

St. Paul Lutheran Church ELCA

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Sterling, Illinois 61081-1543
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MARCH 2026

"Some Basic - and Important! - Questions and Answers"

In a recent visit to the website of the ELCA - the denomination of the Church of which the congregation of St. Paul Lutheran is a member - I came across some "questions and answers" on some basics of the faith that I felt might be helpful to a good many of us. So, I'm going to share them! See below. (if you would like to browse the website of the ELCA you will find it at: www.elca.org.)

I'm new here. I have questions about God and church and faith.

All people seek meaning. This can come in the form of knowledge, relationships, spirituality or organized religion. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is part of the Christian church. We believe God's grace, God's unfathomable love, is available to all people as a gift through Jesus Christ. All are welcome here with their whole selves, which includes one's race, ethnic background, past wrongdoing, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical ability and legal status. Questions and doubts are welcome.

Who is God?

God is the creator of the world; the giver of life; the source of wholeness, healing and forgiveness; the champion of the poor and oppressed; the power of new life and resurrection. God creates, redeems and continues to sustain the world. Christians know God as the Holy Trinity — one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As Christians, we believe all people are created in God's image and loved by God. We know about God thanks to the witness of the Scriptures and



especially through Jesus Christ, who embodied God's love for humanity. God's grace is a gift, given through Christ and received by faith. There is nothing we can do on our own — good or bad — to earn this gift. We call this "good news" or the "gospel." Through this gift of God, we are led by the Holy Spirit to love and work for justice and peace.

What do Christians believe?

Christians believe that God came to us in Jesus Christ, a true human, humble and vulnerable. Jesus lived among us and demonstrated the good news in all he was and did. The good news is the promise that God loves us and saves us by grace alone. This promise was realized when Jesus was crucified. He died on the cross but was raised again in the body and in a new wholeness. As a result, through the gift of grace received by faith, all people can be made whole in Christ and set free to love and serve all people, particularly the vulnerable, just as God loves us.

What is faith and why is it important?

Martin Luther, after whom the Lutheran branch of Christianity is named, once wrote, "Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that you could stake your life on it one thousand times. Through faith, a person will do good to everyone without coercion, willingly and happily; serving everyone, suffering everything for the love and praise of God, who has shown such grace." Faith, then, is not about intellectually agreeing to a set of beliefs but about living in a trusting relationship with God in response to God's grace. Faith is our confident hope that living in God's promises sparks renewal to love and serve neighbors, as God in Christ loves us.

May these "basics of the faith" lead us to worship, live, and love as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Mark S. Luepke

Don't forget to "Spring Ahead" your clocks before you go to bed on March 7! You wouldn't want to be late for church on Sunday.



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: Brock Woessner, Evan Smith, Jeff Waite, Dianne Miller, Karol Gerken, Lori Dewey, Maggie N., the Woodworth family. Michelle Klinger, Matt Friel, Sandy Julifs, Mike, Dylan Wescott, Phyllis Jacobson, Betty Steinke, the family and friends of Ron Billings, the family and friends of Vi Koster, and the

family and friends of Jean Cogdall.

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

Church Announcements

St. Paul Year Budget Report

2026 Budget \$309,934 (\$25,828 Monthly)

Totals through January 31, 2026

Budgeted Expenses	\$25,828
Offerings/Interest	\$39,122
Expenses	\$18,689



Home Visitation

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
Sandy Julifs
Dale Worley

Lori Dewey
Cliff Miller

Katherine Janssen
Sandra Sweitzer

Please join us for BBT in March!

Breaking Bread Together or BBT is a time of sharing life, God's love and a meal together! These are no host gatherings for all interested parties. BBT is meeting twice this month:

Tuesday, March 10 at 11:30 a.m. at Azul Cantina (3920 E. Lincolnway) in Sterling and **Tuesday, March 24** at 11:30 a.m. at Crave (old Family Table, 3312 W Rock Falls, Road) in Rock Falls. Come and share life with God and each other at BBT! All are welcome.

**Breaking
Bread
Together
BBT**



TRI-CHURCH LENTEN MID-WEEK WORSHIP

All are welcome to join Tri-Church (Immanuel, St. John's and St. Paul) for worship this Lenten season at **12:15 p.m. worship at Immanuel** in Rock Falls (501 8th Ave., Rock Falls) and **6:30 p.m. worship at St. Paul** in Sterling (1701 16th Ave., Sterling). Cookies/Dessert & fellowship will follow each service.

During the five weeks of Lent 2026, we will learn what it means to be **“WALKING WET”** – Living our baptismal promises in daily life. The five baptismal promises, which are made when we are baptized, provide guidance as we live as a child of God in the world. These promises are meant to drench us daily in God's love and grace - promises for each day. Come and be drenched – appreciating God's love for us all! Below are the “watchwords” and preaching texts for each week:

March 4: “Sacrament” Matthew 14:13-21, Pastor Jacob Gawlik, St. John's

March 11: “Story” Luke 18:35-43, Pastor Mark Luepke, St. Paul

March 18: “Compassion” Mark 10:35-45, Pastor Jacob and Pastor Bree

March 25: “Witness” Jonah 3:10-4:11, Shawn Wolfe, SAM of Trinity & First

Come! Allow yourself to be drenched in God's immense love!

Stewardship



*REMEMBER: Whenever you're in a position to help someone,
Be glad and always do it.*

*Because that's God answering someone else's prayers
Through you.*

*Dearest Lord, teach us to be generous:
Teach us to serve you as you deserve:
To give and not to count the cost.*

Give with a grateful heart for all he has done for us!

Sound/Livestream volunteers needed. We are need of more volunteers to help out with the sound system on Sunday mornings. If you would like to learn or see all what's involved, please see Greg Zeigler. Thank you in advance!





Menz Group will meet at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sterling on Monday, March 2 at 6:00 p.m.

WELCA Tri-Church **Current Active Groups**

Morning Gather Bible Study at Immanuel

Coordinator Ronda Borgmann

Meets the 3rd Tuesday of Each Month at Immanuel at 9:00 a.m.

Next meeting is Tuesday, March 17, 2026

How to Attend: Just show up at Immanuel

Evening Gather Bible Study at St. John's

Coordinator Karen Wolfe

Meets the 1st Tuesday of Each Month at St. John's at 6:00 p.m.

Next meeting is Tuesday, April 7, 2026

How to Attend: Just show up at St. John's

Quilting for Lutheran World Relief

Coordinator Deb O-Brien and Dawn Waite

Meets the 3rd Wednesday of Each Month at St. Paul at 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Next meeting is Wednesday, March 18, 2026

How to Attend: Just show up at St. Paul

Church Ladies Eating Out (CLEO)

Coordinator Judy Bartel

Meets the last Monday of each Month at Different Restaurants at 5:30 p.m.

Next meeting is Monday, March 30, 2026 at Culver's in Rock Falls.

How to Attend: RSVP to Judy Bartel each month. Call her at 815-751-6768

All Women are invited to attend any of these groups. We hope you find a group or two that works for you. We can do so much together!

LADIES: if you are on Facebook, please follow the WELCA Tri-Church Facebook page. This Facebook page will help keep you up to date with WELCA events and groups. Click [HERE](#) for the link.



WELCA Tri-Church Bible Study will be held on Tuesday, March 17 at 9:00 a.m. at Immanuel. Please bring your Bible and Gather magazine. All women of St. Paul are members of the WELCA and welcome to join WELCA for a time of fellowship and Bible Study!

Lutheran World Relief Quilting

Our next quilting day will be on Wednesday, March 18 from 9:00a – 12:00p in the Social Hall. Feel free to join us as we tie and pin the quilts. Dawn sews the outer edges and we package them to be distributed to those in need.



Lutheran World Relief
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. LASTING PROMISE.

We are always in need of clean, spot free sheets and blankets to use within our quilts. If you would like to donate, the materials can be placed in the basket in the closet next to the kitchen.

If you have questions regarding the quilting contact Dawn Waite (815-631-8142) or Debbie O'Brien (815-441-0257).

CLEO (Church Ladies Eating Out)

CLEO meet monthly at 5:30 p.m. at a designated restaurant. The March outing is on Monday, March 30 at Culver's in Rock Falls. 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!



Gather Bible Study
WELCA TRI-CHURCH
All Women are Welcome!
St. John's Lutheran Church, Sterling, Illinois

1ST TUESDAY EACH MONTH
6:00PM TO 7:30PM

Bring your Gather Magazine and your Bible

Purchase your Gather Magazine at www.gathermagazine.org



"Raising Our Voices: Proclaiming the Gospel When the World is Loud"

Proclamation isn't shouting louder than hate...it's speaking, living and standing in love, truth, and justice as people claimed in Christ.

WELCA SPRING RETREAT 2026

"Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 4:11

APRIL 25, 2026

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

LOMC Oregon, IL

\$30 per person

Scholarships are available

**Program and Worship led by
Pr. Laurie Hensley, Bethany ELCA, Woodhull, IL**



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Registration forms and Scholarship forms are available on the table at the back of the sanctuary.

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.

2	Feona Pfundstien	<u>Happy 35th Anniversary</u>
5	Cliff Pfundstein	March 2, 1991
6	Dale Worley	Don & Vickie Goshert
10	Jacob Reitzel	
12	Chris Engstrom	<u>Happy 11th Anniversary</u>
13	Scott Wolber	March 14, 2015
18	Liz Spaulding	Joe & Pam Machan
22	Lyle Spaulding	
24	Eugene Strike – 95	<u>Happy 50th Anniversary</u>
	Joan Jensen – 91	March 20, 1976
25	Austin Petty	Mark & Patty Arians
26	Collin Zollinger	
28	Dawn Waite	
31	Sarah Wolber	



Congregational Resourcing Event 2026



You are invited to the Congregational Resourcing Event on March 7, 2026 at Sauk Valley Community College in Dixon, Illinois. Come gather together with lay and rostered members from across our synod as we learn from Pastor Laurie Skow-Anderson, our workshop leaders, and our display table hosts. Each piece of the day will inspire and encourage participants in faith and ministry! Cost is \$40 per person and includes lunch and coffee. Registration is now open! The church will pay for your registration if you are interested in attending. You can either register yourself and

turn in your receipt to be reimbursed or stop by the office and Sue will register for you. Click [HERE](#) to register.

Youth News!



Children's Offering

The March Children's offering will go towards the expenses of the Buddy Bag program.

Tri-Church Confirmation

6th-8th Graders: Tri-Church Confirmation is on March 1 at Immanuel from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Lunch is provided. If you have any questions, please contact Gabby at gabby@stpaulsterling.com.

The schedule for the rest of the school year:

March 1 at St. John's

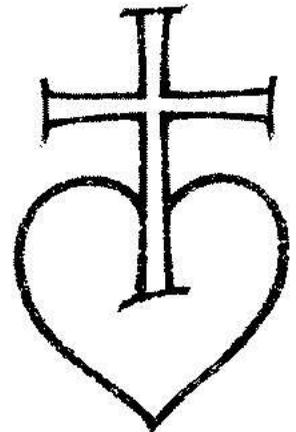
April 1 – 7:00 p.m. Buddy Bag packing at Wesley UMC

Note date change

April 19 at St. Paul

May 3 at Immanuel (Wrap-up party and review)

May 13 – Buddy Bag packing at Wesley UMC





Teach us to pray

In Luke 11:1-13 (NIV), Jesus teaches about prayer.

Directions: Add or subtract the letters indicated and unscramble the letters to form a new word, using hints from the passage. Then unscramble the circled letters to answer the question below.

- party - t = p r a y (v. 1)
lady + i = _ _ _ _ _ (v. 3)
drab + e = _ _ _ _ _ (v. 5)
rod + o = _ _ _ _ _ (v. 7)
bask - b = _ _ _ _ _ (v. 9)
keeps - p = _ _ _ _ _ (v. 9)
define - ee = _ _ _ _ _ (v. 9)
shift - t = _ _ _ _ _ (v. 11)
sneaky - y = _ _ _ _ _ (v. 11)
sift + g = _ _ _ _ _ (v. 13)



What will the Father give to those who ask of him?

_____ (v. 13)

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 DeJonge, Children's Music Leader/Worship Song Leader

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

Nancy Eilers, Custodian – (815) 441-4435



2025 Congregation Council

President – Greg Zeigler

Vice President – Julie Woessner DeJonge

Treasurer – Chrissy Zollinger

Secretary – Stacey Avelar

Christian Education/Youth

Stacey Avelar ('27)

Lay Ministry & Worship

Chrissy Zollinger ('27)

Julie Woessner ('27)

Stewardship

Greg Zeigler ('27)

Property & Management

Rayce Gale ('27)

Social Outreach

Stacey Avelar ('27)

Dawn Waite ('28)

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

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**– 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