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St. Paul Lutheran Church and School • Royal Oak, MI

# The Masthead

St. Paul Lutheran Church & School  
Monthly Newsletter



January 2026

Church Office: 248-541-0613 & School Office: 248-546-6555

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Front Page .....	1
Vestry Update.....	2
Meet the Staff .....	3
Hey Pastor.....	3
Special Thank Yous.....	3
Ministry & Events.....	4
School News.....	5
Notes & Directory.....	6
Birthdays.....	7
Calendar.....	8



REV. JAKOB ANDRZEJEWSKI



## “New Year, New... Me?”

Every January, we do it—we declare with bold confidence, “This is it. This is the year.” The year we finally eat better, read more, spend less, run farther, pray deeper, organize everything, lose twenty pounds, and somehow become the sort of person who actually enjoys kale.

And then reality shows up: the treadmill squeaks, the planner disappears by January 12th, someone brings donuts to the church office (why is it always donuts?), and after a week of “early morning devotions,” we’re negotiating with the snooze button like diplomats at a peace summit. January reveals something about us: our resolve is strong, but our strength is limited; our hopes are big, but our habits are stubborn; we want transformation, but we cannot manufacture it by sheer willpower. That’s why the good news of January isn’t a fresh start on your calendar—it’s a fresh start in Christ. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Paul doesn’t say, “If anyone tries harder...” or “If anyone finally gets their act together...”; the newness doesn’t come from you—it comes to you, from Jesus. He is the One who makes new. He is the One who transforms. He is the One who pulls you forward when your resolutions fall apart like a cheap folding chair. January reminds us that Christian life isn’t self-improvement—it’s Christ-renewal. You’re not given a list of spiritual resolutions; you’re given a Savior. So if your year is starting messy—if you’ve already broken your resolutions, already fallen behind, already wondering how you’ll get through a month that feels seventy days long—take heart. Your hope isn’t in your performance but in His promise: “I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5).

Not some things. Not the things you manage to fix. All things. Including you. So as you step into the year ahead with its unknowns, burdens, joys, and surprises, do what God’s people have always done: don’t trust your resolve—trust your Redeemer. And maybe, just maybe, enjoy a donut without guilt. WWJD? He’d eat that donut. “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22–23).

Pastor Andrzejewski



# Vestry Update

From our Vestry Vice President ~ Steven Carpenter



150th Anniversary Ribbon-cutting ceremony  
Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce  
Dec. 2, 2025

**2025 has flown by, and we are deeply thankful.** As we reflect on the year behind us, we give thanks for the many ways God has been at work at St. Paul—within our congregation, our community, and our shared mission. This year also marked the joyful completion of our three-year capital campaign. We are grateful for the visible and lasting improvements it made possible, including a new welcome center, improved office spaces, and new—now leak-free—windows in the school gym. Even more, we celebrate that this work was completed with more than \$100,000 under estimates.

As Vestry, we began the year with a nearly blank slate—stepping into a new governance model and a shared opportunity to listen, discern, and build together. Through prayerful collaboration, we developed a comprehensive policy handbook spanning governance, worship, discipleship, education, outreach, and Christian care. We are grateful to see just a few of these thoughtful and meaningful policies already taking root—such as *Fellowship*, which supports welcoming small groups and deeper relationships. At the same time, we are excited about what lies ahead, including *Grow in the Word*, a commitment to deepen engagement with Scripture across all ages by 20% annually.

These policies (*available through the church office*) support our newly rewritten mission—**Serve. Support. Share.** We are grateful for the strong foundation laid this year and confident it will allow St. Paul to grow and flourish for the next 152 years.

We are also thankful for the focused work of Vestry members serving alongside key initiatives—Jeff with the Housing Committee, Marshall with the Marketing Committee, and Steven with the End of Year Giving Committee, to name a few. This shared leadership has produced meaningful results, from St. Paul Royal Oak commercials on television to our 150th Anniversary ribbon-cutting ceremony with the Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce.

That same spirit of collaboration carried into our End of Year Giving Campaign. We extend our sincere thanks to those who helped in its coordination, and to every member who prayerfully responded. **Your generosity is already making a difference, and we are deeply grateful.**

As we close the year, we do so with gratitude and anticipation—thanking Art Steiber and Brian Hermann for their faithful Vestry service, and joyfully welcoming Lily Paul and Chay Smith as new Vestry members. **With thankful hearts for the year behind us and excitement for the year ahead, we move forward together in faith.**

## FINANCE

Weekly contribution needed based on approved 2025/26 budget: **\$13,700**

Weekly Contributions Received:

11/30 \$10,911  
12/7 \$17,576  
12/14 \$14,642  
12/21 \$18,295



### ELECTRONIC GIVING

St. Paul offers a convenient electronic giving option to help you keep up with your intended offerings. Please enroll on our website [www.stpaulroyaloak.org](http://www.stpaulroyaloak.org)—or QR code below. For questions, contact Sue in the church office.

### 2026 Vestry Members:

Chris Schultz—President  
Steve Carpenter—Vice President  
Rachel Harris—Secretary  
Marshall Mackinder—Financial Secretary  
Jeff Szerdi  
Lily Paul  
Chay Smith  
Pastor Andrzejewski  
Chris Francik—School Principal  
Please email [sprovestry@gmail.com](mailto:sprovestry@gmail.com) if you'd like to reach out to our vestry members.

## Meet the Staff



**Every month we will feature a different staff member! This month we are introducing our middle school teacher & band director—Kurt Schmidt.**

Kurt Schmidt, a life-long Lutheran, began teaching at St. Paul, Royal Oak in August of 2024. He is currently in his 43rd year of teaching with over 30 of those years in Lutheran schools. He has taught students in every grade from 1st-12th during that time but enjoys guiding middle school students the most as they begin discovering a much broader outside world.

Mr. Schmidt has three lovely daughters, three fantastic sons-in-law, and five grands ranging from almost 2 through the oldest at age 9. One family is in Oakland County, one (literally) in Chicago, and one outside Chattanooga, in northwest Georgia.

He finds so much to enjoy about his current position at St. Paul where he instructs upper grade students in ELA courses, our bands, and shares the Gospel in morning Bible class that starts three of the mornings each week. Probably the highlight for him is recording and editing the weekly Channel V News Crew broadcast. Every 7th and 8th Grader is an important part of the Crew, and each one is seen "on air" every week performing their assigned role.

Outside of school, Mr. Schmidt frequently attends jazz concerts and festivals throughout southern Michigan and northern Ohio. He sings tenor in the St. Paul Chancel Choir. And being a Buckeye by birth, he is a huge fan of The Ohio State University and any Cleveland team. (His grandpa's college roommate [at Concordia, Springfield] played 2nd base for the 1920 World Series Champion Cleveland Indians.)

**Thank you, Mr. Schmidt, for all the wisdom, joy & love you share with our staff & students EVERYDAY!**



Many, many thanks to all members who make our church AMAZING! Specifically, we'd like to acknowledge the individuals who have helped in the following areas recently

\*Volunteers who are on our altar guild—thank you for not only taking care of our sanctuary each week but also for being in charge of decorating our sanctuary last month for Christmas!

\*Volunteers who serve on our trustee board. Thank you for taking care of our buildings—both inside and out.

If there is an area that you'd love to help with at SPRO, please reach out!



### HEY PASTOR...

(A short Q&A column answering common faith or Bible questions)

Q: I am curious as to why there are not any Crucifix's in the Sanctuary with Jesus on the Cross. Is this unique to the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod or a St Paul Royal Oak decision?

A: Thank you for this thoughtful question! It's actually one that Christians have asked and answered in different ways for centuries. Some churches prominently display a crucifix (a cross with the body of Christ), while others use a cross without the corpus. Both are historically Christian, and both communicate deep theological truths.

Here at St. Paul, you'll notice that while we don't currently have a crucifix, we have crosses everywhere—on banners, windows, paraments, architecture, and art. None of that is accidental. The cross is the beating heart of the Christian faith. Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23), and our sanctuary reflects that preaching.

So why a cross instead of a crucifix?

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has no prohibition against crucifixes. In fact, plenty of LCMS congregations use them, and many pastors (including Luther himself) encouraged their use because they visibly proclaim Christ's sacrifice. St. Paul happens to lean toward the "empty cross" tradition, which emphasizes the completed victory of Jesus. The empty cross proclaims:

Christ was crucified for you.

Christ has finished the work of salvation.

Christ is risen and alive.

A crucifix, on the other hand, highlights the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus—His real, physical, atoning death on our behalf. Both are true. Both are good. Both are deeply Lutheran.

Whether a church displays a crucifix or an empty cross isn't about what we believe but about how we visually emphasize what we believe. Crucifix = the cost of salvation. Empty cross = the completeness of salvation. St. Paul simply leans toward the second emphasis in its particular sanctuary design.

You might be pleased to know this, however... there is one crucifix on the church. I wear a big one on my chest during services we offer communion to visually amplify the message "this is my body; this is my blood."

Have a question you'd like answered? Send them to [office@stpaulroyaloak.org](mailto:office@stpaulroyaloak.org) or visit the church office!

# Upcoming Events & Opportunities

## BIBLE CLASS OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday Bible Class	9:45am w/Pastor Andrzejewski (lounge)
Sunday School	9:45am w/ Liz & Jerich Lopez (school)
<b>Weekday/Saturday Bible Classes</b>	
Mondays 9:00am	Women's Bible Class (Sept-May) (lounge) Contact Lee Ann Millinger or Rita McClatchey
Wednesdays 10:00am	Pastor Andrzejewski (lounge) (Sept-May)
Thursdays 8:00am	Men's Breakfast at The Avenue Restaurant (Woodward, N of 13 mile) Contact Mike Rasmussen
3rd Saturday, 7:30am	Men's Breakfast/Bible Study, (Sept-May) (lounge) Contact Chuck Brewer



## Coming in February ~ Annual Big Game Bash

Plan to join us for Superbowl

Sunday on February 8th starting at 5:45pm in the lounge to watch the game on the big screen. More details to come early next month! Contact Chuck

Brewer with any questions—  
**brewerchuck10@gmail.com.**

Please plan to join us Friday, Jan. 16th and Saturday Jan. 17th to un-decorate the sanctuary and tidy up our church areas. We need many hands to pack away ornaments & boxes. Please reach out to Kathy Eifert with questions ~ [holland4me@yahoo.com](mailto:holland4me@yahoo.com).



## Monthly Bible Readings

LCMS Series C

Jan. 4	<b>2nd Sunday after Christmas</b>	<b>1 Kings 3:4–15</b>	<b>Psalm 119:97–104</b>	<b>Eph. 1:3–14</b>	<b>Luke 2:40–52</b>
Jan. 11	<b>The Baptism of Our Lord</b>	<b>Isaiah 42:1–9</b>	<b>Psalm 29</b>	<b>Rom. 6:1–11</b>	<b>Matt. 3:13–17</b>
Jan. 18	<b>2nd Sunday after Epiphany</b>	<b>Isaiah 49:1–7</b>	<b>Psalm 40:1–11</b>	<b>1 Cor. 1:1–9</b>	<b>John 1:29–42a</b>
Jan. 25	<b>3rd Sunday after Epiphany</b>	<b>Isaiah 9:1–4</b>	<b>Psalm 27:1–9 (10–14)</b>	<b>1 Cor. 1:10–18</b>	<b>Matt. 4:12–25</b>



## Sanctity of Life Sunday & Baby Bottle Boomerang!

Sunday, January 18th is Sanctity of Life Sunday. Please consider supporting our local Care Net Pregnancy Center of Berkley/Detroit. We will have baby bottles available for you to fill and return Jan 18th-Feb 8th. Coins are great but the bottles can also be filled with bills & checks (made out to Care Net Berkley/Detroit). All funds go directly to Care Net and are used to assist local mothers in crisis. Information on the center is available at <https://www.carenetworkberkleydetroit.org/>  
**Last year we raised over \$3500!!!!**

# SCHOOL MINISTRY



## St. Paul Lutheran School

100+ Years of God's Grace

### Our Mission

"Serve, Support & Share Where God Calls Us!"

### Statement of Purpose

St. Paul Lutheran School equips children for a life of service with a foundation of academic, physical, spiritual, and social maturity centered around Christ Jesus.



### Miranda Lorence ~ Kindergarten Teacher

We are excited to invite families to Kindergarten Round-Up later this winter. This is a wonderful opportunity to explore all that our school has to offer: hands-on learning, faith-filled lessons, a nurturing environment where children grow academically, socially, and spiritually. At our school, every child is loved and valued, and we share the joy of learning and the love of Jesus with our students. From reading and writing to fun projects, and faith-centered activities, there is so much for children to discover.

I am especially looking forward to meeting new families and reconnecting with familiar faces. Children who are new to St. Paul quickly become part of our school family, and we take pride in creating a warm, welcoming community where children and parents feel at home. We can't wait to open our doors, share our classrooms, and show how education and faith work together every day to help each child grow. We also invite you to share this opportunity with friends or family who may be interested in joining our school family. We look forward to seeing you and sharing what makes St. Paul such a special place.



### Thank You for Blessing Our Christmas Shop!

We are truly grateful for the incredible generosity of our St. Paul families. Your handmade gifts were beautiful, thoughtful, and filled with the kind of care that makes this tradition so special. It's clear how talented and giving our community is, and our children were blessed by your creativity.

A heartfelt thank-you as well to the wonderful volunteers who gave their time to help set up, wrap gifts, and walk alongside our students as they shopped. Your support made the entire experience joyful for our children, and we couldn't have done it without you.

Thank you for sharing your gifts, and your hearts, with our school this Christmas season. Happy New Year!

**Chapel Offerings for the Second Quarter** go to help support our church food pantry. Thank you for all the support for this ministry Vikings! Last quarter we raised over \$272 for Camp Restore—Detroit!

### School Calendar

January 5 School Resumes  
January 16 1/2 day—end of 2nd quarter  
January 19 No School—MLK Jr. Day

### Coming in February:

Valentines Dance—2/13  
Winter Break—2/16 & 2/17  
Parent/Teacher Conferences—2/26 & 2/27



# January Birthdays

Jan 1st	Danielle Workman	Jan 13th	Paul Brown
Jan 2nd	Lauren Bunker	Jan 14th	Al Manteuffel
Jan 3rd	Erik Olsen Remy Szlagá	Jan 18th	Jason Roche Michelle Ohngren
Jan 4th	Ezra Simon (Newton) Ephraim Simon (Newton)	Jan 19th	Henry Eising
Jan 6th	Emily Bashore	Jan 22nd	Laura Newell Kaylee Guilmette
Jan 7th	Brian Louwers	Jan 24th	Sara Jarvey Courtney Woodward
Jan 8th	Dawn Heins Andrea Keeble Aaron Brandt	Jan 25th	Susie Wlotkowski
Jan 9th	Gabrielle Charlton Jenelle Jackson	Jan 28th	Jeff Lehman Parthenia Mickens
Jan 10th	Peggy Schwartz	Jan 30th	Hope Malczynski
		Jan 31st	Beverly Limbaugh Esther Simon (Newton)



If we've missed listing your birthday, please contact the church office 248-541-0613

# January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 New Year's Day All Offices Closed	2 All Offices Closed	3
4 8:15am • Worship -C 9:45am—Bible Class & Sunday School 11am • Worship 1pm Brewer Memorial	5 School Resumes 9am • Women's Bible Study • Trustees 7pm • Elders	6 Epiphany	7 8:30am • Chapel 10am • Bible Study	8 8am • Men's Breakfast 7pm • Choir 8:30pm • Bell Choir	9	10 9am • New Member Class
11 8:15am • Worship 9:45am—Bible Class & Sunday School 11am • Worship -C	12 9am • Women's Bible Study • Trustees • Food Pantry	13 7pm • Vestry Meeting	14 8:30am • Chapel 10am • Bible Study	15 8am • Men's Breakfast 7pm • Choir 8:30pm • Bell Choir	16 10am • Undecorate Church School—Half Day	17 7:30am • Men's Breakfast 10am • Confirmation • Undecorate Church
18 8:15am • Worship -C 9:45am—Bible Class & Sunday School 11am • Worship	19 School Closed MLK Jr Day	20	21 8:30am • Chapel 10am • Bible Study	22 8am • Men's Breakfast 7pm • Choir 8:30pm • Bell Choir	23	24 9am • New Member Class
25 8:15am • Worship 9:45am—Bible Class & Sunday School 11am • Worship-C	26 9am • Women's Bible Study • Trustees • Food Pantry	27	28 8:30am • Chapel 10am • Bible Study	29 8am • Men's Breakfast 7pm • Choir 8:30pm • Bell Choir	30	31