



## St. Peter's Lutheran Church

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November 15, 2022

Dear friends in Christ:

Most of us have heard the Bible story of Noah and the ark found in the book of Genesis. God told Noah to build a giant boat and fill it with two of every kind of animal. Then God sent torrential rains for forty days and forty nights, wiping away everything that was not safely esconced on the ark, or could not survive in the seas.

After the waters receded from the earth, Noah, his family, and the animals stepped off the ark into a whole new landscape. Some of them probably bounded away, relieved to finally be free of the confines of the ark. Some of them probably moved a bit more cautiously than before. Things looked familiar, but the debris of their former lives littered the ground in every direction. Everything that used to be true about their world was gone. It was now up to them to build a new world and find meaning and value and strength to go on.

It's hard work building a new world. And I've heard many of you share how tired you are right now. Not just a normal tiredness that comes from staying busy and resuming activities, but a fatigue that makes it difficult to function at the same level we previously did. Our minds and hearts and souls are still recovering from the COVID pandemic in much the same way as Noah's family needed time to process and make peace with what had happened to them.

Our world is struggling with this right now. We see so many people acting out their pain and anger and fatigue by inflicting pain on others. And when everything feels like a struggle, all of us can easily fall into sniping and attacking each other. There seems to be a spirit of disintegration in the air, something that threatens to drive us apart.

In this atmosphere, it is more important than ever that we find places where we can safely breathe in the rejuvenating oxygen of God's love, forgiveness, welcome and peace. The word for "spirit" in Greek and Hebrew is the same as the word for "breath," and St. Peter's is a place where we can breathe in God's Holy Spirit, make peace with our past, and allow the Holy Spirit to empower us to go forward. As we read in the Bible: **"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."** (Romans 5:5) *(continued on reverse)*

Our stewardship theme this year celebrates “**The Spirit of St. Peter's.**” I have seen and felt this spirit more strongly than ever throughout the past year, and I trust that you have too. Together you have continued to support St. Peter's as a place where people come to reconnect and find meaning and belonging.

This year in particular, I am proud to share that St. Peter's has responded to the needs of our community by **supporting the Verona Food Pantry** above and beyond what we have ever done before. Our building has been a **safe place for children and youth** to gather and a **lifeline for people who need help**. Our livestreamed worship service has reached further than we ever dreamed possible and given **hope and joy** to many. You have provided an oasis for people who need to experience a loving God.

**It would be impossible to do these things without your support!** This is the time of year when we invite you to reflect on what St. Peter's means to you and prayerfully consider how you might support St. Peter's in the coming year. Enclosed in this envelope is a 2023 giving card and privacy envelope. We humbly ask you to consider growing in your giving, not merely to pay the bills (although that's necessary!), but to allow us to do even more work of the Spirit in the year to come.

Once you have made your plans, please take a moment to complete the giving card, keep the stub for your records, and return it to St. Peter's or directly to Paula Bishop, our financial secretary. You can place it in the offering plate or in Paula's box any time between now and December 31. You can also email the pertinent information directly to Paula at [pbishop2344@icloud.com](mailto:pbishop2344@icloud.com) or complete the card on our website at [stpetersverona.org](http://stpetersverona.org) (under “Giving” at the top, click on “Stewardship”). Rest assured that Paula will be the only person to see your information, and that you can change your giving plan at any time during the year if your situation changes. **Why do this?** Making a giving plan empowers you to give sustainably without shame or guilt. Sharing your plan with us helps us to use your gifts wisely.

Thank you, St. Peter's, for continuing to meet the challenges of building a new world based on God's love and grace. Just as Noah and his family found that God was still with them even in the midst of great change, we continue to gather and give thanks for God's presence in human connection. Together we are the body of Christ, doing more than any one of us could ever do alone, and continuing the mission of Jesus in the world.

Together in Christ,

Pastor Katie Yahns