



St. Paul's of the Stillwater
Absarokee, Montana December 2018

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Priests who have served St. Paul's of the Stillwater

The Rev. C. Prath conducted the first service at the Congregational Church in Fishtail on Christmas Day 1961. Other priests who served in 1962 and 1963 were Revs. G. A. Gatza, R. J. Koch, E. Nechermann, and Don McKay. The Revs. J. P. Greely and R. J. Koch shared services through 1965 with occasional services by Revs. Thad Harris and James P. Crosby. Crosby and Harris shared the ministry through June 1968.

Serving from August 1968 to May 1969 was Rev. Mark Cady. Serving a week or two during the summer were George Holley, Don McKay, Ed Speare, John Crockett, Leigh Wallace, and Harry L. Howard. Beginning in September 1972, J. Welch served through January 1974. John Crockett started in February 1974 and served through September 1976. C. W. Graves began in October 1974 and was there through April 1978. Then Clark Irving was ordained and served through May 1981.

Beginning on January 8, 1982, Gary Neely served through May 1982. Then Clark Irving started to serve again. Gary Neely and Clark Irving shared serving through 1985. Some Morning Prayer was led by LEMs. In 1985, Clark Irving also served with Priscilla Inman. Ron Lytle served once in November 1986, and The Rev. Ramon Eldebo from Sweden served on October 24, 1987. In 1988, Priscilla Inman married and became Priscilla Bell.

In 1990, Joe E. Galligan started serving in a cluster that included Clark Irving. Galligan now lives in Wyoming. Beginning in March 1997, Father Mike Morrison was the main priest. Father Randy Pendergraft began in 2000 in rotation with Clark Irving, and Mike Morrissy in a cluster of churches that shared among Absarokee, Red Lodge, Joliet, and Laurel. In March 2002, Marietta Johnson was ordained and started serving in the rotation. Joan Yetter started to serve in 2003 and was part of the rotation when Father Morrissy left. She was the primary server for some years.

Upcoming Services

Dec. 2 – 11 am – Holy Eucharist
The Rev. Robert Leaverton
LEM – Jeanine Lee

Dec. 23 – 5 pm – Blue Christmas
Father Randy Pendergraft
LEM – Jeanine Lee
Lector – Various persons from the community

This will be the last service conducted at St. Paul's of the Stillwater.

The Rev. Jane Schomoetzer came in July 2006 and was the only priest until August 2010. After that time, there were supply priests: David Fos, Ron Lytle, M.C. Garthie, Richard Hardel (a retired Lutheran minister), Warren Murphy from Wyoming, Gretchen Rehberg (the present Bishop of Eastern Washington), Georgina Clark, Gary Waddingham, Robert Leaverton (another retired Lutheran minister), and Randy Pendergraft.

All Saints Sunday Sermon – The Rev. Robert Leaverton

Welcome to this All Saints Sunday here at St. Paul's of the Stillwater Episcopal Church. Today we gather together to honor the saints who have gone before us, who are gathered at the table of the feast that has no end, sharing the glory of God. I am sure you can recall many who have gone before us from this congregation, as well as friends and family who are no longer with us.

The text from Isaiah and the one from Revelations are texts which I have often used at funerals. These are beautiful, heartfelt texts which proclaim the hope of a new world and a new life in it. Yet as people of God, called to build up the Body of Christ, we have the potential to help bring about this new reality of heaven on earth. As Christians this is our calling, our vocation. We are hopeful, positive, constructive builders. Because Jesus promises to be with us in this endeavor.

Yet there are times when we may feel all our efforts have come to naught. The last I was with you, after worship you had a congregational meeting, and you shared a hard decision you had come to regarding this congregation – a decision to close at the end of the year. Yes, the realization of this decision is indeed sad, and we mourn what will be loss in our lives of weekly worship here at St. Paul's of the Stillwater. Yet we grieve with many congregations in our world who come to such a decision. And we may wonder, did God abandon us? Is this God's will for us? As Paul would say: "by no means."

In our gospel lesson from John, Jesus shows how the dead can be brought to life and given a new purpose by the gathered community. Lazarus indeed has been dead four days, and Jesus brings him back from the grave to life.

But the job was not complete – the community had work to do. Jesus gives the command to the people gathered: "unbind him and let him go."

Those gathered had to fully liberate Lazarus. He had to be unbound to fully live into this new life. Yes, we have a calling to continue on in the work and ministry of the Church.

Yes, this congregation will close, but will we respond to Jesus' call to come out into the light and live? Will we find community which can unbind our hurt, our loss, our grief, and help us live in the ministry and mission of the Church?

The task before us to build up the Realm of God is unending, ever present. Jesus calls and bids us to come and help, come and build up God's Kingdom. There is work to be done, and as Jesus tells us the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. I don't know what your ministry will look like or be in 2019, but I do know there is work to be done and we are called to do it. Yes, we will mourn our loss, but there is work to be done and we are equipped and able as anyone else to take on this task of building up the Realm of God.

Our Prayers

We ask prayers for Joey and Gage and others serving in the armed forces.

Prayers of healing for Dick, Lisa, David, Barbara E., Barbara T. Wyatt, Nickki, Desmond, Denny, Josh, Lois, Leo, and Ken. Prayers of healing and guidance for the faithful congregants Jeanine, Marilyn, John, Lori, and Kris.

Prayers of guidance for the Diocese of Montana in its search for a new Bishop.