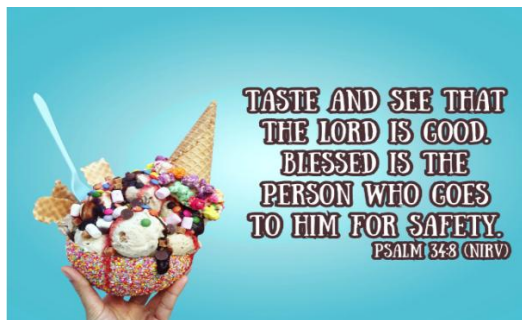




"FOR PETE'S SAKE"

St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Zurich, ON

Church Office: 519-236-4697

Interim Pastor: Rev. Stephen Gross
stephengross06@gmail.com

Treasurer: Rick Deichert
forpetestreasurer@gmail.com

September 2026 Newsletter

Pastoral Ponderings

I first want to say thank you again for the wonderful 40th Anniversary of my Ordination gathering in July. It was far more than I expected. Your gift of support (which I have experienced from early on) has continued to humble me and lift me up. It once again demonstrated the character and quality of your congregation-Thank you very, very much-from both Susan and myself.

.....

What does it take to develop and continually build and nurture a community? That question has been on my mind as we approach September, with planning in full gear for Welcome Back Sunday, among other congregational events. We have also been discussing this question at council as we look toward building a longer-term plan for the work and life of St Peter's. Congregations never stay static. People and their circumstance change, the world around changes and people may come and go-all part of the routine of all congregations. Paying attention to those changes and what is required to address them is part of the work of all members, not just the leaders of the congregation.

Where do we start?

John Westerhoff III says, in his book *Living the Faith* community reminds us that, "the church is the body of Christ...an outward and visible manifestation of an inward and spiritual reality known as grace, that communal relationship that God has with us and we have with each other.... And we who are in the image of God are intended to live in community". (pg. 13)

Community begins with us. It begins when we commit ourselves regularly to the work of the congregation. It begins when we ask ourselves how we can be

a part of continuing to create and build the congregation of St Peters, here, now and for the future.

A hymn I have never heard before was quoted with the following line. “Kindle in us love’s compassion so that everyone may see in our fellowship the promise of a new humanity”.

Dave Daubert, in his book Living Lutheran: Renewing your Congregation, states the following: “Accepting the responsibility for the church is our job.”

“The first step in renewing a congregation is for the people of the congregation (all of them preferably, but the leaders for sure) to say, this issue belongs to us. We accept the challenge of being a new church in a new day. We want to take up a life of discipleship. We want to be useful to God”. Pg 53. He also says “A renewed congregation exists for others more than for itself. It sees partnering with God as exciting and adventuresome-a change to extend God’s love to others and to meet new people who will be allies in God’s work.” pg. 18

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his Letters and Papers from prison the following succinct statement: “The church is the church only when it exists for others” pg. 382.

There are lots of different ideas about where we can build on what already exists here at St. Peter’s. And it will not be just one thing.

Council and other members are working on the planning of events that usually take place from September to December and considering other ideas as we have capacity.

Here are a couple of ideas for your consideration from my point of view.

- 1) You may recall that at the June congregational meeting Council invited the congregation to consider the idea that members supporting and caring for each other was one focus for the longer-term plan. I know that visiting and supporting each other is not always comfortable for many people. I would like to offer some training sessions focussed on members supporting members in the fall. I will put a sign-up sheet in the hall on Welcome Back Sunday if you are interested in being part of that training.
- 2) I have challenged you to consider how we might work to bring people not currently part of the work and mission of the congregation. I would be willing to offer some times of conversation about some of the ways that this can be done and what support members need to do this work. I will also have a sign-up sheet for this initiative.

I invite you to consider these opportunities.

As a last thought, Dave Daubert writes the following, “When every person in the church says the words ‘thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in

heaven' they are praying for a radical overhaul" and "Anyone you talk to will admit that God's kingdom has not yet been fulfilled". Finally, he says the following, "God is looking for allies in mission and each of us and each of our congregations has a role to play as God's dream unfolds. That role is our purpose. Mission is God's work to bless and save the world. Our purpose is our part in God's work." pgs. 31 and 39.

I invite you to ponder these thoughts. Amen. Amen

Upcoming Worship Service Dates and Locations – SEPTEMBER

August 30 - Mark Heimrich - Sanctuary - Service of the Word

Sept. 6 – Doug Klopp - Sanctuary - Service of the Word

Sept. 13 - Pastor Stephen - Communion - Parish Hall - Welcome Back Sunday - - Kids' Club (Leader: Vanessa Strike - Games and Activities for the Children)

Sept. 20 - Pastor Stephen - Sanctuary - Communion

Sept. 27 - Rick Deichert - Sanctuary - Service of the Word - Kids' Club (Leaders: Kelly and Danica Jeffrey - Music Theme)

Upcoming Events:

Sunday, September 13 - Welcome Back Sunday - First Day of Kids' Club - Lunch after church (BBQ hotdogs and ice cream sundaes will be provided). *Congregation members are asked to bring a salad, raw veggies, fruit or nibblies to add to the meal.*

Sunday, October 18 - The Exeter Ukulele group has been invited to participate in our worship service.

Sunday, November 29 - First Sunday in Advent - Fall Noon Meal after the service



St. Peter's Buzz



Michelle and Steve Haberer recently welcomed their 10th grandchild, Vera Robin Sigouin. They refer to their two granddaughters as "bookends", since the oldest, who is 19, is followed by 8 grandsons. Congratulations on your latest blessing.

Darlene & Jerry Sloat have recently moved to Stratford, but will continue their membership here until they find a new church home. They will be missed when that time comes. As usual, Jerry is growing his Santa beard for Grand Bend Christmas events. He may help with some of the parsonage repairs, and we thank him for the work he has already taken on. Their new address in Stratford is 68 Cygnet Drive, Stratford N5A 0L6.

St. Peter's Youth Bryce, Danica, and Blaire Jeffrey, along with Conway Ingram are proud members of the Bluewater Youth Tug of War team based out of Dashwood. The team trains from April through September, practicing two evenings each week for a total of three hours. Their dedication, teamwork, and hard work have given them the opportunity to compete on an international stage.

In August 2025, Bryce and Danica travelled to Heino, Netherlands, to compete in the GENSB Youth Tug of War competition. As part of the only team representing Canada, they achieved an impressive 12th-place finish out of 35 teams. GENSB stands for Germany, England, Netherlands, Switzerland, and Belgium, with youth teams from these countries coming together for this annual international competition. This year, Bryce, Danica, Blaire & Conway will have the opportunity to represent Canada, travelling to the Sins area of Switzerland to compete. After their strong 12th-place finish last year, the team is hoping to climb even higher in the standings and make their mark at this year's competition.

The opportunity to compete internationally is an exciting experience for these young athletes, but it also represents countless hours of practice, teamwork, determination, and commitment. The Jeffrey siblings and Conway are looking forward to testing themselves against some of the best youth tug of war teams from across Europe—and hopefully bringing home an even better result than last year's 12th-place finish. We wish Bryce, Danica, Blaire, and Conway the very best as they head to Switzerland and proudly represent Bluewater, St. Peter's, and Canada!

Correspondence from Council

July 12, 2026 Congregational Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to give Council the authority to move forward with parsonage renovations. The phases of the renovation and estimates were reviewed, followed by questions from the congregation. Information was shared about the difference in the value of the parsonage if sold "as is" or if it would be repaired and renovated.

No repairs - \$425,000 - \$450,000 if sold in present condition

With repairs - \$550,00 - \$575,000 or possibly as high as \$600,000 if repaired

According to Pat O'Rourke, a home with extensive renovations required is not attractive to sell and could be on the market for a long time.

A final decision about whether or not we keep or sell the parsonage cannot be made until we know who our next pastor will be. Regardless, fixing it up will be to our benefit no matter what happens down the road.

The meeting ended with a motion by Mark Heimrich; 2nd Ross Cordell.

The motion was made to authorize the Church Council to proceed with repairs to the parsonage, based on the outlined phases, as soon as sufficient money is available for each phase.

Parsonage Renovations

By the time you receive this newsletter, the parsonage will be empty and renovations will be very close to beginning. Thank you to all the St. Peter's disciples who worked very hard to clean out the parsonage and prepare it for renos! We are very grateful for each one of you!! The first stage of filling holes, repairing drywall etc. should soon be underway or in process by Brad Holmes. The next phase will be painting by Dave Heimrich, and as soon as there is enough money to pay for that phase, it will begin.

Donations are coming in, a little more slowly than we had hoped, but they are arriving. We are saving approximately \$5,500 per month without a fulltime pastor right now and that is helping us to pay all of our bills and save up money, some of which will be used for renovations. This is a big project for a small church community, but I know we can make it happen! You may donate with a cheque or by sending an e-transfer to our treasurer, Rick Deichert, at forpetestreasurer@gmail.com At the printing time of this newsletter, Rick reports that \$15,145 has specifically been given toward renovations. Thank you to all who have already donated! We are thankful for each and every gift toward this project. Please prayerfully consider how you can continue to help out as this undertaking proceeds over the next number of months.

Congregational Mission Profile Document

Thank you for your feedback to the four questions for which we requested your input recently. The next step is final approval of the completed document by council at their September 8 Council meeting. Shortly after that, this information will be sent to Synod in order for the call process to officially begin, and for the Call Committee to begin their work.

St. Peter's Buzz

Linda Bluhm has agreed to write this part of the newsletter each month. She is hoping you will reach out to her with milestone birthdays, anniversaries, sports' schedules, activities in which members are involved etc. so we can get to know each other better. Please put "St. Peter's News" in the subject line of an email so she doesn't miss your message in her junk mail. Linda's contact information is:

519-504-1325

llbluhm@hotmail.com

Coffee Hour

Susan Deichert has put a sign-up sheet for Coffee Hour, from September to December, on the long table inside the entrance to the parish hall. Please sign up on a Sunday you know you are available. Susan will fill in the blanks after members have had some time to sign up. Once the list is finalized, it will be on the bulletin board outside the offices. If something comes up on your Sunday, please switch with someone else on the list. Coffee Hour doesn't need to be anything fancy. The most important part of this time together after church is to connect with our church family and enjoy each other's company.

Welcome Back Sunday

Sunday, September 13 is the Sunday we welcome back our children and families to the beginning of Kids' Club for another year. The children will be in attendance during the service until the Children's Message and will then be dismissed to Kids' Club for activities planned by their leaders. After church, there will be barbecued hotdogs served. Congregation members are asked to bring something to accompany the hotdogs (a salad, raw veggies, fruit, or nibblies) and then we will end the meal with a Sundae Sunday for dessert (sundaes with all the yummy toppings). We look forward to seeing everyone who can attend on Welcome Back Sunday!

Disciples Needed

We are very happy to have an active Kids' Club at St. Peter's. It appears they will have enough regular leaders and special activities/events leaders to be able to continue meeting two Sundays per month, which is wonderful! This means we need help planning for Children's Messages during the service, prior to Kids' Club, two Sundays per month. At the present time, there are only three of us (Jenni, Cathy and myself) willing to plan Children's messages, which isn't sustainable from September to June. Please let me know if you can help, or if you know of someone in the

congregation who would participate in this important ministry for our children. Resources are available at the church and online.

We are looking for some help cleaning at the parsonage after the drywall repairs and sanding are done and prior to painting. We will need to vacuum, dust all surfaces and wash the trim and doors in order to get the best paint job. Please speak with Laurie if you think you could help.

If you are able to help decorate and/or provide some decorations for the sanctuary for Thanksgiving, please reach out to Diane Klopp or Christa Ihrig. They are looking for disciples to help them prepare the church for the Thanksgiving service on October 12.

THANK YOU!!

There are so many of you who have stepped up and continue to answer the requests to take on a more active role in the life of St. Peter's. These requests will continue as we find new ways to serve others, and work to develop and strengthen our relationships as members of this faith community. Attendance on Sunday mornings throughout the summer months is up from the last few years, and your support of our Lay Leaders and Pastor Stephen each Sunday, through your presence in church and words of encouragement, are very much appreciated! In the absence of a full-time pastor, many responsibilities fall upon your Council, and we are SO VERY GRATEFUL for all the support you show us as we, along with all of the disciples at St. Peter's, complete the tasks that need to be done. We are SO blessed to be members of this church!!

Laurie Erb
Council Chairperson
forpeteschair@gmail.com
519-870-5928