



WINTER 2026

2026

Quarterly Newsletter of St. Paul Lutheran Church & School of Ann Arbor

Dying His Death, Living His Life

By: Pastor Ted Hopkins

Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit describes the Christian life as modeled after Jesus himself: dying and rising again. As the teacher so the student; as the master, so the servant (see Luke 6:40). And our master, our Lord Jesus, took up His cross, was buried in a tomb, and rose again from the dead. Following after Him, Jesus calls each of us, His people, to follow Him in carrying our crosses and dying to our own sinful selves. As we die to our sins, we die with Jesus and find now that we live in Jesus in and through his Spirit, filled with His resurrection life. Hence, Paul can say, "You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

This Lent, we are going to dive into this mystery of dying with Christ in order to live with Him. Starting on Ash Wednesday (February 18) and each Sunday in Lent, we'll be looking closer at another element of dying to our sinfulness in Christ Jesus in order to live the new life of faith through him. On Ash Wednesday, we will look at how we die to our sins to live in Christ's forgiveness. Throughout the Sundays of Lent, we will hear about dying to various elements of our sinful nature—pride, greed, doubt, turmoil, and judgment—in order to be raised with Christ in His resurrection life—living for others, for the treasures of heaven, by faith, in peace, and in grace.

During Holy Week, we will walk again with our Lord into Jerusalem to see Him surrounded by the crowds, and will cry out with the people: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." We will sit with the apostles on Holy Thursday and remember His death as He gives himself to us in the bread and the wine. We will go to the cross, watching Him suffer for us, pondering the mystery of His death that brings us life. And we will end at the open tomb on Easter in wonder at awe at our Lord, the crucified and risen One.

(cont'd on pg. 2)

In This Issue:



Lent & Holy Week Schedule and
Hope Clinic Lunch Pack [Pg. 2]

Love Ypsi Community Meals &
Diaper Pantry [Pg. 2, 13]

SPAA Easter Festival [Pg. 3]

Building Project Update [Pg. 4]

St. Paul into the Future & What's
next with Church Center? [Pg. 5]

Hey Pastor: Why Do We Confess
Sins...every Sunday? [Pg. 6-7]

National Lutheran Schools Week,
Preschool & PTL News [Pg. 8-9]

Stephen Ministry and Pastoral
Care [Pg. 10]

Moms in the Middle and Bach
Vespers [Pg. 11]

Puerto Rico Mission Trip [Pg. 12]

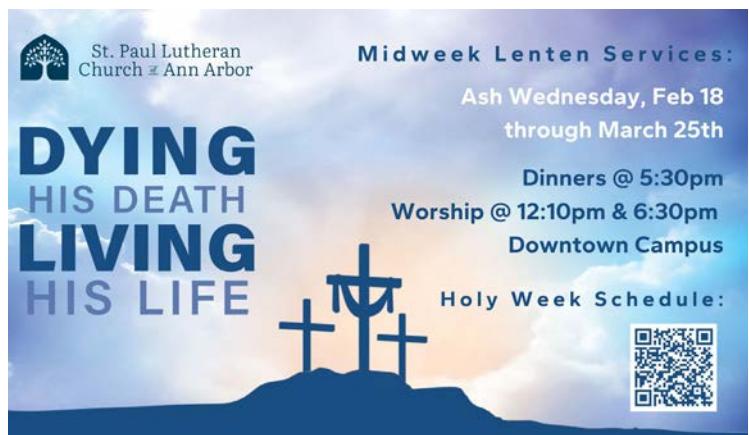
Youth Ministry & VBS [Pg. 14-15]

Dying His Death... cont'd from cover

Each Wednesday in Lent, (including Ash Wednesday) we will have meals at 5:30pm in the Fellowship Hall at our Downtown Campus, followed by our evening Lenten services at 6:30pm. We also offer a shorter service at 12:10pm on those Wednesdays in Lent (Downtown) for those who can only attend on their lunch hour or prefer the earlier afternoon time. After Ash Wednesday, our Wednesday worship services will explore the theme: "The Water of Life," as area pastors explore God at work in and through water in the Old Testament to bring His people life.

Friends, I want to encourage you to join us for worship this Lent—on Wednesdays as well as Sundays. When you're able, come early on Wednesdays for the shared meals and fellowship with one another. Life is busy, but this season gives us a chance to slow down, gather around our Savior, and walk again through the holy history of Christ's life on earth and our Savior's love for us. Come and receive God's good gifts through his Word and one another. See you in church!

Pastor Ted Hopkins



Serving Meals at Love Ypsilanti Mission

By: Jordyn Pair



With just a few folding tables, a couple crock pots, and a mostly empty room, Faith Lutheran Church is reaching the people of Ypsilanti in a tangible way: their stomachs.

Love Ypsi – spearheaded by Faith – is hosting a monthly community meal for Ypsilanti residents immediately surrounding their Forest Avenue building. The meal, although currently under-attended, is meaningful, hyperlocal and

immediately impactful.

And St. Paul has the chance to get involved.

Our congregation is now sponsoring a second monthly meal for Love Ypsi and is actively looking for volunteers to cook, serve, and commune. We have meals scheduled for **February 16, March 16, and April 20**, with multiple volunteer slots open for each one.

Volunteers can shop for groceries, prepare a crock pot meal, serve dinner or just sit with community members and eat. One person is also welcome to fill multiple slots or spread out their involvement over several meals. This is also a good opportunity for families – no hands are too little!

Meals are done buffet-style, with volunteers serving up hot plates or bowls alongside cookies, fruit and cartons of milk. Attendees are welcome to take home leftovers, as

(cont'd on pg.13)

A New Tradition Begins: Join us for Our Easter Festival!

By: Elise Snapper, Director of Admissions

This spring, our church and school are excited to come together in a brand-new way as we launch our very first **Easter Festival**—a joyful celebration of faith, community, and service. Hosted jointly by our church and school, this special event is more than just a fun afternoon; it is an intentional opportunity to welcome others, share the love of Jesus, and serve our wider community together.

Easter is at the heart of who we are as Christians. It is a season filled with hope, renewal, and the promise of new life. With our Easter Festival, we hope to create a space where families from our congregation, school, and surrounding community can gather, connect, and experience that hope in tangible and meaningful ways. This event reflects our shared vision of **sowing truth, building faith, and shining love**—not only within our own community, but beyond it as well.

The festival will feature activities designed for all ages, including an Easter egg hunt, live animals, hands-on crafts, face painting, and opportunities for families to spend time together. Throughout the event, we will intentionally point hearts toward the true meaning of Easter. Children and families will be invited to participate in faith-focused experiences such as creating a cross craft, exploring a visual faith table, and engaging in simple, age-appropriate conversations about Jesus' love and the Easter story. In these moments, we are sowing seeds of truth, building faith through shared experiences, and shining Christ's love in ways that are welcoming and accessible to all.

One of the most exciting aspects of this event is its purpose as an outreach. The Easter Festival is designed to be welcoming and accessible, making it easy for members of our church and school to invite neighbors, friends, classmates, and extended family. For some, this may be their first experience stepping onto our campus or participating in a faith-based gathering. Our prayer is that they will feel warmly welcomed, deeply valued, and



curious to learn more about who we are and what we believe.

This festival also reflects a shared mission between our church and school. By hosting this event together, we are living out our commitment to walk alongside one another in faith, education, and service. It is a meaningful example of what it looks like to **build faith together while shining love through action, generosity, and hospitality**.

Of course, an event like this is only possible when we come together as a community. In order to serve our neighbors well, we need many hands and willing hearts. **There are two important ways everyone can help make this Easter Festival a success.**

First, we are asking for **donations** to support the event. These donations will help provide supplies for activities, and our egg hunt. Please consider signing up to donate. Items are due by **February 20**, so we can plan and prepare well. Empty 12-count egg cartons are especially needed!

Second, we need **volunteers** on the day of the event. From helping with set-up and clean-up to assisting at activity stations or welcoming families as they arrive, there are roles for everyone—whether you have an hour to give or the whole morning. Scan the QR code above to donate or to volunteer!

The Easter Festival is more than an event on the calendar. It is an opportunity to live out our faith together—to sow truth, build faith, and shine love as a united church and school community. As we begin what we hope will become a cherished tradition, we invite you to pray about how you can be involved and who you might invite to join us.

Earhart Expansion - We have a City Approved Plan!

Building Campaign Committee



St. Paul
Ann Arbor



Expansion Project Update

After years of back and forth, the Ann Arbor Building Commission approved the St. Paul School expansion project on January 21. Thanks to St. Paul for your prayers regarding achieving this milestone! God truly does answer prayer!

Expansion Feature Summary

- Remodel of the current 1,970 sq. ft. library to a large pre-school area with facilities suitable for classroom or activities use and a small dedicated kitchen space.
- A new 2,600 sq. ft. library/media center on the north side of the east/west corridor.
- A new parking and traffic system that replaces our current 113 space lot with 177 spaces and a safer traffic pattern. It will also include 18 EV charging stations with 69 more spaces wired for future charging stations, if needed.
- A new fire suppression system and roof mounted HVAC for the east/west corridor.
- Two new entrances for access to new playground and to new waste removal area.
- A major site water retention upgrade and landscaping to meet Ann Arbor requirements.

So What Happens Next?

- Right Now: with approved plans, we are soliciting final bids from suppliers.
- Early March: When bids are received and reviewed, the final total cost will be presented to St. Paul leadership.

- Late March: Our leadership will recommend a final plan to pay for the expansion: a combination of our Pledges, plus Special Gifts, and loans (up to 1.5 million, and a \$500,000 bridge loan, which was already approved by congregational assembly in January 2025).
- April: If either the project or the funding plan is not what was already approved by the congregation, the project, the cost, and the funding plan will be presented to the congregation for voting/approval.
- May-June: If the congregation votes to approve that plan, or if everything is already within the plan passed by the congregation in January 2025, construction can begin asap, and no later than summer 2026.
- Estimated completion time for construction is 18 months. The Capital Campaign will start the FINAL PHASE when final costs are confirmed.
- When the final costs are approved, our Capital Campaign relaunches with a final phase. The final push will include specific items of equipment, technology, and furnishings for the new spaces, so donors can sponsor specific items.
- The window for pledges and gifts will be extended for two more years due to all the project delays. This opens up new pledging windows for everyone.

To Give:

For more information on the project and the different ways you can give scan the QR code or visit our website at www.stpaulannarbor.org.



St. Paul into the Future

By: Pastor Ted Hopkins

Since September, the vision team has been hard at work on long-term vision planning for St. Paul Lutheran Church and School. Pastor Ted has been leading a group that includes Jason Hallman, Chris Warren, Tim Adler, Monica Slack, Jessica Meier, Jordyn Pair, Cory Dunham, Natalie Nesbitt, and Carol Nelson. The goal of the vision team is to understand St. Paul's history, understand the strengths and skills of our people, and understand the opportunities in our community. By weaving these three things together, we can tell the story of God at work through St. Paul into the future, as reach out together to the Ann Arbor area with the good news of Jesus Christ through our church and school.

On January 31, the vision team led a workshop on our long-term vision planning process. We had three rounds of conversation: "St. Paul's History Guiding Our Future," "Community and Engagement," and "Imagining the Future." These conversations were deep and meaningful, as St. Paul people spoke from the heart about what they



St. Paul
Ann Arbor

Sowing **TRUTH**.
Building **FAITH**.
Shining **LOVE**.

love about our church and school, and what we could be doing better. The vision team received valuable feedback to shape the team's future conversations.

Going forward, the vision team will discuss this data from the vision workshop and the vision survey in February. In March and April, the team will hone the long-term vision with the help of the book God Dreams by Will Mancini, that fits with St. Paul's history and strengths, and leads us into God's mission in the Ann Arbor area. The team hopes to finalize the long-term vision by the end of the school year in early June.

Church Center - Don't Miss What's Coming Up Next!

By: Natalie Nesbitt, Director of Communications

Did you know?

Did you know you can watch our Sunday morning livestream worship right in the Church Center app (or on your computer via the SPAA Church Center webpage)?

Not only can you watch our livestream through Church Center you can also:

- Set a reminder in the app to be notified when our service is live
- Access the weekend Worship Folder link, Sign-in Form and Giving right from the livestream page
- Chat with other SPAA viewers watching with you

In addition to our livestream you can: watch previous worship services, listen to sermon messages and watch our Pastors' weekly "Sermon Recap" all in one place!

You can also easily view our calendar of upcoming events with all details including important links and sign ups and you even search the calendar by event type ("worship", "children's ministry", "volunteer opportunity", etc).



Scan the QR code to get started and connect with the life of your church.



That's great! So what's next?

Later this month we will be rolling out our **Directory** option where members can opt-in to be a part of our church family directory. **Watch your email for that invitation coming soon!**

So if you haven't signed up for SPAA on Church Center yet - do it now! Scan the QR code to get started! You will find detailed instruction sheets at worship entrances to guide you. If you have any questions please reach out to the church office at 734-665-9117 or to Natalie Nesbitt at nnesbitt@stpaulann Arbor.org.



Hey Pastor: Why Do We Confess Sins and Receive Forgiveness Every Sunday?

By: Pastor Aaron Roggow



I've been asked this question often in my ministry. There are two driving ideas behind it:

- 1. Some Christian churches don't include a public/corporate Confession & Absolution in their worship. For people with different church backgrounds or family members in other church bodies, this seems foreign.**
- 2. It can feel strange to begin worship with what can feel like a "downer" statement - "I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess..." Why would we start our service in such a way?**

Some History

You may be surprised to know that this regular practice isn't as old as many of the other elements of our Sunday liturgy. The early church's predominant practice, still practiced today, is "individual" or "private" confession with a pastor. (Pastor Hopkins and I are always open to meeting with you for private confession.) In the early Lutheran church, private confession wasn't mandatory as it had been in the Roman Catholic church, but it was still considered beneficial and salutary. The practice that developed was for individuals to confess to their pastor sometime during the week before receiving communion. As churches grew larger, the practice of confession and absolution shifted to a pre-service ritual held "before church" or to a Saturday evening prayer service. The pastor pronounced absolution over the individuals as he placed his hands on their heads while they knelt at the altar. (This is still done in some congregations in the German Lutheran church). Another practice that developed in the

18th century was the pastor pronouncing forgiveness over the whole congregation, called "corporate" or "public" confession, which we still use at St. Paul.

What's Happening Here? ¹

Confession follows Jesus' call at the beginning of His ministry for all people to "Repent" (Mark 1:15). He then went out in the authority of the Father to forgive sins (Matthew 9:1-8). Ultimately, Jesus' death and resurrection bring forgiveness to all people.

After He rose from the dead, Jesus sent His disciples to preach the same message of "repentance for the forgiveness of sins" in His name (Luke 24:47). He also gave His Church His authority to forgive and withhold forgiveness (Matthew 16:19, 18:18; John 20:21-23).

Throughout the Bible, we learn that God is abundantly generous in connecting His people to the forgiveness of Jesus. He forgives sins by proclaiming the truth of our forgiveness (John 1:8-9), he unites us to this forgiveness in our baptism (Acts 22:16; Ephesians 5:26-27; 1 Corinthians 16:11), and we receive forgiveness in Holy Communion "for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

God offers forgiveness in so many ways because we need it and we need to be reminded of it. The first-century church knew this, too. While the practice of confessing sins in worship didn't become a widespread formal practice as mentioned above, it was certainly something that God's people were encouraged to do. The earliest Christian document outside the New Testament is called The Didache ("the teaching"), which, in discussing Sunday worship, calls Christians to "Assemble on the day of the Lord, break bread and celebrate the Eucharist; but first confess your sins, that your sacrifice may be holy." When Christians gather, we recognize that we and everyone around us need what God gives to us - His forgiveness, grace, and life. And since God's work is primary in worship, confessing our sins and receiving His forgiveness is often the way we begin. In this, we remember that He alone makes us holy (forgiven), and then He welcomes us into His holy presence in worship.¹

Didn't Jesus Forgive All of Our Sins on the Cross?

¹ This section was supported with some great information in Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services, (cont'd on pg. 7) pgs. 436-437.



Hey Pastor... cont'd from pg. 6

Yes! 100%. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, you are completely forgiven. You can live daily in the assurance that He has accomplished everything for your life and salvation. And yet, two things remain true. We daily sin (we are at the same time 100% saint, forgiven by God, and 100% sinner, rejecting God's Word of life), and we forget or doubt His promises (that we are forgiven for everything we think, say, do, or desire that rejects His Word of life). God uses the church to speak His Word weekly to troubled and burdened sinful people, so that we hear of His love once again. In recognizing our sinfulness, we repently confess that sin and receive forgiveness. However, sometimes our sin weighs on us, and we carry it week after week or even year after year. When we come to the Lord's house, we hear that word that we need to hear once again, "Your sins are forgiven."

I like to think about weekly confession & absolution this way:

Imagine a husband and wife on their wedding day. And on that day, the husband says, "I will" and "I love you." Then years pass, and the husband and wife enjoy a happy marriage with the challenges and struggles that go with it, but the husband never says "I love you" again. His thought is that he said it once on their wedding day, and it's still true, so why would he need to say it again? His wife shouldn't worry, and he'll be sure to let her know if anything changes.

This isn't the way most husbands act, and it's also not the way that God acts. Just as a husband regularly says to his wife, "I love you," reminding her of what continues to be true even if she forgets that truth or doubts her worthiness of such love, God speaks words of loving forgiveness to His bride, His church, each time the church gathers. Out of His abundant grace, He speaks and delivers what we need to hear and receive regularly. He says, "I love you. I forgive you," connecting us again and again to the triumphant work of Jesus.

Not Really a Downer

At St. Paul, we continue to place confession and absolution at the beginning of most services because we're once again proclaiming truth. We are "poor miserable sinners." We are never better off because of our sin, and in repentance, we recognize that our sin ultimately leads to brokenness

² Thomas M. Winger, *Lutheranism 101*, pg. 88

and misery for us, for others, and in our relationship with God. We are "by nature sinful and unclean." This is our reality in our broken/fallen world, and we are completely at fault for our sin. Yeah, the fact that this is true of us week after week is a downer. We even take a moment of silence to give ourselves space to recognize and confess the particular sins that are bothering and burdening us. Pastor Tom Winger says, "We might compare confession and absolution to Moses' taking off his shoes before drawing near to the Lord in the burning bush (Exodus 3:5). We confess that our sins have made us dirty and that we need to be cleansed before entering the Lord's holy house.



This confession is a return to the cleansing waters of our Baptism (Hebrews 10:22).² But then God immediately speaks the Word we truly need and long to hear. "I forgive you." And then He says, "I will be merciful toward [your] iniquities, and I will remember [your] sins no more." (Hebrews 8:12). In Jesus, God reconciles us to himself. (2 Corinthians 5:18) That's the joy in this! In confession and absolution, God is working for us! He's bringing us to repentance and then announcing his merciful forgiveness. So now we're free from every sin that weighs us down (that's the real downer), and we're free from a life of separation from God and broken relationships. We're free for holiness in God's presence to receive His Word and gifts in worship. We're free for life and service in the places where God calls us. We're free to live out that forgiveness as we forgive others. God wants us to be alive (not miserable) today and every day in the freedom of His forgiving love, and so week after week we get to receive what He freely gives through Jesus.

As a pastor, I can tell you this is one of the best things that I get to do. I get to speak what God says to you, "I forgive you." As Peter writes, (1 Peter 2:16), "Live as people who are free."

**Do you have a
"Hey, Pastor"
question?**



We'd love to know!
Just send your question to
Pastor Roggow at:
aroggow@stpaulannarbor.org

"Make a Joyful Noise" - National Lutheran Schools Week

By: Jessica Meier, Teacher Grade 1

Psalm 98:4 – “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!”

St. Paul Ann Arbor is proud to announce its participation in the 2026 National Lutheran Schools Week, held from January 25–31. This year's theme, "Make a Joyful Noise," inspired by Psalm 98:4, highlights the schools' commitment to providing academic excellence while sharing the love of Jesus Christ with students and their families. Throughout the week we celebrated the blessings of Lutheran education through various activities designed to engage students, parents, and the local community.



Although weather forced us to cancel school on Monday, the week quickly picked up on Tuesday with a lively Lip Sync Concert! Students dressed as their favorite music genre or as their past, present, or future selves—reminding us to praise Him in every season of life. Students also worked

on a meaningful service project by decorating wooden crosses for shut-ins, those newly widowed around Valentine's Day, and residents of surrounding nursing homes. These crosses will be delivered as a reminder of Christ's love and the care of our church family.

Wednesday was Cozy and Comfy Day, when students relaxed while watching Sing and enjoying popcorn together. All week long, students could also purchase temporary "tattoos for teachers" for \$1 each, raising \$134 for our monthly mission project, Lead A Child—a wonderful example of joyful giving!



On Thursday, chapel families gathered in the gym for some friendly competition and laughter with activities like passing the hula hoop, cup-stacking relays, finding your shoe, and ring toss. It was a great opportunity



to strengthen relationships across grade levels and celebrate being one school family in Christ.

Friday brought an exciting conclusion as our entire K-8 school headed out for a school-wide field trip to Super Bowl in Canton for an afternoon of fun and fellowship. Teachers also arrived at school proudly showcasing all of the temporary tattoos selected by students throughout the week!



We were also blessed on Sunday, February 1, when our K-4 choirs sang during the 10:45 service. Hearing their voices lifted in worship was truly inspiring and a beautiful reminder of the work God is doing in the hearts of our students.



We are deeply thankful for the partnership, love, and support of our church family. It is such a blessing to serve in ministry together, helping students know and love Jesus more each day. Lutheran education puts Christ first in everything, focusing on the belief that salvation is essential at St. Paul Ann Arbor. We are thrilled to join over 1,800 schools in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) to celebrate God's work in our school. What a blessing to live our mission of Sowing Truth, Building Faith and Shining Love.

NLSW Team: Samantha Conway, Jen McCracken, & Jessica Meier

Exploring Winter Through Young Eyes

By: Monica Slack, Preschool Director

Brrr, it's chilly outside!

We've been having so much fun this winter with snowflakes, snowballs, ice skating, and observing animals in their cozy habitats. Over the past few weeks, we've been busy creating our own snowflakes, having exciting snowball fights in the movement room, playing outside in the soft, fresh snow, and even ice skating right in our classroom! It's been a magical winter wonderland, and there's nothing better for little ones than to explore it all! What more could a child wish for??



PTL Auction: Get your tickets now!

By: Carolyn Steenstra

St. Paul School is gearing up for our annual spring auction! Please join us on April 18th, 2026, as we fundraise for new basketball hoops and sun shades for the new playground. Additionally, a minimum of 10% of auction proceeds will go toward the Endowment Fund for student scholarships. Our event will take place at "The Garage" at Angel Food Catering in Belleville, from 5-10pm. Our theme this year is "Night at the Derby!" Ladies, feel free to wear a Derby-style dress or fascinator, and men, a bow-tie or suspenders! Childcare is provided at St. Paul School with your ticket purchase. We hope you join us for a fun night of fellowship with our St. Paul Church and School community! Purchase tickets here: https://onecau.se/_d35fp1 or scan the QR code.

PTL Fun Run update:

Using proceeds generated by St. Paul School's Fun Run last fall, the PTL recently purchased new tables and chairs that will be used in the future media center and library! These tables will be used for technology classes, after school enrichment activities, and meetings. We also purchased mobile power towers for charging student chrome-books, storage pedestals, and 2 book carts. Thank you for your donations to the Fun Run which allowed for these exciting improvements! Shout-out to Kristine Humphrey for leading the planning of this new equipment!



Fun Run Update! With your donations, we were able to purchase these new items:



12 technology tables



6 storage pedestals



22 regular chairs & 2 "noodle" chairs



3 mobile power towers



2 book carts



Check out the library this spring to see the new furnishings. Thank you for your support!

Stephen Ministry and Pastoral Care

By: Lexie Brown, SPAA Stephen Leader



“Stephen Ministers are lay congregation members trained to provide one-to-one care to those experiencing a difficult time in life, such as grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or relocation.”

This definition has been shared in the past, and this article seeks to explore what this means in light of the fact that Stephen Ministry is both an extension of pastoral care and a primarily lay-driven ministry.

You may be wondering how Stephen Ministry is an extension of pastoral care. This gets back to the heart of why Stephen Ministry was started 50 years ago.

A pastor was trying to care for so many hurting people in his church and simply did not have the ability to do it. At St. Paul, we have 2 pastors and hundreds of members in our church. It is simply not possible for the pastors to spend the amount of time necessary to meet individually and provide spiritual care for every single person who is struggling. The task seems daunting and overwhelming.

That's where Stephen Ministers come in. At St. Paul we have **14 Stephen Ministers** who are trained and able to provide one-to-one spiritual and emotional care. Four of our Stephen Ministers are male and ten are female.

There are a few instances where a person might be struggling and pastoral care is clearly a better option than Stephen Ministry.

First, Stephen Ministry is not for minors. If a young person under the age of 18 is struggling with something, our

fantastic youth director as well as our pastors are more equipped to walk alongside that individual than a Stephen Minister would be.

Additionally, Stephen Ministry is not for couples. Stephen Ministry is a one-on-one ministry. There have been cases where the husband had a male Stephen Minister, and the wife had a female Stephen Minister, but if a couple is looking to meet together with someone, Stephen Ministry would not be an option for them, and our pastors would be able to give better counsel for those situations.

Finally, Stephen Ministry is usually more long-term. If someone has an ongoing struggle, Stephen Ministers are prepared to walk alongside them for as long as they need. If someone has a situation where they only need to meet once or twice for spiritual and emotional care and encouragement, pastoral care is probably the better option.

If you or someone in your life is struggling and could benefit from the care of a Stephen Minister, please know that St. Paul Stephen Ministers are available and glad to walk alongside you! You can contact any of the Stephen Leaders for more information. You can also find more detailed information on our website by scanning the QR code below.



Moms in the Middle...

Where Moms Sip, Share and Strengthen Faith

By: Cathy Krzyske & Shannon Seehafer

Motherhood is one of the hardest jobs in the world. You are responsible for your child's well-being, but your own as well. It's a journey filled with joy and laughter but also challenges and uncertainties. And that's where the magic of mentorship comes in. As mothers we're so focused on being mentors to our children we forget about someone being a mentor to us. That's where someone who has been through those ups and downs and has come out stronger is needed. They have the capacity to provide guidance, navigate challenges and celebrate victories with you with God's love and guidance. Having a mentor means having someone to share the journey with – someone to laugh with, cry with, and learn from.

For those of us in our sixties, St. Paul never had the option of Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) or anything else of that nature to the best of my knowledge. Now St. Paul mothers have the option of MOPS. However, there is a need for those moms going through the Junior High and Senior High years with their children. Even more so with those moms who work and cannot attend daytime activities. These moms need an option that doesn't require them to prepare for a study or be responsible for food or planning. Time is already a factor they struggle with. They need an outlet to socialize with other women where they can talk through and pray about things they are going



through with their children during these years. And even better yet, a place where confidence is a golden rule.

That is why we would like to pilot this new group once a month through the months of **March, April and May**. If this is something that goes well and appears to have interest, then the possibility of reconvening in the fall could be explored. If you have interest in coming to be spoiled a little as a mother of these beautiful children, please contact Cathy Krzyske at (734) 904-0674 via text or email @ cathykrzyske@comcast.net to RSVP. The idea is to meet at the home of Cathy Krzyske (12141 Tuttle Hill Road, Willis, MI 48191) for the first session on Friday, March 20th from 6:30 to 9:00 pm.

Bach Vespers

By: Dr. John Boonenberg

Sunday, March 22, 2026 at 4:00pm
St. Paul Lutheran Church of Ann Arbor
420 W. Liberty St, Ann Arbor
Admission: Free

St. Paul Lutheran Church of Ann Arbor continues its new Bach Vespers series, presenting the beloved music of Johann Sebastian Bach in its original context—the beautiful Vespers liturgy. This wonderful tradition continues on March 22, with a presentation highlighting the breadth of Bach's repertoire featuring multi-generational musicians and a wide-variety of different instruments and vocal combinations. Led by artistic director, Dr. John Boonenberg, this Lenten presentation will allow the opportunity to experience this exquisite repertoire in the manner it was presented in Bach's day!





MISSIONS & Community



St. Paul Lutheran
Church of Ann Arbor

Sowing TRUTH. Building FAITH. Shining LOVE.

Puerto Rico Mission Trip - Nov 2026!

By: Tyler Seehafer, Director of Youth, Media & Missions

St. Paul continues to rejoice in the ministry of Rev. James and Deaconess Christel Neuendorf as they serve in Puerto Rico. After postponing a previously planned mission trip last year following prayerful discernment, we are grateful to share that plans are now underway to send a mission team to Puerto Rico in November 2026.

A team is already beginning to take shape, and **we would love to welcome additional participants as we work toward finalizing the group by March**. This trip will offer a hands-on opportunity to serve alongside our missionaries and local believers through a variety of ministry efforts, which may include:

- **Supporting the community through English language camps**
- **Assisting with groundwork and preparation for a future church site**
- **Engaging in university outreach in partnership with local members and missionaries**

Participants will have the opportunity to experience life and ministry together with our Puerto Rican brothers and sisters—gathering for worship, studying Scripture, serving side by side, and building meaningful relationships. God uses many different gifts in His mission, and whether your strengths are in teaching, music, construction, hospitality, or encouragement, there is a place for you on this team.



As an added convenience, **no passport is required** for this trip!

If you feel stirred to learn more, **please contact Tyler** at tseehafer@stpaulannarbor.org. If you missed the two informational meetings he would love to talk with you if you still have interest.

Our pastors are excited to be joining the mission as well, and we look forward to seeing how God will work through St. Paul in this overseas mission opportunity. Please continue to pray about whether God may be leading you to take part.

Love Ypsi... cont'd from pg. 2

well as shop at the miniature food pantry on-site.

We also have a chance to grow with the program. Although only a handful of people might currently cycle in during one meal, Faith leadership has their sights on being able to feed up to 50 people in a night.

If the first three meals go well, we plan to continue and become a regular host.

Serving these meals is a way to make real impact in our immediate community. At Love Ypsi, God is on display in messy aprons and steaming crock pots.

And that impact comes in many forms. It is the elementary schooler who goes home with a full stomach, or the volunteering middle school student who learns to serve. It's the older man who gets to eat with others instead in front of the television. For one woman last month, it was the visible relief upon her being offered a box of leftovers.

Love Ypsi's meals also build community. We aren't just parachuting in with time or money or labor, but getting

to know our neighbors. The work of peopling is just as important as scooping chili or shredding cheese – if not more so.

We are called not just to have faith and pray, but to dig in and do. A servant's stance is not one of grandeur or pomp, but bent over the kitchen sink or handing out cookies. It's sitting with someone and asking about their day. It's a few folding tables and a crockpot.

We may never single-handedly feed the 5,000, but we can feed the 50.

Community is built at the kitchen table. Come be a part of it.



For more information about joining Love Ypsi's community meals, reach out to Lexie Brown at lbrown@stpaulann Arbor.org or Jordyn Pair at jordynpair@gmail.com or scan the QR code to sign up!

More Ways to Serve: Love Ypsi Mission Diaper Pantry



Looking for a hands-on way to love our neighbors and make a real difference right here in our community? Join others in this new SPAA Community Group in partnership with Love Ypsilanti Mission's Diaper Pantry.

Volunteers (ages 14 and up) will serve families in need in our community by helping with simple intake forms, gathering requested supplies from the supply room, and distributing items to clients in a welcoming, supportive environment. **The next SPAA serving opportunity is March 14th from 9:30am-1:00pm.** Contact our SPAA Diaper Pantry Community Group leader, Amber Siglin, for more info at: breweral@umich.edu.

Love Ypsilanti Mission Diaper Pantry is located at Faith Lutheran Church (1255 E. Forest Ave, Ypsilanti). This is a truly meaningful way to help shine the love of Christ and support families in our local community.



For more information on Love Ypsilanti Mission visit: <https://loveypsimission.org>

A New Season for Our Youth Ministry

By: Tyler Seehafer, Director of Youth, Media & Missions

We are excited to share some great news about the next chapter of our ever-growing High School Ministry! For many years, we have been incredibly blessed by the space God provided through the youth house—a place where relationships were built, faith was nurtured, and students found belonging. Now, as our ministry continues to grow, we are stepping into a new season by transforming our church gym into our new Youth Center.

This transition is both practical and exciting. The gym offers us a larger, more flexible space that will allow us to better serve our students—creating room for worship, teaching, games, small groups, and meaningful connections. We truly believe this space will become a hub for discipleship, community, and life change for our youth in the years to come.

This move also opens up new opportunities for ministry beyond our High School students. By transitioning youth ministry into the gym, the youth house becomes available for future ministry opportunities that can bless even more areas of our church and community. We are grateful to see God expanding our vision and our capacity to serve.

We are deeply thankful to share that a generous donor



has already given a significant gift to help get this vision off the ground. What a blessing! We would also love any families that would like to help support this project, whether through financial support or by sharing ideas and ways you feel called to help. At this time, we are not seeking used or old furniture, but rather support that aligns with the intentional vision for this space. We will have a list of items in the coming months that you can choose to donate to support this project.

What a time this is for our church and our students. God is good, and we are thankful to be part of what He is doing in the lives of our youth.

Middle School Youth: Jr High District Gathering!



This summer, our middle school students are invited to attend the Jr. High Michigan District Gathering, taking place **July 28-30**. Open to students entering 6th–8th grade in Fall 2026, this retreat gathers junior high students from across Michigan for a few meaningful days focused on faith, friendship, and fun.

The theme for this year is Alien Fellowship, rooted in 1 Peter 3:15b: "Always be prepared to give an answer... for the hope that you have." Throughout the retreat, students will explore what it looks like to follow Jesus in a world where

faith can sometimes make us feel different—and how God uses Christian community to encourage, strengthen, and support us.

The retreat experience is designed to help students:

- Grow in their faith through worship and Bible study
- Build Christ-centered friendships within our church and beyond
- Learn from engaging speakers and breakout sessions
- Enjoy games, activities, and shared experiences

For parents, this retreat offers a great balance of spiritual depth and accessibility. The shorter length makes it an ideal first overnight retreat for students while still providing a meaningful and memorable experience.

We are also looking for adult leaders and chaperones who are interested in serving alongside our students. Additional details, including pricing, will be shared soon. For now, please save the date and complete the Google Form if your student—or you as a chaperone—are interested. Early sign-ups help with planning and ensure you receive all future updates. Scan the QR code to sign up!



High School Youth: Mighty Waters - HS District Gathering



We are excited to share an opportunity for our high school students to attend the 2026 Michigan District High School Gathering, taking place **June 28–July 1** on Mackinac Island. This event brings together students from across Michigan for several intentional days focused on faith, community, and growth in Christ. This year's theme, Mighty Waters, comes from John 4:14: "Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst..." Surrounded by water on Mackinac Island, students will explore how the life-giving water of God's Word brings lasting renewal far beyond what the world offers.

More than 1,000 students will gather for a meaningful experience that includes:

- Christ-centered Bible studies
- Engaging speakers and worship
- Breakout sessions that connect faith to everyday life

- Games, activities, and island adventures
- Intentional faith-building community

This gathering gives students space to step away from daily distractions and be immersed in an environment centered on encouragement, friendship, and spiritual growth.

The full cost of the gathering is \$599 per student. Through the partnership between St. Paul and ULC, our students will attend for \$399. This includes: 4 days / 3 nights at Mission Point, round-trip ferry transportation, 7 meals, Service events, gathering t-shirt, all programming and activities!

To reserve a spot, a \$100 deposit is due by March 1. Families are asked to complete the Google Form by that date as we finalize group numbers and begin detailed planning.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to Tyler Seehafer (tseehafer@stpaulann Arbor.org). Scan the QR code to register!



Vacation Bible School 2026

By: Lexie Brown, Director of Family Life Ministry



This year, our planning team is excited to help kids step through the mist into Rainforest Falls, overflowing with wild waterfalls, towering trees and colorful creatures. Beneath a canopy of chattering birds and howling monkeys, kids plunge into a life-long adventure, discovering the nature of God, and exploring what it means to be rooted in relationship with their creator, a safe place in life's storms. VBS is open to children who have turned 4 by June 1 through children who have completed 4th grade. You can serve as a volunteer at VBS once you have completed 5th grade. This June 22-25, we will gather at St. Paul Lutheran School from 9:00 am until noon. **Registration for both participants and volunteers will open March 15!**

Vacation Bible School is one of the biggest community outreach events of the year for our church. We are so excited to welcome kids from our community, and hopefully, get a chance to connect with their families. It is an amazing week of sharing the love of Jesus... but we need some help! **We are looking for volunteers to serve in a variety of ways at VBS and we are especially looking for crew leaders.** Crew leaders don't have to prepare anything in advance. They just show up to one of our volunteer training sessions and then show up to VBS and guide children through each station. As a high schooler and college student, I was blessed to serve as a crew leader for VBS many times and if you love children, this is probably the most rewarding volunteer position you can have. St. Paul hopes to encourage children to grow in their faith at home, at church and at school. VBS is a fun way for them to experience that during the summer and there are so many ways you can be involved no matter your age.



If you'd like to be involved with VBS this summer, more information is available by scanning the QR code here.

Questions can be directed to Lexie Brown at: lbrown@stpaulann Arbor.org.



Sowing **TRUTH.**
Building **FAITH.**
Shining **LOVE.**

To learn more about the ministries of St. Paul Ann Arbor visit our website at:
www.stpaulannarbor.org

*If you would like to submit an article or news item for any of the St. Paul communications
please contact Natalie Nesbitt, Media Outreach Coordinator at* nnesbitt@stpaulannarbor.org.



St. Paul
Ann Arbor

**We equip families and individuals to know Christ,
to discover truth, and to create meaningful connections.**