

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Newsletter

Summer/Fall 2026



Rooted & Growing

Pastor's Post



What if it actually worked?!

This summer my wife and I took a detour so that we could photograph ourselves in front of the “Cheers” sign outside of the iconic Boston Bar. Seeing this sign not only brought a smile to my face, but also it put its famous theme song in my head! I suddenly was singing aloud, “You wanna be where you can see, our troubles are all the same.”

Times have changed since people gathered on their sofas to watch Cheers, but the hunger we have for connection and fellowship has not. I would actually offer that in our culture today, we are starving for friendship. We all want a “Cheers” in our life, a place where we can feel a sense of belonging.

During and emerging out of the pandemic, our church leadership became convinced that people would be searching for opportunities to connect with each other. More than this, we wanted people to have a chance to ground their lives in something deeper and more consistent than the political, economic and social turmoil that the last years have brought. We wanted to give people the chance to reflect on what was happening in their lives and in light of the Word of God. We discerned God’s Spirit calling us to forge ahead, creating a congregation in which vulnerability, care and transformation were possible. And so we created a number of Common Ground groups, places where people could connect with each other and Jesus, through his teachings and presence in the community. We lived into our mission statement: Rooted in God’s grace, we grow loving relationships with Jesus Christ and each other to serve in the world.

And, well, it worked.

We’ve known it was working by the number of people that participate in various ministries. In fact, the proposed capital campaign grows out of physical need for more and improved facilities.

But here is the really exciting thing. Our church asked Rev. Renee Liabraaten to interview members to determine whether the capital campaign was realistic. She returned and said that the people interviewed shared a strong sense of community at St Paul and that – and this is crucial – they feel that the church helps them live as disciples of Jesus in their daily lives. (Rev. Liabraaten will be at St. Paul on Sept. 20th).

This Fall, I invite you to find a place at St Paul where you can dig deeper into the Word and with others. On Rally Day (Sept 13), we will introduce to everyone all of the options available in this regard. Know that you can talk to the staff and we would be happy to point you in the right direction! As a preview, this fall we are going to reflect together on mercy and justice, where they meet and where they don’t!

Pastor Rob



Sunday Morning *Learning Together*

COMMON GROUND GROUPS



Our vision at St Paul is “Answering Christ’s call to revitalize lives and the community by enabling the sacred ground to become the common ground.” One of the major ways in which we cultivate faith and community for adults is through our Common Ground Groups. This is our version of adult Sunday School. It is our prayer that through these groups, people would find a place that fits their interests and questions, and connect with people in similar seasons of life. We want people to feel supported and cared for as we all follow Christ together. There is a place for you here!



Parents of Young Children (Ages Infant - 6)

A place for parents to connect and find mutual support and encouragement for navigating life and raising young children.



Parents of Older Children (Ages 7-12)

A place for parents to connect and find mutual support and encouragement for navigating life and raising school age children.



Parents of Teens (Ages 13-18)

A place for parents to connect and find mutual support and encouragement for navigating life and raising teenagers.



Families in Faith

Parents of young adults gather for study and discussion to nurture the faith that produces healthy family relationships and supportive friendships, especially as kids graduate and leave home.



Together in Christ

A group for all ages that gathers for connection and conversation using the weekly sermon lesson.



Life Together

A group that supports each other while navigating the various transitions of life.



Faith Building

This group meets for the study of Scripture and conversation about how to live in light of God’s truth.



Sandwich Generation

A group of peers navigating the overlap of simultaneously caring for their own children and aging parents.



Seminary Nook

This class offers an in-depth look at various Seminary-level topics and societal issues while thinking about what faithful Christian witness and action looks like in today’s world.



Sisters in Christ Bible Study

For women of all ages. This Bible study utilizes curriculum from Gather magazine, a publication of the Women of the ELCA.



Let’s Talk; A Discussion about Lutheran Theology

For those who are new to the Lutheran tradition or would like to better understand Lutheranism. This class will provide the opportunity to explore our rich theological heritage.

St. Paul Sacred Grounds

CULTIVATING FAITH, COMMUNITY & CREATIVITY

Another summer has come and (almost) gone at St. Paul Sacred Grounds! Thanks to volunteers under the leadership of Al Rothermel, ragweed, mulberry, poison ivy, and other invasive species are being kept at bay. Grounds staff and volunteers have done work to maintain the diverse trees in the native forest, mitigate sinkhole problems brought on by sudden rain showers, and keep the prayer labyrinth a serene place to pray and think. As fall comes and we anticipate the withering of the wildflowers, the retreat of the insects, and leaf-shedding of the trees, activity at the Sacred Grounds will not stop. From weeding and mowing to tree care and path maintenance, there are many ways for us to lend our hands in service. Taking care of the Sacred Grounds fosters connection with God through His creation and to our neighbors by making this outdoor space accessible to all. We invite those willing to volunteer to contact Al Rothermel (Rothermel16@gmail.com) or Jonah Lenahan (jlenahan@stpaulititz.net).

Even if you do not have the time to volunteer, the Sacred Grounds is made richer by everyday use. This small plot of land is a valuable place to observe natural wonder, read scripture, take a walk, meet a friend for a chat, or just sit in the quiet. We invite you to engage in some or all of these practices while the sun is still warm.

Looking ahead, we are planning to partner with Warwick High School. Students may have the opportunity to care for a section of the grounds. Also new is the Sacred Grounds **Instagram page (@sacredgrounds_stpaul)**, dedicated to the flora, fauna, and folks that make it what it is.

Sacred Grounds Book Club

Join as we gather to cultivate faith and community through conversation about what it means to tend the patch of ground where we are. We meet monthly on Monday mornings at 10:30AM in the Media Room. For more information contact Scott Frase at sfrase@stpaulititz.net.

Fall Book Selections

September 28: The Unsettling of America by Wendell Berry
October 26: What Grows in Weary Lands by Tish Harrison Warren
November 23: This is Happiness by Nial Williams
December 21: The Irrational Season by Madeline L'Engle



SACRED
GROUND
STORIES

Stories are powerful. They have the profound ability to help us reflect upon God, life, faith, community, and the longing, grief, and beauty that we experience in this world. Through the sharing of stories, we find hope, joy, courage, empathy and the profound reality that we are not alone in our experiences. We are shaped by our stories and those of others.

For this reason, we launched a new event called Sacred Grounds Stories! This is an evening of live storytelling where we gathered to hear real stories from folks in our community about life experiences and how they have been formed along their journey. Additionally, we were joined by Augustana University's God Pod mobile recording studio. This is part of the Sacred Stories initiative which is embarking on a tour across the US, collecting stories of God at work in and through people's lives. This ministry exists to serve young adults on their journey of faith and equip them to share through a variety of mediums and expressions, what it means to be known and loved by God. Stay tuned for announcements regarding our next evening of Sacred Grounds Stories!



fall happenings

Rally Day

Sunday, September 13, 2026

Rally day marks the beginning of the church calendar year for everyone! Let's rally together and return to church and Sunday school.

We will return to our regular worship schedule with the 1st service at 8:15AM and the 2nd service beginning at 10:45AM. Come to the social hall at 9:00AM for a pancake breakfast fundraiser with proceeds going towards future service trips and retreat opportunities for the youth of St. Paul. You will also have the opportunity to catch up with or meet folks in our congregation and hear about faith formation for all ages and the theme for the fall. We look forward to seeing you!



Fifth Quarters

Once again, we will welcome Warwick students to our campus after a varsity football game for a night of games, fun, food, and the opportunity to connect with friends in a safe, positive and supervised environment. This is one of our largest outreach events and an incredible opportunity to cultivate community among kids in our district.

Middle School: Friday, September 11, 8:30-10:30PM

High School: Friday, October 23, 9:00-11:00PM

And we invite you to participate in making this happen! We are looking for enthusiastic night owls to welcome students, oversee activities, serve refreshments and help clean up afterwards. You can also contribute by donating drinks, snacks, and baked goods; and contribute towards the cost of purchasing pizzas! Sign ups can be found on the church website. For more information or if you have questions, please reach out to Scott Frase at sfrase@stpaulnitz.net.

Fall Festival

Saturday, October 3, 2026

10 AM - 2 PM RAIN OR SHINE

St. Paul Lutheran Church Pavilion



Join the Christian Early Learning Center and St. Paul Lutheran Church for a day of festivities, feasting, and fun as we come together to give thanks for life's bountiful blessings. Enjoy exciting activities for the whole family, rain or shine! Activities will include a cake walk, face painting, raffle, pumpkin decorating, and MORE! Be sure to bring your furry friends for a pet blessing at 10 AM.

We are looking for church volunteers to work at each station, donations for the cake walk, and crock pot macaroni and cheese donations. Scan the QR code to sign up!



Something new on Thursday evenings

Contemplative Worship

"Be still, and know that I am God."

Psalm 46:10



Come set aside the noise of the week for centering prayer, meditative hymns, and quiet time with the Lord. All are welcome — no experience needed.

Beginning October 22, 2026, St. Paul will offer a new weekly worship service each Thursday evening in the sanctuary. This contemplative service will become an ongoing part of our worship life each week.

What is contemplative worship?

It's a quieter, slower way of meeting God — a chance to set aside the noise and busyness of the week and simply be still in God's presence. Come into a quiet space of prayer, reflection and peaceful worship.

Before and after

The sanctuary will be open for quiet meditation both before and after the service, and a fellowship time follows in the narthex. Pastor Robert will remain in the sanctuary afterward for anyone who wishes to share a prayer need. On the first Thursday of each month, a study and discussion on prayer will follow the service.

GATHER WITH US

Thursdays, 7:00-7:35 pm

St. Paul Sanctuary

Beginning October 22, 2026

A slower way of praying

This way of praying is ancient, reaching back to the earliest Christians, who called their faith simply "the Way." Paul urges us in Romans 12 not to be conformed to this age, but transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Contemplative worship gives us space to do just that — to offer ourselves to Christ and let him, rather than the pressures of the world, shape who we are becoming.

A coordinating team is working with Pastor Robert to plan and shape this service going forward.

All are warmly invited to come and experience this unhurried time with God

no experience with contemplative prayer necessary. Just come as you are and be still.



Empty Bowls Many Hands, One Purpose

A simple handmade bowl.
A serving of soup.
Neighbors gathered around tables.

That is the heart of Lititz Empty Bowls.

Since St. Paul first brought Empty Bowls to Lititz in 2017, our congregation has helped bring together youth and adult volunteers, local artists, restaurants, businesses and community members to raise both funds and awareness in response to hunger and food insecurity in the Lititz/Warwick community.

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, March 7, 2027

We will gather again for Empty Bowls, with proceeds benefiting the Warwick Community Chest. For St. Paul, continuing to spearhead Empty Bowls is more than producing a successful community event. It is one tangible way we can live our call to love and serve our neighbors.

But Empty Bowls takes many hands — and many different gifts!

Ten Work Groups, One Effort

Planning is underway, and every group needs people.

- Community engagement
- Bowls and artists
- Food and restaurant partnerships
- Fundraising
- Promotion and participation
- Ticketing, registration & guest experience
- Volunteer engagement
- Event production
- Program, entertainment & mission experience
- Financial stewardship

The goal is to distribute responsibility broadly so that many people can contribute their particular interests, experience and gifts.

We are looking for people willing to serve as Work Group Leaders as well as Work Group Members. You don't need previous Empty Bowls experience. Perhaps you know local businesses. Maybe you love working with people, organizing details, communicating, fundraising, hospitality—or simply helping make things happen.

Empty Bowls 2027 has a place for you!

If something here sounds like you—or you'd simply like to
learn more—
please contact Larry or Melanie Carlson

larry.carson52@gmail.com

Summer for Kids at St. Paul

We Sense the Lord

Our summer sermon series to connect church & home and w/ our big blue board. Each week, we found one sense connected to the Gospel reading. On the board, the church was invited to post mementos that represent how you sense the Lord. It was fun to see the board grow each week, like a summer scrapbook of St. Paul. Kids took home a sense card each week in the Kids Sermons as a reminder to sense the Lord that week - at home, on vacation, by the pool, everywhere!



Splash VBS

Over 20 families, 15 volunteers, 5 youth helpers & our Bucks for Buckets! On Tuesdays in July, we offered Family-Style VBS where families with young children attended stations of Bible fun together. Kids played, parents connected and watery Bible fun was had by all. Volunteers hosted activities of crafts, games, science and play. We started each evening with bible songs and a watery bible story. We also collected money to buy buckets through Letharan World Relief for folks who need to transport their water. We surpassed our giving goal and got to dump a buck of water on Pastor Rob after worship as a fun reward!



Camp & More!

Camp is a large part of the summer ministry we offer through St. Paul. over 30 St. Paul campers, 3 staff, 15 donors. There's something for everyone.

Creek Walk, SPF, and the By Heart Challenge. Kids Ministry keeps faith at our core all summer long. We had a fun creek walk in June, we invited kids to share their artwork for a bulletin, and 5 girls took the By Heart Challenge this summer.



Kids Ministry this Fall



COLORFUL SERMONS

This Fall, we'll use colors in our Kids Sermons. Come see how colors connect to our faith, and take home a gift to color each week. We'll also color a group canvas together with our fingerprints each Sunday. The color theme will include:

- Sermons
- Crayon collection
- a Fingerprint Mural
- a "Splash" of Color event



TEACHER BLESSINGS

On Sunday, September 13, our Sunday School teachers will be blessed in worship as we lift the new school year to the Lord.



Teachers & Classes

Preschool: Cindy Geesey, Cindy Gillespie, Elizabeth Petersen, Shirley Flickinger

K & 1: Marty Althouse, Jody Charles

Grades 2 & 3: Chris Runkle, Jim Hoffer, Beth Hoffer

Grades 4 & 6: Joe Geesey, Christy Matias, Kathy Ross

Grade 5: April McGinty, Kelly Groff, Sharon Kready, Ty Turner

Substitutes Needed!

Would you be willing to lend a hand in a Sunday School room? Please email Deacon Emily for more info.



NEW! FOR the GIRLS!

This Fall, we are launching a ministry for Girls in Grades 5-8. A few times throughout the school year, they will gather with faith mentors: Brenda Penny and Cindy Stauffer. Together, they'll connect over faith and through connection. The first meeting is Sunday October 18 at 6:30pm.

girls
SUPPORT
girls



St. Paul Youth

Rooted in service. Growing together.



This summer the youth participated in the Diaconos service project program at Camp Kirchenwald! During the day, we partnered with local and regional ministries and then returned to camp for traditional camp activities. This year we learned about stewardship, supplying fresh produce to the community and regenerative farming by harvesting elderberries at Wittel Farm. We learned about bicycle repair with Bicycle Recycle in Lebanon which provides bikes free of charge to folks for transportation and exercise. At the Christ Lutheran Church Medical Clinic, we experienced what it looks like to affirm the dignity of people through practical care. And we were able to spruce up areas with new coats of paint! Finally, we prepared meals for families through Bridge of Hope. It was a truly transformative week that will stay with the youth for years to come.

Faith Friends Fun Service



Our Middle School students, who are in our Confirmation program, recently spent a day exploring Mt. Gretna to get to know each other better, have some fun, and learn about the upcoming Confirmation year. We shared meals, hiked the Governor Dick observation tower, and spent time reflecting upon how we are seen; by ourselves, our friends and family, and by God and how that shapes who we are. Thank you for your generosity which makes opportunities like this possible!



Youth Ministry:

Reflection



Sometimes it feels that the pace of life is relentless. And our responsibilities and commitments demand so much energy and time that we often feel depleted. Then factor in our relationships, the communities we belong to, concern and care of family or friends that are navigating really hard things in their lives. And on top of that, there are local and global conflicts and issues that we are constantly confronted with. Yes, we experience good and beautiful things, and have moments of peace and joy. We are surrounded and clothed in God's grace. But there is a weighty amount of grief and hardship we experience, and too often, it obscures our vision of God's goodness. So, how do we sustain ourselves as Christ followers? How do we implement practices and rituals that help us become better aware of God at work in our lives and in the world?



IN CONFIRMATION

This year, middle school students will be exploring the story of God as told through worship as they learn about and experience the significance of liturgy and how it centers and orients us as individuals and as the family of God. There is a beauty in the rhythm of worship as a community and the truth that we are not alone but part of something far greater than we could ever imagine.



FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS

We will take a journey through the book of Revelation which teaches us about what it means to patiently bear faithful witness to Jesus Christ and his coming Kingdom, while we endure in the midst of Babylon. We will consider what it looks like to count others as more significant than ourselves, how to be merciful, and what it looks like to bear our cross and be his people in this world while we await the beauty of a kingdom in which all is made new.



IT IS MY PRAYER

that through youth faith formation, the kids in our midst would grow deeper in their faith and identify as Christ followers and citizens of His good kingdom. Along this journey, I pray for the cultivation of community and faith as we explore and think about what it means to be, as Curt Thompson describes our story, a people of great desire and longing, a people of grief, and a people of beauty. Through our programming, I pray that the youth of St. Paul would find a place where they can breathe and recenter themselves and be equipped to go and bear witness to Jesus and his story of forgiveness, hope, wholeness and rest that can be found in Him alone. Our true home is on its way. Behold, Jesus is coming soon. Amen.



Music Ministry St. Paul, Lititz

Join our music community



Whatever draws you to make music - singing, playing an instrument, or trying something new - there's a place for you here.

Reach out to Becky Rairigh, St. Paul Music Director - she will be excited to connect with you!



Choir

Make new friends while sharing your voice or playing an instrument.

Wednesdays, 7:30–8:30 PM Youth & Adults

Rehearsals **begin Sept 9**



Youth Music

Youth who play an instrument or love to sing are encouraged to join — gather after the second service for 20 minutes to learn music for Sunday worship.

First gatherings: **Sept 20 & 27**



Praise Band

We'd love to hear your voice or your instrument.

Tuesdays, 7:00–8:30 PM Sanctuary

Starting **Sept 8**



Male Vocal Ensemble

Back this fall, led by Lee Zelewicz. Youth and adults are invited — don't miss out!

~20–25 min. after 2nd worship service **Dates TBD**



Handbells & Chimes

Chime Time for Kids · Grades 2–6

Mondays, 4:30–5:15 PM Sanctuary Begins **Sept 21**

Parents, text Becky to enroll

Jubilate Handbells

Wednesdays, 6:30–7:25 PM Sanctuary Begins **Sept 9**



Cantors & Instrumentalists

Cantors

Youth & Adults help lead the congregation through singing

Instrumentalists

Play along with hymns & liturgy to enrich worship



Becky Rairigh
Music Ministry Director



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