

Welcome Home!

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church

December 2025 Newsletter

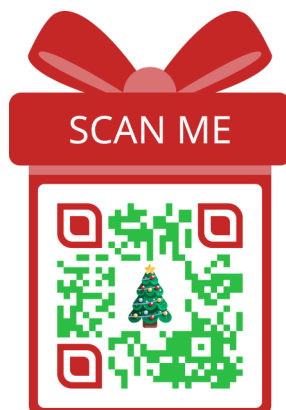


The Giving Tree

The Giving Tree wish lists are at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050A4BA9AD29AA8-60155903-stpauls> or scan the QR code.

Gifts need to be new, wrapped & have gift tag with gift recipient's first name. All gifts and monetary donations need to be delivered or dropped off at St. Paul's by 9 AM on Thursday, December 18.

Questions? Contact Sara Beilharz at GivingTree@stpaulserie.org.



Christmas Cookie Trays

Let's bring some Christmas cheer to those in need by sharing some of our delicious cookies! Help us by donating cookies, assembling trays, & delivering the cookie trays.



Please have cookie donations in the church kitchen by Saturday, December 20 at 10 AM & label them "cookie trays."

We will be working on Giving Tree cookie trays on Saturday, December 20 at 10 AM. The remaining trays will be assembled on Sunday, December 21 at 10:15 AM & ready for pick up to deliver by 11:30 AM. Signups in the entryway of St. Paul's.

If you know of anyone who would benefit from receiving a cookie tray, contact Terry Moyer or Ruth Moyer at CookieTrays@stpaulserie.org or 814-833-1761, ext. 336. Terry & Ruth can also be reached on Facebook Messenger or in person before or after Sunday morning worship.

The Longest Night

Join us for The Longest Night, a special service of hope & healing, on Sunday, December 21 at 7 PM.

The Longest Night is a worship service of music, scripture & prayer that brings hope to all who are struggling in darkness or who have experienced great loss during the holidays. It is inspired by the solstice, winter's longest night.



Christmas Eve Worship



Join us for Christmas Eve as we sing, worship, & celebrate Christ's birth at our child-friendly 4 PM service and our carols & candlelit services at 8 PM (w/choir) & 11 PM (w/strings).

The 8 PM worship service will also be at www.facebook.com/stpaulserie & available at www.youtube.com/user/stpaulslutheranerie.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

3108 Sterrettania Road

Erie, PA 16506-2658

www.stpaulserie.org

Saturday Worship Service, 5 PM

Sunday Worship Service, 9 AM

All Sunday worship videos are livestreamed at

www.facebook.com/stpaulserie

and available at

www.youtube.com/user/stpaulslutheranerie.

Wednesday Scripture Study, 9 AM



Office Hours:

Mon-Thu 9 AM-3 PM

814-833-1761

office@stpaulserie.org



Pastor Erik

Pastor Erik Young

814-833-1761, ext. 103

Pastor@stpaulserie.org

Pastor's Office Hours: Mon-Wed 9 AM-1 PM

Who Started Christmas?

A few years back I heard a story on the radio of a woman who was out Christmas shopping with her two children. After many hours of looking at row after row of toys and everything else imaginable and after hours of hearing both her children asking for everything they saw on those many shelves, she finally made it to the elevator with her two kids. She was feeling what so many of us feel during the holiday season time of the year: overwhelming pressure to go to every party, every housewarming, taste all the holiday food and treats, financial strains, getting that perfect gift for every single person on our shopping list, making sure we don't forget anyone on our card list, and the pressure of making sure we respond to everyone who sent us a card. Finally, the elevator doors opened and there was already a crowd in the car. She pushed her way into the car and dragged her two kids in with her and all the bags of stuff. When the doors closed. She couldn't take it anymore and stated aloud, "Whoever started this whole Christmas thing should be found, strung up, and shot." From the back of the elevator everyone heard a quiet, calm voice respond, "Don't worry, ma'am, we already crucified him." For the rest of the trip down, the elevator was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop.

We feel this, don't we? It is so easy for us all to get caught up in the harried distraction of everything the season throws at us. So much so that we lose sight of the reason we have this season – a celebration of the birth of the one who came to save the world by showing us how much God loves us. As this season tries to push and pull you, don't forget to keep the One who "started this whole Christmas thing" in your every thought, deed, purchase, and word. If we all did that this Advent and Christmas season, think of how different this whole world would be every other day of the year.

-Pastor Erik Young



Worship Ministries

Join us this Advent season for *Words for the Beginning*, our worship theme & series. Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year rushes in. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving— and yet, we feel the weight of many things coming to an end. The world as we know it spins madly on.



This series is filled with blessings, with the words we need to hear again and again as we begin a new season. Imagine the words Mary would speak to her newborn son. What scriptures and stories would she impart to him? What lessons would she teach him as he grew? And so, the weekly themes may feel like the lessons we teach to children, but in reality, these are lessons we continue to learn and relearn as adults. They may sound like the messages or homilies we impart to loved ones during special ceremonies or sacred rituals. We invite you to enter this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead.

In many ways, pregnant Mary was surrounded by endings— large and small, personal and political. And yet, Mary proclaimed hope in a God who was and is making all things new. As we move through new personal and political chapters, may these words for the beginning renew us and remind us of the ways we are called to live out our faith. No matter what you are facing, no matter this new day brings, let love be your beginning.

© a sanctified art

Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and ends on Christmas Eve. It is a time of preparation and anticipation. The focus of the season is one of hope and the expectation of the coming of Christ. Symbols and rituals add depth and meaning to the season. One of those symbols is the Advent wreath.

A circular wreath of evergreens holding four candles is often used to count down the four weeks of Advent. The circular shape represents the eternal nature of God and reminds us that God's love has no beginning or end. The evergreen branches symbolize the hope of eternal life in Christ. And just as evergreen plants remain green even in the harshest of winter, the hope of salvation through Jesus endures in all seasons of life. The wreath as a whole reminds us of both the immortality of our souls and God's promise of everlasting life to us through Christ.

The candles on the wreath represent the light of Christ entering the world. One candle is lit on the fourth Sunday before Christmas with another candle being lit each subsequent Sunday. The first candle pierces the darkness of the world. By the third candle, the light is winning out over the darkness. A fifth candle often is placed in the center of the wreath and lit on Christmas Day, celebrating the arrival of Jesus, the Light of the World.

Each week emphasizes a different theme. These themes correspond to the four candles on the wreath. The first week focuses on the hope of Christ's coming. The second signifies the peace that Christ brings to our lives. The third represents the joy that fills our hearts as we anticipate Jesus' arrival. The fourth reminds us of the unconditional love that God has for us, demonstrated through the gift of His firstborn son.

The Advent wreath serves as a visual representation of the journey towards the coming of Christ. As each candle is lit, the light increases, mirroring the increasing anticipation and joy of the season, inviting us to reflect on the themes of hope, peace, joy and love, and helping us to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming celebration of Christ's birth.

-Submitted by Amy Nupp.



Congregational Care Ministries

Congregational Prayers

Please keep our brothers & sisters in Christ in your daily prayers: **Richard Davies, Liz & Ted Davis, Dan DeCoursey, Charlotte Haggerty, Rick Hetrick, Jessica Kidd, Judy Matthews, Becke Moniot, Terry Moyer, & Sue Snyder.** Pray for those who are dealing with cancer, financial hardships, & facing illness or surgery.

Continue to pray for those who are homebound or in nursing homes: **Ann Anderson, Vince Balinski, Debi Firment, Noni Gardner, Dottie Johnson, & Sandy Pamin.** Wrap your hearts around those who are alone, broken-hearted, grieving, or anxious.

Bless our teachers everywhere & pray for St. Paul's **Children's Church, Child Development Center, & Preschool teachers.**

We continue to pray for those who are close to us who serve in the military, including their families: **Dylan Green,** as well as friends of St. Paul's— **Samuel Arthur, Luke Goodwin, Brennan Madara, Natalie Ramish-Long, Benjamin Sperring, Brody Swab, Jordan Swab, Christopher Tinsman, Allison Ward, & Zachary Zehner.**

We keep our college students in prayer as they study and prepare for their future vocations: **Corinne Bechtold, Megan Bechtold, Sophie Beilharz, Stella Beilharz, Andrew Collins, Jacob Gross, Sebastien Jones, Xavier Jones, Drew Kwiatkowski, Ethan Leopold, Ellie Schau, & Hannah Schmidt.**

Anniversaries

Dec 13— Mary & Rick Hetrick

Dec 27— Rick & Debby Sullivan

Birthdays

Dec 1— Connor McLaughlin, Rob Stroul

Dec 4— Emily Collins

Dec 5— Christie Young

Dec 6— Evan Csir

Dec 7— Gretchen Andrews, Linda Martz

Dec 8— Ron Kaffka

Dec 9— Gretchen Hunter

Dec 11— Laurie Chrostowski, Janet Csir, Debbie Farantz, Leah Laska

Dec 14— Katae Csir

Dec 16— Aaron Wakley

Dec 17— Jonah Douglas, Betty Lou Schau

Dec 20— Laurie Sanders

Dec 22— Bre Fetterman

Dec 23— Sherry Bechtold

Dec 24— Ann Anderson, Jacqueline Boyd

Dec 25— Laura Ditzler

Dec 26— Ruth Mussett

Dec 27— Linda Mroz

Dec 29— Becky Holcomb, Amy Nupp, Kristen Perrin

Dec 31— Floyd Csir



Thank you to Ron Till & Kim Frey for rescuing our beloved butterfly when it tumbled to the ground.

Congregational Congratulations

Congratulations to our Fall 2025 Confirmation Class: **Quinn Gould** pictured with Pastor Erik. Quinn publicly affirmed his baptism on Sunday, October 26.



Congregational Thank You Notes

Thank you St. Paul's community. I appreciate all the thoughts, prayers, and cards. Every little bit helps, and to have the support of your wonderful community means an awful lot to me. Thanks again.

Sincerely, Dan DeCoursey

*To the Quilters of St. Paul's,
Thank you for another year of warmth for our guests.*

S. Val & Emmaus Ministries



Thanks to Larry Kessler for training our Youth Group kids how to be an acolyte during worship!

Congregational Care Ministries

Bereavement Ministry

Bereavement luncheons have been part of St. Paul's for many years. This meal is time of community and remembrance, where family and friends can share a meal together following the funeral service.

Our ministry team provides two food options. The first is a meal prepared by the members of St. Paul's. The second option is a catered meal by a place chosen by the family. We prepare the setup and serve the catered meal.

We would like to request volunteers from our church family to be part of this caring ministry. We need to gather more help for the preparation and cleanup. In this case, many hands make light work!

We would also like to compile a list of volunteers to make desert for the meal.



Visitation Ministry

Our Visitation Ministry is composed of a team from our church family that share time with those who are homebound. This can be temporary or a long-term inability to get to a church service. The visit provides company, care & support to them. Sharing Communion is also offered. Visits are usually once a month. You will receive as much joy visiting as person you visit receives during the time shared.

Greeting cards are also so appreciated. This can be for the person you visit, as well as others you hear about in our church family.

If you would like to be part of one or both of these ministries, please contact June Kessler &

Debbie DeCoursey at 814-833-1761, ext. 339 or CongregationalCare@stpaulserie.org. Thank you very much.

We will be having signups in St. Paul's entryway soon for both Bereavement & Visitation Ministries.

Community Care Ministries

50th Erie County CROP Hunger Walk

St. Paul's team raised \$6,132 for the 50th Anniversary Erie County CROP Hunger Walk because of the wonderful walkers and sponsors! Your generosity is amazing! Carol Davis' total \$2,074 and Michael Wright's total was \$585! Ruth Mussett sold well over 100 Boscov coupons to benefit the Walk. Thank you to everyone for helping those in Erie County and our global neighbors in need.

Food Pantry & Reverse Advent Calendar

As we anticipate celebrating the birth of Jesus, we can share our good fortune with others this Christmas season. One of the ways we can do this is to complete the Reverse Advent Calendar. Pick up a calendar in the entryway of St. Paul's; each day as a different item listed next to it. Grab a box or bag and every day during Advent, place a non-perishable item in the bag. This is great way to involve the whole family! Drop off donations in the entryway of St. Paul's on or before Christmas. All donations will benefit the St. Paul's Food Pantry.

Food Pantry statistics for October were 68 individuals, 23 households, & 11 new neighbors. Your support has been very generous and we greatly appreciate it. Additionally, we need a few more volunteers to help load and/or unloaded our food orders. Contact us at FoodPantry@stpaulserie.org.

Good Gifts Ornaments

Good Gifts ornaments are available to purchase during Advent. If you are having trouble deciding what to get that "someone who has everything"

for Christmas, consider Good Gifts. There are many options, from honeybees for \$20 to goats for \$50. Just pick an ornament, pay by check or cash, and cross off a name on your list! If writing a check, make it out to St. Paul's Lutheran Church & include Good Gifts in the memo line. All proceeds go to ELCA World Hunger Relief.

ELCA
GOOD
GIFTS
CATALOG



Patchwork of Love Quilting & Knitting Ministry

Join our Patchwork of Love team of quilters & knitters! We meet on Tuesdays from 9-11 AM in Clare-Wolfe Lounge.

Sock Drive

We are collecting socks for those experiencing homelessness in Erie County. Warm & dry socks are an important & much-needed clothing item! Please donate **NEW** pairs of men's socks in the bin located in the entryway of St. Paul's. All donations will be shared with local shelters. Thank you!



Faith Formation Ministries

Children's Ministry with Bridget

Children's Church is open to all children in pre-K through grade 5. We could still use more volunteer teachers! Please sign up on the bulletin board in the entryway of St. Paul's.

Questions? Contact Bridget at CDCAssistant@stpaulserie.org.



Confirmation Youth Group with Pastor Erik

Please join us every Monday in the gym & youth room from 6-7:30 PM for youth group! We will gather for fun & games, Bible & faith studies, & solid hang out time. Youth Group is cancelled for December 1 & 29.



Preschool Ministries

December always flies by in preschool. Throughout the holiday season, we continue to talk about family and of course, Christmas. Snowmen, elves, reindeer, and all things special about this amazing holiday will be taught. We will be making cards for our homebound members, as well as gifts for parents and loved ones.

Preschool will have a concert Friday, December 19 at 9:30 AM in the sanctuary of St. Paul's, with a special Christmas visitor. The kids will receive a gift and get pictures with our special guest. We hope to see you there!

This is always an exciting and somewhat crazy month as the kids await Christmas morning. We encourage everyone to remember fond memories from when you were young and woke up on Christmas morning to lights, presents under the tree, and all of your favorite people. St. Paul's Preschool wishes everyone a Merry Christmas!

Questions? Contact Melissa Collins at PSDirector@stpaulserie.org or 814-833-1761, ext. 115.



Congregational Fellowship

Breakfast Group

Breakfast Group meets on Monday, December 1 at 8:30 AM at Perkins at 4403 Peach St. in Erie. All are welcome & responsible for their own meals.



Well-Watered Disciples Men's Fellowship Group

Well-Watered Disciples meets next on Thursday, December 18 at 6 PM. The location is to be announced.



Church Council Highlights

From the November 2025 meeting:

Elected Council officers & assigned liaison duties:

- Vanessa Baran (Early Childhood Education Board Liaison)
- Mike Barber (President & Community Care Liaison)
- Joanne Erikson (Vice President & Faith Formation Liaison)
- Bill Gross (Treasurer & Finance Liaison)
- Larry Kessler (Christian Education Liaison)
- Joe Lang (Property Liaison)
- Marsha Szymanowicz (Secretary & Worship Liaison)
- Erich Zech (Congregational Care Liaison)
- Kelly Zimmerman (Personnel Liaison)

Next meeting: Tuesday, December 16 at 6:15 PM in Clare-Wolfe Lounge.

Attendance & Finances

By The Numbers: October 2025

Avg. Saturday Attendance	23 in-person
Avg. Sunday Attendance	82 in-person 14 online views
October Income	\$26,203
October Expenses	\$29,364
October Difference	-\$3,161
October Budget Income	\$28,100
October Budget Expenses	\$29,279
October Budget Difference	-\$1,179
Year-to-Date Income	\$273,578
Year-to-Date Expenses	\$321,138
Year-to-Date Difference	-\$47,560
Year-to-Date Budget Income	\$285,475
Year-to-Date Budget Expenses	\$312,379
Year-to-Date Budget Difference	-\$26,904
2025 Total Budget Income	\$348,607
2025 Total Budget Expenses	\$374,512
2025 Total Budget Difference	-\$25,905

Electronic Giving

Have your weekly or monthly contribution debited from your checking or savings account automatically—you'll never have to remember your checkbook again!

Simply scan the QR code. You can also give online at [Give to St. Paul's Lutheran Church \(breezechms.com\)](https://www.breezechms.com).



December Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 <i>Preschool Closed</i> 8:30am Breakfast Group 6:00pm Confirmation Youth Group 6:30pm Property Team Meeting	2 9:00am Patchwork of Love Quilting Ministry 6:15pm Girl Scout Troop Meeting	3 9:00am Scripture Study 10:00am Staff Meeting 8:00pm Basketball	4 8:00pm Basketball	5 7:00pm Alcoholics Anonymous Marble Group	6 5:00pm Worship
7 8:15am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Children's Church 9:00am Worship	8 9:45am Children's Chapel 1:45pm Children's Chapel 5:30pm Security Team Meeting 6:00pm Confirmation Youth Group 6:30pm Worship Team Meeting	9 9:00am Patchwork of Love Quilting Ministry 5:30pm Faith Formation Team Meeting 6:15pm Girl Scout Troop Meeting	10 9:00am Scripture Study 8:00pm Basketball	11 8:00pm Basketball	12 7:00pm Alcoholics Anonymous Marble Group	13 5:00pm Worship
14 8:15am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Children's Church 9:00am Worship	15 <i>Newsletter Articles Due</i> 9:45am Children's Chapel 6:00pm Confirmation Youth Group	16 9:00am Patchwork of Love Quilting Ministry 6:15pm Church Council Meeting 6:15pm Girl Scout Troop Meeting	17 9:00am Scripture Study 8:00pm Basketball	18 4:00pm Food Pantry Distribution 6:00pm Well-Watered Disciples Men's Fellowship Group 8:00pm Basketball	19 9:30am Preschool Christmas Concert 7:00pm Alcoholics Anonymous Marble Group	20 10:00am Christmas Cookie Trays Assembly 5:00pm Worship
21 8:15am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Children's Church 9:00am Worship 10:15am Christmas Cookie Trays Assembly 7:00pm The Longest Night	22 <i>Preschool Closed</i> 9:45am Children's Chapel 1:45pm Children's Chapel 6:00pm Confirmation Youth Group	23 9:00am Patchwork of Love Quilting Ministry 6:00pm ECE Board Meeting 6:15pm Girl Scout Troop Meeting	24 <i>Church Office Closed</i> <i>Preschool Closed</i> 9:00am Scripture Study 4:00pm Christmas Eve Worship 8:00pm Christmas Eve Worship 11:00pm Christmas Eve Worship	25 Christmas Day <i>Church Office Closed</i>	26 <i>Preschool Closed</i> 7:00pm Alcoholics Anonymous Marble Group	27 5:00pm Worship
28 8:15am Choir Rehearsal 9:00am Children's Church 9:00am Worship	29 <i>Church Office Closed</i> <i>Preschool Closed</i> 6:00pm Confirmation Youth Group	30 <i>Church Office Closed</i> 9:00am Patchwork of Love Quilting Ministry 6:15pm Girl Scout Troop Meeting	31 <i>Church Office Closed</i> <i>Preschool Closed</i> 9:00am Scripture Study 8:00pm Basketball			

Worship Assistants

Date	Event	Ushers	Assist Minister/Reader
Dec 7	2 Advent	Wright Team	TBD
Dec 14	3 Advent	Zech/Chiapa Team	TBD
Dec 21	4 Advent	Curtis Team	TBD
Dec 24	Christmas Eve 4 PM	Zech/Chiapa Team	TBD
	Christmas Eve 8 PM	Wright Team	TBD
	Christmas Eve 11 PM	TBD	TBD
Dec 28	1 Christmas	Gardner/Marzka Team	TBD