as the Proposed General Fund and Building Fund 2014 Budget Proposal to the Ministry Body. Mike Murray seconded. All were in favor.

Doug Shirk presented the proposals and bids for new roofs and windows that are needed for the office wing and sanctuary. Pastor Doug suggested that we set a dollar figure that will allow us to do these projects to present to the Ministry Body for a Capital Funds request. Lisa Brooks made the motion that the Guardians and Ministry Leaders move that we present to the Ministry Body a Capital Improvement Project which includes the replacement of the roofs over the sanctuary and office wings, soffits and gutters for both, insulation for both, and replacement of the 38 windows in the office wing. Furthermore the maximum cost of the project is to be set at \$89,000. The Ministry Leaders and Guardians will approve the specific bids. The Ministry Body will be invited to make donations beyond their regular giving into a newly established Capital Improvements Fund. Pastor Doug seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of ten for the motion and one abstention.

Ballot for open Guardian spots: Stacy Wright will run again. Judy Coppersmith stated that three persons have agreed to pray about being willing to serve as Guardians. The vote will take place at the Annual Meeting on Feb. 9th.

Pastor Doug's Statement of Call and the Points of Emphasis for 2014 will be discussed at the next Guardian's meeting.

Per Pastor Doug, there will be a conference meeting on March 9 to nominate a pastor to be our new bishop. The Northeastern Ohio Assembly will then elect the bishop and consider other business on May 15-17, 2014. Pastor moved that Mike Murray and Stacy Wright be our 2014 Assembly delegates, with Lisa Brooks as an alternate. All were in favor.

The next meeting, which will once again be a joint meeting of the Guardians and Ministry Leaders and is called for the purpose of approving the bids for the Capital Improvements Project will be February 6, 2014 from 6-8 pm; Pastor Doug volunteered to do devotions.

The Annual Meeting will be February 9, 2014 between services.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

*Mindy Wood*

Secretary

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## Bishop's Letter: January 9, 2014

Dear Co-workers in the Gospel,

A blessed Epiphany to all of you. I hope this ordinary time in the church's year is a chance for you to reflect on the miracle of the incarnation and how each of us can bear the message of God's redeeming love in Christ's death and resurrection to our communities and to the world. May God bless your faithful service and witness in Christ's name.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* Pope Francis urges "Let us go forth, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ." "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security." (p. 25) This impulse is consistent with the work that has been ongoing in your midst in the Northeastern Ohio Synod for the past few years: *Journey Forward*. During this time of transition and new leadership from Pr. Terrance Jacob we want to sustain the work of *Journey Forward* in such a way that it is a gift to a new bishop and a new chapter in the life of the synod. I am therefore pleased to offer the following from Pastor Jacob on how the next nine months of *Journey Forward* will be shaped in the synod:

### UPDATE ON JOURNEY FORWARD – LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN

The *Journey Forward* is a process of discernment. We are individually and corporately discerning what it is that God wants us to be and to do in the parts of God's vineyard in which we find ourselves. We are intent on being faithful and good stewards, putting our time, resources and talent to use for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ who calls us to be the salt and light to the world as a church against which the gates of hell will not prevail. God calls us to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Following much listening and engaging amongst the *Journey Forward* leadership, including cluster conveners, conference rostered leaders, synod staff and spiritual directors, a plan of action for the next nine months has been laid out. This plan can simply be described as a plan to listen: the "Three Great Listenings" – listening to God; listening to each other in the congregation and cluster; and listening to the broader community.

To date, cluster conveners and spiritual directors have been working together in leading the cluster meetings with the JF Leadership Committee (Charlotte Glasgo; Lee Eilert; Paul Jaster; Pamela Czarnota and Terrance Jacob) providing support to your leadership. There have been a few glitches, but due to your resilience and everyone's commitment to this process, we have made it thus far. Most clusters are almost at meeting 2, with about three/four preparing for meeting 3. Two/three clusters have yet to start, but we will get there.

Phase II has two main seasons, which we are roughly aligning with the church year. During the Lenten Season we will continue the process started in cluster meetings 1 and 2 of listening to God and each other in clusters, and we will begin a process of listening to each other in our congregations through intentional one-to-one conversations.

During the Pentecost Season we will continue to listen to God and each other, and begin to listen to our community/neighborhood. This we will do by listening and building relationships through one-to-ones with key people in our neighborhoods, as well as using all data gathering instruments at our disposal (e.g., census, ELCA Research and Evaluation, other web-based instruments). During this season individual congregations may focus on their immediate neighborhoods but there will be more opportunities for clusters to work together to build relationships in the community.

In the Fall of 2014, each cluster will have a 2-3 hour discernment retreat to bring together what we have heard in the "Three Great Listenings". We will be clearer as congregations as to who we are, where we are, and begin to discern why we are (our mission and purpose) based on the "who" and "where". This will not simply be a regular mission and vision exercise that some congregations do by/for themselves, but a corporate, cluster-based process as we discern together what God is calling us to do as ELCA congregations in various neighborhoods of the Northeastern Ohio Synod.

The JF Leadership Committee will host the next training event for cluster conveners on January 16, 2014 to prepare for Phase II, and as with the previous cluster meetings, the conveners and spiritual directors will train and coach leaders from your congregations as we together walk this *Journey Forward*.

## Bishop's Letter Continued

I add my personal thanks to Pr. Jacob and to the Journey Forward leadership team (Charlotte, Lee, Pamela, and Paul) for their faithful and visionary work. I encourage your continuing participation in this process. If you seek more information you can contact your cluster convener or a member of JF leadership team (see the list at [http://www.neoselca.org/Journey\\_Forward/Docs/Meetings/CM00\\_ContactList.pdf](http://www.neoselca.org/Journey_Forward/Docs/Meetings/CM00_ContactList.pdf)).

This is also the time of the year when annual reports are prepared. You already have or soon will receive information regarding the Rostered Leaders Report to the Bishop and the Congregational Report. I look forward to hearing from each rostered leader and responding to your reports. Additionally, the annual Congregational Report is a vital tool to help us plan and respond to opportunities and needs within the synod. As in 2013, a congregation that has submitted the Congregational Report will be the recipient of two free synod assembly registrations. The deadline to be eligible for this drawing will be announced in future communications.

Again, I offer my thanks to you for your continuing work in your congregations and ministries and for this opportunity to be with you. It is truly a joy to be in your midst again.

Sincerely, in Christ,

*Marcus Miller*, Interim Bishop

## Electing Our Bishop: Discerning God's Will

As we move toward the election of our next bishop, we are blessed with the opportunity to engage in prayerful discernment of God's will. Discernment is a gift—something that we receive, not that we do. It is a capability inherent in the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the means by which we listen to God. It is an act of faith. The gift of discernment empowers us to seek, find and follow the will of God in word, thought and deed.

Its presence and effect is described in 1 Cor. 2: 9-13, 15:

*But as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" – these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God, and we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. (NRSV)*

Jesus taught us how we must be as a discerning person or community. We must be vulnerable (open) and prayerful (silent). We must also be willing to defer to God's will as the authoritative voice in the midst of everything we hear or experience. Discernment is a process. The pace and the end

result are determined by God. Therefore, we must resist the temptation to decide now whom God will call forth in May, 2014. We can take comfort in knowing that there is a timeline in place that can allow discernment to flow in a process leading to the election. We don't need to jump-start it. It has already begun. Discernment of God's will invites us to set aside our current preferences or opinions and to defer to our faith that God is at work in Christ. While God is working, our hearts and minds individually and collectively may be open and responsive to nothing other than God's wisdom, guidance, support and love in Christ.

**Therefore, we will pray. As we gather in committees or council meetings, Bible studies or worship, we will listen. We will be intentional, persistent, yet patient together asking God's help to lead our process, every step of the way to the day of the election of our next bishop. Please pray in worship and in other gatherings of God's people as we prepare to elect the Bishop of the Northeastern Ohio Synod.**

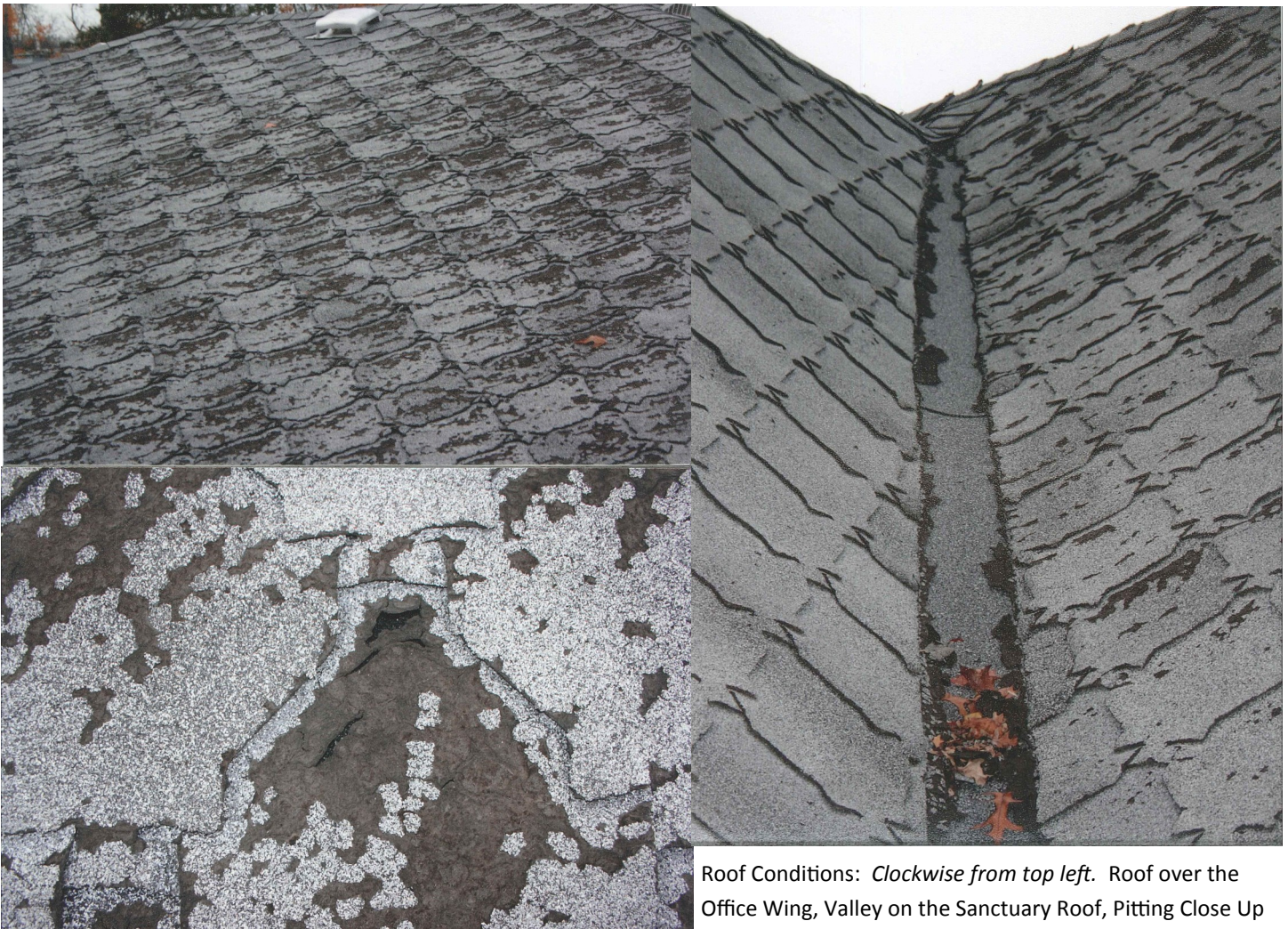
(Thanks to Spiritual Director Pam Czarnota of Christ the Redeemer in Brecksville for providing this material.)

### February Prayer Leading to the Bishop's Election:

Stir up your power, O Lord, and illuminate our minds. As we enter this year when we elect our next bishop, help us to listen to you and to each other with open hearts. Protect us from our need to know anything other than that you are in our midst, guiding us through this time of discernment. Lord, hear our prayer. Amen.







Roof Conditions: *Clockwise from top left.* Roof over the Office Wing, Valley on the Sanctuary Roof, Pitting Close Up

**The St. Paul Epistle**

St. Paul Lutheran Church  
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Web  
www.splc-bellville.org

**8:15 AM**  
**Arise! Worship Service**  
*Acoustical Guitar Music*

**9:30 AM**  
**Adult & Kids Learning**

**10:30 AM**  
**Rejoice! Worship Service**  
*Organ Music*  
*Nursery Available*

**Holy Communion Weekly**

**Handicapped Accessible**



**OUR MISSION:**

Living & Sharing God's Love



**OUR VISION:**

We live & share our faith in Jesus Christ by:

- ◇ Trusting God with all our heart.
- ◇ Learning God's desire for us.
- ◇ Telling others about God's love,
- ◇ Caring for others using the gifts God gives us.