



ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
ROOTED AND GROWING

# EPISTLE QUARTERLY

NOVEMBER 2023

*“Come and fill us with your peace,  
you alone, O Lord, are Holy!”*



by Pastor Rob

I spoke with a Jewish friend of mine from high school the other day. He was torn. On the one hand, he felt threatened by the attack from Hamas on Israel and the rise of anti-semitism across the world. Yet he knew that Israel's response was causing too many civilian deaths. The world seems too complex and locked in violent ways that lead to cycles of revenge. We clamor for peace, yet we are unsure how to get there.

It is not simply in the world that peace seems elusive. In our own hearts, there seems to be a constant nagging that things are not right. During the height of the pandemic, anxiety rates shot up and they've been reluctant to go down. There seems a constant sense that we lack the time, head or heart space to make sense of how fast life comes at us. We clamor for peace, yet we are unsure how to get there.

*“He shall be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, the Prince of  
Peace” Isaiah, 730 BC.*

As Christians, we believe that Isaiah was referring to Jesus, whom we confess to be the Prince of Peace. This Advent (the church season leading up to Christmas in which we prepare for the coming of Jesus), we will reflect on Jesus as our peace. We will celebrate and rejoice in the ways in which Jesus has already brought about peace. We will also acknowledge where we lack peace in our lives and pray for the peace of Christ to enter our lives. The ministry of St. Paul throughout Advent - worship, bible studies, devotional materials, intergenerational events - is designed to focus us on the peace of Christ.



### *Ways in which you can dwell in the peace of Christ this Advent*

**Worship:** We will have worship on Sundays, but also on Wednesdays at 7 PM.

**Small Groups:** A number of study and fellowship groups meet on Sunday mornings. If you are looking for a place to process your life in light of the stories of Scripture and the peace of Christ, we have room for you! We will also offer Pod and Pub during Advent on Thursday nights.

**Intergenerational Events:** Each Sunday evening we have an inter-generational event, starting with the making of an Advent wreath, a great way to focus your faith in this busy time of year.

**Advent Devotional & Online Calendar:** In addition to print Advent devotionals, we will also have an Online devotion calendar with links to various St. Paul staff-created videos and audio files for daily devotions.

### ***When does all this happen?***

Technically, Advent IV falls on December 24. However, to avoid it coinciding with Christmas Eve, we have shifted Advent IV up a week. This year, Advent will begin on November 26th, at St. Paul.

### ***Weekly themes for Advent:***

Nov 26, *Peace in ourselves*

Dec 3, *Peace in our families*

Dec 10, *Peace in our community*

Dec 17, *Peace in the world*

Our hope is that as we anticipate the arrival of Christ, that our prayer ***"Come and fill us with your peace, you alone, O Lord are Holy!"*** will indeed be answered!



# ADVENT EVENTS

## and Outreach

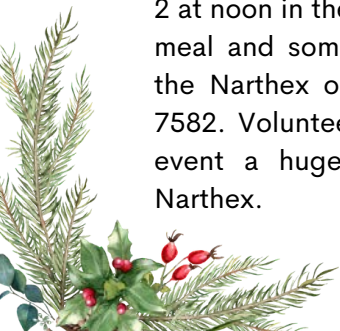
### Cozy Comfort Kits

This year St. Paul is teaming with Church World Services (CWS) of Lancaster to provide refugee neighbors within our community with new bed sheet sets. Starting November 26, blue tags are available in the Narthex to take home as a reminder to gather a bed sheet set (twin or full size) for donation as part of our Advent outreach endeavor. Sheet sets should consist of one fitted sheet, one flat sheet, and one (or two) pillow case(s). Sheets must be in new condition. Return sheet set to St. Paul by Sunday, December 10. The Comfort Kits will be blessed at worship and sent to CWS. Thank you for blessing a refugee neighbor in Lancaster County!



### Senior Christmas Dinner

Mark your calendars for the senior Christmas dinner and program on Sat Dec 2 at noon in the Social Hall. We will share a meal and some holiday cheer. Sign up in the Narthex or call Kathy Ross 717-468-7582. Volunteers are needed to make this event a huge success. Sign up in the Narthex.



*Join us every Sunday in Advent  
at 6:30 pm as we come together  
to prepare our hearts and homes  
for the arrival of Christ.*



**Make an Advent wreath  
Nov. 26, 2023**



**Decorate the Church  
Dec. 3, 2023**



**Gingerbread Nativities  
Dec. 10, 2023**



**Caroling in Lititz  
Dec. 17, 2023**



## Wednesday Worship

### **Holden Evening Prayer** *God's Presence is Real*

Christmas is a month away! Are you among the many who already feel the pressure to attend to the many "get ready" details?

St. Paul invites you to enter a quiet space each Wednesday night during the four weeks of Advent where together we consider the Good News of **"Emmanuel – God With Us."**

Holden Evening Prayer takes place on Nov. 29, Dec. 6, 13, 20. The forty-five-minute worship begins at 7:00 pm.

For the meditation presented at each service, Pastor Robert will address how the wonder of Emmanuel runs through the entirety of the Bible and opens to us the life God intends for us to live "in Christ."

## Thursday Offering

### **Advent Pod and Pub**

Thursday Nights, 7 PM.

Starts Nov. 30th

Pod topic: Favorite Christmas Hymns, the Scripture and history behind them.

Questions? Contact Justin Charles



## Show us what you've got musically!

***The St. Paul Choir invites you to sing with them at the 9 pm Christmas Eve service!***

Rehearsals will be Mondays at 6:30 pm on Nov. 20 and 27, Dec. 4, 11, and 18.

There will also be a rehearsal on Saturday, Dec. 23 from 10 – 11:30 am.

Attendance for rehearsal is important. Please try to make as many rehearsals as possible.

## ***Men's Ensemble Invitation for Youth and Adults***

Lee Zelewicz and Becky Rairigh will be leading this ensemble.

Rehearsals will be after the 10:45 service for 20–25 minutes on Nov. 26, Dec. 3 and 10.

The ensemble will sing on Dec. 17 for 8:15 and/or 10:45 at the Prelude.

Attendance for rehearsal is important. Please try to make 2 of the 3 rehearsals.

*Please text or email Becky if you are interested at 717-824-5913 or [beckyr@stpaulinitz.net](mailto:beckyr@stpaulinitz.net)*

# Christmas Services December 2023

## *Quiet Christmas*

**Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023 at 7:00 pm.**

***For those whose hearts are hurting.  
You are not alone.***

Quiet Christmas is a gentle, contemplative service for those carrying pain or loss this season.



*The Word became flesh and  
made his dwelling among us.*  
John 1: 14

## **Christmas Eve**

**Sunday, December 24, 2023**

**10:45 am**

Traditional worship with Holy Communion and candle lighting.  
Special music will begin at 10:30 am.

**4:00 pm**

Children & Family Worship with a child-friendly message and special music.

**9:00 pm**

Traditional worship with Holy Communion and candle lighting.  
Special music will begin at 8:40 pm.

# ADVENT WITH CHILDREN

## FAITH AT CHURCH

Sunday School children will present a part of the Christmas Story in worship (10:45am) each Sunday of Advent.

The church loves to hear the story of Christmas told by children, and children have fun with costumes, props and proclaiming the Good News: **Jesus is born for you!**



**Nov. 26 - preschool & pre K:**  
***"The Creation is Ready!"***

**Dec. 3 - grades K & 1:**  
***"The Angel has a message!"***

**Dec. 10 - grades 4, 5 & 6:**  
***"Mary & Joseph in Bethlehem"***

**Dec. 17 - grades 2 & 3:**  
***"Shepherds get the news!"***

***Practice will take place during Sunday School at 9:30am.***

## FAITH AT HOME

Children will receive an Advent Devotional for use at home with your family. This year's devotion is called "Manger on the Mantel". Families will build a paper manger that will be moved around the rooms of your home every day as you take a card out of the manger. Each day of December, follow the fun instructions on the card: an activity to do and a bible verse to read. Families at St. Paul will receive this devotional gift through Sunday School, or you can stop by church to pick up your copy.

## MUSIC MINISTRY FOR KIDS

Does your child or youth play an instrument? There will be an instrumental rehearsal on Thursday, Dec. 14 and 21 from 6:30–7:30 pm to prepare music for the 4 pm Christmas Eve Service.

Please contact Becky before Dec. 7 with your child or youth's instrument so there is music for them on December 14. If they play the piano please let Becky know their selection.

Please text or email Becky at 717-824-5913 or [beckyr@stpaulstitz.net](mailto:beckyr@stpaulstitz.net) if interested.

*See Youth Ministry for "Chime Time" opportunities on Christmas Eve.*



# Kids Ministry Fall Flashback

*A new year started in September  
Rally Day is fun to remember  
our 3 year olds began Sunday School  
our older kids thought that was cool*

*October had so much to share  
Our K & 1 kids led the Lord's Prayer  
We had a printing press celebration  
of the church's Reformation*

*November is a time for reunion  
our 2nd graders have first communion  
The Flashlight Tour was super fun  
Our fall held something for everyone!*



# YOUTH MINISTRY

## 5th Quarter



### **Middle School Retreat Recap: *Alive at Camp Nawakwa***

In September our middle school youth embarked on the Alive Middle School Retreat at Camp Nawakwa. The kids had a blast engaging in fellowship, faith, and fun!



Earlier this fall, we opened our doors to all Warwick Middle and High School youth after a football game for a night of safe fun and fellowship. Over 150 kids came and enjoyed food, games, music, inflatables and more! Thank you to all who donated food and to all of the brave adults who stayed up late to chaperone!

### **Youth Choir Ensemble**

Grades 7-12

Wednesdays from 3:30 - 4:20 pm

December 6, 13, and 20 in the sanctuary

They will sing at the 4 pm Christmas Eve Service



### **ChimeTime**

Grades 4-8

Wednesdays from 4:30 - 5:20 pm

Dec. 6, 13, and 20 in the sanctuary

They will play at the 4 pm Christmas Eve Service

**Please text or email Becky at**

**717-824-5913 or**

**[beckyr@stpaulsititz.net](mailto:beckyr@stpaulsititz.net) if interested.**

*See the Kids Advent page for instrument opportunities on Christmas Eve.*

# LITITZ EMPTY BOWLS

## *A Huge Success!*

On November 5th, St. Paul hosted an event to remember. More than 350 guests attended the Lititz Empty Bowls Dinner at Rock Lititz Pod 2. On arrival, guests selected handcrafted bowls, generously donated by local artists, and a fantastic silent auction and chance raffle. The event featured restaurants serving signature soups, and entertainment was provided by Kurt Benit and Papa Tater.

The event raised over \$13,000 for the Lititz Warwick Community Chest.

The Lititz Empty Bowls Dinner was created in 2017 to help St. Paul Youth gain leadership skills and serve the community. This year, the 6-12 grade youth group served in a variety of ways, from washing and packing all of the bowls in preparation for the event, to taking tickets at the door, pouring drinks, and serving delicious bread and desserts donated by local businesses.

Thank you to the Empty Bowls team and all volunteers who made this event possible!



# FALL FESTIVAL

Folk stories, live music, face painting, a cake walk, and a very popular raffle were just a few of the charming activities offered at the St. Paul CELC and Church joint Fall Festival on September 30th.



**Pulling Carrots in the  
Community Garden**



**St. Paul Youth Host Nature  
Exploration Station**



**Future Master Gardener**

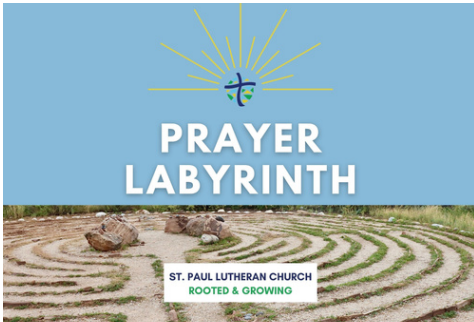
Nature explorers also hunted insects in the wildflower meadow with magnifying glasses, pulled carrots from the community garden for a wholesome snack, and planted pollinator-friendly plants in the monarch waystation.

Many volunteers made this event a huge success including St. Paul Youth, Community Gardeners, Girl Scouts, and especially the CELC Committee and Teachers. The Warwick Warblers and Boy Scout Troop 44 sold fabulous food. The day ended with St. Paul's annual Blessing of the Animals, including a bearded dragon named Frida. Mark your calendars for next year! This is an event you won't want to miss.



**A Path and a Prayer**

# Sacred GROUNDS

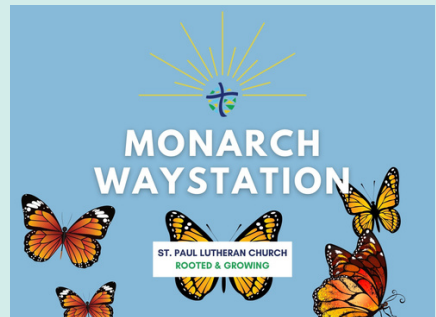
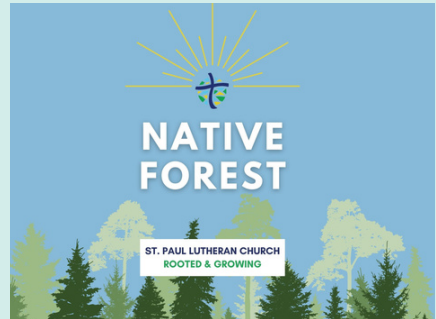


St. Paul's Sacred Grounds made the news in Lititz and Lancaster! Check out the article by Laura Knowles on the Sacred Grounds page of the St. Paul website.

The Green Team (re)launched in October with a three-part training. In addition to gleaning some useful information and inspiration, this opportunity put us in touch with a large network of congregations that are participating in God's call to care for the earth right where we worship!

Volunteers with buckets and shovels moved a mountain of dirt into the growing spaces of the Prayer Labyrinth. (on Nov. 18)

**Advent in the Sacred Grounds:** Look for short videos on Wednesdays in Advent to ground our prayers in anticipation of Jesus' arrival in the world that God made and so loves.



[stpaulititz.net/sacred-grounds](http://stpaullititz.net/sacred-grounds)



# STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS

## REPORT & BUDGET

---

# STRATEGIC GOALS

It is important to note that while all of these goals are interconnected, some are more visible to the congregation as a whole, while others are more hidden.

Progress towards the Strategic Plan will be included in this section.

## Why we are doing what we are doing.



WELCOME THE NEXT 300 VISITORS, INTEGRATING 150 INTO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

---



ADD ADDITIONAL WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND REDUCE BARRIERS FOR PEOPLE UNFAMILIAR WITH CHURCH OR LUTHERAN TRADITION.

---



LEVERAGE EXISTING OUTSIDE RELATIONSHIPS TO DRIVE PARTICIPATION AND SHARE FAITH

---



DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT AN APPROPRIATE STRUCTURE THAT ALLOWS US TO IMPLEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

---

# Measuring Progress

GOAL	STEPS TAKEN	IN PROGRESS
<b>Welcome the next 300 visitors &amp; integrating 150 to active participation.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Narthex renovations began, including painting, lighting and a coffee station.</li><li>• Revamped new member process.</li><li>• Added additional faith formation groups on Sundays</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuing narthex improvements</li><li>• Researching social media trends to expand our reach.</li><li>• Learning REALM database to streamline integration.</li></ul>
<b>Add additional worship opportunities and reduce barriers for people unfamiliar with church or Lutheran tradition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New cameras in sanctuary for improved online worship</li><li>• Prayer labyrinth near completion.</li><li>• Increased Lutheran content in adult faith formation, including having adult confirmands.</li><li>• Implemented a dinner church model for Lenten midweek services.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forming “Green Team” committee for long-range Sacred Grounds planning.</li><li>• Creating a teaching video on how to use the labyrinth</li><li>• Continue expanding learnings opportunities around “fundamentals”</li></ul>
<b>Leverage existing outside relationships to drive participation and share faith</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reorganized CELC leadership to include church members serving on governing committee.</li><li>• Defined priorities within outreach ministries, designating ministries into tiers of financial and communication commitment.</li><li>• Developed form for submitting outreach project requests.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beginning to share the newly defined outreach priorities and project request forms.</li><li>• Expanding ministry with CELC; more chapels and also more baptisms of CELC people at St. Paul!</li></ul>
<b>Design and implement an appropriate structure that allows us to implement strategic plan.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Our major changes are outlined above.</li><li>• Hired Director of Operations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Director of Operations to implement “invisible” infrastructure.</li></ul>

# BUDGET 2024

Advancement of internal strategic initiatives will be a core focus of the 2024 budget. While much of the prior year was spent improving the physical infrastructure of the St. Paul campus, including solar panels, a new white roof on the education wing, sanctuary LED lighting, worship cameras, and painting the narthex, the primary focus for the coming year will be internal infrastructure. By internal infrastructure we mean the people, systems, and tools needed to drive ministry, mission, and organizational growth.

## Comparison of 2023 and 2024 Budget

### Worship & Music

2023 Budget: \$13,900

**2024: \$13,500**

The small decrease is a result of budgeting more in line with expense expectations. Important expenditures continue to remain music, instrument maintenance, and guest musicians.

### Faith Formation

2023 Budget: \$27,000

**2024: \$26,600**

In 2024 a Youth Gathering will take place instead of the summer mission trip. Fortunately, a strong reserve in the youth dedicated fund will keep the anticipated budget for next year in line with 2023. Additional key expenditures will remain the ministries of summer camperships, VBS, and confirmation camp.

### Mission & Outreach

2023 Budget: \$26,600

**2024: \$26,900**

We will continue to give our allocation to the Synod (\$16,000) and to partner ministries (\$4,000). In addition, support of the Swanson family will increase to support their mission work.

### Personnel

2023 Budget: \$470,300

**2024: \$493,300**

The core positions of St. Paul will stay in place with an annual inflation adjustment for wages. Additional funds are set aside in this budget to address strategic initiatives that may arise as the organization grows and requires more resources to deliver on the strategic plan.

### Communications, Administration, IT, Governance

2023 Budget: \$48,400

**2024: \$47,800**

Key costs in this area include office supplies (copier and paper), IT, online subscriptions and bank charges. We are actually able to grow opportunities in this area, but reduce costs after negotiations with vendors. We also continue to budget funds to obtain an independent review of financial statements and plan to increase our web and social media presence.

**Buildings & Grounds**

2023 Budget: \$112,800

**2024: \$112,800**

Important costs in this area include building Insurance, gas, grounds care, service contracts, repairs and handyman hours. Electricity costs will plummet due to our solar power. The money we save in electricity will go mainly to other repairs but also other increasing building costs. 2023 was budgeted to be a smaller property expense year because of the capital campaign. We plan to keep that number low again for 2024 and use the coming year as planning for projects in 2025 and beyond.

**TOTALS**

2023 Budget: \$699,000

**2024: \$720,900**

The 2024 general fund budget represents a 3% increase in total spending and will require a similar increase in giving over projected 2023 income. Currently, we are operating with a year-to-date surplus. The Annual Congregational Budget Meeting will be held on Sunday, December 17 after both worship services to vote on this proposed spending plan. If you have questions on the budget, please contact Deb Rothermel, Treasurer (drothermel535@gmail.com).

**GIVE FROM THE HEART CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE**

Thanks to your generosity and support, St. Paul undertook significant improvements to the campus in 2023 that will yield positive results for years to come. The solar panels, sanctuary LED lighting, and white roof on the education wing were all possible due to this campaign. As of October 31, 2023 all projects have been completed and vendors paid. As we continue to await rebates and tax credits for our investment, St. Paul took on a \$60,000 bridge loan with our bank this summer. Thanks to your continued support for pledge fulfillment, that loan balance has been reduced to \$53,900 as of 10/31 and continues to decrease each month. Our current amount of pledges outstanding is \$27,200. Although the campaign runs through 2024, we appreciate all who have advanced their gifts in order to reduce our loan balance and keep interest expense to a minimum. If you have any questions regarding the Campaign or a pledge, please contact Lyle Hosler, Director of Operations (lhosler@stpaulstitz.net).