

## CORNERSTONE

---

### **“THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU AT ST. PAUL’S**

**SEPTEMBER 2022 Volume 29, Issue 7  
St. Paul’s Lutheran Church**

#### The Power of Prayer

“As we fight to change the world, when we pray, truly pray, we are the ones transformed by the ones that we are praying for and with.”

Claudio Carvalhaes, *Praying With Every Heart*

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.”

Ephesians 1:18

Dear Brothers and Sisters In Christ:

Blessings to you as the summer winds down and fall begins to creep up on us. Now comes what we call, “the busy time”; children are going back to school, those meetings that we cancelled over the summer are resuming, most of us have already taken our vacations for the year. As we enter this, yet another, time of transition, I have a question for you.

How did you learn to pray? Perhaps your parents taught you to pray. Maybe, it was a grandparent or other relative. Maybe you were

baptized as an infant and raised in the church and there heard the prayers of Sunday School and worship. As a grandmother, I take joy in teaching my little ones to pray in their simple language words of thanksgiving, grace at mealtimes, and prayers asking God to help them. In our house, we call them our “Dear Gods”.

Have you ever been in a room full of people when the question is asked, “Who would like to pray for us?” If you really want people to stop looking at you, just ask this question. It even happens among us pastors! Why are we so reluctant for others to hear our prayers?

Perhaps, we think that our prayers aren’t eloquent enough. Perhaps we struggle with what to pray for. Sometimes, we don’t think that God hears or answers our prayers. I know that for a very long time, this was true for me.

When I was twelve years old, my grandfather became very ill. My cousin said that we should pray for God to make him better. So the two of us, two little girls who loved their grandfather so much, stood outside in the yard of my family home, and prayed that God would make Pap better and send him home. My grandfather died shortly after. After that, I did not pray. It wasn’t until I was a young adult and started attending church with my then fiancé, Keith, that I began talking with God regularly.

And that is what prayer is, it is a conversation with God. God wants to hear our prayers, no matter how simple or complex. Something that I have learned recently, since I began a two-year training program for Spiritual Direction and Leadership, is that there are so many ways to pray, and sometimes, we don't even need to use words.

Some of the ways to pray that I have practiced lately include: the Mirror Prayer, Imaginative Contemplation, Walking a Labyrinth, the Daily Examen, Lectio Divina, drawing, working in clay, sitting with nature, and the prayers that we use weekly in worship. Many of the Psalms are prayers. You can look up any of those prayer forms, or call me to ask about them, and try them for yourself. I will describe three of them for you.

First, the Mirror Prayer. For this prayer, you need a mirror of any size. You can do this prayer fully clothed or fully naked, but the point is to look into the mirror at yourself and see yourself, truly see yourself. What story do the scars tell? Whose face do you see when you look into your own? What is the history behind the wrinkles and the sagging skin? Most importantly, what does God see when God looks at you? This prayer can lead us to see our life's story, our joys and sorrows, and see how and where God was at work in and through us.

The Daily Examen is a simple prayer that can be done at any time of the day, or even throughout the day. You begin with thanksgiving – what are you thankful for at this very moment? Then, you look back on your day or the day before to see when you felt distant from God, when you may

have sinned. You ask God for forgiveness and to help keep you from sinning. Finally, what is ahead for you in the coming hours or the next day? How do you want God to help you with those things? You could end with the Lord's Prayer.

Imaginative Contemplation is one of my favorite forms of prayer. For this prayer form, you choose a portion of scripture and read it through. What words or phrases stand out to you? Why do you think that is? Then, after reflecting on that, you read the passage again. But, this time, you put yourself into the story. You could be a bystander, observing the scene. You could be one of the characters in the story. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell or taste or touch? Is Jesus in the story? Does he look at you, speak to you? What does he say? How does he look at you?

For any of these prayer forms, it is often helpful to write down your thoughts and feelings about the experience. You will find that, as you repeat these prayer practices that your prayer life grows richer and deeper.

I am currently reading a book, *Praying with the Heart*, by Claudio Carvalhaes. In it, he writes that there is a difference between praying for and praying with someone. We do a lot of praying for. How often do you see prayer requests on social media with numerous comments of "praying"? All of us have a list of names that we are praying for in our congregations. It is good to pray for others. But, how often do we pray with someone? When you pray with someone, they know that you have heard them. When you pray

with someone, you can't help but become part of their circumstance and they become part of you – one body, united in Christ Jesus.

Sisters and brothers, there is power in prayer, power to transform lives and to transform our world. May God keep us diligent in our prayers!

Pastor Sue



- Masks are now optional at St. Paul's. Masks will not be worn during the service unless someone has any objections. CDC, Synod, & Plum are recommending masks for people that have not been vaccinated.
- PLUM Board made the decision to allow congregations to adjust how we do communion to allow for a return to the communion rail. However, COVID safety protocols remain in place. Councils to determine change in consult with Pastors. St. Paul's will continue with our present process until another decision is made.
- **Confirmation Class:** Children in Grade 6 and up who have not been confirmed, please notify Nancy Pollo, President, 724-207-0941 ([nancypollo.research@gmail.com](mailto:nancypollo.research@gmail.com)) or Ann Morrocco, 724-746-5897, [amorrocco1@gmail.com](mailto:amorrocco1@gmail.com).
- **Communion Class:** Children, age 8 and up, who have not received communion instructions, please notify Nancy Pollo,

President, 724-207-0941

([nancypollo.research@gmail.com](mailto:nancypollo.research@gmail.com)) or Ann

Morrocco, 724-746-5897

([amorrocco1@gmail.com](mailto:amorrocco1@gmail.com))

- **St. Paul's Children Education Program**, please bring all of your ideas and volunteer intentions to assist in bringing God's stories to our youth to Nancy Pollo. She is working on a plan to revamp the room above the sanctuary for use during the church service.
- **What's Next Meeting**, September 1, 2022, 7PM, zoom.
- **Taize Service**, September 2, 2022, 7PM, zoom.
- **What is the Gospel?** Book Study: Pastor Martin Rafanan will facilitate on Thursdays, Sep 8 – Nov 10, 2022, 8-9PM, PLUM zoom site. Register by email at [PLUM@plumofpa.com](mailto:PLUM@plumofpa.com). Flyer posted on bulletin board.
- **Rise Against Hunger**, Saturday, September 10, 2022, 9:30AM, Christ Lutheran, Duquesne. Each congregation will contribute \$480 and our PLUM family will prepare 13,000 meals. Signup sheet on bulletin board if you plan to attend.
- **Confirmation Orientation Meeting**, September 10, 2022, Christ Lutheran, Duquesne, immediately following Rise Against Hunger. Information is being mailed to 6<sup>th</sup> grade student or older are eligible. Please contact Pastor Brenda Henry if you have a child that is ready for Confirmation.
- **Zoom Worship Committee**, September 14, 2022, 7PM, zoom.
- **St. Andrews Flea Market**, September 17, 2022, 11 AM – 4 PM.
- **Pastor Alexander Sumo's** will preside over his first sermon service at St. Paul's on September 18, 2022.
- **St. Paul's** will host a Fellowship/Coffee Hour Event when Pastor Sumo arrives at

St. Paul's for his first service on September 18, 2022. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend and meet/greet Pastor Sumo afterwards. More Council info about this event to come.

- **St. Paul's Council** will meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month. September 19, 2022, St. Paul's Council meeting, 7PM, zoom.
- **Special Congregational Meeting, September 24, 2022**, immediately following the 11:15 Service. The purpose of this meeting is to approve Pastor John Grop's transition from a PLUM full-time pastor to a PLUM part-time pastor effective August 1, 2022.
- **PLUM Board** meeting, September 26, 2022, 7PM, zoom.
- 2022 Parochial Report will be due March 1, 2023.
- **PLUM Board**: Each congregation should have four (4) members on this board. This board meets once a month, usually the fourth Monday of the month, on zoom. Presently, St. Paul's only has three: Milt Stemmler; Shawndel Kelley; Ann Morrocco. If anyone is interested in becoming a PLUM Board Member, please notify Nancy Pollo, President, 724-207-094 ([nancypollo.research@gmail.com](mailto:nancypollo.research@gmail.com)) or Ann Morrocco, 724-746-5897 ([amorrocco1@gmail.com](mailto:amorrocco1@gmail.com)).
- **St. Paul's family** cleaning/lunch/What is the Gospel, second chapter, Bible Study, September 24, 2022, 10AM. Please join us!
- **Missional Leadership** in Time of Disruption: Oct 7 & 8 at PTS and online. Pastor Brenda will be a panelist for one of the workshops.

## HOW MISSION SUPPORT WORKS



The monthly mission for the month of September for St. Paul's Lutheran Church is Washington City Mission.



### Eternal Candle

August – Karen & Logan Billingham  
September – Mark & Nancy Pollo  
October – Mike, Carol, Corey Ferens  
November – Scott & Lisa Cregut  
December – Ann Morrocco  
January – Need Sponsor

If you would like to sponsor the eternal candle please notify Ann Morrocco, [amorrocco1@gmail.com](mailto:amorrocco1@gmail.com). Donation is \$25.00. Put your name on the envelope along with your check/money in the collection plate.



**WORSHIP SCHEDULE 11:15 A.M. -- St Paul's**

September 4 – Pastor Sue Devine  
September 11 – Pastor Elizabeth Mayforth  
September 18 – Pastor Alexander Sumo  
September 25 – Pastor Brenda Henry



**Assistants**

September 4 – Scott Cregut  
September 11 – Shawndel Kelley  
September 18 – Scott Latta  
September 25 – Karen Billingham

**Lectors**

September 4 – Lee Jones  
September 11 – Logan Billingham  
September 18 – Mike Ferens  
September 25 – Marcy Wright

**Usher: Scott Latta**

If you are interested in serving as an assistant/lector/usher, please notify Ann Morrocco; 724-746-5897; email: [amorocco1@gmail.com](mailto:amorocco1@gmail.com).



**SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

Carol Cramer	September 14
Josh Porter, Jr.	September 27



**SEPTEMBER FLOWER CHART**

September 4  
September 11  
September 18  
September 25

If you are interested in placing flowers on the altar for a special occasion, please notify Ann Morrocco; 724-746-5897; email: [amorocco1@gmail.com](mailto:amorocco1@gmail.com).



## FELLOWSHIP

September 4, 2022 –  
September 11, 2022 –  
September 18, 2022 –  
September 25, 2022 –

If you are interested in sponsoring Fellowship for one of the Sundays in September, please sign the signup sheets on the bulletin board or notify Ann Morrocco; 724-746-5897; email: [amorrocco1@verizon.net](mailto:amorrocco1@verizon.net).



Will you please consider saving your prescription bottles? These bottles can help people in third world countries.

## ST PAUL'S PRAYER LIST

Please remember all who suffer from disease, violence or distress, frontline health care workers; all who protect and serve our country and community; all who suffered the loss of a family member or friend; all PLUM churches and our PLUM pastors and staff; the congregation of St. Paul's and the Canonsburg community; especially .....Kpannah K. Sumo, (Pastor Sumo's Mother), Rick Jones (Lee's brother), Charlotte, Milt, Steve, Barbara, Lee, Dom, Mike, Sue, Barb, Rebecca Harvison, Ann, Pastor Paul (Parkinson's), the Richmond family, our Bishops, our Synod, our PLUM pastors and our PLUM family. Send them your healing, grace, and mercy.



AHN Canonsburg Hospital, Pastoral Care Department, will be offering a Bereavement Support Group. Meetings will be held in the hospital's McNary Conference Room, Wednesday evenings, 6:30 – 8 PM. The series will begin on September 07, 2022, and end on October 12, 2022. Grief & Loss Dinner following on Wednesday, October 26, 2022, 6:30 PM. RSVP NLT October 12, 2022, call 724-745-6100, X4118. Chaplain Katharina Brandt, Canonsburg, Hospital, 100 Medical Blvd, Canonsburg PA 15317; 724-745-6100, X4118; emergency pager; 724-223-4830; email [Katharina.Brandt@ahn.org](mailto:Katharina.Brandt@ahn.org).



God of all good gifts, your Son gathered children into his arms and blessed them. Help us to understand our youth as they grow in years and in knowledge of your world.

Teach us to encourage their search for truth and value in their lives. Protect and bless all of our young people, especially Hazel Julia Mae Cregut, Eleanor Marie Cregut, Logan Billingham, Andrew Cowser, Gina Cowser, Austin Filby, Joelle Filby, Clarke Johnson, Larry Ryan Johnson, Gregory McGrail, Lindsey Nimal, Josh Porter, Jaxon Porter, Jordyn Porter, Aaliyah Gilpin, Adalae Carmichael, Stephanie Richmond, Sydney Richmond, Sammie Jo Richmond, and Skylar Richmond.

**Please notify Ann Morrocco, [amorocco1@gmail.com](mailto:amorocco1@gmail.com) if someone should be added or deleted from our prayer list).**



Will you please consider saving your pop can rings? These rings will help someone with cancer treatments.

## **SHARED BY PEG, MESSIAH LUTHERAN**

Church is hard.

Church is hard for the person walking through the doors, afraid of judgement.

Church is hard for the pastor's family, under the microscope of an entire body.

Church is hard for the prodigal soul returning home, broken and battered by the world.

Church is hard for the girl who looks like she has it all together, but doesn't.

Church is hard for the couple who fought the entire ride to service.

Church is hard for the single mom, surrounded by couples holding hands, and seemingly perfect families.

Church is hard for the widow and widower with no invitation to lunch after service.

Church is hard for the deacon with an estranged child.

Church is hard for the person singing worship songs, overwhelmed by the weight of the lyrics.

Church is hard for the man insecure in his role as a leader.

Church is hard for the wife who longs to be led by a righteous man.

Church is hard for the nursery volunteer who desperately longs for a baby to love.

Church is hard for the single woman and single man, praying God brings them a mate.

Church is hard for the teenage girl, wearing a scarlet letter, ashamed of her mistakes.

Church is hard for the sinners.

Church is hard for me.

It's hard because on the outside it all looks shiny and perfect. Sunday best in behavior and dress.

However, underneath those layers, you find a body of imperfect people, carnal souls, selfish motives.

## CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

But, here is the beauty of church—  
Church isn't a building, mentality, or  
expectation.

Church is a body.

Church is a group of sinners, saved by grace,  
living in fellowship as saints.

Church is a body of believers bound as  
brothers and sisters by an eternal love.

Church is a holy ground where sinners stand  
as equals before the Throne of Grace.

Church is a refuge for broken hearts and a  
training ground for mighty warriors.

Church is a converging of confrontation and  
invitation. Where sin is confronted and  
hearts are invited to seek restoration.

Church is a lesson in faith and trust.

Church is a bearer of burdens and a giver of  
hope.

Church is a family. A family coming  
together, setting aside differences, forgetting  
past mistakes, rejoicing in the smallest of  
victories.

Church, the body, and the circle of sinners-  
turned-saints, is where He resides, and if we  
ask, He is faithful to come.

So even on the hard days at church—

The days when I am at odds with a friend,  
When I've fought with my husband because  
we're late once again. When I've walked in  
bearing burdens heavier than my heart can  
handle, yet masking the pain with a smile on  
my face. When I've worn a scarlet letter,  
under the microscope. When I've longed for  
a baby to hold, or fought tears as the lyrics  
were sung. When I've walked back in, afraid  
and broken, after walking away.

I'll remember, He has never failed to meet  
me there.

Jacob Waldron



**Pastor Brenda Henry & Holly Schmidt –  
Representatives**



**Note: Andrew Sabol (Organist who  
began his career at St. Paul's) is 1<sup>st</sup> on the  
left in back row.**





## **Interview with Rev. Dr. Alexander Sumo**

written by Rev. Ryan Pusch

The Reverend Dr. Alexander Sumo recently joined the ministry leadership team of Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries in May of this year. He relocated here from his call in Columbus, Ohio, and is originally from the nation of Liberia in West Africa. We chatted on the phone about his call to ministry, his expansive work experience, and the differences between ministry in the United States and in Liberia.

When I asked him about his call, the story he told me was very interesting, and had many familiar themes of folks who are called to pastoral ministry. At first, he didn't really give it much thought because as the eldest son, he was expected to follow his father's wishes, which were that he would study medicine and become a doctor. He emphasized the strong cultural expectation in Liberia and West Africa to obey your parents' wishes. So, he started out in premed at the University of Liberia but realized after 2 years that this was not what he wanted to do with his life.

Luckily, Pastor Sumo's mother was a Sunday School teacher at St Peter's

Lutheran Church, and she sensed that her son might be called to ministry. He had already also become involved with High School Campus Ministry, had led worship for other students, and had even become the president of this student group after 2 years. He told me that the first time he led worship he read from the gospel of John 10: 10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." His mother told him that she would support him if God was calling him to seminary.

So, after 2 years Pastor Sumo switched to the African Methodist Episcopal University in Monrovia to study sociology and public administration. Then he continued his education at the Gbarnga school of Theology in Liberia, which became the United Methodist University, an ecumenical school with Methodists, Episcopalians, and Lutherans, to receive a Bachelor of Theology. It was at this point that he began his internship, and he served as a vicar for 2 years, first at the Lutheran Trinity Institute, and then, because of the Liberian Civil War, at St Matthews in Monrovia, which was a very large church with 10 different preaching points, and many thousands of members.

When Pastor Sumo was ordained in May of 2003 at the age of 29 he became the youngest ordained pastor in the Lutheran church in Liberia, since up until then the Lutheran church had only been ordaining pastors who were in their 40's! Pastor Sumo talked about how there was tension between him and his father because of his choice to become a pastor. At his ordination, his father attended, but did not stay to celebrate afterwards. It was only after 3 years of ministry, when his father was at the end of his life, that reconciliation took place. Laying on his death bed, his father spoke to the whole family about how his life had been changed by his son's call, which had reawakened his own faith. He also commended his son for his successful ministry in the church and for becoming the leader of their family.

Pastor Sumo and I talked about his extensive ministry experience in Liberia and in the United States. He was first called to continue his ministry at St Matthew's, alongside 3 other pastors on staff and 15 lay ministers. It is obvious that this experience will be helpful as he begins his new ministry with PLUM's 10 congregations. After 3.5 years, he served the Harrisburg Parish for 2 years in the suburbs of Monrovia, then when on to serve Lutheran Memorial Parish, across

the St. Paul River, for another year.

It was then that Pastor Sumo was called to Grace Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio, first as a missionary as he went through the candidacy process here with our church, the ELCA, which took another year and a half, from 2008-2010. He was then called by the Southern Ohio Synod to a mission development site in Columbus specifically to serve the community of West Africans who lived there. This community he served for 9 years, until in 2020 he was called to also serve another congregation in the area, St Luke's Lutheran Church. It was also during his ministry in Columbus that he continued his academic studies- receiving first a Master of Youth and Family Studies from Capital University in Columbus, then a Master of Sacred Theology at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, with a focus on pastoral leadership and church administration. Finally, after 5 years of study, he received his Doctor of Ministry with a focus on leadership for transformational change in 2020.

Pastor Sumo was excited to talk to me about how he will utilize these years of study in his new call with PLUM through strategies like "community mapping"-finding the resources and needs of a community and learning how churches can

become more involved in sharing and meeting those needs. He also talked about the process of revisioning and rebranding the PLUM churches to ensure their thriving Lutheran presence in the community for years to come.

This was also when we got to talking about the differences between ministry in Liberia and the United States. In Liberia, Pastor Sumo talked about how the churches are the refuge of people from the corruption and poverty of society. There are many, many people in poverty in Liberia, so people go to church for a sense of hope, freedom, security, and to find their voice. Preaching and ministry in Liberia thus was always focused on uplifting the marginalized in society and a means of liberation. Much of this contrasts with the church in the United States, which is a country of affluence, even while we struggle with radical inequalities of our own. The challenges here, Pastor Sumo said, were that people need to work or just want to find recreation on Sunday, and they don't see the church as a place where they can find their voice. Where in Liberia, the pastor is like the parent, the mother or father of a community, in the United States, the pastor is more of a role model. Key to every ministry, though, is listening and presence. This is what Pastor Sumo said he

learned most from his mother- that to learn, you must listen.

When I asked Pastor Sumo about how he will engage with topics like racial justice in his new call, he talked about the importance of getting beyond slogans (like Black Lives Matter) and social statements to practicing what we preach. Understanding that we are agents of God's grace, mercy, peace, and love to all others and all of creation. We are called to be God's voice to every community we touch, and to ensure that everyone has a seat at the table. We are called to be Jesus wherever we go. Pastor Sumo also shared with me some of his and his colleagues' frustrations with discrimination because of his West African accent. "What", he asked me, "if the missionaries that were sent from the United States or other countries to Liberia had been rejected because of their strange accents?" Pastor Sumo was adamant that all it takes is 2 Sundays of listening to his accent to become more familiar with it. We both agreed that it is of the utmost importance that the folks in our churches be willing to learn to appreciate the wonderful gift of God that comes from listening to the voice of someone from a different part of the world who wants to share with us the love of Jesus! Pastor Sumo expressed a hope that churches in the United States and elsewhere would

become more open to the leadership and participation of Liberians and West Africans in all aspects of our life together.

We thank God for sending the Reverend Dr. Sumo to our synod and to PLUM and are excited to see what the Holy Spirit will be working on through his ministry.



Join friends from PLUM and the SWPA Synod for this workshop

**Saturday, October 1, 2022**

**9:30 AM - 3:00 PM (includes lunch)**

Hope Lutheran Church  
8070 Rowan Road, Cranberry Township,  
PA, 16066

Storytelling is one of the most effective ways to influence, teach, and inspire others. Stories create connection between people and illuminate ideas. This workshop will enhance and enliven your congregation's stewardship efforts through training in the art of telling your own story and God's. Created by our synod's Stewardship & Financial Support Committee.

**Keynote Speaker: Rev. Jim Kulma**  
**"Storycraft: Listening, Crafting and Telling"**

Jim will present basic skills that help in the learning and internalization of biblical stories: visualization, word parallels, outline, and repetition. Foundations of oral tradition will be included, and ways that storytelling can be included in preaching, worship, education and caregiving.

Various workshops will be offered by leaders from our synod which focus on diverse aspects of stewardship: advocacy, financial, relational, and congregational.

**MEMBERS OF PLUM  
CONGREGATIONS  
(PLUM WILL COVER THE \$10  
REGISTRATION FEE):**

**REGISTER WITH DEANN AT  
[CHRISTLUTHDUQ@GMAIL.COM](mailto:CHRISTLUTHDUQ@GMAIL.COM)**

**BY WEDNESDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 21**