

St. Paul Lutheran Church ELCA

1701 Sixteenth Avenue
Sterling, Illinois 61081-1543
Phone (815) 625-3069

Email: stpaulsterling@comcast.net
Website: www.stpaulsterling.com

FEBRUARY 2025

“Worship and Epiphanies”

It is every pastor's dream: To be a part of an epiphany! No, I'm not talking about pastors dreaming about getting a call to serve at one of the thirty ELCA congregations named “Epiphany Lutheran Church” or “Lutheran Church of the Epiphany.” But, instead, to be a part of helping someone to see and to know Jesus Christ. That is a wonderful thing to be a part of! And it's not something that only pastors get to be a part of. Every Christian has this privilege and responsibility - to help in the revelation of God's Son to the world. That's an “epiphany.”

I have been mindful of this privilege and responsibility many times in my work, but I am especially mindful of this task and joy when it's time to preach. Whether the members of the congregation that particular day of worship are hearing the “old, old story” or hearing the Gospel (Good News) message for the very first time, I have the privilege of helping folks to see Jesus Christ. It is an awesome and humbling calling.

I hope that you regularly put yourself in times and places to be “epiphanized.” I know that it helps my faith and, in fact, my entire outlook on life when I *regularly* “see” Jesus. But if I stay away from opportunities to do so - like times of worship - chances are that I will *not* see Jesus. Or I won't see Jesus as I should.

I can't identify many “blessings” that came out of our struggles with the COVID pandemic, but there is one that has become very obvious to me: the boundaries of many a congregation's worship services have now been extended beyond their sanctuary walls. Many congregations have gone online and



livestreamed their worship services - as has this congregation of St. Paul in Sterling. I have found that having these livestreamed and recorded worship services available have helped a lot of people to hear God's Word and have proven to be a tremendous worship and outreach opportunity. So, while there is no question in my mind that that it is best to gather *together* to worship the Lord - as Scripture calls us to do - I am grateful that when we are unable to gather with others, we can still be "epiphanized" by God's Word reaching us via the internet.

In a past issue of "The Lutheran" magazine, Pastor Peter Marty doesn't write about epiphanies, but his words about worship in a faith community are really wonderful. Here's the closing paragraph of his article: "If we stay away from worship too long, we start to make God into our own image. The privatization of our spiritual journey only transforms God to be virtually anything we want. Once back in the habit and flow of worship, however, and surrounded by a mix of people who don't mirror every facet of our life, something delightful happens. We discover God to be quietly remaking us into God's own image. We encounter a rhythm stronger than our heartbeat. We find ourselves full of more joy than we can contain."

You know what? I think these words *do* have something to do with an epiphany!

Looking forward to worshipping with you at St. Paul again - and again,

Pastor Mark S. Luepke



During this time of transition if you have an emergency, please call Sue in the church office or one of the council members who will contact the pastor that is covering during that time.



Join us For Worship

9:00 a.m. worship to praise God.

The Livestream can be accessed by clicking [HERE](#)



This past month we have prayed for the following: Dianne Miller, Steven Julifs, Bev Julien, JoAnn Garcia, Barb Lenn, Lori Dewey, Betty Steinke, Larry Wahler, JoDell Cruz, Sandy Julifs, Lila Edeus, the family and friends of Michael Harting, the family and friends of Kay Kutchera, the family and friends of Burt Severson, the family and friends of Bobby McElhinney, and the family and friends of Larry Kujala.

Please contact Sue in the church office if you have a prayer request for the congregational prayer list.

Church Announcements

CLEO (Church Ladies Eating Out)

CLEO meet monthly at 5:30 p.m. at a designated restaurant. The February outing on Monday, February 24. Watch the Announcement Sheets for where they will be meeting. If you are unable to attend because of bad weather or personal reasons, please join us the next month. If you need a ride or have any questions, please contact Judy Bartel at 815-751-6768. All are welcome!



Menz Group will meet at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sterling on Monday, February 3, at 6:00 p.m.

Please keep our home visitation members and friends in your thoughts and prayers. If you would like the address for anyone listed here, please contact Sue in the church office.

Shirley Dodd	Lori Dewey	Lila Edeus
Katherine Janssen	Sandy Julifs	Viola Koster
Cliff Miller	Sandra Sweitzer	Dale Worley



Home Visitation

St. Paul Year Budget Report

2025 Budget \$293,589 (\$24,466 Monthly)

Totals through January 27, 2025

Budgeted Expenses	\$24,466
Offerings/Interest	\$9,895
Expenses	\$2,646



Lutheran World Relief Quilting

Our quilting day in February will be the fourth Wednesday, which is February 26. We meet in the Social Hall at the church at 9:00 a.m.

We have 41 quilts constructed and 3 comforters that were donated. Thank you for your donations of clean, spot-free materials to use within our quilts.

If you are interested joining us to tie and pin the quilts, we would be glad to have you. If you have questions regarding the quilting contact Dawn Waite (815-631-8142) or Debbie O'Brien (815-441-0257).



Coffee Fellowship

If you would like to sign-up to celebrate a special event, the sheet is on the kiosk in the Fellowship Hall. Coffee time begins at 10:00 a.m. during the Sunday school hour.

Altar Flowers

The sign up chart is on the wall by the church office. If you would like to order in memory of in honor of someone, sign-up and let Sue know if you will be ordering them yourself or if you would like her to order for you.



Stewardship – Thank God by Giving

Grace is when God gives us good things that we don't deserve.

Mercy is when He spares us from bad things we deserve.

Blessings are when He is generous with both.

Truly, we can never run out of reasons to thank Him.

God is good all the time.

No one has ever become poor by giving.

Treat your treasures as a trust; God will meet your deepest needs. Use your talents!!

Give generously with a grateful heart!

Ladies – Mark your Calendars!

On Monday, February 17th from 6:00-8:00 p.m. there will be a Women's event at St. Paul. Salad, sandwiches, soup, dessert, tea (wine and coffee available too), conversation and a craft! RSVP to Sue Dirks in the church office by Sunday, February 9th. A clipboard will also be on the back table in the sanctuary to sign-up. All women are welcome!

A decorative background featuring a white teapot and a matching cup and saucer with floral and butterfly patterns. Several colorful butterflies (pink, blue, yellow) are scattered across the scene. The overall aesthetic is soft and elegant.

St. Paul Ladies

Please join us for a special evening

Feb. 17, 2025 6:00–8:00pm

Salad, sandwiches, soup, dessert, tea (wine and coffee available too), conversation and a craft!

St. Paul Fellowship Hall

RSVP To Sue Dirks in the church office
(815.625.3069) by Sunday, February 9th

BIRTHDAYS FOR OUR CHURCH MEMBERS & FRIENDS

If you don't see your name on this list or there is a correction to be made,
please let Sue know in the church office.

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | Elaina Arduini | <u>Happy 38th Anniversary</u> |
| 3 | Susan Bartel | February 28, 1987 |
| | Riley O'Brien | Jul & Jeff Woodworth |
| 4 | Nancy Eilers | |
| | Shawn Platz | |
| | Addisyn Petty | |
| 6 | David Metzler | |
| 8 | Anna Ivarson | |
| 10 | Kathy Johnson | |
| 21 | Dianne Adams | |
| | Jill O'Brien | |
| 24 | Nathan Reed | |
| 25 | Janie Billings | |
| | Paul Zollinger | |
| 26 | Shirley Dodd – 91 | |



Youth News!

Children's Offering

The February children's offering will be for the **CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES**: Wildfires in California are devastating communities, leaving families in urgent need of help. Homes, schools, businesses and churches have been destroyed, with entire neighborhoods reduced to ashes.



You can provide hope and relief to neighbors in crisis who need it.

Click the link to donate online.

[RUSH AID NOW](#)

When you give now, this is what you make happen:

- For those most in need, you provide **hot meals, essential household supplies and support for transportation costs**, so they can travel out of harm's way.
- You help deliver **LWR Quilts and Kits** to our partners in and around Los Angeles, so they can provide comfort for evacuees and families who have lost their homes.
- You make the long road to **recovery and rebuilding** possible.

But we can't do it without you.

Your gift is a lifeline for neighbors who are feeling overwhelmed and helpless. Your act of compassion and kindness provides them with **immediate aid and ongoing support**.

We are so thankful to have you by our side because you truly go above and beyond when disaster strikes, whether at home or abroad. Thank you for extending God's love where it is needed most.

To our neighbors affected by the wildfires, please know you are surrounded by love and prayers, and that help is on the way.

You can also mail your donations to:

Lutheran World Relief

PO Box 17061

Baltimore, MD 21297-1061



Confirmation 2024-2025



St. Paul has a multi-year confirmation program for **6th-8th graders** students who desire the Rite of Confirmation typically Affirm their Baptism in the fall of their 9th grade year.

Confirmation is a special time of intentional exploration of our faith through Bible Study, questions, service, worship, retreats and more! It is an opportunity to learn about God, Lutheranism, ourselves & others. There are MANY opportunities to grow in faith, love & service!

At this time Confirmation classes will not meet on Sunday mornings here at St. Paul but will meet with Immanuel and St. John's through monthly Sunday gatherings from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Each session will include a light lunch which the host church for that session provides. **The schedule for the year is below.** The dates with an * are still being confirmed. Items in *italics* are service or fellowship events. PLEASE aim to participate as you are able. Friends are welcome! This schedule is subject to change.

2024-2025 Tri Church Confirmation Schedule

February 9, 2025; 11 a.m.-2p.m. at Immanuel, New Testament

**February 26, 2025; 7 p.m. Buddy Bags Packing*

March 2, 2025; 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at St. John's, New Testament

April 6, 2025; 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at St. Paul, New Testament

**April 30, 2025; 7 p.m. Buddy Bags Packing*

May 4, 2025; 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Immanuel, New Testament (Wrap-up Party & Review)

Make plans to join us in exploring your faith this year!

Community Announcements

**Breaking
Bread
Together
BBT**

Breaking Bread Together (BBT)

You are most welcome to join the people of Immanuel for BBT in January! Breaking Bread Together or BBT is a time of sharing life, God's love and a meal together! This is a no host lunch. Join us for BBT on Wednesday, February 5th at 11:30 a.m. at Sophie's Café (1204 W. Rock Falls Road, Rock Falls) and February 26th at 11:30 a.m. at Asian Buffet (3106 E. Lincolnway, Sterling). ALL

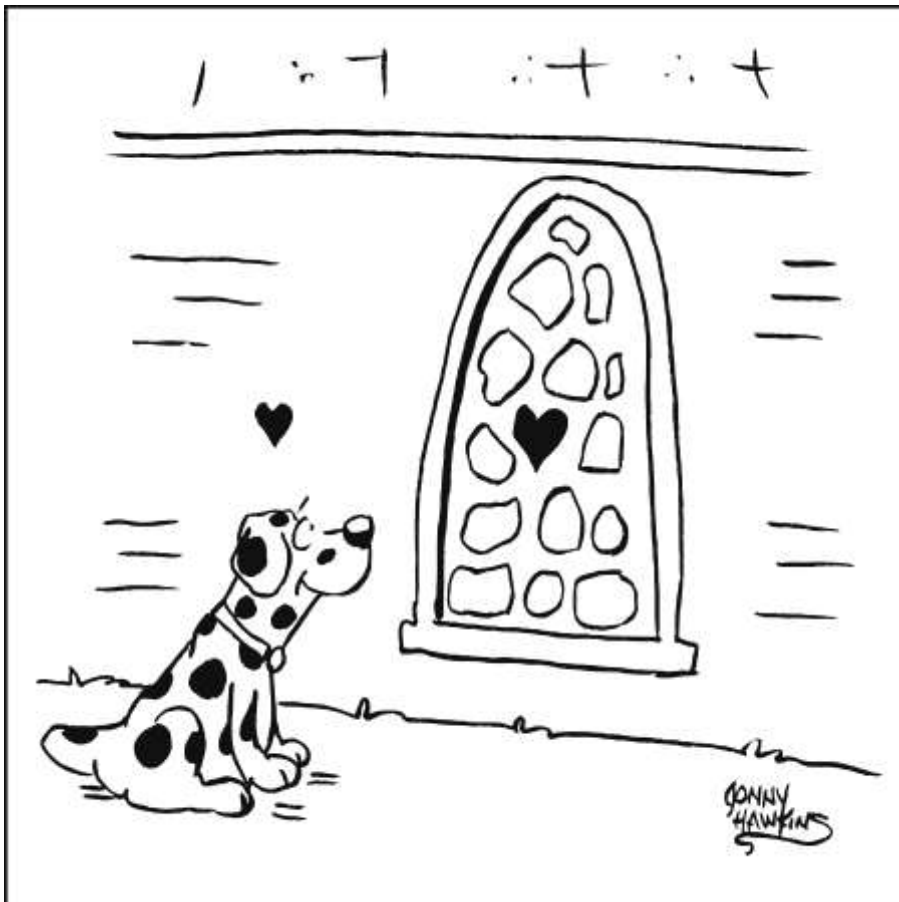
ARE WELCOME! Come and share life with God and each other at BBT!

Black History Month Royale



Join us for an unforgettable evening at the **Black History Month Royale on February 22 at 6:00 p.m.** Celebrating the rich heritage and achievements of the African American community, this in-person event will take place at The Elks, **1279 Franklin Grove Road, Dixon, IL, USA.** Get ready to immerse yourself in a night filled with live entertainment, games, inspiring stories, and a vibrant atmosphere. Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to be part of a special event that celebrates diversity and

unity. Get your tickets now and be prepared to be amazed! Tickets are \$65 a piece and available at: <https://facebook.com/DiversitySV>. All are welcome!



TELEPHONE PRAYER SUPPORT GROUP

We welcome your prayer requests and also your praise reports:

(Want to be a part of this? Call the church office.)

Church office – 815-625-3069

Janie Billings

Judy Bartel

Greg Zeigler

James 5:16 *Pray one for another.*

DIRECTORY OF STAFF and CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL

Pastor Mark Luepke

pastormark@stpaulsterling.com

Sue Dirks, Parish Secretary

(815) 535-3574 – sue@stpaulsterling.com

Gabby Law, Children Ministry

(815) 981-6470 – gabby@stpaulsterling.com

Dawn Zeigler, Music Coordinator

(815) 275-3775 – dawn@stpaulsterling.com

Julie Woessner, Children's Music Leader/Worship Song Leader

(815) 441-8084 – 4woessner@comcast.net

Shawn Andrews, Custodian

(779) 775-4530



2025 Congregation Council

President – Greg Zeigler

Vice President – Mary Ordean

Treasurer – Chrissy Zollinger

Secretary – Stacey Avelar

Christian Education/Youth

Stacey Avelar ('27)

Stewardship

Greg Zeigler ('27)

Social Outreach

Stacey Avelar ('27)

Lay Ministry & Worship

Chrissy Zollinger ('27)

Julie Woessner ('27)

Property & Management

Dan Bartel ('26)

Members-at-large

David Carrillo ('27)

Mary Ordean ('26)

Rayce Gale ('27)

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH
1701 Sixteenth Ave.
STERLING, ILLINOIS 61081

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**– DATED MATERIAL –
PLEASE DO NOT HOLD**



LOVING – SERVING – SHARING

DIRECTORY

Office (815) 625-3069

Office Hours: Monday – Thursday; 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Friday – 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Pastor Mark's hours – Tuesdays – 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Email: stpaulsterling@comcast.net

Website: www.stpaulsterling.com

Facebook: St. Paul Lutheran Church – Sterling, IL