

Living Waters

January 2024

A Year of Grace

Pastor Zak

Ahhh...a new year and with it a moment filled with endless potential. Perhaps this is the year I stick to my resolution of reading more. Possibly 2024 is the time for me to stick to that workout regiment I've thought about from the comfort of my couch the past few months. Maybe this is my chance to finally pick up the guitar once more to pursue my music career. Honestly, it's highly unlikely that any of these aforementioned "resolutions" make it past February, but a pastor can dream! So often this time of year is defined by making resolutions to help improve oneself mentally, physically, spiritually or emotionally. This is an admirable annual endeavor, but I have learned that I need to allow for grace in this process. Rather than get upset at myself for failing to stick with a new regimen, perhaps I need to allow myself grace to appreciate that I tried something new in the first place. The grace to see that no matter how much I improve myself or create a "new me", I will never be perfect. Maybe I need the grace to remind myself that I am already enough because of Christ, and that while it is always good to try something new, that in Jesus, God is already *"making all things new"* (Rev. 21:5). In this new year my resolution is to live out grace more fully, not just for myself, but for others as well. May your new year be filled with health, happiness and grace!



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Lenten Season at St. Paul

Soon we will be entering into the Lenten season as we prepare ourselves for Easter. Join us for all the activities of this season:

On Ash Wednesday, February 14th, we will gather for worship services at Noon and 7pm. There will be a Soup Supper hosted by the Youth at 5:30pm in the Cafe. Ashes-to-Go will be offered by Pastor Zak outside of Door #2 from 7:30am-9:30am.

Weekly Soup Suppers will take place every Wednesday during Lent from 5:30pm to 6:15pm in the Cafe. Please sign-up [HERE](#) if you would like to share a soup, and additional soup is always welcome. Following the supper, we will gather for candlelit Holden Evening Prayer in the sanctuary. This brief worship service will provide space for song, silence, and reflection.

Mark your calendars for Maundy Thursday on March 28th as we gather for Dinner Church hosted by Vicar Katie as part of her internship project. See Vicar Katie's article in this newsletter for more details.

Worship Information

In Person

Sundays

Worship in the sanctuary at 8am and 10am.

Online/Livestream

Watch the service live on [YouTube](#), or anytime after that!

Altar Flowers Sign-Up

Sign up now using our [digital sign-up](#)! Two bouquet slots available for each Sunday; each bouquet is \$30.

Congregational Life...

Listening Softly by Vicar Katie

I've gone long stretches of my life struggling to feel heard. Since I was a young child, all I've wanted is to feel understood. I found myself in many-a situation anxious and overwhelmed by the feeling that my thoughts did not matter.

One of the deepest human desires we have is to be understood. I think of Psalm 130 that comes to me with its plea, "Out of the depths I cry out to you God! Hear my prayer!" We long to be known, to see and to be seen. For many, this isn't a reality in their daily lives for varying reasons: isolation, marginalization, or seasons of change. When I'm struggling in one of these isolating seasons, I turn to the words of the writer and visionary Audre Lorde.

I love this image of two people coming to sit at the base of a tree to share silence. Care is exchanged not through words or solutions, but through presence. We must try to exercise that same presence in our daily lives. I think back to a younger Katie, who just needed someone to sit with her under a tree and listen to what she had to say, non-judgmentally and with deep care. I pray you receive the same understanding and can practice offering it to others.

"If You Come Softy" by Audre Lorde

If you come as softly
As the wind within the trees
You may hear what I hear
See what sorrow sees.
If you come as lightly
As threading dew
I will take you gladly
Nor ask more of you.
You may sit beside me
Silent as a breath
Only those who stay dead
Shall remember death.
And if you come I will be silent
Nor speak harsh words to you.
I will not ask you why now.
Or how, or what you do.
We shall sit here, softly
Beneath two different years
And the rich between us
Shall drink our tears.

Book Club

Book club will not be meeting in January.

You are invited to join St. Paul's Book Club on in February on Monday, February 5 at 7 PM in the Cafe area to discuss *Paradise Falls: The True Story of an Environmental Catastrophe* by Keith O'Brien. The book is the telling of a group of mothers who discovered poisonous chemicals were leaching into the surface of their community. Their work to save the Love Canal area was the springboard for the environmental movement.

Wine, Women & the Word

Women, Wine and the Word will be gathering a week later in January due to the holiday. We will meet on **Tues Jan 9th** at the home of Judy Nuehring at 7 pm. We will be discussing *Finding Your Why* pg 76.

Hands & Feet

Hands and Feet will be open on Sun. Jan 7th from 2-4 pm. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Judy as we will be creating the 2024 schedule in January. All are welcome and invited to serve.

Under 105

The Under 105 Lunch planning group is meeting Wednesday, January 10th, in the Cafe at 1:00pm.

Anyone interested in planning Feb-May lunch menus should attend. If you have questions please contact [Joelle Soefker](#).



...and More!



Stewardship Spotlight

Although winter walks can be chilly, there is a special peace and closeness to creation at this time of the year when walking in the woods, forest preserves or even a nearby park. Bundle up and as a family take a walk together and just listen.

It's always best to not feed wild animals "human" food, but scattering some seeds, nuts, or rolled oats is a way of sharing what we have with God's creatures. Enjoy the quietness of the season as we celebrate the birth of Christ.

Church Event Photos

St. Paul loves to post pictures of events and we need your help! If you attend an event or special service and have pictures you can share please send them to Liz in the church office or to office@stpaulvp.org. Thank you for your help!

November Numbers

Giving: \$40,440 (including online: \$28,291)
Expenses: \$43,527
YTD Giving vs. Expenses: \$3,512

Other Statistics

Date	Attendance	Viewers
11/5	162	49
11/12	145	48
11/19	174	32
11/26	152	47

Adult Education Opportunities

The new year brings new learning opportunities! The classes listed below will be starting (or continuing) in 2024. For dates and time please reference the church calendar.

Being RIC

Embark on a transformative four-week Adult Education study this winter, from January to February 2024, exploring the historical roots of Reconciling in Christ (RIC) in the ELCA. This course delves into the connections between RIC's past and the contemporary experiences of queer and other marginalized communities within the church. Through discussions and reflections, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and successes of the RIC movement, while fostering a supportive environment for questions and collective learning. Join us in contemplating how we can actively live into our identity as an RIC church, shaping a more inclusive and compassionate community together.

By Heart: Luther's Small Catechism

Conclude our enriching Small Catechism Adult Education study in February 2024 with a focused exploration of the sacraments and Luther's profound insights. Delve into Luther's perspective on sacraments as divine gifts bestowed upon us on earth, discovering the depth of theological understanding he imparted. Through thoughtful discussions, we will reflect on how our sacramental practices embody and resonate with this Lutheran theology. Join us in this concluding session as we deepen our appreciation for the sacraments and their integral role in our faith journey.

Lutheran Worship Class

Start an Adult Education course at St. Paul Lutheran Church in the spring of 2024 to discover the special relationships that exist between Lutheranism and our liturgy. Discover the unique components that form our Lutheran worship and explore the motivations behind our beloved rituals. This course will strengthen our sense of faith identity while encouraging us to imagine innovative ways our faith inspires our worship to evolve. At St. Paul Lutheran Church, come explore the depths of our Lutheran tradition in community with one another.

All Things Family Ministry

Manger Tales Christmas Program 2023

The 2023 Christmas program, *Manger Tales*, was a huge success! Over 30 youth (of all ages) joined together to share the story of Jesus' birth. A big thank you to all the participants and their families for providing St. Paul with a wonderful morning of hope, music and laughter!



Thank You for the Amazing Holiday Collection

A big thank you to everyone who donated items. We collected over 250 items for Hands and Feet, the Outreach House, and Adult Christian Care Center. The items were delivered, and everyone was excited to get these items.

Sunday School Update

Thank you to everyone for a great start to the year. Sunday School will be starting on January 7, 2024.

Worship & Prayers

Save the Date for Our Maundy Thursday Dinner Church Service 2024 Edition!

Dear Beloved Church Family,

I am excited to announce a unique Maundy Thursday Dinner Church Service on Thursday March 28th, 2024! This special service is my cumulative internship project, highlighting St. Paul's commitment to lay ministry and community engagement.

At St. Paul Lutheran Church, we believe that everyone possesses unique gifts and talents to contribute to our community. This Dinner Church service will focus on our collective gifts, empowering everyone to take an active role in the worship.

Dinner Church, inspired by early Christian gatherings, centers around shared meals, fostering fellowship alongside worship with special liturgy. Enjoy a communal meal with friends and loved ones as we worship. From sacred readings, to the communal meal, every aspect mirrors the spirit of the Last Supper.

Join Us for an Inclusive Worship Experience:

- Enjoy Contemplative Musical Elements
- Listen to the story of the Last Supper
- Enjoy a communal meal with friends and loved ones
- Engage in Reflective Prayers and Rituals

Stay tuned for flyers, social media updates, and announcements in your weekly bulletins, on our website, and through our social media platforms about this service.

Save the Date
Thursday, March 28th, 2024
5:30 - 7:00 PM
St. Paul Lutheran Church Sanctuary

Let's unite as a community to co-create an unforgettable and spiritually enriching Maundy Thursday Dinner Church Service! [Click Here to RSVP.](#)

Blessings,
Vicar Katie

Prayer List

Names will remain on the prayer list for three weeks, or longer by request. To submit a prayer request please use the online [Prayer Request form](#), email prayers@stpaulvp.org, or contact the church office.

Prayers of Healing and God's Presence

Sabrina Tessing (friend of Kathy Jones), Richard Shutt (stepfather of Brad Saurbaugh), Joyce Jepsen (mother of Judy Nuehring), Bill Bartel, Carole Batek, Melinda Brent, Paige Cady (friend of Carrie Lavorini), Kristy Fash-Alvarez, Sheila Bowdish, Margaret Golden, Arlene Jensen, Chris (Elm Tree employee), Linda Long (Evelyn Kimble's daughter), Daniel Rubalcaba, Tommy Shallcross, Mark Szerzinski (father of Alex Szerzinski), All Caregivers

Prayers for the Bereaved

Laurie Stearns (cousin of John Lavorini)

Community



Elm Tree News

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from everyone at Elm Tree! We wanted to say thank you to everyone who donated books to Sophia's Little Library. We collected 283 books for the wonderful cause. Also, many thanks to everyone who purchased Fannie May Candy in November.

In the beginning of December, Elm Tree started a new tradition, and adopted a Christmas Tree on the Prairie Path. If you would like to check it out, it is located on the corner of Harvard and Central by the "fish park". A group of our Elm Tree families met and decorated the tree with ornaments that the children and families made. We decided on a book theme, and everyone worked hard to make our tree look amazing!

We have been very busy this month prepping for our Christmas Program, which some of you might have caught during the Under 105 Luncheon performance! We also performed a great show for all our families, with there being 10 songs and 4 sing-along songs on this year's lineup.

The holiday season also brought studies on other important holidays such as Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and how different cultures celebrate the holidays around the world. We had fun learning how to play dreidel, and even sang the dreidel song during our holiday program. We closed out the month with a week off to celebrate the holidays with our families. We look forward to the second half of the school year and hope you all have a wonderful New Year!



January 2024

All events subject to change. [View the calendar at www.spaulvp.org](http://www.spaulvp.org) for more information and Zoom links, or contact the church office.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 New Year's Day Office Closed	2	3 9:30a Bible Study 6p Handbells 7p Chancel Choir	4	5	6 9a Asset Mapping
7 8a Worship 9a Sunday School, Confirmation 9a Wired Word 9a RIC Class 10a Worship 2p Hands & Feet	8 10a Prayers & Squares 6:30p Finance 7p Espresso Yourself 7:30p Exec. Mtg	9 2p Rachel Circle 7p Wine, Women & the Word 7p M.E.N.D	10 9:30a Bible Study 4:45p Wings Choir 5:30p Wed. Dinner 6p Handbells 7p Chancel Choir 8p VPYB	11	12	13
14 8a Worship 9a Sunday School, Confirmation 9a Wired Word 10a Worship 11a Youth Comm.	15 Martin Luther King JR. Day 6:30p Elm Tree Board Mtg. 7p Espresso Yourself	16	17 9:30a Bible Study 4:45p Wings Choir 5:30p Wed. Dinner 6p Handbells 7p Chancel Choir	18	19 Lutherdale HS Retreat	20 Lutherdale HS Retreat Living Waters Deadline 9:30a VPYB Event
21 Lutherdale HS Retreat 8a Worship 9a Sunday School, Confirmation 9a Wired Word 9a RIC Class 10a Worship	22 7p Espresso Yourself	23 7p Council	24 9:30a Bible Study 4:45p Wings Choir 5:30p Wed. Dinner 6p Handbells 7p Chancel Choir	25	26	27 9:30a VPYB Event
28 8a Worship 9a Sunday School, Confirmation 9a Wired Word 9a RIC Class 10a Worship 11a Annual Congregational Meeting	29 7p Espresso Yourself	30	31 9:30a Bible Study 4:45p Wings Choir 5:30p Wed. Dinner 6p Handbells 7p Chancel Choir			



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Loved by God, we grow, care, give, and share in Jesus' name.

St. Paul Leadership

Church Council

President: Marti Seaton
Vice President: Gay Nass
Treasurer: Alex Szerzinski
Secretary: Chris Bard
Caring Commissioner: Shirley Jensen
Congregation and Community Commissioner: Emy Ishida
Education Commissioner: Julie Frakes
Property Commissioner: Joel Johnson
Stewardship Commissioner: Karen Egan
Worship, Music, and Arts Commissioner: Cindy Johnson
Youth Commissioners: Wendy Biggs

Staff

Pastor: Rev. Zachary Wagner
Vicar: Katie Mueller
Parish Administrator: Elizabeth Chitester
Administrative & Computer Specialist: Alice Ramsay
Director of Music: Cynthia Viise
Assistant Director of Music: Margaret Colletti
Director of Youth (Interim): Roxanne Doremus
Director of Children & Families (Interim):
 Laura Albert
Social Media/ Wedding Coordinator: Katie Briseno
Worship AV Techs:
 Fiona Kordyban, Tony Clavio, Keith Root
Nursery Attendants: Nina Matthis & Katie Priest

St. Paul Lutheran Church is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and a Reconciling in Christ community.



Stay Connected

Phone: 630-832-5580

Email: office@stpaulvp.org

Website: www.stpaulvp.org

Sign up for our email list to receive the latest news and information from St. Paul!



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.