

The Messenger

Monthly publication of St. Paul Lutheran Church
& Early Childhood Learning Center



JAN. 2026

Greetings St. Paul Lutheran Church!

Merry Christmas!

I love saying Merry Christmas after Christmas Day to remind people that the 12 days of Christmas are after Christmas not before.



We'll be celebrating a lot after Christmas Day. The Sunday after Christmas, that we call, "The First Sunday of Christmas" December 28, we'll continue to hear the Christmas story with lessons and carols. We don't often sing Christmas carols much before Christmas Eve, but we will sing them after.

Sunday, January 4, the second Sunday of Christmas, we'll hear the story of Jesus' birth through scripture and monologues based on characters in the birth of Jesus story.

The 12 days of Christmas end on January 5. The next day is Epiphany, January 6. It's the day we celebrate the wise men getting to Jesus by following the star. This year we will have a gathering together to celebrate. One of my favorite operas is "Amahl and the Night Visitors". I bought it on DVD and wanted to show it. It is a perfect Epiphany story as it tells about the wisemen who visit Jesus but it's really about their stop on the way to Jesus. They visit a poor mom and crippled son's house. Spoiler alert – the crippled son gets healed. So between that opera and the ECLCs Trike-a-thon last month I was thinking about having a time when all of our folks who have walkers or canes walk around the circle drive, like our school's Trike-a-Thon. So let's meet at 1p in the circle drive and then watch the DVD in the sanctuary. You can bring your own movie snacks. And even if you don't have walking devices, you can walk around the drive too.

So once January 6 is over, then Christmas is officially over, but then it's *Baptism of our Lord Sunday* on January 11. The theme will be the ABCs of the Baptism of our Lord.

PrAshely's article continued on pg. 6.

WhatsInside

- Pg. 2 Council Report
- Pg. 3 ECLC News
- Pg. 6 Faith Opportunities
- Pg. 6 PrAshley's Article cont.
- Pg. 7 Serving Hope
- Pg. 8 Visit with Santa Pics

- Pg. 9 Birthdays/Celebrations/Info
- Pg. 9 Visit with Santa Pics Face Autism
- Pg. 10 Calendar of Events
- Pg. 11 Prayer Requests

December Council Report

December Council Highlights

Elected to office for 2026:
 President: JoAnn Jordan
 Vice President: Judy Roberts
 Secretary: TBD
 Treasure: George Hutfiltz



Accepted the V2A Grant for Building Bridges Latino Ministry.

Elected Bob Lariviere and Esther Smith to 3 year terms on OMF.

President's Corner

Dear Siblings in Christ,

As we step into a new church year and prepare for a new calendar year, this feels like a meaningful moment to look ahead together. As you pull out your calendars, please note these important dates:

- **Monday, January 19 – Annual committee reports are due (please submit to George Hutfiltz)**
- **Sunday, February 22 – Our Annual Meeting, held following worship**

These moments may not feel exciting on the surface, but they help us tell the story of who we are as a congregation and shape the path ahead.

Looking forward, your church council is planning a retreat early in 2026 to thoughtfully implement the constitutional changes we've affirmed and to listen for where the Spirit is leading St. Paul next. As part of that preparation, we invite you to share your hopes and dreams for our congregation—including ministries or programs you feel called to help lead. Please feel free to reach out to any council member in the months ahead.

Thank you for your faithfulness and for walking this journey of discernment together.

JoAnn Jordan

Message from the Church Office

Pastor Ashley and the Parish Administrator will never email or text you asking for donations of money or gift cards.

Please ignore these scammers. You should always contact the church office if you are not sure.

The Messenger is the newsletter of St. Paul Lutheran Church.

Mailing address:
 2256 Bahia Vista St.,
 Sarasota FL 34239-2499



Phone: 941-955-6479 Fax: 941-955-8600
 ECLC Preschool 941-955-6480
 Email: StPaul-Admin@verizon.net
 Preschool email: StPaul-ECLC@verizon.net
 Council email: StPaul-Council@verizon.net
 Pastor email: prashley1010@gmail.com
 Web site: www.StPaulSarasota.org
 Editor: Sue Scherr

St. Paul Lutheran Church is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA.

Pastor: Rev. Ashley Nicolls
 Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Donald J. Hillerich

Executive Committee

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

Congregation Council

Irene Felicetti, Geortg Hutfilz, JoAnn Jordan, Bob Lariviere, Nancy Parmakian, Judy Roberts, Mike Scherr, Mary Schulte, Esther Smith, Pastor Ashley Nicolls

Ministry Team Leaders or Council Liaison

Sharing & Caring – Jan Kruse
 Christian Education – **Seeking volunteer leader**
 Communications – Sue Scherr
 Early Childhood Learning Cntr – Esther Smith
 Evangelism – Bob Lariviere
 Safety & Emergency Preparedness - Cindy Paxton
 Fellowship – **Seeking volunteer leader**
 Finance – George Hutfiltz
 Food Pantry – George Hutfiltz
 Outreach Ministry Fund – Bob Lariviere
 Property - Mike Scherr
 Social – Judy Roberts
 Stewardship – George & Marilyn Hutfiltz
 Worship and Music – Judy Carnal
 Parish Administrator – Tracy Bateman
 Director of Music – Fonda Davies

The Messenger is published monthly and distributed without charge to St. Paul Lutheran congregation members and friends.

Copyright © 2025 St. Paul Lutheran Church, Sarasota FL.
 Permission granted for reproduction of individual articles with credit to source.

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.

ECLC News

Congratulations to our ECLC - Excellent Designation!

State Board of Education

Ryan Petty, *Chair*
 Esther Byrd, *Vice Chair*
Members
 Grazie P. Christie
 Layla Collins
 Daniel P. Faganholi, Sr.
 Kelly Garcia
 MaryLynn Magar



**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**

fldoe.org

Anastasios Karousas
 Commissioner of Education

October 30, 2025

Dear St. Paul Early Childhood Learning Center,

Congratulations! The Division of Early Learning (DEL) is proud to recognize your program for earning the designation of **Excellent** for the 2024-2025 Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) school-year program. This is the highest distinction a VPK provider can receive. Enclosed is a certificate recognizing your remarkable achievement.

When Florida launched VPK 20 years ago, our goal was clear: provide every 4-year-old child in the state access to high-quality early learning experiences that would prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond. Kindergarten readiness is one of the strongest predictors of lifelong success.

Your commitment to the mission is making a lasting difference in the lives of children, their families and the broader community. Thank you for the heart and energy that you bring to Florida's youngest learners.

I look forward to our continued partnership in this vital work.

Sincerely,

Cari Miller

Cari Miller

CM/na

Enclosure

CARI MILLER

CHANCELLOR, DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

325 W. GAINES STREET • TALLAHASSEE, FL 32399-0400 • 850-717-8550 • Toll Free 866-357-3239 • www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com



DIVISION OF

Early Learning

LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.



ECLC Picnic Rooms 1 & 2

These little ones met Santa on December 9, 2025. It was a chilly day, but Santa warmed everyone's heart.



These two rooms met Santa on a much warmer day, December 10, 2025. Santa couldn't keep a secret what was in his bag!



ECLC Picnic
Rooms 3 &
VPK



Prayer Ministry



St. Paul offers many ways to pray with and for loved ones, the community, and the world!

Online Prayer Chain - an email goes out weekly with prayer requests. Please let PrAshley know if you want to be a prayer.

Prayer Crosses - Located in the Fellowship Hall, the Sanctuary, and outside for prayers to be placed either in or on. Any prayer request put on the cross in the FH or Sanctuary will be put on the outside Hope Cross.

Prayer Zoom - Talking with God (see below) facilitated by Deacon Kim Heindl meets every Thursday at 4:00p.



Hope Seeds

Hope Seeds met on Monday, December 15, 2025, where 15 volunteers packed 3,600 bags of Swiss Chard seeds. Remember that Hope Seeds meets the 3rd Monday of every month from 1:00-3:00p. Come when you can and leave when you must. Come have a good time, fellowship, conversation and snacks. We are helping so many families around the world become self sufficient in growing their own food. Hope to see you on January 19, 2026.

See Sue Goddard-Barry if you have any questions.

Talking with God

As people of faith it is quite natural that we talk to God. In quiet moments, in moments of uncertainty or challenge, and in times of joy. It is part of our worship and helps us grow personally and communally in our relationship with Jesus. I would like to invite you to join a group of us that gather every Thursday at 4p via Zoom. We talk, share our lives, joys, concerns, and we pray. No stress and easy to be part of! Follow the link below (it is the same every week) or email Kimberly Heindl for an invitation: kaheindl@comcast.net.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81662784525?pwd=QSt4TGNSR2F3L0ovUDJ3SVdWbjRYUT09>

Meeting ID: 816 6278 4525

Passcode: 628552

PrAshley's article continued from page 1.

The next four weeks January 18 - February 8, are our Four Weeks of Favorites. Four Sundays of favorite songs, scriptures, children's messages, and food during fellowship time.

Speaking of food, Bread for the World is an advocacy ministry St. Paul has supported for years. If you remember writing letters to our elected officials to support WIC and other food legislation, that was through Bread for the World. Sarasota has a great opportunity to learn more about this ministry. Their CEO Rev. Eugene Cho will be speaking during a luncheon at Palm Aire Country Club on February 6 at 11:30a. St. Paul has a table of 8 for it. We can get another table if we have more people. Please sign up in the narthex for it. More information is found on page 7.

God bless you in 2026!

-PrAshley

We hope to have one table for St. Paul members at this luncheon. You may also sign up individually. The luncheon is \$75 per person and \$550 for a table of eight. Eugene Cho, Bread's CEO will be the keynote speaker. He is compelling and passionate. At a time of political division this intentionally nonpartisan organization with strong bipartisan support in the House and Senate can help unify our congregations and our collective witness to the gospel that seeks to feed every hungry neighbor throughout the country and world.

Donations will be matched up to \$20,000., so your donation will have twice the impact. Please consider attending this Bread for the World Luncheon on February 6, 2026 at 11:30a at the Palm Aire Country Club located at 5601 Country Club Way in Sarasota, FL.

RSVP by Monday, January 26 with the St. Paul office if you plan on attending.



Serving Hope Luncheon

hosted by the **Bread for the World**
Coalition of Sarasota

Join us for a special luncheon with **Rev. Eugene Cho**,
President & CEO of Bread for the World.

Learn how you can be part of the movement to end hunger – and connect with others committed to advocacy and change.

**Friday,
February 6, 2026**

11:30 a.m. Doors Open
12:00 p.m. Lunch and Program

**Palm Aire
Country Club**

5601 Country Club Way,
Sarasota, FL 34243

Attire: Country Club Casual

Kindly RSVP by **Monday, January 26**
Register or Donate: bread.org/Sarasota
Questions? Contact **Doreen Dowd**
at ddowd@bread.org



SAVE THE DATES

FOUR WEEKS OF FAVORITES!

JANUARY 18, JANUARY 25, FEBRUARY 1, FEBRUARY 8

Be sure to submit your favorite hymn by January 11.



A Visit with Santa



Celebrating God's Family



Jan. 4 Judy Carnal
 Jan. 7 Anna Williamson
 Jan. 15 Sue Scherr
 Jan. 19 Barbara Hahne
 Jan. 19 John Scherer
 Jan. 21 Jayvion Robinson
 Jan. 25 Rev. Don Hillerich
 Jan. 27 Evelyn Gulliksen
 Jan. 27 Hank Roberts
 Jan. 27 Brian McCulley
 Jan. 27 Mason Beetle
 Jan. 28 Missy Craig
 Jan. 29 Cindy Paxton
 Jan. 30 Blake Riley

HAPPY
Anniversary

Jan. 25 Frank & Joan Scianni



Save the Date

February 14

Shrove Saturday

February 18

ASH Wednesday Worship at 7:00P

February 22

Annual Church Meeting following worship

Visit with Santa for Face Autism



St. Paul had the pleasure of hosting a *Visit with Santa* for the Face Autism organization. The fellowship hall was filled with laughter, smiles, and jingle bells. 45 children plus their parents, grandparents, and siblings enjoyed an afternoon of holiday fun!



Of course Santa was the main attraction, but fun with crafts, cookie decorating, hot chocolate and letters to Santa were a hit as well.





Jan. 1 Thursday



Jan. 3 Saturday
9:00a Food Pantry
Distribution

Jan. 4 Sunday
9:30a Worship Service

Jan. 5 Monday
1:00p EvANGELism
Ministry Meeting
7:00p Worship & Music
Ministry Meeting Zoom

Jan. 6 Tuesday
1:00p Epiphany
Gathering
2:30p Sharing & Caring
Ministry Meeting
5:30p Community Meal

Jan. 7 Wednesday
8:00a Property Ministry
6:00p Bell Practice
7:00p Choir Practice

Jan. 8 Thursday
9:30a Food Pantry Prep
4:00p Prayer Team
Meeting Zoom

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan. 10 Saturday
9:00a Food Pantry
Distribution

Jan. 11 Sunday
9:30a Worship Service

Jan. 13 Tuesday
**Ministry Reports Due
for Council**
9:30a ECLC Chapel
5:30p Community Meal

Jan. 14 Wednesday
8:00a Property Ministry
6:00p Bell Practice
7:00p Choir Practice

Jan. 15 Thursday
Messenger Deadline
9:30a Food Pantry Prep
1:30p Finance Meeting
Zoom
2:30p Exec. Team
Meeting
4:00p Prayer Team
Meeting Zoom

Jan. 17 Saturday
9:00a Food Pantry
Distribution

Jan. 18 Sunday
9:30a Worship Service
11:00a Confirmation

Jan. 19 Monday
**Annual Ministry
Reports Due**
1:00p Hope Seeds

Jan. 20 Tuesday
9:30a ECLC Chapel
5:30p Community Meal

Jan. 21 Wednesday
8:00a Property Ministry
6:00p Bell Practice
7:00p Choir Practice

Jan. 22 Thursday
9:30a Food Pantry Prep
4:00p Prayer Team
Meeting Zoom
6:30p Council Meeting

Jan. 24 Saturday
9:00a Food Pantry
Distribution

Jan. 25 Sunday
9:30 Worship Service

Jan. 26 Monday
9:00p LSF

Jan. 27 Tuesday
9:30a ECLC Chapel
5:30p Community Meal

Jan. 28 Wednesday
8:00a Property Ministry
6:00p Bell Practice
7:00p Choir Practice

Jan. 29 Thursday
9:30a Food Pantry Prep
4:00p Prayer Team
Meeting Zoom

Jan. 31 Saturday
9:00a Food Pantry
Distribution



•For 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, Assistant 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 & Food Pantry Guests. •Prayers upon the HOPE Community Prayer Cross. •St. Paul ECLC teachers and students. •The Arlington Park neighborhood.

<p>Members</p> <p>Manny Acevedo Earleen Ashbrook Beetle/O'Hara 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 Sciani Betty Smowton</p> <p>Homebound Members</p> <p>Donna Casala Evelyn Gulliksen Lindy Lindemann Virginia McQuaig Michael Reiter Carole Wilson</p> <p>Friends and Family</p> <p>Alice - JoAnn Jordan's friend Brad - Cincy Paxton's brother Debbie - Scherr's friend Donnie - CM guest Ed - Sandy Choquette's friend Gina - Jane Kruse's friend Jeff - CM guest Mark - Hillerich's friend</p>	<p>MJ - Ron Zimmerman's friend Rick - Linda Knight's nephew Ryan - CM guest Sharon - Jane Schubert's friend Susan - Cindy Paxton's friend T.J. - CM guest Sandi Acevedo - Acevedos sister-in-law Jesus Alegria - Sandy Tull's niece-in-law Reyna Alegria - Sandy Tull's niece-in-law Kareem Ali - Fred Melton's friend Clinton Allen - Jim Paulsson's friend Laura Anderson - Robert's niece Sheryl Brandes - Sue Scherr's sister-in-law Buete & Pearson family - Brian McCulley's family Caroline Burmaster - Susan Burmaster's sister-in-law Todd Couch - Sandy Choquette's son Mike Cunningham - H. Roberts' friend Fonda Davies - Director of Music Dave Eller - Carolyn Mele's friend Gladys Faraone - H. Robert's friend Bill & Vickie Hall - Fonda Davies' family Clair & Karen Hawver - Keith Hildreth's cousins Niklaus Heisler - Irene Felicetti's great-grandson Katy Hernandev - M. Acevedo's niece Pr. John Hilficker - Conrad Hellwege's friend Nicole Ketler - Susan Burmaster's friend Kate Kretschmann - Lindy Linderman's friend Karen Kugler - Marty Hillerich's friend Jesse Lugo - Jose Lugo's brother</p>	<p>David McCall - Judy Roberts' brother Marsha McKinney - former member Becky Nobles - Lindy Lindermann's friend Linda & Jim Norris - Doris Schlotterback's family Karen Paulsson - Jim Paulsson's sister Manny Ribas - Cindy Schlotterback's friend Brian & Kenny Schlotterback - Doris Schlotterback's sons Hailey Schlotterback - Doris Schlotterback's granddaughter-in-law Bill Schroeder - Conrad Hellwege's friend Bethany Smith - Smiths' daughter Joyce Swartzbaugh - former member Natalie Smowton Boxx - Betty Smowton's great-granddaughter Noel Scott Studenwalt - Smiths' nephew Bill Sweeney - Hutzliz's grandson Dan Torrence - Kathy Snyder's friend David Van Ness - Missy Craig's brother Elaine & Mark Vanderweight - Jim Paulsson's friends Curtis Weckwerth - Rick Weckwerth's cousin John & Janet Welther - Ethel Hamilton's family Dr. Pete Zieg - JoAnn Jordan's former pastor</p>
---	---	---

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble, with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." 2Corinthians 1:3-4

St. Paul Lutheran Church

& Early Childhood Learning Center
2256 Bahia Vista Street, Sarasota, FL 34239

941-955-6479 Preschool 941-955-6480

940 -955-8600

www.StPaulSarasota.org

Rev. Ashley Nicolls, Pastor

Rev. Don Hillerich, Pastor Emeritus

Sunday Schedule

9:30a Service of Worship In-person

9:30a Service of Worship on Facebook Live



St. Paul Mission Prayer

God of grace and love, you created us as your children and have brought us to St. Paul Lutheran Church. We are not perfect people, but this church is the perfect place for imperfect people. Thank you for your grace through Christ given to us. You call us to proclaim to everyone we meet that your grace is for them too. As a Holy Spirit-led family of God, we ask you to help us joyfully share your word and serve your people, so that together our lives make a difference in your kingdom here on earth. Strengthen us in our mission together; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

