



St. Paul Lutheran Church

9:30a Service of Worship
Pastor ~ Reverend Ashley Nicolls

Third Sunday of Advent | December 14, 2025

May God's grace continue to
overflow to and through you.

Assisting In Worship

Musicians

JoAnn Jordan
Valerie Nicolls

Assisting Minister

George Hutfilz

Reader

Carol Grosch

Acolyte

Ryan Masse

Sound

Rick Barry
Mike Scherr

Camera Operator

Ron Zimmerman

Screen Operator

Amy Hildreth

Ushers

Judy Roberts &
Kathie Snyder

Greeter

Hank Roberts



Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Church!

We hope you will use this bulletin during the week to have a song to sing, prayers to pray and give comfort, whether you are worshipping in person or from home on your electronic devices.

Although not all of us are physically together to worship, our Lord is still with us. We give thanks for those who attend in-person and the technology that allows us to share the bulletin and the worship service on the website.

St. Paul has a Community Prayer Cross located outside near the road. You are welcome to leave a prayer request there or in the box when you enter, and it will be placed on the cross.

Important community ministries of St. Paul include the Tuesday Community Meal, Saturday Food Pantry, and the Early Childhood Learning Center. Your financial gift makes a difference for Christ and His kingdom and enables St. Paul to be *the community church that cares*. It can be made by online giving, on Sunday morning, mailed to the church, or dropped off during normal office hours - Monday-Friday • 9a-12noon.

May God bless you and give you peace!

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

"We Three Kings" – John H. Hopkins, Jr. Arr. Cynthia Dobrinski – St. Paul Ringers

Lighting of the Advent Wreath Prayer

Pastor: Let us pray,

Response: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. Your prophets spoke of a day when the desert would blossom and waters would break forth in the wilderness. Bless us as we light the candles on this wreath. Strengthen our hearts as we prepare for the coming of the Lord. May he give water to all who thirst, for he is our light and our salvation. Blessed be God forever. Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath song ~

Advent Candle Lighting Song



1. Come, light the flame, our hearts- pre -pare, For Christ is near-, the
2. Peace fills the air as can- dles glow, God's gen- tle whis- per,
3. Re- joice, re- joice, the Lord- is near! We lift our songs- in



hour is fair. In hope- ful long- ing, we - a- wait The
soft and low. The wars may rage, the storms- may roar, Yet
joy- ful cheer. The can- dle bright, its dan- cing gleam Re-



Pro-mised dawn- through hea-ven's gate. A spark of faith- be- gins to-
Christ will calm- the trou- bled shore. In qui- et trust-, we light- once
minds us of- the an- gel's theme. "Good news and ti- dings, born- to-



rise, A gui- ding star in sha -dowed skies.
more, The flame that o- pens mer- cy's door.
day!" We sing with hearts in swe- et a- rray.

Confession and Forgiveness

Pastor: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose home is heaven and earth, whose salvation is sure.

Response: Amen.

Pastor: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Pastor: Long-expected God,

Response: we confess that we look to ourselves for the peace and security only you can provide. We reach for swords and spears, reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war. We become impatient while waiting and weary of keeping awake. Free us from self-reliance, and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors. Increase our trust in God's timing, and awaken us to your advent among us, that we may abound in the hope you have promised. Amen.

Pastor: God judges us not as we deserve, but according to God's own righteousness. ☩ You are freed and forgiven, saved by grace, and ready to welcome the Savior.

Response: Amen.

Gathering Hymn ~ Angels from the Realms of Glory

1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
 2 Shep-herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your flocks by night,
 3 Sa - ges, leave your con - tem - pla - tions, bright - er vi - sions beam a - far;
 4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God, the Fa - ther, Spir - it, Son,

once you sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
 God with us is now re - sid - ing, yon - der shines the in - fant light.
 seek the great de - sire of na - tions, you have seen his na - tal star.
 ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing to the e - ter - nal Three in One.

Refrain

Come and wor - ship, come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born king.

Text: James Montgomery, 1771–1854, alt., sts. 1–3; *Salisbury Hymn Book*, 1857, st. 4
 Music: REGENT SQUARE, Henry T. Smart, 1813–1879

Prayer of the Day

Pastor: Let us pray, **Response:** Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Ministry in Music

“Advent Prayer”- James E. Clemens - St. Paul Singers

Children's Message

Scripture ~ Isaiah 35:1-10

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. ³ Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.” ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened ⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; ⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes. ⁸ A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. ⁹ No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. ¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return

and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Word of God. Word of Life.
Response: Thanks be to God.

Scripture ~ Luke 1:46b-55

All:

1., 3. My ——— soul pro - claims your
 2. You have cast the might - y

great - ness, O God, and my spir - it re - joic - es in
 down from their thrones, and up - lift - ed the hum - ble of

you,
 heart, You have looked with the love on your
 You have filled the hun - gry with
fine last time

ser - vant here, and blessed me all my life through.
 won - drous things, and left the wealth - y no part.

Great and might - y are you, O Ho - ly One,
 Great and might - y are you, O Faith - ful One,

strong is your kind - ness ev - er - more.
strong is your jus - tice strong your love,

How you fa - vor the weak — and low - ly one,
As you prom - ised to Sar - ah and A - bra - ham,

hum - bling the proud of heart.
kind - ness for - ev - er - more.

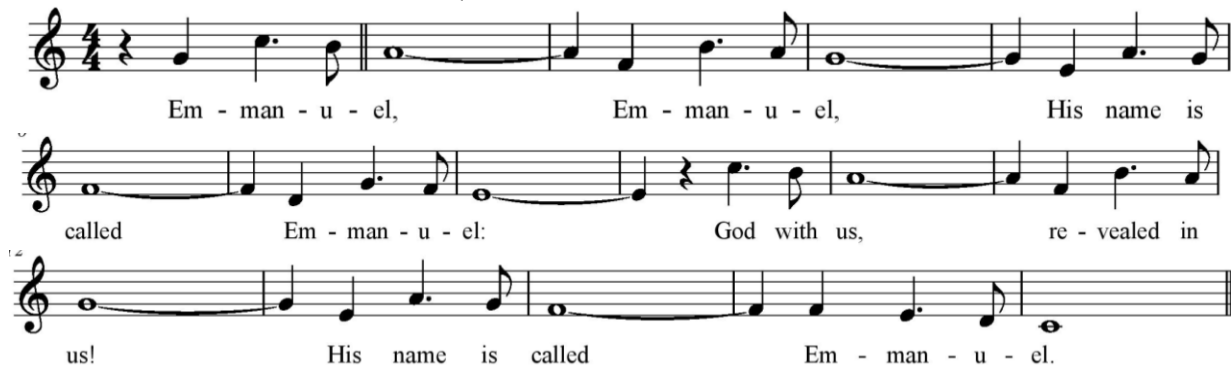
Text and Music: Marty Haugen, b. 1950; © 1990, GIA Publications, Inc.

Scripture ~ James 5:7-10

In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Word of God. Word of Life. **Response: Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation



CCLI Song # 12949

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Gospel ~ Matthew 11:2-11

John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew the 11th chapter.


Response: Glory to you, O Lord.

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" ⁴ Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." ⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' ¹¹ "Truly I tell you, among those born of women

no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Pastor: The Gospel of the Lord. **Response: Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon ~ Pastor Ashley Nicolls

Hymn of the Day ~ *In a Far-Off Place, Jesus Comes*



1 In a far - off place, Je - sus comes to earth.
2 For the poor in heart, Je - sus comes to earth.
3 In our deep - est night, Je - sus comes to earth:

Sheep and cat - tle grace the site. As the
Hum - ble shep - herds start the news. For each
ra - diant star to light our way. Sum - mer's

an - gel songs be - gin, like the whis - per of the wind,
home-less in - fant born, for the meek and those who mourn,
heat or win - ter's chill, with a warm and lov - ing will,

na - ture's hope a - wakes a - gain; Je - sus comes.
for the wear - y and the worn, Je - sus comes.
to a world that needs him still, Je - sus comes.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953

Music: TENTH NIGHT, Sally Ann Morris, b. 1952

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Prayers of the Church

Assisting Minister: As we wait for you, O loving God, we place before you our prayers for the church, the world, and all of creation.

(pause for silence)

Assisting Minister: God of joy,

Response: the church rejoices in the greatness of the Lord. You turn our hearts from fear to faith. Open your church to deep joy.

Assisting Minister: God of promise, **Response:** Receive our prayer

Assisting Minister: God of joy,

Response: you made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them. We need water for life, yet we misuse what you have given us. Restore us to live in right relationship with all creation.

Assisting Minister: God of promise, **Response:** Receive our prayer.

Assisting Minister: God of joy,

Response: you toss the mighty off their thrones and raise up the lowly. You fill the bellies of those without enough to eat, and send the rich away hungry. You frustrate the ways of the wicked.

Assisting Minister: God of promise, **Response:** Receive our prayer.

Assisting Minister: God of joy,

Response: when we are weak in mind, body, or spirit, bring us strength. We pray for those in our community in need, both for those who have asked, and for those who have not. Help us to recognize the fragments of joy that surround us each day.

Assisting Minister: Be especially with those we name now aloud or in our hearts. *(pause)*

Assisting Minister: God of promise, **Response:** Receive our prayer.

Assisting Minister: God of joy,

Response: the fatigue of this season is real. You are at work through the ministry of our congregation. Meet us in our needs and open us to meet the needs of our neighbors.

Assisting Minister: God of promise, **Response:** Receive our prayer.

Assisting Minister: God of joy,

Response: our ancestors in the faith knew and passed along the joy they received from you. Guide us to pass it to future generations of your followers. Join us all together in praise at your heavenly throne.

Assisting Minister: God of promise, **Response:** Receive our prayer.

Assisting Minister: Joyfully, we trust you wholly to answer our prayers.

Response: Amen.

Offering

(The collection plates will be brought forward at this time. Offering plates can still be found at the back of the sanctuary if you did not place your offering in the plates when you entered. Online giving at www.stpaulsarasota.org is also available.)

Offering Prayer

Assisting Minister: Nourishing God, you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Through this meal, satisfy our parched places, that we may rejoice and be for the world signs of your kingdom come. **Response: Amen.**

Spiritual Communion Prayer

Pastor: My Jesus, I believe that You are present in this most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there, and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

Holy Communion

(Those who want to partake of Christ's body and blood in their in their seats may lift up their elements at this time).

Pastor: In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and

for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Response: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Lord's Prayer

Pastor: Lord, remember us in your love and teach us to pray.

Response: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

Pastor: Here is life. God is with us. Come, receive what God has promised.

Response: Thanks be to God.

Pastor: Those who wish to remain at their seats to partake of Christ's body and blood in the bread and wine/grape juice may do so now. The body and blood of Christ is given and shed for you. Take and eat. Take and drink. If you wish to come to the altar, you may do so at the ushers' direction.

Communion Music ~ *Come to This Place* ELW #731 (Tune: Earth and All Stars)

Come to this place, gather and eat. Nourish your bodies and souls. It's my treat.
Go from this place fed and renewed. Go share with others what I've shared with you.
Come now with joy as a child of our God. Go giving joy to the world.

Post Communion Blessing

Pastor: Now may the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in his grace now and forever.

Response: Amen.

Prayer after Communion

Assisting Minister: God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus. **Response: Amen.**

Blessing

Pastor: May God who comes among us, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always.

Response: Amen.

Sending Hymn ~ All Earth is Hopeful



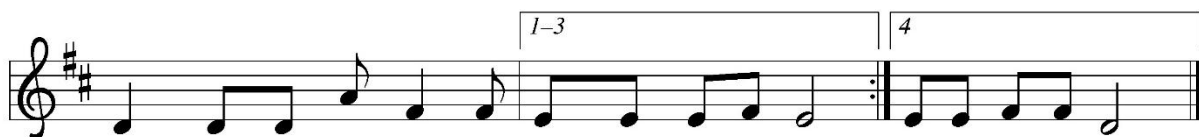
To - da la tie - rra es - pe - ra al Sal - va - dor
1 All earth is hope - ful, the Sav - ior comes at last!
2 Peo - ple of Is - rael, you heard the proph - et tell:
3 Moun - tains and val - leys will have to be pre - pared;
4 We first saw Je - sus a ba - by in a crib.



yel sur - co_a - bier - to, la ob - ra del Se - ñor; es el
Fur - rows lie o - pen for God's cre - a - tive task: this, the
"A vir - gin moth - er will bear Em - man - u - el"; she con -
new high - ways o - pened, new pro - to - cols de - clared. Al - most
This same Lord Je - sus to - day has come to live in our



mun - do que lu - cha por la li - ber - tad, re -
la - bor of peo - ple who strug - gle to see how
ceived him, "God with us," our broth - er, whose birth re -
here! God is near - ing, in beau - ty and grace! All
world; he is pres - ent, in neigh - bors we see our



cla - ma jus - ti - cia y bus - ca la ver - dad. dar - nos li - ber - tad.
 God's truth and jus - tice set ev - 'ry - bod - y free.
 stores hope and cour - age to chil - dren of this earth.
 clear ev - 'ry gate - way, in haste, come out in haste!
 Je - sus is with us, and ev - er sets us free.

Text: Alberto Taulé, b. 1932; tr. Madeleine Forell Marshall, b. 1946

Music: TODA LA TIERRA, Alberto Taulé

Spanish text and tune © 1993 and English text © 1995 Centro de Pastoral Litúrgica, admin. OCP Publications, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213.

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Dismissal

Pastor: Go in joy. Keep awake.

Response: Thanks be to God.

Children: And all God's children say,

Response: Amen. Yes!

Postlude

"Blessed Be that Maid Marie" – Arr. Lorie Line – Valerie Nicolls

Coffee & Social Hour is held in the Fellowship Hall after worship.

Flowers this week are given by: Helen Miller in loving memory of my husband John's 91st birthday.

Bulletins this month are given by: Helen Miller

Eternal Candle is given this month by: Helen Miller.

Attendance for last Sunday: 67 in-person; 210 views on line. (12/9/25)

St. Paul Mission Statement

As a Holy Spirit-led family of God, we are called through baptism to proclaim and bear witness to God's reconciling grace in Jesus Christ to all so that by joyfully sharing God's Word and encouraging each other to service for the sake of others, our lives together make a difference for Christ and His kingdom.

Please remember in your prayers...

All those serving in the U.S. Military, especially Gage Fournier. The homeless in our neighborhood, our city, our nation and the world. The Florida-Bahamas Synod Office of the Bishop Staff: Bishop Pedro, Assisting Ministers to the Bishop Pastors Carlos, Derek, Nicole, and Rob, Specialists Kim, Bill, & Brittney, Support Staff Tina, Yuliet, & Ileana.

SURE – Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity. Community Meal and Food Pantry guests. Prayers upon the HOPE Community Prayer Cross. The Arlington Park Neighborhood.

St. Paul members, especially, Carol Grosch, Evelyn Gulliksen, Barbara Hahne, Ethel Hamilton, Conrad Hellwege, Jr.,

St. Paul Early Childhood Learning Center families and teachers, especially Siena, Stephen, Halston, Mrs. Lisa and Ms. Iven.

Members Manny Acevedo Earleen Ashbrook Beetle/O'Hara/Miller Family Dorothy Boller Susan Burmaster Judy Carnal Missy Craig Sue Fisher Joann Flanigan Bob Fong JoAnn Jordan Valerie Nicolls Nancy Parmakian James Paulsson Colleen Ryan Frank Scianni Betty Smowton Homebound Members Donna Casala Evelyn Gulliksen Lindy Lindemann Virginia McQuaig Michael Reiter Carole Wilson Friends and Family Alice – <i>friend of JoAnn Jordan</i> Brad – <i>brother of Cindy Paxton</i> Debbie – <i>friend of Scherrs</i> Donnie – <i>community meal guest</i> Ed – <i>friend of Sandy Choquette</i> Gina – <i>friend of Jan Kruse</i> Jeff – <i>community meal guest</i> Mark – <i>friend of M & D Hillerich</i> MJ – <i>friend of Ron Zimmerman</i> Rick – <i>nephew of Linda Knight</i> Ryan – <i>community meal guest</i> Sharon – <i>friend of Jane Schubert</i> Susan – <i>friend of Cindy Paxton</i>	T.J. – <i>community meal guest</i> Sandi Acevedo – <i>sister-in-law of Acevedo</i> Jesus Alegria – <i>niece-in-law of Sandy Tull</i> Reyna Alegria – <i>niece-in-law of Sandy Tull</i> Kareem Ali – <i>friend of Fred Melton</i> Clinton Allen – <i>friend of Jim Paulsson</i> Laura Anderson – <i>niece of Roberts</i> Sheryl Brandes – <i>sister-in-law of Sue Scherr</i> Buete and Pearson family– <i>family of Brian McCulley</i> Caroline Burmaster – <i>sister-in-law of Susan Burmaster</i> Todd Couch – <i>son of Sandy Choquette</i> Mike Cunningham– <i>friend of H. Roberts</i> Fonda Davies – <i>Director of Music Ministries</i> David Eller – <i>friend of Carolyn Mele</i> John and Joy Emanuelli – <i>friends of Roberts</i> Gladys Faraone – <i>friend of H. Roberts</i> Bill & Vickie Hall – <i>family of Fonda Davies</i> Clair and Karen Hawver – <i>cousins of Keith Hildreth</i> Niklaus Heisler – <i>great-grandson of Irene Felicetti</i> Katy Hernandez – <i>niece of M. Acevedo</i> Pr. John Hilficker – <i>friend of Conrad Hellwege, Jr.</i> Nicole Ketter – <i>friend of Susan Burmaster</i> Kate Kretschmann– <i>family of Lindy Lindemann</i> Karen Kugler – <i>friend of Marty Hillerich</i> Jesse Lugo – <i>brother of Jose Lugo</i>	David McCall – <i>brother of J. Roberts</i> Marsha McKinney– <i>former member</i> Becky Nobles – <i>friend of Lindy Lindemann</i> Linda and Jim Norris – <i>family of Doris Schlotterback</i> Karen Paulsson – <i>sister of J. Paulsson</i> Manny Ribas – <i>friend of Cindy Schlotterback</i> Brian and Ken Schlotterback— <i>sons of Doris Schlotterback</i> Haley Schlotterback – <i>granddaughter-in-law of Doris Schlotterback.</i> Bill Schroeder – <i>friend of Conrad Hellwege, Jr.</i> Bethany Smith – <i>daughter of B&B Smith</i> Joyce Swartzbaugh – <i>Former Member</i> Natalie Smowton Boxx – <i>great-granddaughter of Betty Smowton</i> Noel Scott Studenwalt – <i>nephew of B&B Smith</i> Bill Sweeney – <i>grandson of Marilyn and George Hutfilz</i> Dan Torrence – <i>friend of K. Snyder</i> David Van Ness – <i>brother of Missy Craig</i> Elaine & Mark Vanderweight– <i>friends of Jim Paulsson</i> Curtis Weckwerth – <i>cousin of Rich Weckwerth</i> John and Janet Welther – <i>family of Ethel Hamilton</i> Pr. Pete Zieg – <i>former pastor of JoAnn Jordan</i>
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St. Paul Lutheran Church

and Early Childhood Learning Center

A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
and the Florida-Bahamas Synod, established 1955
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The Rev. Don Hillerich, D.D. - Pastor Emeritus – djhillerich@yahoo.com

Executive Committee

JoAnn Jordan, President Judy Roberts, Vice President
George Hutilz, Treasurer TBD, Secretary

Congregation Council

Irene Felicetti
George Hutilz
JoAnn Jordan

Bob Lariviere
Pr. Ashley Nicolls
Nancy Parmakian
Judy Roberts

Mike Scherr
Mary Schulte
Esther Smith



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