

St. Paul Lutheran Church ELCA

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

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

JULY 2026

Come Home"

Being retired - okay, being retired with a very part-time job (by choice!) - is a very different life than non-retired life was. I won't get into all the differences, but one of them is certainly how Nancy and I think about "vacation time." We no longer need to get our four vacation weekends for the year figured out in January, basically so that I would know what to tell couples inquiring about wedding dates. It's a lot easier now to be semi-spontaneous!

Invariably, with congregation members knowing when we would be heading out for a vacation trip, Nancy and I would have folks say to us in the days ahead of our departure: "Have fun!" "Be safe!" "Have a great time!" "Get some rest." "Enjoy your time with each other!"

And then every once in a while we heard: "Come home!" Come home. Nancy and I always had every intention of following through on the words of advice and blessing that were shared with us. (Although, as active as we like to be on our trips, the "get some rest" was always more of "a break from the usual" rather than a "lying around and relaxing" kind of rest.) And then we also "came home." It was (and is) always good to come home - to our house and pets, and to our church home.

It is painful for me to hear the stories of those who don't feel that they have a community of nurture, support and encouragement. It is painful for me to hear of the "aloneness" that some folks often feel - even in the midst of a host of people. And it is even more painful for me to hear folks share stories of not feeling at home in their community of faith - their church or congregation. A part of the



pain I feel comes from knowing that even though I might be hearing this from folks who are a part of another faith community, there are certainly folks who belong to my faith community who feel the same.

Some who have left their church home do so intentionally and maybe for specific reasons. Others drift away over time and maybe don't even fully realize the extent to which they have done so until sometime much later. In either case, I invite and encourage you to "come home." If one has been "on vacation" from a life of worship of the Lord in an assembly of the body of Christ, it may take some effort to change one's routine or mindset. Or one might have some fear about being "welcomed" home. (Some may want it recognized by others that they have been "gone" and have now returned - while others would very much prefer just being able to slip back into place without any notice at all.) But what a blessing it is to "come home"!

If any of you reading this have left "home" because of a particular issue or incident in the past, this may require more than simply heading out the door and driving to the church. Maybe it's reaching out to someone in order to start a reconciliation process that is needed before one can "come home." Maybe it's a conversation with the pastor.

And it may be that, for the sake of the importance of worshipping the Lord regularly in an assembly of the body of Christ - important for you and for all those *other* folks who may need you there - it may be that, yes, you need to go home, but that home is another part of the body of Christ - another congregation. While the "selfish" part of me always resists this idea, I have certainly helped folks find a different Christian fellowship with which to call "home." Having a congregational worship home is way too important to insist that it be "this" or "that" home!

"Come home." I have appreciated these words. I now extend them to you - whether you've been gone from your worship home since last weekend, last month, last Easter or Christmas, since before the COVID pandemic, or when your last child was baptized or confirmed. "Come home."

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: 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, Phyllis Jacobson and the family and friends of Brad Hussung.

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 June 20, 2026

Budgeted Expenses \$154,968

Offerings/Interest \$ 83,299

Expenses \$113,979



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 July! 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. **We are changing the days of the week to meet to Tuesdays in July. Please join us for BBT on Tuesday, July 14 at 11:30 a.m. at Harvest Bakery & More** (916 Albany Street, Erie.) There will be a car pool from Immanuel at 11:00 a.m. and shop at **Sandlin** (810 Main Street, Erie) following lunch, **You are also welcome to join us for BBT on Tuesday, July 28 at 11:30 a.m. as Asian Buffet** (3106 East Lincolnway, Sterling). **Come and share life with God and each other at BBT!**

**Breaking
Bread
Together
BBT**

Stewardship – Reciprocation of Kindness:

Reciprocation of kindness; Give it and be grateful

Do not expect it **from** your kindness.

Disappointment comes to those who **EXPECT** reciprocation and gratitude,

Because vanity always expects a compliment or reward.

Vanity thrives on praises, applause and reciprocation.

Sometimes, those who are always giving, are the ones in need of receiving.

Every day, try to help someone who can't reciprocate your kindness.

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, July 6 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!



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	Patti Arians	<u>Happy 22nd Anniversary</u>
	Christy Lincoln	July 3, 2004
4	Beverly Graunke	Adrian & Stacey Avelar
5	Robert Dillon	
6	Max Brockman	<u>Happy 69th Anniversary</u>
7	Shannon Kramer	July 7, 1957
8	Dawn Arians	Dale & Sharon Worley
11	Breann Grell	
12	Sandy Julifs	<u>Happy 16th Anniversary</u>
	Marla Esnard	July 10, 2010
13	Jeff Ivarson	Dan & Susan Bartel
14	Lillyanna Reyes	
15	Jennfier Pillars	<u>Happy 11th Anniversary</u>
16	Randy DeJonge	July 11, 2015
19	Daniel Straw	Tim & Chrissy Zollinger
24	Tasha O'Brien	
25	Emily Wolber	<u>Happy 14th Anniversary</u>
26	Clifford Miller – 100	July 14, 2012
	Logan Pillars	Tim & Shannon Kramer
27	Jim O'Brien	
31	Sandra Sweitzer	<u>Happy 32nd Anniversary</u>
		July 16, 1994
		Jeff & Kjersten Ivarson



Happy 57th Anniversary
July 19, 1969
Ruben & JoAnn Garcia

Happy 34th Anniversary
July 24, 1992
Jeff & Dawn Waite

Happy 12th Anniversary
July 24, 2014
JJ & Lana Shore

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, July 21, 2026

No preparation needed – join us for learning and conversation!



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, July 7, 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, July 15, 2026

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

Family Group

Coordinator Gabby Law

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

Next meeting is Wednesday, July 8, 2026 (Change of date due to VBS)

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, July 27, 2026. The place will be determined at a later date.

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

Thanks to all who attended the June 16th WELCA Tri-Church craft and fellowship event at St. Paul! There are pictures on the WELCA Tri-Church Facebook page. Be watching for a fall activity.

Lutheran World Relief Quilting

Our next quilting day will be on Wednesday, July 15 from 9:00a – 12:00p in the Social Hall to tie and pin the quilts. No sewing is required. Please join us!



Thanks for the donations of sheets and materials that we use within our quilts. Any donations can be placed in the closet by the kitchen. We have 78 quilts to date.

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

Lutheran World Relief School Kits

Through the month of **JULY** we will again gather School kits supplies to send with the quilts to enable children to participate in their learning.

We have 60 backpacks sewn. They will be in the back of the sanctuary. Please take and fill with the school supplies and return to the church during the month of July. Thank you.

LWR School Supplies Shopping List

(All items need to be new)

4-70 sheet notebooks of wide-or-college-ruled paper. **NO** loose leaf paper.

1-30 centimeter ruler, or a ruler with centimeters on one side and inches on the other. **Hard rulers only please**

1-Pencil sharpener

1-Eraser (2 1/2inches)

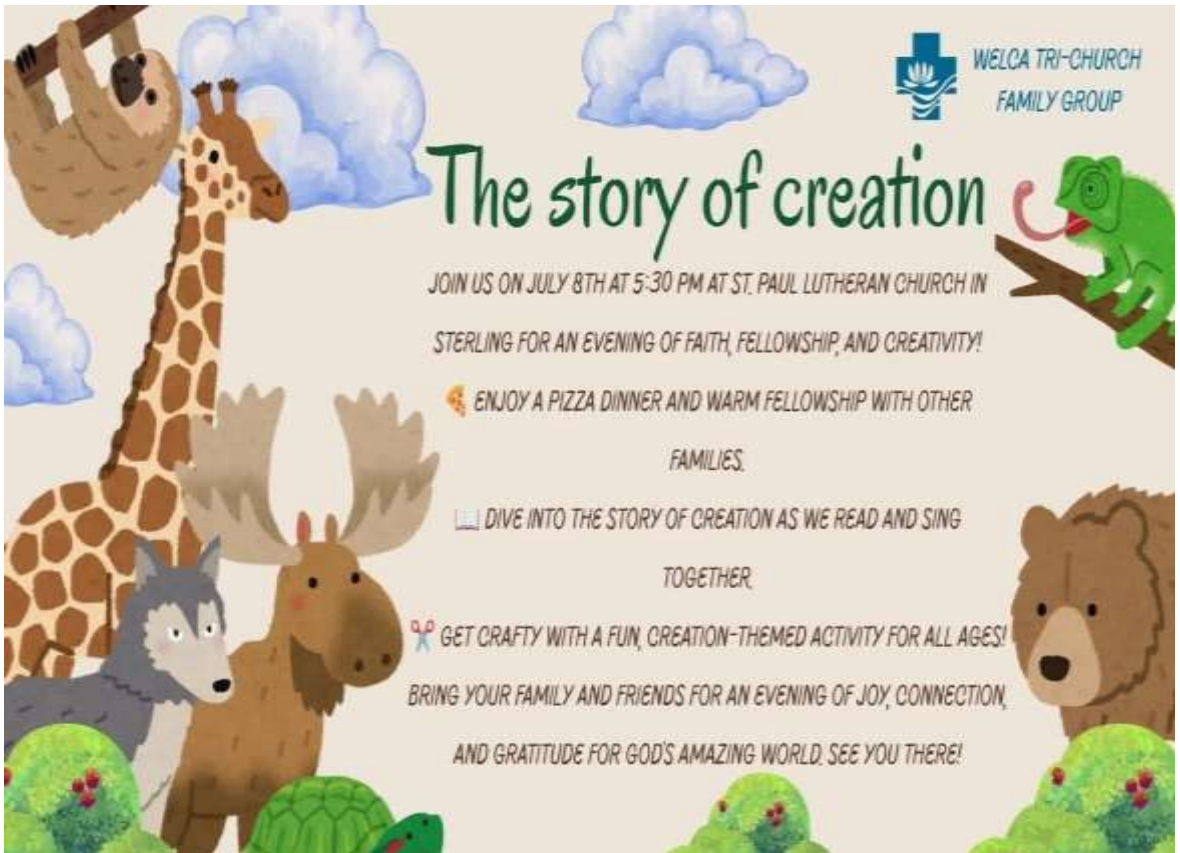
1-BLUNT pair of scissors

5-UNSHARPENED #2 Pencils with erasers

5-Black or Blue ballpoint pens (No ink gel)

1-Box of 16 or 24 count crayons





The story of creation

JOIN US ON JULY 8TH AT 5:30 PM AT ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN STERLING FOR AN EVENING OF FAITH, FELLOWSHIP, AND CREATIVITY!

🍕 ENJOY A PIZZA DINNER AND WARM FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER FAMILIES.

📖 DIVE INTO THE STORY OF CREATION AS WE READ AND SING TOGETHER.

✂️ GET CRAFTY WITH A FUN, CREATION-THEMED ACTIVITY FOR ALL AGES! BRING YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS FOR AN EVENING OF JOY, CONNECTION, AND GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S AMAZING WORLD. SEE YOU THERE!



Tri-Church News: We join the people of St. John's in giving thanks for Shawn Wolfe, who has completed the Diakonia program! We will celebrate this accomplishment with a special presentation from Diakonia leader, Doug Wood, during the **Wednesday evening worship on July 29 at 6:00 p.m. at St.**

John's (703 3rd Avenue, Sterling). There will be a gluten-free reception following. **You are welcome to prepare a card, prayer of favorite Bible verse to pass along as a blessing to Shawn. All are welcome!**

Shawn is an active member of St. John's and such a gift. Shawn as responded to God's call and the needs of the church and is serving as the Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) at Trinity in Milledgeville and First Lutheran Jordan in rural Sterling. We thank God for raising Shawn up within St. John's and working with them in service to others! **We hope you will join in worship and celebration on the 29th!** We are church together! If you would like to assist with the reception, please contact Denise Norman at denise49@yahoo.com or 815-631-9506.

Youth News!



Children's Offering

The July Children's offering will go to towards the purchase of supplies needed for LWR School Kits. Families are also invited to shop for the needed supplies or contribute monetary donations to be used to purchase the items. Grab an empty bag from the coat rack at the back of the sanctuary to take with you. The list of items is attached to the bags.



Please join us **July 12-16 at Bethel Reformed Church in Sterling** for Rainforest Falls: Exploring the Nature of God!



This will be an unforgettable week of adventure, worship, and faith-building fun for kids **4 yrs. old through 5th grade**. **A free dinner** is served nightly at **5:30 p.m.** and VBS runs from **6:00-8:00 p.m. each night**

MANY (6th grade through adult) VOLUNTEERS are needed to help lead games, crafts, music, Bible stories and more. Whether you love being on stage or serving behind the scenes, there's a place for you!



You can scan the QR code to register kids or sign up to volunteer. Let's help kids discover Jesus!

*CommUNITY VBS is sponsored and led by Immanuel, First Presbyterian, St. Paul, St. John's, Grace Episcopal, First Christian of Sterling, Bethel Reformed Church and Open Door Community Church. Bethel is the host site this year. IMPACT hours for service are available. **Thank you for supporting this vital ministry!***

Join us for CommUNITY Worship on Sunday, June 19m at 9:30 a.m. at Grandon Civic Center (304 Brinks Ct., Sterling)! We will be worshipping God with our CommUNITY VBS partners!

If there is inclement weather, worship service will be held at Bethel Reformed Church (230 E. 23rd Street, Sterling). All are welcome!

There will be NO Worship at St. Paul.

ELCA Youth Gathering

Attention all high school students!

Mark your calendars for an incredible experience next summer: the ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, MN, from June 28th to July 2nd, 2027! This is a fantastic opportunity to grow in faith, connect with peers, and make a difference.

Miss Gabby needs to hear from you ASAP if you're interested in attending. The sooner we have a headcount, the better we can plan fundraising efforts to support the trip.

Don't miss out—let Miss Gabby know today! If you have any questions or need more details, feel free to ask.



Community Announcements

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



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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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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Website: www.stpaulsterling.com

Facebook: St. Paul Lutheran Church – Sterling, IL