

St. Paul Lutheran Church ELCA

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APRIL 2026

"Holy Week and a Holy Resurrection Life"

Many of you will receive this newsletter a day or two before the beginning of Holy Week. Holy Week is, to understate the fact, a very special week in the life of the Church. Holy Week is a time set aside by the Church in which we give ourselves to a special remembrance of the events of Jesus' life in the week of his crucifixion - and certainly the day of his crucifixion itself.

We will begin this special week on Sunday, March 29th with the waving of palms, remembering Jesus' triumphal and majestic entry into Jerusalem. We will then quickly move - maybe too quickly for some - (I imagine Jesus might have felt the same way!) - into the story of the Passion - the suffering and death of Jesus. On Maundy Thursday we will remember Jesus' model of service as he washed the disciples' feet and gave of himself in the Lord's Supper. At St. Paul, we will remember the events of Maundy Thursday within a gathering for a meal together on Good Friday, April 3rd. (The meal begins at 5:30 p.m. Holy Communion will be offered in the Fellowship Hall about 6:15 that evening.) We will then move into the sanctuary for a time of worship at 6:30 p.m. with our Good Friday focus on the mystery of the cross and the gift of salvation we receive from God through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

On Easter Sunday, April 5th, congregations of Christians around the world will be shouting out and singing "Alleluia!" - "Praise the Lord!" - as we celebrate Christ's resurrection and the promise of the resurrection to eternal life that is given to us. ***"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into***



Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” (Romans 6:3-5)

Some of you have heard me share that the word “holy” means that something is “set aside for God’s purposes and use.” So, this *Holy Week* will be a week that we will recognize to be one that has been, is, and will be set aside for God’s purpose.

But let me move beyond Holy Week now - since this is what will happen. The Easter story itself is a story that moves on. In our time of worship together on Easter, we will hear the Scriptures proclaim the message of the angels: ***“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen!”*** Jesus is on the move - so his disciples best be on the move, too! And the New Testament is then full of calls to all who follow Jesus to “be holy” - to be people through whom God works.

So, moving on, let me ask you how you intend to “be holy” in the Easter life that lies ahead of you. And I’m asking about the Easter life that you and I know now, in this life. How will you be “a holy one of God”? I challenge you to let that question rattle within you at work, at home, at school, and in every relationship you are involved in. *“How might I be used for God’s purposes in this setting and/or relationship? How might I be holy?”*

And how might this be reflected in your life of worship? The third commandment speaks to this directly. ***“Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.”*** As Christians and as members of St. Paul Lutheran Church, we have certain days and times “set aside” for the purpose of worship - to give ourselves to hearing God’s Word and receiving God’s gifts of grace.

Across our nation, the Christian Church is seeing fewer and fewer individuals “remembering the Sabbath day, and keeping it holy” by devoting time to worship the Lord. How are you doing in regards to the call to be holy by regularly worshipping the Lord with other Christians? The Easter season seems

to be a wonderful time to re-commit to this holy call to worship. Come and celebrate the resurrection! And your presence will be celebrated, too!

Pastor Mark S. Luepke

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: Brad Wussung, Brock Woessner, Evan Smith, 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 Rod Janssen and the family and friends of Carolyn Reppe.

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 March 20, 2026

Budgeted Expenses \$77,484

Offerings/Interest \$54,423

Expenses \$45,129



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, April 14 at 11:30 a.m. at Benny's in Sterling and **Tuesday,**

April 28 at 11:30 a.m. at Froggy's in Rock Falls. Come and share life with God and each other at BBT! All are welcome.

**Breaking
Bread
Together
BBT**

HOLY WEEK

GOOD FRIDAY – April 3

Supper – 5:30 p.m.

Worship – 6:30 p.m.

Gabby will have children activities during worship

EASTER SUNDAY – April 5

Worship – 9:00 a.m.

Easter Egg Hunt – Following worship

Coffee Fellowship – 10:00 a.m.

No Sunday School



TRI-CHURCH HOLY WEEK SERVICES



First Lutheran – Jordan Creek

20314 Hickory Hills Road, Sterling

Trinity Lutheran

171 Stover Avenue, Milledgeville

Maundy Thursday

6:30 p.m. Joint service at First

Easter Sunday

8:30 a.m. at First

10:15 a.m. at Trinity

St. John's – Sterling

Maundy Thursday – 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday – 6:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday – 9:30 a.m.

Immanuel – Rock Falls

Maundy Thursday – 12:15 & 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday – 12:15 & 6:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday – 9:00 a.m.



Lent Wednesdays

Thank you to everyone who helped with the Mid-Week Lenten baking each week:

Diane Yoeckel

Audrey Cox

Nancy Beck

Chery Gorman

Nancy Eilers

Stewardship – Your Barn?

Is your barn full? – Give fully

Is your barn light? – Give a little

Is your barn feeling empty? – Give of your time, your attention, your prayers, or your encouragement. Even when it feels like there's little of offer, God can use what we have to make a difference.



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

Use your talents!!

Give generously with a grateful heart!



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

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.

- 3 Mark Glafka
- 4 Carolyn Duncan
- 8 Tim Zollinger
- 10 Karen Wright
- 11 Paul Steinke
- 15 Bob Bartel
- 24 Bennett Shore
- 25 Liz Klein
- 28 Susan Kuehl
- 29 Izzy Brockman

Happy 36th Anniversary

April 21, 1990

Keith & Kathy Peugh



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, April 21, 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, April 15, 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, April 27, 2026. Watch announcements to find out where to meet.

How to Attend: RSVP to July 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, April 21 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, April 15 from 9:00a – 12:00p in the Social Hall. We have completed 48 quilts this far. We welcomed several new volunteers in February.



Lutheran World Relief
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. LASTING PROMISE.

We are always in need of clean, spot free sheets and materials 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, April 27. Watch the announcements to see where to meet. 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!



Mark your calendar for Tuesday, June 16th at 5:30 p.m. for a special event for ALL women of Immanuel, St. John's and St. Paul. The evening will include a light meal and *Color Me Joyful* craft activity. Watch for more details in the May newsletter.



LWR Personal Health Kits

During the month of April we will be gathering the items listed below for the **Personal Care Kits**. We will have the towels, please just shop for the other items. We have monies from Thrivent from Patty Arians to buy towels.

The **Personal Care Kits** will be taken to the ingathering along with the quilts. Thank you.

There is a container in the back of the church to place the items.

These kits go all over the world when natural disaster strikes or political conflict flares. These families often have little chance to gather their belongings before fleeing the danger. They arrive in a refugee camp, or other place of safety, scared, vulnerable and dirty from travel.

The simple items included in a **Personal Care Kit** allow them to wash away dirt and sweat with the fresh scent of soap and the softness of a towel to remind them that they are cared for. So let us do God's Work with Our Hands and share God's grace by providing that simple comfort to those who do not have. Questions please ask Debbie O'Brien, 815-441-0257.

Here is the list of the items needed:

4-dark-colored bath towel

Thanks to a Thrivent grant from Patty Arians, you will NOT need to purchase a towel this year.

2 or 3-Bath size bars of soap (**8oz or more total**). Please KEEP in original packaging. Any brand welcome.

1-Adult size toothbrush .Please KEEP in original packaging or a business size envelope.

1-Sturdy comb (no picks or fine toothed combs).

1-metal nail clipper with or without a file.



Youth News!

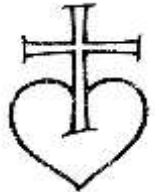


Children's Offering

The April Children's offering will go towards the LWR Personal Care Kits.

Tri-Church Confirmation

6th-8th Graders: Tri-Church Confirmation is on April 19 at St. Paul 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:

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



NOW is the time to make plans to join in CommUNITY VBS this summer, July 12-16! Consider having your grandkids or extended family coming to visit during that time and join us for VBS too! **CommUNITY**

VBS is offered for Pre-School-5th graders July 12-16 from 5:30- 8 p.m. at

Bethel Reformed Church (230 E. 23rd St., Sterling).

Festivities include a free supper, Bible exploration, music, games, science and arts & crafts!

Guard your calendars and plan to volunteer for this life-shaping week too! If you would like to be

on the CommUNITY VBS planning team, the next meeting is on Thursday, April 9 at 4 p.m. at Bethel.

PLEASE plan to join us or volunteer for CommUNITY VBS July 12-16!





NOW is the time to sign up for summer camp! Learn more and register at <https://lomc.org/>

It is the desire of the whole LOMC community of churches and individuals that **no child is ever denied an amazing camp experience due to a family's financial constraints.** Through the help of many generous donors, LOMC has campership funds available for those in need. Please contact LOMC to learn more at 815-732-2220 or email registrations@lomc.org. LOMC wants to make sure your child has this safe, uplifting, adventurous life experience every year!

Community Announcements



Mark Your Calendars for Relay For Life on June 13! You are invited to become members of the *Spirit of Immanuel Relay For Life team!* The 31st annual event is at **Westwood Sports Complex in Sterling on Saturday, June 13 from 4:00 – 9:30 p.m.** Relay For

Life is about celebrating survivors, honoring and remembering those lost to cancer, and Fighting Back against this cancer which is not fussy about who it attacks – male or female, younger or older, whatever nationality or heritage. Information will be shared through the weekly bulletin. **For questions, about raising money for the American Cancer Society through Relay for Life please contact Immanuel members, Pam Shoffner or Kelly Schaefer or Deb Cervantes.**

Registration of survivors to walk the first lap, receive a free Survivor T shirt, and a free food item after the opening lap and team members as well may register online at www.relayforlife.org/saukvalleyil or call 1- 800-ACS-2345.



Pancake Breakfast

An all you can eat Pancake Breakfast to support **Self Help is on Saturday, April 11th from 7:00 a.m. – Noon** at Self Help Enterprises, (2300 W. LeFevre Road, Sterling). Free Will Donations Received. There will be a Bake Sale, Craft & Vendor Show, and a 50/50 Raffle too!





Rock River Hospice and Home (RRH&H) is offering **"Growing Through Grief"** a support group the **2nd Monday of every month from 5-6:30 p.m.** RRH&H's Social Worker and Bereavement Coordinator will guide

this journey with care and understanding. Come and share experiences in a safe, supportive space. Come and connect with others who understand. Come and find healing and hope together. You don't have to face grief alone. Join this monthly gathering and find support, connection and healing. For more information please contact Kaitlyn at 815-625-3858 or kaitlynk@hospicerockriver.org

Support Immanuel Youth while dining at Culver's on April 28 from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.!!!


Immanuel Youth will deliver your meals through a fundraiser at Culver's on April 28. The proceeds support Immanuel Youth Opportunities. The amount of sales is tied to the % of donation that Culver's is able to make. For example: A normal Tuesday will pay out 10% of sales. If they see an increase in sales over their average Tuesday we could receive up to 20% of sales. (Which is what happened last time!) **Come and dine at Culver's in Rock Falls (1901 Harley-Davidson Dr., Rock Falls) from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.!** There will be a tip jar out on front counter to support LYO. Culver's will present a check by about 8:15 p.m. Thanks in advance for your support. Hope to see you there! Thanks to Culver's for their support!





Easter Service & Egg Hunt

Celebrate Easter with us! Join our uplifting Sunday service, followed by an Easter egg hunt for the whole family. If there is poor weather, we will have the egg hunt indoors.



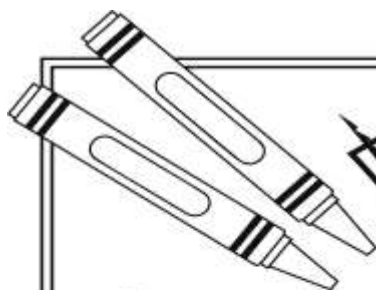
5
April

**St. Paul Lutheran
Church**

1701 16th Ave, Sterling IL

WORSHIP
@9:00 AM





PUZZLE

Jesus gives us *life*

Through his death and resurrection, Jesus offers the free gift of eternal life.

Directions: Match each clue from Holy Week with the correct image. If you get stuck, look up the Bible verses.

People spread these on the road for Jesus. (Matthew 21:8)

Mary pours this on Jesus' feet. (John 12:3)

Jesus shares this with his disciples. (Matthew 26:26)

This is placed on Jesus' head. (John 19:2)

Soldiers may have used these to compete for Jesus' coat. (John 19:23-24)

Jesus carries this himself for a while. (John 19:17)

Marks caused by these help Thomas identify Jesus. (John 20:25)

While on the cross, Jesus is thirsty and is given this. (John 19:28-29)

This is rolled away from Jesus' tomb. (John 20:1)

These are used to prepare Jesus' body for burial. (Luke 23:55-56)

These remain in the tomb after Jesus rises. (John 20:6-7)

Judas betrays Jesus for this. (Matthew 26:14-15)





GONNY
HAWKINS
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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; Rayce Gale – (815) 499-5611



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

