

Bethel Lutheran Banner



*"... making disciples for Jesus Christ in
our church, neighborhood and world..."*

WINTER 2018

ANSWERS

A look at some foundational truths about God and His infallible Word



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The Banner is published quarterly by Bethel Lutheran church, a member of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

staff

Rev. Andrew Prin
Senior Pastor

Rev. Lusienie Fofana
Assistant Pastor

Anna Zimmerman
Director of Discipleship & Outreach

Alaina Gall
Ministry Coordinator

Mike Lange
Bookkeeper

Dr. Max Radloff
Organist

Faye Hayhurst
Handbells Choir Director

www.bethelstpaul.com

bhc@bethelstpaul.com

670 W Wheelock Pkwy
Saint Paul, MN 55117

651-300-2642

God's Word: Foundation of Truth

By Pastor Lusienie Fofana

How remarkable that the God of the Universe would actually want to communicate with us! We are creatures of a physical world to which we relate through our five senses. God almighty is a spiritual being. In our physical state we cannot see Him, or touch Him, so how can He communicate with us? Through the Bible.

Centuries ago, God the Father inspired numbers of people to write down what He felt we needed to know about Him, and how He expects us to live. These writings have been collected into what we call the Holy Bible – holy because it contains the sacred words of almighty God. In a miraculous way, the Bible speaks to each of us. Its truths apply across generation, across cultures, and across all life experience.

When it comes to reading the Bible, most of us read just enough to get by. We miss much that God's Word has to offer. Brothers and sisters in Christ, today I encourage you to read God's Word daily so you can thoroughly understand all God wants you to know.

2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right."

As Christians, we build our lives on the truth of God's Word. It has power to transform your life today. Amen.

Attributes of God: More than just words

By Alaina Gall

Attribute: a quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something.

One of the most encouraging biblical topics to study is the attributes of God. Scripture is full of declarations of who God is, and the revelation of His character through His deeds and interaction with people and creation. Not only does naming God's attributes elevate our worship and our delight in Him, but it can provide comfort and strengthen our faith during difficult seasons of life. It is good for us to ask, "Who is this God we trust in? Who do we worship and follow?" We find the answers to these questions in God's Word, and in faith we believe it is truth.

But it isn't enough just to be able to name God's attributes. Faith also recognizes His attributes at work in our everyday lives – his goodness, faithfulness, mercy, lordship, and love on display every moment. It's easy to acknowledge God's goodness when our lives are filled with happiness and peace; but what about the times of struggle – sickness, depression, sadness, fear, poverty? Do we see His goodness and faithfulness then? When wicked people "get away with" their wickedness – do we question God's justice and power? When burdened with a sense of guilt or shame, do we doubt His forgiveness and love?

We all struggle with doubt and hardness of heart. Be honest with yourself and God about your struggles; it's good for us to admit our doubt, to question and wrestle with the truth, to not pretend everything is fine in the spiritual department. But in the end, faith says, "This is a hard thing to accept, Lord, but I believe what you tell me in Your Word."

Go to God's Word; recall who God is and what He has done for us. Look for His attributes, and in faith believe them to be true – true not only in the abstract, but in a deep, personal way that genuinely speaks to our identity and circumstances. As we come to know and experience the inherent qualities of our Creator, let us pray that God will use His attributes to increase our faith and joy in Him.

The God Who Sees: How Do We Know God Exists?

By Anna Zimmerman, DDO

What is it about this world or this life that is undeniable proof to you that God exists? Is it the way the birds greet the morning with their sweet song? Is it the masterpiece of a sunset that leaves you in awe before turning in for a restful night's sleep? Or maybe it's the kindness and good you see in this earth, or the miracles that you hear about or are lucky enough to witness first hand. Whatever the proof to you may be, faith is at the heart of all this. You have faith that God created this beautiful earth, full of singing birds and sunsets and peaceful nights. And while they seem rare, you have faith that God performs miracles. But what about when your faith feels low, or smaller than that of the mustard seed Christ describes as being able to move mountains?

I can't imagine that Hagar was feeling oodles of love after Sarai and Abram used her, fired her, then cast her out to the wilderness with her unborn child. Check out this story in Genesis 16! Even when this woman was in their good graces, they didn't bother to call her by her first name. They simply called her "servant". Of all the things that we can imagine she felt, I'm sure loneliness and abandonment were pretty high up there. If I were her, the last thing I might have expected was a visit from God. She wasn't looking for God at this point. Rather, God was looking for her.

Take a minute to soak that in: *God was looking for her.*

God came directly to this woman in her lowest state. When she was abandoned, lonely, and cast aside, "God found her". He even gave her a promise (which we learn later was definitely fulfilled) that her offspring would be multiplied through the child she was carrying. And what does the Lord tell her to name the child? "You shall call Him Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction."

Not only does God give Hagar a name for her child, but Hagar does something unrivalled in scripture: she named Him. *El Roi. "The God Who Sees."*

He sees us when nobody else cares to see. He sees our hurt, our loneliness, and our shame. He seeks us out, finds us, and promises us life in Him.

How can we know that God exists? Dear brothers and sisters, remember this: our faith moves mountains when it is just the size of a mustard seed. Personally, I have never seen anyone move a mountain. Consider this: ALL of our faith walks are smaller than a mustard seed. Why does this bring us hope? Regardless of our lack of faith, God still seeks us. The birds, sunsets, and miracles are all awesome and point to His existence, but nothing proves it more than His personal touch in your life. *El Roi. God sees you.*

The Trinity

By Pastor Andrew Prin

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12) [NIV]

Take a moment and recall the image of a most memorable sunset you have seen. Got the image in mind? Good.

Now try to put that image into words.

Try to capture: the colors; the surroundings; the clouds (or, lack thereof) in the sky. Try to capture the grandeur, the majesty...the feelings you were experiencing. Not that easy to do, is it?!

Then, think about this – did you snap a photo of that sunset? And, when looking at that photo – does it do that sunset justice in recapturing what you experienced? Probably not, right? And, that leads us to a most important truth...

...sometimes, things we experience defy being summed up by words.

To the degree that is true for sunsets – it is even more true in trying to describe our God.

In Exodus, when Moses asks what God's name is – He replies by saying: "*I am who I am.*" (3:14) Hardly a name that help us pin down who God is! Yet, through the same Scriptures in which God has blessed us and shared with us who He is – we are told that He is: the Heavenly Father; He is the Son and He is the Holy Spirit.

But, how do we understand the relationship...the connection between the Father, Son and Spirit – this relationship we call the "Trinity?"

Over the years, we have certainly tried. And, we have often resorted to using images we can relate to, wrap our minds around and understand.

And so, we've described this Trinity relationship using the image of h2o.

Water can – in any given moment – be a: solid (ice); liquid (water); or, gas (steam). And, we therefore have tried to say THAT image helps us understand this relationship.

But, there's a PROBLEM with that illustration. It's not QUITE accurate.

And, illustrations – things we say about God, Jesus and the Spirit that are not quite accurate...we have a word for in the Christian faith. We call these inaccuracies...

...heresy.

In the case of the water metaphor, that particular heresy is called "Modalism."

For some, the word "heresy" is almost a fighting word; it quickly puts a person on the defensive. But, in its finest sense, calling something a "heresy" isn't intended to put down an illustration (or, the person using it.) It's simply intended to describe what is. And, when a person or illustration fails to accurately and biblically describe something about God, Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit – we need to call that for what it is...namely, it's inaccurate.

So, what CAN we say – accurately – about the relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit? Enter...the CREEDS.

Since the earliest days of the Christian Church, we have been immeasurably blessed to have had three statements of Christian faith – which as accurately as we can articulate – faithfully describe the relationship between God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds have consistently kept us as accurate as humanly possible in terms of both understanding and speaking about the Trinity. Arguably, the Athanasian Creed speaks most clearly, concisely and eloquently to this Trinitarian relationship, when it notes that the true Christian faith is this:

"... that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance. For the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Holy Spirit is another. But the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal."

Much as we have tried to both understand and articulate the Trinity and much as our attempted metaphors have slipped into heresy (because they end up being inaccurate) – the Creeds have stood the test of time in giving us language and imagery which IS faithful and biblically accurate.

Is the language and imagery of the Creeds always easy to understand?

No – because what the Creeds have undertaken to do is like our efforts to describe a sunset we've witnessed. In short, the Creeds have biblically and as faithfully as humanly possible put into words Him who is beyond words (but, who IS the very Word). Get it? :)

Martin Luther agreed that any effort on our part to fully describe the Father, Son and Spirit comes up short. In a sermon he once gave, he noted:

"To be sure, it is not very good German and does not sound well to designate God by the word Dreifaltigkeit (threefoldness). Even the Latin Trinitas does not sound very well. But since we have nothing better, we must speak as we can. For, as I have said, this article is so high above human understanding and language that God, as Father, will have to excuse the stammering and lisping of His children when we do the best that we can, if only that which we believe is pure and right."¹

Stammering. That's essentially what we are left doing, when we try to describe a sunset. And, that's definitely what we're left doing, when we try to describe the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So, we cling to the gifts our Trinitarian God has given us in this imperfect place – His Scriptures and the Creeds.

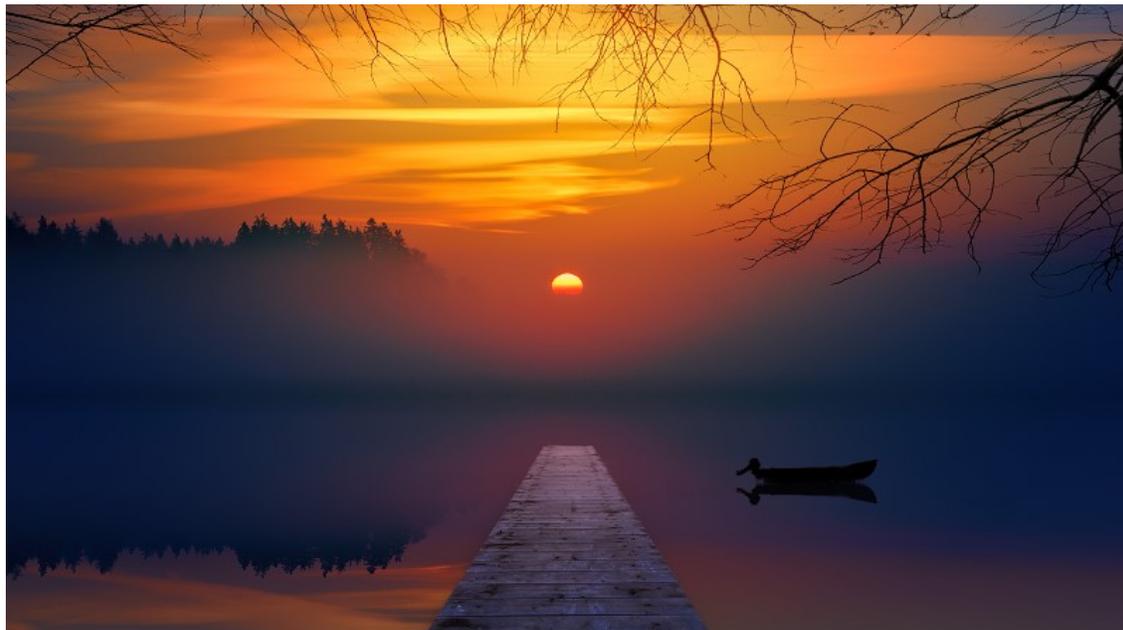
And, we wrestle with and relish the language they use to describe the "persons" of the Trinity. At the end of the day, what are we left to do then when it comes to the Trinity?

Like a sunset, we are simply left to stand in awe...to relish and appreciate everything He has done for us!

The Lord be with you.

Pastor Prin

¹ *What Luther Said*, Vol. 3, pp. 1381-1382



Bethel Lutheran Church... a Neighbor's Perspective

By Mike Ireland, board member
District 10 Como Community Council

In my experience most churches are dedicated to compassionate care for their congregation. Many churches are effective in responding to God's call to the ministry of those in need locally, nationally and throughout the world. Yet, fewer churches participate in the life of the community in which their physical church resides. Even if it is part of a mission statement, highlighted on their web site or included in newsletters, reaching out to a church's closest neighbors and simply being a good neighbor is too often too easily overlooked.

I am a board member of the District 10 Como Community Council that serves the neighborhood where Bethel Lutheran Church is located. I won't digress into an explanation of St. Paul's district council structure (feel free to contact me if you are interested in a short explanation) but one of my personal passions as a board member is to make meaningful connections, build effective relationships and strengthen these associations. I had not contacted Bethel Lutheran Church when Rich Gall reached out to me and conveyed that in conjunction to calling a new pastor, this was also an opportunity for you to refocus on becoming more involved and energetically contributing to our neighborhood. I have been incredibly inspired and encouraged by your church's commitment and tangible outcomes with inclusively integrating into our community, building mutually beneficial partnerships and together sharing our journey in life.

Thanks to the welcoming presence and active efforts of Pastor Prin, Anna Zimmerman, Rich Gall and other members of your congregation, the neighbors and Como community are increasingly gaining a better awareness of Bethel Lutheran Church and its enthusiasm to open its doors in a sincere extension of hospitality. For example, your church has offered meeting space to the community, inviting neighbors to your National Night Out and Trunk-or-Treat gatherings, hosting events as such the environmental symposium in September, partnering with the Capital Region Watershed District and a master water steward to install a rain garden and offering to host other upcoming community events.

Personally the most meaningful outreach you have undertaken is the Living Nativity event. Previously, I have attended several of the outdoor performances and was impressed with the number of people who attended, how thoughtfully it was planned (bleachers, fire pits, animals, lighting and sound amplification) and the message that was earnestly executed. For this year's Living Nativity, I was asked to participate as a Roman census taker in the Bethlehem Walk. It was an honor and privilege to be part of your holiday tradition and it reinforced to me your genuine commitment to community engagement. It truly touched me and was the notable highlight of my holiday season.

I give monthly updates at the Como Community Council board meetings and Environmental committee meetings on Bethel Lutheran Church's community outreach efforts. At these meetings, our people throughout the district become more attentive to your passion to actively participate in positively contributing in our community. With each undertaking, you progressively build upon being this active presence and strengthening the bond with our neighbors and wider community. The Como neighborhood is blessed to have organizations, such as Bethel Lutheran Church, who share in our daily lives and continually collaborate toward improving our collective community.

Thank you for caring enough to take the time and make the effort to be a wonderful neighbor and meaningful member of our Como community.

Mike Ireland
ireland.district10@gmail.com

Here's What's Happening at Bethel

WHAT'S HAPPENED

Work Day: We had our fall cleanup around Bethel on October 28. Despite the snow, which impeded some of the outside tasks, many jobs inside the church were completed. These included cleaning the sanctuary carpet and pews, cleaning the lounge carpet and chairs, and painting in one of the downstairs rooms used by the daycare. Many of the Karen youth who attend St. John's (meeting at Bethel on Sunday afternoons) pitched in and really made the work go faster! Another big project for the work day was cleaning the Maywood House; many hands made light work of the scrubbing, sweeping, mopping, and organizing that was needed.

Trunk-n-Treat: This was our 3rd annual Trunk n' Treat at Bethel. On October 31 several Bethel families decorated their vehicles, parked in the church parking lot, and handed out candy to neighborhood trick-or-treaters. A fire pit and hotdogs provided additional opportunity to mingle with neighbors.

Reformation Sunday/5th Sunday Celebration: On October 29 we celebrated the milestone 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. In addition to special music and a joint worship service with our Liberian brothers and sisters, we enjoyed a German-themed potluck following the service.

Maywood House Neighbors: After hearing about a missionary family in need of emergency housing, Bethel leadership led the charge in offering up the Maywood House, procuring furniture donations, and making the house habitable. The Wagners, who serve with Lutheran Bible Translators, are now making great use of the space as they take a medical leave and serve on home assignment. So many Bethel members, as well as people outside of Bethel, volunteered time, donated items, and gave money to this effort! It was an encouragement to see the body of Christ in action, caring for one another.

Living Nativity: Our 5th annual presentation of the Christmas story with live actors took place on Saturday, December 16. This event included 4 showings of the skit (focusing on the angel's announcement to the shepherds); live animals; and a Bethlehem Walk marketplace to make purchases from local artisans and vendors, as well as enjoy free refreshments and family-friendly activities. Many Bethel members poured lots of time and energy into this event, and many were on hand that day to present the skit, greet visitors, serve refreshments, and help in the kitchen. Many thanks go out to all these people for helping with this outreach!

Advent and Christmas: Bethel enjoyed Sunday and mid-week services throughout Advent, culminating in two Christmas Eve services. The first one featured lessons and carols and special music; the second one included Holy Communion and the lighting of candles for the concluding song, "Silent Night." Another highlight of the Advent season was the **Sunday School Christmas Program**, which featured the skit "Not Sold in Stores," and emphasized the message that God's greatest gifts to us are not always tangible things, but they can be shared in a tangible way. The Sunday school kids led the congregation in a number of carols as well.

WHAT'S IN PROGRESS

ESL Program: Anna Zimmerman is heading up this program to help members of St. John's (who worship on Sunday afternoons at Bethel) learn and improve their English. Members of Bethel are helping as tutors, and even Bethel youth are involved as they join the Homework Night on Wednesdays, assisting St. John's youth with English-related questions in their homework.

"The Journey" Youth Ministry: This ministry encompasses Confirmation and High School ministry. It's an engaging way for Bethel's youth to pair faith with contemporary experiences, with the aim that they stay firm in their faith through and beyond high school.

Bible Bowl: Practices are underway for the students who are participating in Bible Bowl. They are studying Genesis, and the competition will take place in April.

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN

Ash Wednesday and Lent: Our Ash Wednesday service will be February 14. Midweek Lenten services continue on Wednesday evenings through March 21. Stay tuned for information on special Holy Week services leading up to Easter.

Bethel Ski Retreat: The annual ski retreat will be Friday, March 2, at Wild Mountain. The retreat includes skiing, supper, and a time of worship and devotions. For cost and other information, email the office or talk to RJ Zimmerman.

Membership Changes: Deaths, Transfers, New Members

Deaths:

The following members passed into the presence of Christ. We grieve with their loved ones, but rejoice they are with their God and Savior!

Dick Nitz, Gladys Parpart

Memorial Gifts:

Bethel has been blessed with generous memorial gifts in honor of and from the family of:

Dick Nitz, Gladys Parpart

From the Office

It's such a blessing to work with a congregation who is generous with money, time and talents. Many thanks to those who responded to special giving opportunities, such as the Giving Tree at Christmas, and donations for blessing bags. Thank you also to those who gave extra time for outreach and service at church, in particular the Living Nativity, and putting up/taking down Christmas decorations. These things would not happen without you! Thank you for blessing so many. — Alaina

Office Hours:

Monday –Tuesday: 8:30-12:30; Wednesday-Thursday: 8:30-1:30

We're looking for Meals on Wheels volunteers!

Volunteers from Bethel deliver meals each Monday of the month; each volunteer commits to one time per month at a St. Paul-area apartment complex.

Please call or email the office if you are willing to join the team, or would like more information about this opportunity. I will put you in touch with Karen Bade, who coordinates the Bethel volunteers for Meals on Wheels.

Check us out on Facebook!
Photos, video, daily encouragement, and more!
facebook.com/blcstpaul

Bulletin and E—News
Announcements are due by
Wednesday of each week.

GodSpeak
to you through you



Bethel Lutheran reads the Bible as a congregation. We call it **GodSpeak: God speaks to you** through His Word and **God speaks through you** to others.

GodSpeak Groups



Tuesday:

7:30 am 2nd & 4th of the month at Suzie Norris' (1276 Dayton Ave)

Leaders: Bob Holst (651-645-7454) & Suzie Norris (651-645-3811)

10 am at Bethel in the Fellowship Hall — Leader: Andrew Prin (612-868-0927)

Wednesday:

6:30 am at Neighborhood Cafe — Leader: RJ Zimmerman (218-390-8736)

6 pm (African) (Rotates homes each week) — Leader: Lusienie Fofana (651-216-9242)

7 pm (Women's study) Bethel Conference room — Leader: Anna Zimmerman (586-746-7611)

7:15 pm at Rustads' (1105 Montana Ave W) — Leaders: Dave & Lynne Rustad (651-489-6834) & Jeff Bartels (651-489-0903)

Service



February

Pew Servicing

Karen Bade

Counting Team #1 Dave Stueber,
Karita Wienke

Meals on Wheels Delivery

2/5: Bob Holst

2/12: Dave Stueber

2/19: Dave Stueber

2/26: Karen Bade & Sue Norris

NOTE: There will be no February
Banner mailing.

March

Pew Servicing

Carolyn Weber

Counting Team #3

Jim Nash, Sharon Bartels, Tim
Schmalz

Meals on Wheels Delivery

3/5: Bob Holst

3/12: Dave Stueber

3/19: Dave Stueber

3/26: Karen Bade & Sue Norris

NOTE: There will be no March Ban-
ner mailing.

April

Pew Servicing

Betty Paulus

Counting Team #2 Karen Bade, Don
& Carolyn Weber

Meals on Wheels Delivery

4/2 Bob Holst

4/9: Dave Stueber

4/16: Dave Stueber

4/23: Karen Bade & Sue Norris

4/30: Karen Bade & Sharon Bartels

Banner Assembling: Thurs, Apr 25

Nancy Johnston, Betty Paulus



Do you have a knack for technology? Looking for a way to get involved at Bethel? Join our Audio/ Visual team and help run slides and do sound for Sunday morning worship. It's easy to learn! Talk to Sean Boll or Alaina Gall.

Sunday Serving Schedule

Date	Worship Team	Children's Message	Acolyte	A/V	Coffee Hour
Feb-04	STJ	Cara Wilson	Quenby Wilson	Sean Boll	Sean & Susan Boll
				Caleb Boll	Karen Bade
Feb-11	PHPH	Jeff Bartels	Zander Gall	Brian Ruis	Mary Hubert
				Haven Ruis	Rich & Alaina Gall
Feb-18	1 Tim	Mark Meier	Caitlyn Murray	Alaina Gall	Bonnie Renner
				Zander Gall	Faye Hayhurst
Feb-25	S&R	Anna Zimmerman	Jack Prin	David Pieper	Mark & Sarah Meier
				Alex Head	Paul & Cara Wilson
Mar-04	STJ	Pastor Prin	Cameron Collister	Sean Boll	John Collister & Cris Hartnett
				Eli Sorenson	Steve & Melissa Sorenson
Mar-11	PHPH	Jeff Bartels	Darin Hagen	RJ Zimmerman	Jeff & Sharon Bartels
				Mikayla Head	Dave & Ruth Bittner
Mar-18	1 Tim	Mark Meier	Anna Boll	Sean Boll	Becky Luger
				Alex Head	Paul & Jean Beckman
Mar-25	S&R	Anna Zimmerman	Caleb Boll	Brian Ruis	Dave & Karin Hagen
				Haven Ruis	Mike & Kirsten Head
Apr-01	STJ	Cara Wilson	Quenby Wilson	Alaina Gall	Easter
				Zander Gall	
Apr-08	PHPH	Jeff Bartels	Caitlyn Murray	David Pieper	Cindy Pohl
				Caleb Boll	Dorothy Jorgensen
Apr-15	1 Tim	Pastor Prin	Mikayla Head	Sean Boll	Bob & Lynne Holst
				Mikayla Head	Suzie Norris
Apr-22	S&R	Mark Meier	Eli Sorenson	RJ Zimmerman	Brian & Jodi Ruis
				Eli Sorenson	Rosemary Prin
Apr-29	STJ	Cara Wilson	Zander Gall	Brian Ruis	5th Sunday Celebration
				Haven Ruis	

670 W Wheelock Parkway
Saint Paul MN 55117



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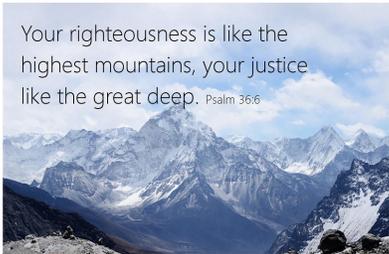
670 W WHEELOCK PARKWAY

SAINT PAUL MN 55117

651-300-2642

blc@bethelstpaul.com

bethelstpaul.com



Your righteousness is like the
highest mountains, your justice
like the great deep. Psalm 36:6

Sunday Morning Worship 9:30 am
Sunday Morning Bible Hour 11:00 am
Sunday Morning African Worship 11:00 am
GodSpeak Midweek Bible Groups (See page 9)
Tuesday Morning Prayer 9:30 am

