

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH – STILLWATER, MN

THE MESSENGER

DECEMBER 2025

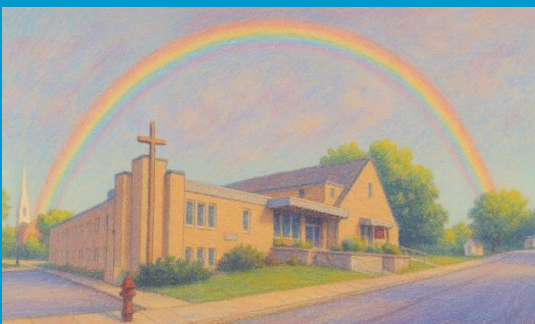
Christmas Eve Worship

St. Paul Lutheran
CHRISTMAS EVE
Worship
3:00 PM & 5:00 PM



A child is born
FOR A CHILD HAS BEEN BORN FOR US, A SON
GIVEN TO US; AUTHORITY RESTS UPON HIS
SHOULDERS, AND HE IS NAMED WONDERFUL
COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING
FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE.
Isaiah 9:6

Harvest & Holly Market



Sharing God's Love for Over 150 Years!

St. Paul Lutheran Church
609 South 5th Street
Stillwater, MN 55082
Phone: 651-439-5970

Website: www.stpaulc.org

Facebook: facebook.com/stpaulstillwater

Message from Pastor Nathan

The power of a good story is the delight of hearing it over and over again. The story of Christmas, of God coming into this world, never fails to delight. But as I've grown and heard this story so many times, I've come to see how this story is as much about us as it is about Christ.

Take Mary, for example. Mary is the first to prepare us to receive Jesus. At the end of the angel Gabriel's announcement that she will bear in her womb God's incarnate presence, she announces to Gabriel: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

This is a bold and self-affirming statement. We usually think of Mary as humble, quiet, receiving. But here, the tone is opposite. Mary is announcing to Gabriel (and ultimately to God) her proud and self-important role in spreading God's love for the world. A literal rendering of Greek demands attention: "Behold!" or "Look!" or "See!" or "Listen" is Mary's first word (*ἰδοὺ* is the Greek word). "Hey there! Look at me!" is the tone here rather than the more tepid sounding "Here am I." Mary is prompting and demanding our attention, no less than when the angels from heaven announce to the shepherds the birth of Christ.

Many of us (perhaps, at times, rightly so) are taught from an early age to be humble about our faith. We are generally skeptical of those who wear their faith on their sleeves. True, it makes good sense not to push our faith on others (a gracious and time-appropriate invitation is always much better). By the same token, however, we have an important role to play in God's will for the world! We are God's messengers, God's hands and feet in this world!

Mary recognizes that her role in God's love for the world is a pivotal and important one. She is proud to affirm and embrace her role as God's servant. It reminds of a prayer I once heard from a pastor: "Lord, make humble, for you know that I am a very important person."

Outside of the Bible, I love gleaning wisdom from our forebears in the faith from generations

past. One such person I go to from time to time is Oswald Chambers, a Scottish Baptist chaplain, evangelist, and teacher. He died in 1917 while serving as a chaplain to British troops during World War I. Almost twenty years after his death in 1935, his wife published a collection of his messages in a daily devotional called, "My Utmost for His Highest."

Chambers' style can be jarring at times, but he also cuts to the heart in some remarkable ways. His devotion for November 30 (which this year is the First Sunday of Advent) sanctions a tepid faith and boldly affirms a faith like Mary's.

"The way we continually talk about our own inability is an insult to the Creator. The deploring of our own incompetence is a slander against God for having overlooked us." Does that get your attention?!? Chambers goes on to describe humbling ways of praying to God that might sound genuine before others but are really an "attitude of defiance" toward God.

Instead, like Mary, he affirms a bold faith in God. Faith that cries out to God by saying, "Thank God, I know that I am saved and made holy!" is what Chambers calls the "peak" or "pinnacle" of faith because it means "you have so completely abandoned yourself to God that you know God is true." (In a similar way, during moments of doubt, Martin Luther liked to cry out to God, "But I am baptized! I am God's child in my baptism!") Chambers concludes by saying, "One individual life may be of priceless value to God's purposes, and yours may be that life."

So as you prepare for Christmas, may the faith of Mary inspire your own. Your life matters! You are singularly loved by God! Your place in the universe and blessing upon others is of utmost importance to God! And like Mary, you are called to bear God's incarnate presence to others who need it. This Christmas, be proud of your faith and in all the ways that you can love your neighbor as yourself.

Pastor Nathan

Rainbow Families

Once again, we will support families from the Rainbow Child Daycare Center, and this year, we are sponsoring four families. The display is now up in the Gathering Area, and we kindly ask that all gifts be returned to the church by 1:00 PM on Wednesday, December 17th.

SPLC families who may need assistance this holiday season are encouraged to reach out to Kristin in the church office.



Holden Evening Prayer

Join us by candlelight on Wednesday, December 3rd, to sing together Holden Evening Prayer. Originally written during the winter of 1986 while the composer was at Holden Village in the North Cascade mountains of Washington state, this popular service is a great way to mark the beginning of Advent. And Pastor Nathan will give a homily about angels!

All-Church Christmas Program

Please join us on Sunday, December 14th, at our 9:00 AM worship service for "Singing Our Faith: The 12 Days of Christmas." Check out the sign-up sheets in the Gathering Area! Your voice and enthusiasm will make this joyful service even more fun! Singing skills not required! Feel free to invite family and friends to share in the laughter, music, and Christmas cheer.



Sunday Shine! December 14th

Join us on the 2nd Sunday in December after the Jazz Service and Christmas program, for Birthday Cake for Jesus and other refreshments. There will also be an intergenerational activity that's fun for all ages.



Leadership in the Valley Update

This past month, our focus was on Business and



Economics. We kicked off the day by learning about the Chamber, followed by leadership training centered on Driving Innovation. Next, we toured Diasorin and discovered more about this incredible hidden gem in the valley. We wrapped up by hearing from a panel of local business leaders who are

shaping the community and highlighting how the Career Pathways program connects students with real-world opportunities. It was an outstanding day of learning and inspiration!

Wapo Dinner Theater Bus Info!

We are going to the Wapo Christmas Dinner Theater this coming Sunday, the 7th! The time to board the bus is 2:30 PM sharp at SPLC. Please arrive a few minutes early so we can get everyone checked in and on our way without delay.

Singing Our Faith
The 12 Days of Christmas



Sunday, December 14th
at our 9:00 AM Worship

Harvest & Holly Market Update

The Harvest & Holly Market brought in over \$2,900, and we couldn't be more thrilled! The entire day ran beautifully from start to finish. Our vendors were delighted with their sales, and shoppers showed up in wonderful numbers and filled Fellowship Hall with cheer, conversation, and the joyful hum of holiday spirit.

A huge thank-you to Santa Clausen, who spent the entire day visiting with families, posing for photos, and spreading Christmas magic to kids and the young-at-heart. Pastor Nathan also deserves a special shout-out for expertly running the popcorn machine, as he made it look far easier than it is!

Kristin logged more than 27,000 steps between Friday and Saturday (send help... or at least good shoes!), and the Bake Sale was absolutely spectacular. Thank you to everyone who baked, donated, or purchased treats—your generosity and creativity made the table irresistible and helped boost our total even further. What a joyful, successful day! Thank you all for making it happen!



Children, Youth, and Family

Join us for Toddler Tuesday on Tuesday, December 9th, from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM! We won't be meeting on December 23rd. It's a fun-filled morning designed just for toddlers, featuring engaging activities, interactive play, and opportunities for little ones to explore and socialize.

Advent Bonfires!

Wednesdays, December 10th and 17th, from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM. All ages are welcome! We'll gather to share stories and enjoy s'mores around the fire (and yes—if it's too cold, we're smart enough to move inside!).



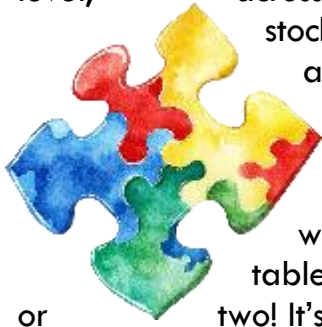
Christmas Crafts and Fun!

Please join us on Sunday, December 21st from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM for Christmas Crafts and Fun! **All Ages Are Welcome!** We will have an afternoon of snacks, Christmas crafts, and festive fun! Everyone is welcome to enjoy a joyful time of fellowship together! Come relax, get creative, and celebrate the season with friends, family, and a warm holiday spirit.



Puzzle Room Reminder!

As the weather cools down, it's the perfect time to cozy up with a puzzle! The Puzzle Room (upper level, across from the restrooms) is stocked with plenty to take home and enjoy. You're welcome to stop in during office hours (Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM) and work on a puzzle at one of the tables in the room. Bring a friend or two! It's a wonderful way to share conversation and laughter while working together. If you don't finish, no worries! You can leave the puzzle in progress and come back another day to pick up right where you left off. Prefer to work on puzzles at home? You're invited to take one home with you. And if you know someone who enjoys puzzles but isn't able to get out and about, please feel free to deliver one to them as a little act of kindness and connection. We're also accepting donations of gently used puzzles to keep the selection fresh and fun for everyone. This program is sponsored by the Senior Committee, but everyone is encouraged to take part! Come find your next puzzle and join in the fun!



Annual Luminary Display

In preparation for this year's Christmas Season luminary display in the Gathering Area, the Mission Outreach Committee will begin taking participation orders after worship on November 30th. There is no cost to take part, and all free-will donations will go to support a local nonprofit. When placing your order, please review last year's list to see if you need to update any names or add new luminary bags. All requests must be submitted on an order form. Orders may be placed in the church office during the week and will be accepted through December 10th.



Operation Christmas Child

The 246 shoeboxes were delivered on Monday, November 17th to Faith Community Church in Hudson. From there, they'll travel to Illinois before being sent on to more than 100 countries around the world. This is Mission Outreach's largest annual project, and we couldn't fill this many boxes without your incredible support and generosity. Once again, THANK YOU for making such a meaningful impact! Your kindness helps brighten the lives of children across the globe in ways we can't even imagine - Mission Outreach Committee



SPLC's Christmas Meal Boxes

Previously, SPLC has participated in the FARE FOR ALL Christmas Meal distribution, sponsored by the Memorials and Grants Committee. Unfortunately, they are no longer coming to Stillwater, and we are unable to coordinate a bulk meal purchase with them. A big thank you to the Memorials and Grants Committee for continuing this tradition! To order, please call Diane Podratz at 651-439-7843. The deadline to order is Wednesday, December 17th. Anyone is welcome to receive a box, whether it's for your own household or someone you know who could use a little extra support this season. We are asking that you limit your order to two boxes. If you have special circumstances, please speak to Diane. The meal pick up will be on Sunday, December 21st, from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM in Fellowship Hall.





At Valley Outreach, we believe everyone should have reliable access to food and support, especially during times of uncertainty.

Thanks to the quick work of our staff, volunteers, and community partners, we expanded food access in response to the recent disruption of SNAP benefits and the federal government shutdown. While the government is reopening and November benefits have been distributed, we know the challenges people face won't be resolved overnight.

That's why we're continuing expanded food access through the end of December. We know the need remains, and thanks to generous community support, we can continue to help. (We collected more than 400 Food-to-Go bags in the first four days of our response! That is more than 5,000 lbs. of food distributed right back to the community!)

Donate Adult Winter Coats & Keep the Community Warm - As temperatures drop and winter sets in, many families in our community struggle to stay warm. You can make a difference by donating gently used or new winter clothing. We are especially in need of adult winter coats.

Valley Outreach is in need of volunteers to help in StyleXchange on the store floor and with clothing sorting. Please go to valleyoutreachmn.org to volunteer.

Advent Devotional

Back by popular demand, you are welcome to pick up an updated Advent devotional written by member Sue Anderson and edited with extra content by Pastor Laurel. It includes hymn texts, beautiful artwork, and questions to ponder by yourself or with others. The devotionals are on a table outside the front sanctuary entrance.



The WELCA Triennial Gathering will be July 16-19, 2026, in Des Moines, Iowa

The Website for more information and to register is: welcatg.org

A few things to know and consider:

- If you are a first-time attendee, there are scholarships available to pay the convention registration fee. Contact Becky Maier: jbmaier@hotmail.com.
- Early registration fee by January 5th is \$475. After that date, the cost is \$525.
- Included in the registration fee is a Friday morning breakfast for first-time attendees.
- Lunch each day is also included.
- Evening meal is on your own.
- The leaders of our Cluster usually plan things out a bit, and the group hangs together when out and about, if you want.

The Cluster will be arranging carpooling for those who wish to carpool and will also help with hotel reservations if you have questions and want a roommate to help with the cost. Hotel reservations and costs are your responsibility. If you have further questions, contact Judy Clausen or Jenny Powell.



Hope for the Journey Home



November 7, 2025

Dear Hope for the Journey Home Partners:

In the spring of 2024, Home for the Journey Home lost our partnership with the Community Resource Center at St. Andrews Church. In the months that followed, Guardian Angels Catholic Church made plans to use their parish house for another program. Thus, the decision was made to end Hope for the Journey Home.

Hope for the Journey Home served families for 12 years because of you, a collaboration of faith communities in Washington County. Parents and their children found a warm and welcoming environment to move forward. We gave families a much-needed respite to gather the support and financial resources they needed to find a home. There is much to be deeply grateful for over the years: amazing volunteers, generous donors, and committed staff.

Our Advisory Board has worked together to distribute the furniture, household items, gift cards, and cash reserves to organizations that were serving families who are temporarily homeless in Washington and Ramsey Counties. These organizations are: Solid Ground, Emma Norton, Theresa Living Center, and Catholic Charities Family Service Center in Maplewood. Bridging also took furniture that will be given to families setting up their household. Lots of toys were donated to Joseph's Coat.

As we say a profound "thank you" and final goodbye, it is with a heartfelt prayer that we all work to advocate for families without a home until homelessness ends. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

HJH Advisory Board:

Marla Simmet, Sally Krupich, John Riehle, Denny Farrell, Richard Osborn, and Jan Hogan-Schiltgen

Senior Section

January 55+ Worship

The January service will be on Sunday, January 4th at 11:00 AM. **The Senior Committee decided the meals will be \$5.00 in 2026.** The menu will be Chef Luke's Old Fashioned Hamburger-Macaroni Hotdish, Jello Salad, Rolls, and Bread Pudding for Dessert. Please sign-up in the Gathering Area by Sunday, December 28th, if you will be staying for the meal. **Remember - Limited Bus service is available for Stillwater and Oak Park Heights. Please contact Bob Michaelis if you are interested in riding the bus.**



The Free Matinee Movie Returns in January!

Large Print Bibles

The Senior Committee has two large-print Bibles available for you to borrow. Contact Bob Michaelis at 651-278-0072.

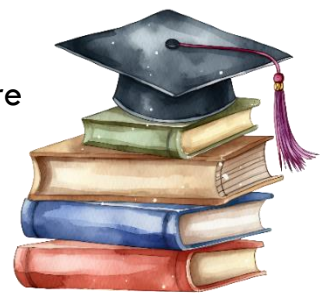
55+ SPLC Senior Members Foot Care In Your Home

55+ SPLC Senior Members Foot Care: A Foot Care RN will tend to your toenails or other foot-related care in the comfort and privacy of your home. You can also visit an office location in Bayport if you prefer. The cost is \$15 per appointment. Pick up an information packet in the Gathering Area or contact Jenny Powell



Scholarship Sunday at SPLC!

Join us for Scholarship Sunday at St. Paul Lutheran Church on December 28th or January 4th during the 9:00 AM service. This is a special opportunity for our scholarship recipients to share their thanks with the congregation for the support, encouragement, and scholarship they've received. We would love to see you in person, but if either date doesn't work for you, you're welcome to send a video instead. Please send your video to jenny@stpaulc.org or 218-770-5754.



Simpson Housing Services



Passage Community, a Simpson-owned building that provides transitional housing for 17 families, received a special gift – a new playground! The idea came from long-time volunteer Jill King. Her employer, Bright Horizons, offers a Bright Space program to their employees to work with non-profit agencies to create warm, safe spaces for children to play and experience the joy of childhood.

After collaborating on the design with Landscape Structures, Jill, her family, and 36 Bright Horizons employees broke ground and began to assemble the playground in May. Within four days, the dirt lot was transformed into a playground. Her favorite memory of the weekend was when two boys who live at Passage offered to help and asked if there could be a bench on the playground so their parents would have a place to sit when they played.

The children at Passage have enjoyed their summer days at the new playground, their parents often happily observing from the bench. “We have over 50 kids at Passage, and now, because of the playground, we are seeing the kids and families outside more, playing, connecting, and building friendships,” says Janelle Leppa, Director of Family Housing Programs.

Simpson Housing Services thanks Jill and Jonathan King, Bright Horizons Foundation for Children, Landscape Structures, and all of the volunteers for creating a bright space for families living at Passage Community.

This is just another way that Simpson Housing Shelter is involved in the community.

Prayer Requests

Congregants: Jenny B., Barb D., Nancy T., Dan B., Al M., Ron K., Judith K., Alida P., Pastor Laurel, Steve P., Mark C., and Abri B.

Family and Friends: Troy A., Sophia M., Marv D., The Family of family of David and Carol S., Connor D., John O., Dan J., Mary A., Renae S., Mike S., Ann B., Katie P., Gary R., Jerry S., Sophia F., Sonja H., Kellye, Dave, Lucy, Keith, & Josh, Becky O., Mike, Jenny, Erica B., Lisa, Kristen B., Mary Jo D., Cody, Rick & Jean, Patti & Family, Randy & Laura, Muggs, Carolyn, Paul, Kevin, Kara, Allison J., Evy, Dave, Georgia, Russel B., Bonnie M., Connie, Shannon S., Mary A., Bonnie S., Leo H., Jane S., Laura C., Lisa, Steph D., Brian D., Tyson D., Teegan D., Lexen, Danny, Harry E., Diane L., Jenny O., Lyle J, Kathy B., Vince S., Phyllis F., Jim G., Margie M., Rick W., Karen W., Carol L., Jeff E., Mike M., and Jeffrey T.

In Loving Memory: Marshal Ray Reams, Jacquilyn Pierre, Dorie Nelson, Lois Haase, Marlene Ritzer, Holly Halvorson, Mark Walker, Richard Markgraf, Sister Eileen Trinity, Judy Becker, Becky Dufresne, Jerry Sharon, Judy (Ek) Anderson, Jeremy Green, Paul Baker, and Scott Coleman.

QR Code for Giving

St. Paul Lutheran Church's QR Code for Giving QR codes are everywhere these days, and SPLC has one too! Our giving QR code makes it simple to support any ministry or project. Once you scan it, just follow these quick steps: Choose your gift amount. Use the dropdown menu to select where you'd like your offering to go. Current Offering, Music Ministry, 4th Street Exterior Repair, and many more funds are available. It's a quick and easy way to give with purpose!



St. Paul Lutheran Church Calendar

As of 12/3/2025

December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 10:00 AM Sr. Committee 1:00 PM Women's Reading Club	2 6:30 PM Worship Committee Meeting	3 12:00 PM Staff Meeting 6:00 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Holden Evening Prayer 7:30 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	4 9:00 AM Quilters 3:00 PM Mission Outreach Meeting 4:30 PM Fellowship Meeting 7:00 PM AA Meeting in Fellowship Hall	5	6 10:00 AM Yarnsters
7 9:00 AM Service 11:00 AM 55+ Worship 2:30 PM Wapo Bus Leaves SPLC	8 5:15 PM CYF Meeting 6:30 PM Financial Operations Special Meeting	9 10:00 AM Toddler Tuesdays! 3:00 PM Memorials & Grants Meeting 5:30 PM Financial Operations Meeting	10 10:00 AM Worship at Oak Park Sr. Living 12:00 PM Staff Meeting 2:30 PM Zoom Executive Committee Meeting 6:00 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	11 9:00 AM Quilters 7:00 PM AA Meeting in Fellowship Hall	12	13 9:00 AM – Noon Council Retreat on Mission, Vision, and Values
14 All Church Christmas Program 9:00 AM Service 10:00 AM Sunday Shine	15	16 6:30 PM Church Council Meeting	17 11:00 AM Worship at Boutwells 12:00 PM Staff Meeting 6:00 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	18 9:00 AM Quilters 5:00 PM Sytten de Mai 7:00 PM AA Meeting in Fellowship Hall	19	20 Newsletter Deadline
21 9:00 AM Service 10:00 AM Coffee & Tea Time 10:30 – Christmas Box Meal Distribution	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Services 3:00 PM Worship 5:00 PM Worship	25 	26 The Office is Closed Today	27
28 9:00 AM Service 10:00 AM Coffee & Tea Time	29	30	31 Goodbye 2025!			

St. Paul Lutheran Church - 609 S. 5th Street, Stillwater, MN 55082 (651) 439-5970

Office Hours - Monday - Friday, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM - Email: splc@stpaulc.org - Website: www.stpaulc.org