

St. Paul Lutheran Church ELCA

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AUGUST 2026

"Practicing Our Faith"

Nancy and I have recently been blessed with having had our three grandchildren spend some time with us at our home in Clinton - our son's twelve year old son, and our daughter's seven year old son and ten year old daughter.

On the days when their time with us was at the same time, we couldn't help but be thrilled at how much they love being with each other!

While we visited the Clinton trolls and attended a wonderful production of "Seussical the Musical" at the Clinton Showboat with all three of them, in the days that we had with only our oldest grandson we did a couple of things that he was interested in, knowing the other two would not be - attending a Clinton LumberKings baseball game (they won 13-3 in a very good season for the team!) and watching portions of a few World Cup soccer games on TV. (Luke is a soccer player and was riveted to the action. I enjoyed it more than I thought I would. I didn't think I would enjoy it at all!)

Now, I could take up a couple of pages just writing about my grandchildren, but that doesn't fulfill the purpose of a pastor's article in a congregation newsletter. Instead, I want to focus on the discipline, the commitment, and the training of the athletes that I have recently watched - and learn from them.

It is hard to believe the number of hours in a day and years in a lifetime that many in professional sports give up to become the best in the world at what they do. It reminds me of the story I've read about a woman who came up to a world-famous violinist (I don't remember which one) and told him that she



would give her life to be able to play as beautifully as he did. He turned to the woman and simply said: "*I did.*"

Whether it's playing soccer, baseball, a musical instrument, or being involved in dance, singing, and acting, if doing very well in this particular activity is truly important to someone, they devote their time and energy and resources to working out, training, and practicing - as well as competing and performing.

Now a question: *How important is your Christian faith and Jesus' call to you to be his disciple?* If it is important, then we need to do something about it. In fact, the apostle Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians (9:24-25), wrote these words: "*Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one.*"

There are a number of different Christian "faith practices" - ways that a Christian is to live out his or her faith. I lift up a few of these with the prayer that each of you would find ways to grow in these Christian faith practices. And, following the model of the athletes that some of us have been watching, growing in these practices will mean practice - *doing them!* **Worship. Study. Pray. Give. Serve. Encourage. Invite.**

Let's devote ourselves to practicing these things so that we can faithfully and fully participate in God's gift of life with others in this world. It's then a win for everybody!

Practicing with you,

Pastor Mark S. Luepke

Dear St. Paul Members & Friends,

We are excited to share that Pastor Mark Luepke has agreed to continue serving as our part-time interim minister through the end of this year. We are grateful for his passionate preaching, and thankful for his and Nancy's friendship. Thanks be to God for their partnership with us!

Blessings,
St. Paul Council

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: Maggie Villafuerto, Richard J., Melinda, Callahan McCallister, Brock Woessner, Lori Dewey, Maggie N., the Woodworth family, Michelle Klinger, Matt Friel, Sandy Julifs, Mike, Dylan Wescott, and Phyllis Jacobson.

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 July 22, 2026

Budgeted Expenses \$180,796

Offerings/Interest \$125,446

Expenses \$118,400



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

Katherine Janssen

Cliff Miller

Sandra Sweitzer

Dale Worley

Lori Dewey (now residing at Heritage Woods in Sterling)

Sandy Julifs (currently residing at Citadel in Sterling)

Please join us for BBT in August! The purpose of BBT is to share life together; connecting in God's love and welcoming God's presence in all of life. These are no host gatherings for all interested parties. **Please join us for BBT on Tuesday, August 11 at 11:30 a.m. at Urban Eats** (130 E. Main Street, Morrison). **You are also welcome to join us for BBT on Tuesday, August 25 at 11:30 a.m. at El Tapatio** (1100 1st Avenue, Rock Falls). **Come and share life with God and each other at BBT!**

**Breaking
Bread
Together
BBT**

Stewardship – Trust in God:

At the end of your life on earth,
You will be evaluated and rewarded
according to how well you
handled what God entrusted to you.

The only right stewardship is
that which is tested by the rule of love.

Stewardship is leaving a system better than you found it.



**Take a moment to pray and express your gratitude to God.
Give generously with a grateful heart!**



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

This summer, the **UNITE** churches are again hosting student musicians from the Sterling/Rock Falls area. This includes any student completing 7th grade – a just graduated college/post grad student. We ask that students share a piece with us at St. Paul and then arrange to play that piece at other **UNITE** congregations, where you will be paid \$30/service as a guest musician. This is a chance to keep your music skills tip top over the summer, share an IMEA or audition piece you may be working on, or another special piece. Please contact *Dawn Zeigler* 815.275.3775 or dawn@stpaulsterling.com for all of the details! We can't wait to hear you!



HYMN SING

On Sunday, September 6 starting at 8:45 a.m. we will have a hymn sing before worship. Have the hymn numbers ready of your favorites, that you'd like us to sing together that day! Come early to worship and bring your voice - or just enjoy listening to others!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

The Rock River Valley Barbershop Chorus will be us on Sunday, August 30. They will present their "Sermon in Song" sharing their music with us throughout the service. Loose offering and the children's offering will be a donation to the chorus. Plan now to attend!



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	Andrew Eakle	<u>Happy 34th Anniversary</u>
4	Vann Reitzel	August 1, 1992
6	Jeni Metzler	Greg & Dawn Zeigler
8	Jeff Waite	
9	Ann Beswick	<u>Happy 37th Anniversary</u>
10	Dan Dir – 92	August 5, 1989
12	Jill Straw	Paul & Dianne Adams
13	Stacey Avelar	
18	John Renner	<u>Happy 14th Anniversary</u>
	Ron Ukena	August 20, 2012
19	Nancy Beck	Dennis & Margarita Biester
24	Matthew Spaulding	
26	Tony Eakle	<u>Happy 33rd Anniversary</u>
26	Tori Metzler	August 14, 1993
27	Kelci Eakle	Scot & Berta Beyer
29	Cheryl Gorman	
	Julie Woessner DeJonge	<u>Happy 44th Anniversary</u>
30	AJ Avelar	August 27, 1982
		Larri & Sue Dirks
		<u>Happy 1st Anniversary</u>
		August 30, 2025
		Randy & Julie DeJonge





WELCA Tri-Church

Evening Gather Bible Study

Coordinator Karen Wolfe

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

Next meeting is Tuesday, August 4, 2026

No preparation needed – join us for learning and conversation!

Morning Gather Bible Study

Coordinator Ronda Borgmann

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

Next meeting is Tuesday, August 18, 2026

No preparation needed – join us for learning and conversation!

Quilting for Lutheran World Relief

Co-coordinators 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, August 19, 2026

No experience necessary – join us for fun while we do this important work!

Family Group

Coordinator Gabby Law

Meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month at St. Paul from 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Next meeting is Wednesday, August 19, 2026

Adult bible study time with frozen pizzas for supper and a guided children's activity – join as you are able!

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, August 31, 2026; Place T.B.D.

RSVP to Judy Bartel each month at 815-751-6768 if you can join!

Lutheran World Relief Quilting

Our next quilting day will be on Wednesday, August 19 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. in the Social Hall to tie and pin the quilts. No sewing is required. Please join us!



We will also assemble the school backpacks. Thank you to all who purchased items for the backpacks.

We have completed 88 quilts thus far. We are always in need of clean, spot-free fabric to be used within our quilts. Donations can be placed in the closet by the kitchen.

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



Tri Church News: Save the Date: Tri Church will be celebrating 10 years with a special worship service featuring Bishop Fidler and brunch at St. Paul on Sunday, January 17, 2027 at 9:15 a.m. Mark your calendar and look for some historical tidbits about Tri Church in future newsletters.

Youth News!



Children's Offering

The August Children's offering will go to towards the shipping of the LWR Kits and quilts that have been collected.

Hot Dog Day Friday, August 7, 2025 from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Downtown Sterling

Featuring 25¢ hot dogs, chips & drinks at various locations throughout the downtown, along with side walk sales, a car wash, fun fair and more! Come see St. Paul's Face painting booth at the Fun Fair with FREE children's activities from 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at the Sterling Marketplace (111 W. 2nd St). If you would like to help with the face painting, please let Gabby know.





CommUNITY VBS was a success again this year. There were 76 kids that participated. A total of \$1,287 was collected throughout the week and at the worship service. Thank you to all who donated food items, helped and financially supported

this program.

Backpack Blessing On Sunday, August 9, we will have a Backpack Blessing. Students or anyone in education--Bring your backpacks or bag to worship. There will be special Blessing around the backpacks during Worship for the students as they begin their new school year. **Plan now to attend! And don't forget your backpack!**





Tri Church Confirmation kicks off this month! Tri Church Confirmation is a multi-year opportunity for 6th-8th graders to explore their faith through worship, service, learning and more! It is our deep hope that young peoples' faith will continue to be formed through experiences, learning and relationships! We intend to meet monthly for class on Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Confirmation kicks off on August 16th with a special Parent/Guardian and Youth Confirmation Kick Off from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at St. Paul. During our time together we will be exploring what our 2026-2027 Tri Church Confirmation year could hold, diving into our first session about the Bible and growing in God with each other. **Please bring a dish to pass and wear clothes you can move in** as we will have a variety of activities throughout our time together.

Here is the full schedule for the 2026-2027 Confirmation year:

August 16, Parent/Guardian & Youth Confirmation Kick-Off, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. St. Paul (1701 16th Ave., Sterling)—Hopes, expectations & getting to know your Bible
September 20, Confirmation, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. at St. John's (703 3rd Ave., Sterling)

Old Testament

October 4, Confirmation, 11 a.m., - 2 p.m. at Immanuel (501 8th Ave., Rock Falls)

Old Testament

October 7, 7 p.m. *SERVICE NIGHT—Packing BUDDY BAGS at Wesley United Methodist (2200 16th Ave., Sterling)*

November 8, Confirmation, 11 a.m., - 2 p.m. at St. Paul, Old Testament

November 20-21 *LOMC Retreat*

December 6, Confirmation, 11 a.m., - 2 p.m. at St. John's, Old Testament Review

Quiz and Celebrating Jesus' Birth

January 10, Confirmation, 11 a.m., - 2 p.m. at Immanuel, New Testament

January 13, 7 p.m. *SERVICE NIGHT—Packing BUDDY BAGS at Wesley United Methodist (2200 16th Ave., Sterling)*

February 7, Confirmation, 11 a.m., - 2 p.m. at St. Paul, New Testament

February 12-14 Wisconsin Dells Youth Quake

March 7, Confirmation, 11 a.m., - 2 p.m. at St. John's, New Testament

April 11, Confirmation, 11 a.m., - 2 p.m. at Immanuel New Testament

April 14, 7 p.m. *SERVICE NIGHT—Packing BUDDY BAGS at Wesley United Methodist (2200 16th Ave., Sterling)*

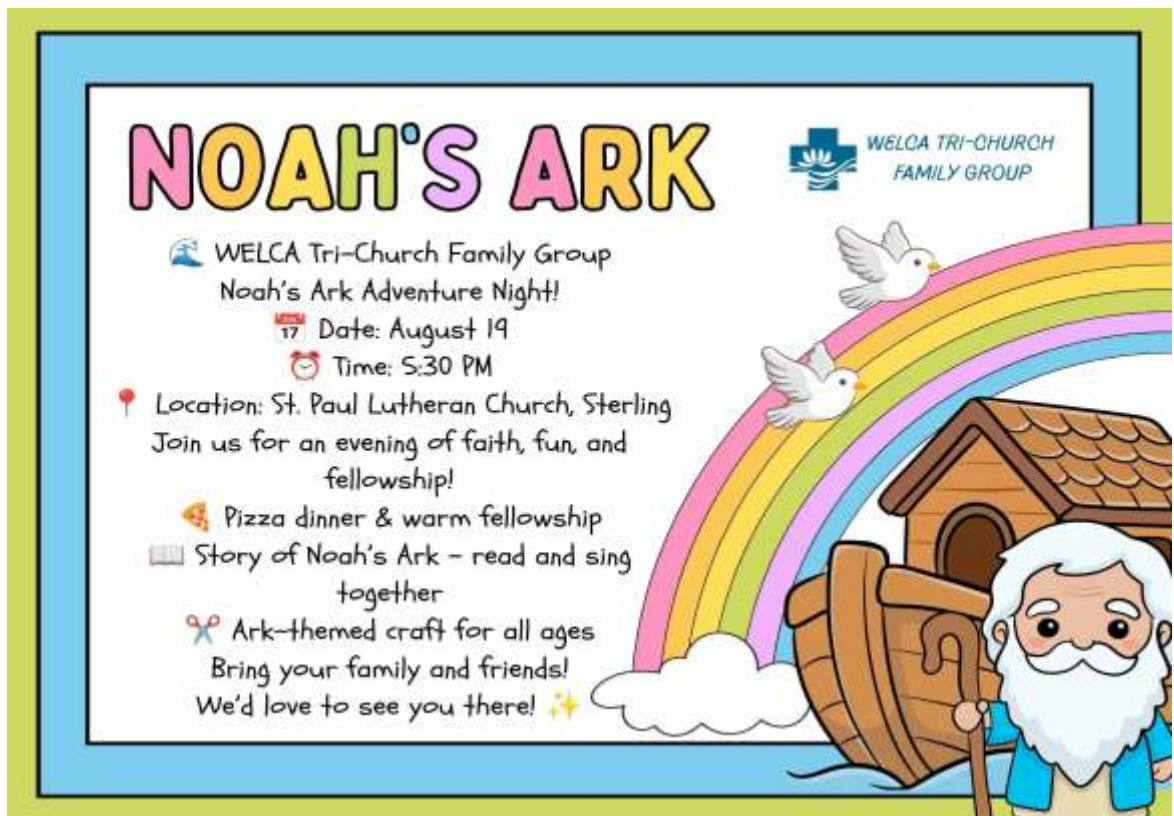
May 2, Confirmation, 11 a.m., - 2 p.m. at St. Paul

New Testament Final Review & Quiz, Year End Celebration

Please note: This schedule is subject to changes and additions. We will do our best to communicate any changes through email, text and congregational publications.

We anticipate a wondrous year of Growing in Christ together!

--Gabby, Pastor Bree, & Pastor Jacob





JOIN US FOR

SPLASH DAY

AUGUST 23RD

STARTS AT 10:30
DIRECTLY AFTER SERVICE

FREE EVENT WITH SNACKS
AND DRINKS AVAILABLE

ACTIVITIES

SPRINKLERS, WATER
BALLOONS, CHALK,
PLAYGROUND,
TODDLER/BABY FRIENDLY
WATER TOYS, AND MORE!

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH
1701 16TH AVE, STERLING, IL 61081

Community Announcements



National Night Out is Tuesday, August 4. This event, sponsored by the Sterling Police Department, will take place at Grandon Civic Center in Sterling from 5:00-7:00 p.m.



**Don't Take
a Vacation
from Church**

Little Savers: Help Your Kids Build Smart Money Habits— Early

A hands-on learning that makes money simple, fun, and practical



Little Savers is a hands-on experience designed to help kids begin making thoughtful money choices in ways they can understand and practice over time. While kids learn through interactive activities, parents gain simple tools to continue building healthy money habits at home— together.

During this session, we'll also address how making even one change can have a big influence on your financial life.

This session is hosted by the Sauk Valley Financial Associates. Little Savers is a fun in-person event teaching kids how to save and manage what's given smartly! Hey there! Get ready for fun-filled, in-person event where young minds can learn all about saving and smart habits. Little Savers is perfect for kiddos looking to start their journey towards their future goals. Bring your little ones and lets make time to talk about creating smart habits young. Parents can attend "Do One Thing Differently" while kids learn.

Reserve your spot.

Please call Diego Hernandez at 815-213-7181, email diego.hernandez@thrivent.com or visit connect.thrivent.com/john-kirchhoff.

Thursday, August 6, 2026

1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. CT

Thrivent

811 E 3rd Street

Sterling, IL



Scan to RSVP



As sweet as honey



Honey is both a sweetener and a medicine.
How can our words be used in the same ways?



Directions: Use the hexagon key to fill in the missing vowels and complete Proverbs 16:24, NIV.



Gr c s w ords
 r h n c mb,
 sw t t th s l
 nd h l ng 
 t th b n s.



PROVERBS 16:24, NIV

"Be humble, be at peace, bring the heat high and inside."



Sermon on the Mound

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

Nancy Eilers, Custodian – (815) 441-4435;

Amanda Fortune, Custodian – (815) 499-5190



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

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.

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