

St. Paul Lutheran Church ELCA

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

Email: stpaulsterling@comcast.net

Website: www.stpaulsterling.com

OCTOBER 2026

"The Purpose of the Bible"

October is a month in which we remember and celebrate Reformation Day. Therefore it is also a month in which we remember and celebrate the gift of the Bible. This said, let me share with you a section of Martin Marty's book *"Lutheran Questions, Lutheran Answers."* The section that caught my attention was entitled: *"What is the Purpose of the Bible?"* It seems a fitting question at any time - but maybe especially for us in the month of October.



"Lutherans might begin to answer this question by saying something about what the purpose of the Bible is *not*. For example, it is not a textbook on science, a reference work to which we pose questions and get answers about the natural world. It speaks a great deal about that natural world, but its goal is to have us relate that world to God, not the physics classroom.

Next, it is not a book of rules, a log of hundreds of "do this's" and "don't do that's," although one can read in it and deduce from it many bits of good advice about how to live and think. Thinking of it as a rulebook leads to forgetting what its basic message is. That message is not "Follow these rules and all will be well. Comply with enough of them and a holy God will be satisfied. Learn them and you can judge your neighbor who is not quite up to your standards and can't match your achievements."

The Bible, furthermore, is not a guide to success. You will hear from some promoters that you will benefit financially if you practice stewardship as the Bible urges, or that the parables are good lessons in successful

management. The fact that the Bible says we have to lose in order to win and die in order to live makes clear that God turns the world topsy-turvy. Very often those who can't know worldly success are most vividly portrayed as the children of God.

The Bible lets us know that God is in control and that we should consult it in all circumstances involving doubt and faith. When we are on our high horses, the Bible, through many stories and sayings, helps knock us down. More important, since we are often to be in the shadows and sloughs, to walk in the valley of decision and be threatened at the chasm of despair, the Bible witnesses to the fact that a loving God remains in control and that our lives are in God's hand.

All this becomes most clear in the words and works of Jesus Christ. The New Testament is most clear about how the God who is in control leaves power behind (Philippians 2) and reaches down to our level, becoming one of us and one with us. He shouted, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" but he is the last one ever to have reason to feel abandoned by God, and after his resurrection no one need ever again to be alone. The purpose of the Bible is to show us the company of God and help us realize it.

Here are other purposes of the Bible that go with these. They help us find our identity, our place, our vocation, our freedom, our relations to others. But all the purposes are wrapped up in what is unfolded with the gift of Christ."

Thank you, Dr. Marty. But even more so, thanks be to God for the gift of the Bible and, even more so, the Word made flesh - Jesus Christ.

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: Craig Green, Tricia M., Ken & Stephanie, Richard J., Callahan McCallister, Brock Woessner, Lori Dewey, Michelle Klinger, Matt Friel, Sandy Julifs, Mike, 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 September 18, 2026

Budgeted Expenses \$232,452

Offerings/Interest \$141,854

Expenses \$151,490



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)

Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Jana Howson, will be our worship leader and proclaimer of the Word on Sunday, October 4th. Pastor Howson is the synod support leader for the search and call process for a new pastor for our congregation. We hope you can be here to welcome her to St. Paul Lutheran Church! (Pastor Luepke will be officiating at a wedding service on the weekend of the fourth.)



**Guest
Preacher**



Pet Blessing Oct 4

During outdoor worship on Sunday October 4, we will be worshipping with all God's creation, including our pets! You are invited to bring your dog, cat, horse, fish or any pet to receive a special blessing for the animals and attend worship with you. (In case of inclement weather, the Pet Blessing will be canceled).

Fellowship Time Guest Speaker – October 11

After our worship service on Sunday morning, October 11th, we will have the opportunity to meet Pastor Pius Yugi, a pastor of Cross and Cornerstone Ministries in Kenya. Among the service ministries of this church community have been establishing food resources, water wells, homes for those in need and now establishing a much needed medical clinic in his village with ongoing construction. Pastor Yugi has some established relationships in Sterling and Freeport and is seeking out church communities with whom to share about the ministry in which he and this congregation in Kenya are involved in.



While St. Paul, through the Northern Illinois Synod, has established companionship ties with the North Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania and the Arcot Lutheran Church in India, we are giving Pastor Yugi an opportunity to share with us about his ministry efforts. We will introduce him during the morning's time of worship.

You are encouraged to attend, learn, and grow from connecting with one of our Christian brothers from Africa. The presentation on Sunday, October 11th, starting about 10:15, is scheduled to last about 30 minutes.

Decorate Leader Needed



Have you started your Christmas shopping?

In looking toward the upcoming Holiday Season, we are looking for someone to lead the Christmas decorating team. Nancy Eilers has held this position for several years and has decided to step

down. If you feel that is something you are interested in, please talk to Nancy or Sue in the church office. Thank you for prayerfully considering this.

Breaking Bread Together BBT

Please join us for BBT in October! 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, October 13 at 11:30 a.m.** at The Shed (134 S. Main Street, Walnut). **You are also welcome to join us for BBT on Tuesday, October 27 at 11:30 a.m.** at Touch of Tai (102 W. 2nd Street, Rock Falls). **Come and share life with God and each other at BBT!**

Stewardship – If You Sow Generosity, You Will Reap Generosity

2 Corinthians 9:6-7, *“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”*



The principle of sowing and reaping applies to every area of life, not just your finances. Whatever you sow in life, you're going to reap. Whatever you deposit is going to be returned to you. If you sow criticism in life, you are going to reap criticism from other people. If you sow kindness, you're going to reap kindness. It is the same for sowing seeds and harvesting the plants.

God set it up this way because he wants you to become like him. God is a giver. The only way that you're ever going to become like him is to learn to be generous in all aspects of your life. When you're stingy, you're like the Devil. When you're generous, you're like God. When you give it away, God multiplies it.

This sounds illogical – to give away when you have a need so that you will get more back. But that's why it requires faith. God says the way you get is by giving, not by holding on.

Gratitude Sunday information will be coming later this month.

Prayerfully consider how you will sow and reap Generosity.

Take a moment to pray and express your gratitude to God.

Give generously with a grateful heart!



Tri Church Menz Group will meet at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sterling on Monday, October 5 at 6:00 p.m. A hearty welcome and invitation is extended!

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 Mel Arians **Happy 39th Anniversary**

2 Sue Dirks October 3, 1987

3 Katelyn Grell Ron & Rhonda Hulteen

10 Katherine Eilers

12 Rhonda Hulteen **Happy 21st Anniversary**

13 AJ Avelar October 8, 2005

15 Dave Koster Chad & Jill Straw

20 Keith Grell

Valerie Petty **Happy 57th Anniversary**

21 Jim Gorman October 11, 1969

Russell Page Jim & Cheryl Gorman

24 Leta VanZuiden

Brandon Adams **Happy 6th Anniversary**

27 Mike O'Brien October 11, 2020

Seth & Reganne Springman

Happy 40th Anniversary

October 18, 1986

Andy & Marilyn Geiger

Happy 36th Anniversary

October 20, 1990

Keith & Dawn Grell





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, October 6, 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, October 20, 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, October 21, 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, October 21, 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, October 26, 2026; (call Judy for location)

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

WE LCA Tri-Church Progressive Meal

Monday, November 2, 2026

5:30-7:30pm

St. John's Lutheran Church - 703 Third Ave Sterling

Bring a hat or mittens for local school children.

Sign up at one of the three churches by Sunday, October 18



Women ^{of the} **ELCA**



Sign up sheet is on the table at the back of the sanctuary

Lutheran World Relief Quilting

Our next quilting day will be on Wednesday, October 21 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. in the Social Hall. No sewing experience is required.



Lutheran World Relief
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. LASTING PROMISE.

We had a change of where the quilts & kits will be taken since the warehouse in Elgin is no longer accepting donations. Paul Wolfe from St. John's is planning to take their kits to the ingathering in Rockford and has agreed to take our personal care kits and school backpacks along. We thank him for that.

Our quilts will go to the Cedar Rapids, Iowa ingathering on October 18, 2026. We sent 95 quilts, 54 personal care kits, and 66 school backpacks.

Thank you again for your donations.

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



Tri Church TEN: Our Story Unfolds

In each of the newsletters leading up to the January 17, 2027 joint worship and celebration at St. Paul, Tri Church is sharing some moments from our nearly 10-year history a few years at a time. This month we are looking at highlights from 2019 and 2020.



In February of 2019, Tri Church hosted the Nordic Choir of Luther College which included housing for 80 students at the Comfort Inn, a pre-concert meal and post-concert reception – all donated by Tri Church members! God's Work Our Hands followed in June with 40 participants helping at LOMC (Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Center) with planting flowers and picnic table assembly and staining, plus collecting "wish list" items in advance such as towels, shower curtains, mops & buckets. What a year of sharing time, talents and resources for the glory of God!

With the COVID shutdown beginning in mid-March 2020 and our churches closed for Sunday worship. Tri Church responded with its first online worship on March 22, 2020. This intentional choice of serving God together through online worship allowed each congregation to offer weekly worship the very next Sunday after things shut down. It was wondrous how worship came together so quickly! This was an opportunity to for so many – pastors, musicians, readers, leaders and tech support – to collaboratively share their talents from a variety of locations. Thanks be to God!

While a major fundraising event in April 2020 to purchase a generator for Rock River Hospice & Home was derailed due to COVID, the generosity of the TC congregations and our local community prevailed! Cash donations, Thrivent Choice Dollars, an online silent auction and a matching gift totaled nearly \$28,000 allowing the purchase of the generator. Despite the challenges of COVID, Tri Church was guided and strengthened by its mission: "United in Jesus love, we learn, serve, and grow through faith and action."

Next month, highlights will be shared from the 2021 and 2022 years. And . . . save the date for January 17, 2027 at 9:15 am at St. Paul for the 10th Anniversary worship and brunch with Bishop Fidler!

Deb Keaschall
Tri Church Convener

October Tri Church Activities & Meetings

- 4 – Confirmation @ Immanuel, 11 am – 2 pm
- 5 – Menz Group @ St. John's, 6 pm
- 6 – WELCA Evening Gather Bible Study @ St. John's, 6 pm
- 7 – Confirmation Service Night @ Wesley United Methodist, 7 pm
(Packing Buddy Bags; 2200 16th Ave., Sterling)
- 20 – WELCA Morning Gather Bible Study @ Immanuel, 9 am
- 21 - WELCA Quilting for Lutheran World Relief @ St. Paul, 9 am
- 21 - WELCA Family Group Meeting @ St. Paul, 5:30-7 pm
- 26 – WELCA CLEO (Church Ladies Eating Out), 5:30 pm
(RSVP to Judy Bartel at 815-751-6768)
- 26 – Tri Church Leadership Meeting @ St. Paul, 6 pm

Youth News!



Children's Offering

During the month of October, our children's offering at worship is going toward Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) Holiday Hope Chest. LSSI offers children and their families gifts for Christmas through the purchase of gift cards to specific vendors. Thank you for helping young people served by LSSI have gifts for Christmas this year! More information will be coming in regards to purchasing gift cards/gifts on your own.





NEW! Sunday School – Fall 2026

St. Paul and St. John's will be combining classes this year. Classes will be held at St. Paul at 10:15 a.m.



Tri Church Confirmation

2026-2027 Confirmation year:

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

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

Save the Dates!



Quake 2027 –February 12–14, 2027

We're gearing up for Quake 2027, our annual retreat for middle and high school students! This is a fantastic time to deepen your faith, make new friends, and grow in community. Ready to join? Let Miss Gabby know ASAP to reserve your spot!

LOMC Fall Retreat – Choose Your Adventure!

November 20–22, 2026

This year, we're offering three flexible options for the LOMC Fall Retreat—pick the one that works best for you!

Option 1: Friday to Saturday

- Arrive: Friday at 6:00 PM
- Depart: Saturday at 4:00 PM

Option 2: Saturday Only

- Arrive: Saturday at 9:30 AM
- Depart: Saturday at 4:00 PM

Option 3: Saturday to Sunday

- Arrive: Saturday at 9:30 AM
- Depart: Sunday at 9:00 AM

Open to all middle and high school students!

Sign up with Miss Gabby ASAP to let us know if you'd like to go.





ELCA Youth Gathering – Last Call!

Minneapolis, Minn., June 28–July 2, 2027

The 2027 ELCA Youth and young adult Gathering is just around the corner, and this is your final chance to be part of this life-changing experience!

Open to:

- Youth in grades 8–12 (as of fall 2026)
- Young adults ages 18–35

Don't miss this opportunity to connect, grow, and be inspired. Contact Miss Gabby before Nov. 1 to secure your spot!

Join us for our annual Halloween Trunk-or-Treat event on Saturday, October 31st, from 3:30–5:30 p.m. in the main parking lot of St. Paul!

Bring your decorated trunk and dress in a costume! A sign-up sheet will be available by the sound table in the back of the sanctuary for those who would like to participate.

Donations are welcome! If you'd like to contribute candy or items for St. Paul to hand out to kids, there will be a donation basket in the back of the sanctuary. We'll also be serving up apple cider slushies made with our slushy machine—don't miss out!



Community Announcements

The Loaves and Fishes Breakfast Program at First United Methodist Church, Sterling, serves hundreds of meals each week day! Plastic grocery sacks are needed. Please place your plastic grocery bags donations in the box at the back of the sanctuary.



Whiteside County Senior Center

**TRUNK
OR
TREAT**

**October 21st, 2026
4:30pm–6:30pm**

**Join us for a fun and free chili dinner,
cookie decorating, candy, costumes, and
trunk or treating. If spooky weather is
upon us, this event will be held inside!**



**1207 West 9th Street
Sterling, IL 61081
815-622-9230**

Autumn FEST

AT LOMC



SATURDAY
**OCTOBER 10,
2026**

10AM – 3PM

Activities



PUMPKIN
CARVING



CIDER
PRESSING



WAGON
RIDES

and so
**MUCH
MORE!**



LUNCH
11AM – 1PM



WORSHIP
3 PM



*Bring your family and friends and join us
for a day of fall fun, food, and fellowship!*

www.rockfallschamber.com

BIZ BOO!

OCTOBER 30
4:00pm - 6:00pm

TRICK or TREAT

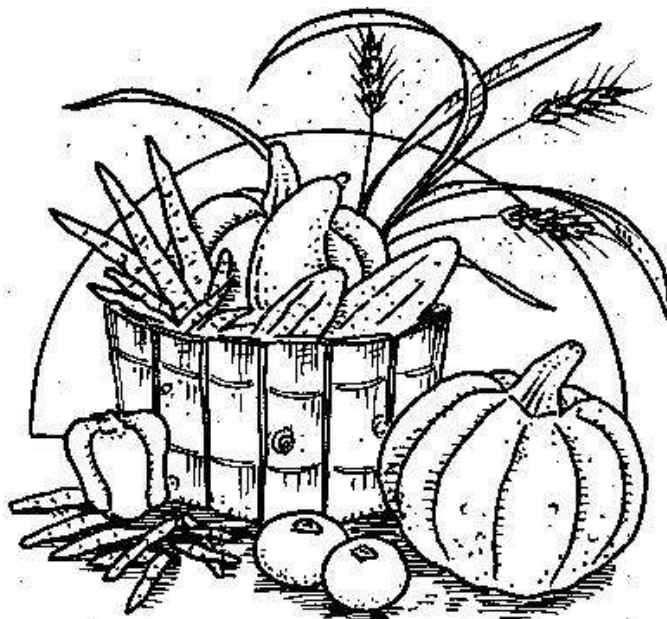
CANDY & KIDS' ACTIVITIES
AT PARTICIPATING
DOWNTOWN
BUSINESSES & BOOTH
SPACES



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Dive into a night of tasty bites and live vibes at The Dinner Show Experience—eat, laugh, enjoy!

DINNER. MYSTERY. LIVE ENTERTAINMENT.

Something is happening at The Classroom in Nelson...and you're invited...Join the Rock Falls Chamber & SERVPRO of Sterling & Clinton for The Dinner Show Experience on Thursday, October 22nd!

Enjoy dinner – Experience live entertainment from Dixon Stage Left

Follow the clues – Interact with the cast – Question what you see and hear

Put your detective skills to the test ...and help us solve the mystery!

Doors open at 5 PM | Dinner begins at 6:00 p.m.

The Classroom

207 Pope St., Nelson, IL

Tickets are \$30 per person!

Bring your friends. Bring your coworkers. Bring your best detective. Or come ready to meet someone new! And whatever you do...**DON'T TRUST EVERYONE AT THE TABLE.**

Tickets are available at the Rock Falls Chamber or online at www.rockfallschamber.com

Questions? Call 815-625-4500

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



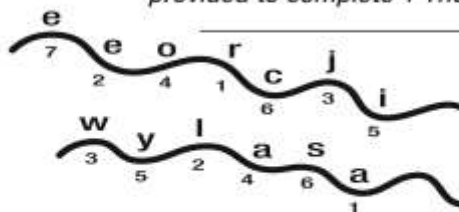
Sermon on the Mound



GOD'S WILL

God wants us to follow his will, but how can we know what that is?

Directions: Write the letters on each vine in the correct order on the lines provided to complete 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NIV.



continually,

in all circumstances; for this
is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.



1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18, NIV



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

Julie Woessner DeJonge, Music Leader – (815) 441-8084



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.

Email: stpaulsterling@comcast.net

Website: www.stpaulsterling.com

Facebook: St. Paul Lutheran Church – Sterling, IL