

# The Messenger

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

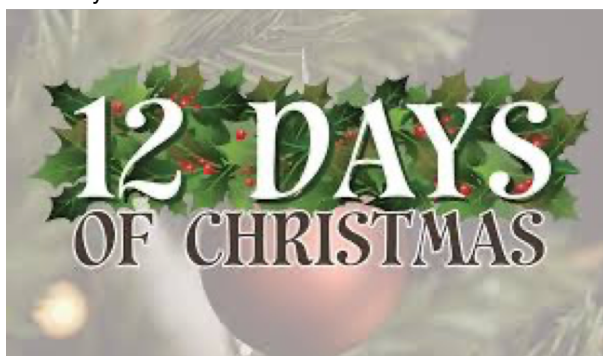


JAN. 2026

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.

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# 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.

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 Council email: [StPaul-Council@verizon.net](mailto:StPaul-Council@verizon.net)  
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 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 Hutfiltz, 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.

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**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

Contratulations to our ECLC - Excellent Designation!

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**State Board of Education**

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



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**  
fldoe.org

Anastasios Kamoutsas  
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

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](http://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 pray-er.

**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](mailto:kaheindl@comcast.net).

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



## SAVE THE DATES



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



**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



Rooted in Christ!



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.

#### **Members**

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

#### **Homebound Members**

Donna Casala  
Evelyn Gulliksen  
Lindy Lindemann  
Virginia McQuaig  
Michael Reiter  
Carole Wilson

#### **Friends and Family**

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

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 Hernandez - M. Acevedo's niece  
Pr. John Hilficker - Conrad Helwege'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

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 - Hutfli'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

"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](http://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

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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.