

MAY 2025

The magazine of St. Paul Lutheran Church

journey



A downpour of love



ON THE COVER:
Sherry Peer

journey

MAY 2025

Volume 13 | Issue 3

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MISSION

St. Paul Lutheran Church is a faith community, shaped around five core values: radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith formation, courageous service, extravagant generosity.

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POSTMASTER

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Eight years ago, through a program in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) called Young Adults in Global Mission, I moved to Cambodia as a volunteer, teaching English for nearly a year. I taught at a community center, established by the Lutheran Church in Cambodia, and at a local primary school in the area. I lived in Tang Krang, a rural village north of the capital Phnom Penh. Tang Krang's main source of income was agriculture. Cattle are herded through the village, chickens roam freely across the roads, ponds are filled with fish and rice, and there is a surplus of fruit and palm trees.

Since Cambodia is a tropical country, there are two seasons — rainy and dry. Typically, the dry season starts in November and ends in April. In those times, the ground becomes hard and dusty, and many plants wither away. There is hardly any wind, so the air is still, and every day is brutally hot. By March, there are consecutive weeks of temperatures well into the 90s. It is the hottest time of the year in Cambodia. Without water, the ground becomes unpleasantly solid and crusty with dust that gets everywhere: on feet, shoes, and clothes. During the dry months, trucks come in and fill neighbors' large barrels full of water every week. This water is rationed for cooking, showers, plants, and animals.

At last, the rainy season returns in April. Over time, the landscape begins to change into vibrant fields of endless green and full ponds. Fruit also begins to grow on the trees. It is the best season for mangos, which are my favorite.

I remember the anticipation. My supervisor, Pastor Vibol, and I would sit in the office, chatting away. "The rain will return," he told me one day. "There is new life." He had a way of slipping God into every conversation. "And we have new life in Christ."

A few days later, I returned from the school and the market, put my produce away in the kitchen, and headed to the office to work on a newsletter. The space was just a room with a printer, router, and a table in the middle of the room for meetings. Pastor Vibol was there, and we sat quietly at the table, each focused on our own work.

A rumbling sound in the distance grabbed my attention. It sounded like thunder. Could it be? Another rumble followed shortly after. Suddenly, like a loud whoosh, rain pelted the metal panels of our roof and soaked the dry ground once again. It wasn't long until I heard the exuberant laughter of children as they rushed outside to play in the rain. They were running, jumping into puddles, and kicking up mud.

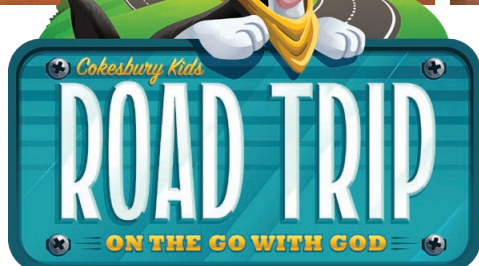
The dry season was over.

During my last months in Cambodia, I watched the green return to the gardens, the trees, and the lotus flower ponds. The daily rain brought fruit, an abundance of water, and intense forks of lightning flashing across the sky.

When we sit and remember together how hope withered in Jesus' last days and when we, in exuberant laughter and joy, shout "Alleluia!" for our Resurrected Christ, I think of that rain that returned and the "new life in Christ," that Pastor Vibol reminded me. On the days where we feel like hope has withered away and joy has dried up, the downpour of God's love, mercy, and grace continues to nourish us. Every day. Together, we get to soak in this "new life in Christ," that grows us, renews us and restores us to God, and to one another.

MADDY TYLER
pastor in residency





This summer you won't want to miss this exciting trip exploring God's goodness on the open road!

Vacation Bible School will be Monday, June 16-Friday, June 20, 8:30 a.m.-12 noon.

Kids embark on a thrilling road trip adventure and explore exciting destinations with the Navigator and their pup, Scout!

Through engaging Bible stories, interactive games, and fun challenges, they'll discover that God is always with them. Road Trip VBS is more than just fun — it's a journey of faith, friendship, and unforgettable memories!

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Kids age four (by Sept. 15) through entering fifth-grade, from 8:30 a.m.-12 noon. Registration is \$15 per child through Sunday, May 11. From May 12-June 1, cost is \$25 per child. Deadline is June 1.



678 WEEK

Middle-schoolers, entering grades 6-8, spend the morning (8:30 a.m.-12 noon) having a blast and learning about God. Registration is \$15 per student through Sunday, May 11. From May 12-June 1, cost is \$25 per child. Deadline is June 1.



VOLUNTEER!

A strong corps of service-minded and joy-filled adults make it all happen. Interested in helping? There's a job to fit your gifts.



Sign up online at stpaulqc.org/signups or scan the QR codes

Please note: No walk-ins or late registrations can be accepted. Questions? Contact Maddy Carroll, maddy@stpaulqc.org





may

HAPPENINGS

Celebrating May in the Book Corner

A lively place that cultivates a community of readers and celebrates fair trade, the Book Corner keeps adding fresh titles and gifts to the shelves.

In May, the Book Corner features a number of organizations that support women with gifts for women. Also in stock are a number of devotionals for the women in your life, including:

- ▶ ***Ordinary Blessings for Parents: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations for Family Life*** by Meta Herrick Carlson
- ▶ ***The Beauty of Motherhood: Grace Filled Devotions for the Early Years*** by Kimberly Knowle-Seller and Erin Strybis
- ▶ ***The Lives We Actually Have or Good Enough*** by Kate Bowler



Walking the Grief Journey begins May 11

Gather on five Sundays, May 11-June 15 (*with a break Memorial Day weekend*), 10:15-11 a.m., for a supportive, compassion-filled series for those who have experienced the recent loss of a loved one. Explore anger, depression, fears, acceptance, and new strength for a hopeful future. Meet in the Church House Living Room. Led by Pastor Sara Olson-Smith and Joel Moore, deacon and registered nurse. Sign up online at stpaulqc.org/signups. Contact: Sara Olson-Smith, sara@stpaulqc.org.

Save the Date: St. Paul Golf Outing on June 8

Join the St. Paul Tee Time Golfers for their inaugural golf outing this June! Put on your best golf gear and head to Palmer Hills Forge's 18-hole putting course on June 8 for a 2 p.m. start. This new event features a 72-player shotgun start. Anyone is welcome and encouraged to attend. Sign up online at stpaulqc.org/signups.

Tee Time Golfers is a friendly community of golfers of all ages and skill levels, coming together for casual games and socializing on the greens. To learn more or to get on the contact list, contact: Duane Haas, dhaas.dh@gmail.com.

St. Paul to host Assumption High School Choir

Welcome spring by coming to hear the Assumption High School Choir perform at St. Paul on Sunday, May 18, 3 p.m., in the Sanctuary. At St. Paul, we delight in welcoming music-lovers from all around the Quad Cities. Bring your musical joy and make yourself at home. Free and open to the public. Contact: Chris Nelson, chris@stpaulqc.org.

Thanks for a great year of learning!

On May 11, we wrap up another enriching year of Sunday-morning learning for all ages and shift into summer mode. Warm thanks to every teacher, classroom helper, and learner — from the smallest preschoolers to adults who seek to grow in faith. Immerse yourself in worship these summer months. The learning hour resumes on Sunday, Sept. 7.



Racial Awareness Team: Documentary Shorts

Gather with others to expand your awareness, grow in empathy, advocate for change, delight in diversity, and partner with neighbors in the city. On Tuesday, May 27, 6:30-8 p.m., watch an hour-long documentary film and discuss it together. We'll wrap up our time by engaging ways we can work to diminish prejudice and build a more just community. Contact Sara Olson-Smith, sara@stpaulqc.org.

Adult leaders needed for youth mission trip

Planning is underway for the 2025 Youth Mission Trip to St. Louis, July 6-11. Still needed for the week of service, learning, and fun, are a few adult leaders willing to volunteer their time. On Sunday, May 11, 5:30 p.m. in Library Commons, come to an informational meeting about the trip and hear more about what it entails. SNL follows the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

To sign up for the trip, visit stpaulqc.org/signups. Contact: Ellie Lindmark, ellie@stpaulqc.org.

Soil Stewards

Interested in caring for the grounds of St. Paul while finding fellowship with others? Help plant, transplant, weed, trim, and keep the grounds looking beautiful. Interested in lending a green thumb or two? Open to anyone. Contact: Peg Iglehart, peg.iglehart@gmail.com.



Planting with Tapestry Farms

Come dig in the dirt and help plant the Tapestry Farms garden plot at St. Paul on Saturday, May 17, from 10 a.m.-12 noon. The plot is located across the alley from the south parking lot at 2005 Main Street, Davenport.

Bring gloves and garden tools if you'd like. Please wear closed-toe shoes and appropriate clothing for the weather. This event is for all ages. No need to sign up; just come! Tapestry Farms is a nonprofit urban farm system that works with refugees who live in the Quad-Cities. The organization started out of St. Paul eight years ago.

If the event is canceled or rescheduled due to bad weather, Tapestry Farms will post on their Facebook page at facebook.com/tapestryfarms.



Cinema and Spirituality

Each month of 2025 on the third Tuesday, come to The Last Picture House in Davenport to screen a film from the book *A Whole Life in Twelve Movies* by Kathleen Norris and Gareth Higgins. On May 20, 6:30 p.m., watch *Paterson* (2016). The film stars Adam Driver as a bus driver and poet, and Golshifteh Farahani as his wife, who dreams of being a country music star and opening a cupcake business. Afterward, discuss the film's themes of vocation and finding meaning in the ordinary.

\$5 tickets (cash preferred), superb popcorn, comfortable seating, and taking in stories together on the big screen make this a unique community experience. Pick up the book in the St. Paul bookstore. Bring a friend. To help with advance planning, please sign up online at stpaulqc.org/signups. Contact: Peter Pettit, ppettit@stpaulqc.org.

Family Dinner and Parenting Conversations

On Tuesday, May 13, gather with other families for food, play, and conversation. After sharing a meal, parents discuss a recent podcast episode, book chapter, or other parenting topic while the kids play with the children's ministry staff.

Family dinner starts at 5 p.m. in the Library Commons with discussion around a parenting topic at 5:30 p.m. Sign up at stpaulqc.org/signups. Contact: Sara Olson-Smith, sara@stpaulqc.org.

St. Paul counselor available for appointments

Steve Kalber is St. Paul's onsite counselor. His services are available to the St. Paul community at no cost. He can assist and support with difficult transitions, relationships, depression or anxiety, working through trauma, or simply be a listening ear.

Steve is available for appointments. Call 563-326-3547 to schedule, or email him at steve@stpaulqc.org.

Grace in the struggle

Food has played a large role in St. Paul member Sherry Peer's life. From her professional career, to time with her family, and her quiet impact on families during the holidays. Now, Sherry has found a new home and purpose in the Quad Cities after moving to be closer to her family.

Compassionate care

Sherry's journey began in the west, moving from South Dakota to Colorado and back again. She attended Colorado State University. At first not quite sure which career would be a good fit for her, Sherry took a chance as a dietician and fell in love with the work. She soon found her calling in outpatient services, where she could interact with patients and help them develop practical nutrition solutions.

Sherry took a compassionate and understanding approach with patients, recognizing the human aspect of dietary challenges. Her work was not just about providing nutritional advice; it was about supporting people through their struggles and celebrating their successes.

"Outpatient care allowed me to see the improvement in the quality of life for these patients. I created an outpatient clinic in Colorado Springs because, at that time, they didn't have one around yet. Physicians referred patients to me and I would work to understand their diagnosis and what their dietary needs were. It was important for me to support people. Sometimes the dietary rules patients are given are so daunting that no one can follow them," Sherry said. "Through my career I had an opportunity to not judge, to understand what help a person needed, and what little steps they were ready to take to get there. I remember one gentleman was trying so hard to do the right thing and to eat well but it was difficult. I told him 'you are a human being, you de-

"Food is a real gift in my mind. It's something that makes people feel better and taken care of."

SHERRY PEER

serve to eat. That's not something you have to keep fighting."

Her passion for giving back is evident in her long-term volunteer involvement with Camp Gilbert, a diabetes youth camp in South Dakota, where she served, always in a volunteer capacity, as director and mentor, ensuring the camp's legacy now continues under the leadership of former campers.

Sherry's dedication to helping others extended beyond her professional life; she actively participated in various programs at her previous church, including a backpack program that provides food for children over the weekend and food and clothing drives.

Moving and settling

Recently, Sherry moved to the Quad Cities to be closer to her daughter and her daughter's family. She found her way to St. Paul through a family friend and was

drawn to the welcoming atmosphere and extensive outreach programs.

"I came from a small country church in South Dakota. It's crowded if you put 200 people in that sanctuary. Everyone knew everyone. And then I came to visit St. Paul, and it was huge. It was huge, but it never felt big," Sherry said. "I remember sitting in the pew one day trying to figure out where I was in my life. I'd experienced so much change in such a short amount of time. But here I felt comfortable that I could just be. That day a message of welcome and radical hospitality was shared. I knew in that moment that this was the place I wanted to be. There's always someone to greet you with a smile on their face. I started coming to small groups. I met people, then I became familiar with people, and now I feel like I really know people here. I'm truly joyful when I'm at St. Paul."





Giving to others

Her commitment to helping others is deeply rooted in her upbringing, influenced by her grandparents' generosity during the Dust Bowl era. Sherry believes in the power of food to bring people together and provide comfort, a philosophy that has guided her throughout her career and personal life.

"I grew up giving. I remember my dad telling me at a young age about my grandpa. My grandparents had lost their farm during the dust bowl when my dad was very young. My dad would tell me how Grandma Peer would send Grandpa Peer with money to buy supplies for the home. He was supposed to come home with change, and my grandma was surprised there wasn't ever any change left. Grandpa gave that money to someone else who needed it. Even though they didn't have much, grandpa always gave to others. My dad and mom carried on that kind of generosity and passed it to me."

Last November, Sherry was struck with the inspiration to give back. She inquired about providing a ham or turkey for a family in need. Not typically an item collected for local food pantries at St. Paul due to a lack of freezer space, staff sought to find a connection for Sherry. Serendipitously, just about an hour after Sherry's inquiry, a church member mentioned the need for just such an item for their family's celebration. Sherry pulled up to the church a day later with a ham and grocery store gift cards to fill out the family's shopping

list and fill their table for Thanksgiving, allowing the family to worry a little less and spend time together during the holiday.

"Food is a real gift in my mind. It's something that makes people feel better and taken care of. I love being involved with food. It's what brings people together. Food is why we gather. It's so much more than nourishment," Sherry said. "It's important for me to give. Sometimes people just need a little help and with that help they get their feet back under them and they pass the support on, paying it for-

ward and helping someone else. Everything finds its way to a better place, to the place its meant to be. That's part of the grace in the struggle."

Living with her daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren in Davenport, Sherry enjoys the vibrant community and the opportunity to watch her grandchildren grow. She finds joy in attending their soccer games, musical concerts, and other activities, cherishing the moments spent with family and always looking to help give back.



End of school food and care ingathering planned for May 17 & 18

Fill a bag with nonperishable food items and toiletries and bring it to church the weekend of May 17 & 18 to support The Friendly House Food Pantry in Davenport. Or, write a check to St. Paul, with "Food Pantry" in the memo line, and drop it off or mail it to church.

What's most needed right now? Soups, canned meals, canned meat (chicken & tuna), cereal, pasta sauce and noodles, peanut butter, jelly, paper products like toilet paper and paper towels, and hygiene items such as soap, laundry soap, and feminine products (tampons and pads).

Interested in helping to sort the food received? The ingathering food sorting is scheduled for Sunday, May 18 at 12 noon. Questions? Contact Jessica Taylor, jessica@stpaulqc.org.

A LOOK BACK THROUGH PHOTOS:

Holy Week and Easter

From the reverent observances of Palm Sunday and Good Friday to the joyful celebration of Easter Sunday, St. Paul people came together to share in the joys of community that define this holy season. Powerful moments of worship, prayer, and fellowship marked the journey of Christ's passion, death, and triumphant resurrection.







St. Paul members Ryan Carney and Amanda Moeller-Carney turn their grief into action, hosting local blood drives and other events in honor of their daughter, Zoey.

Zoey Carney's smile was infectious. According to those who knew her best, she was a beacon of joy and positivity. She was an outstanding athlete, playing soccer with the Iowa Olympic Development Program and other local clubs. She excelled in basketball, volleyball, and softball. Zoey's love for animals was evident in her participation in 4H, where she showed dairy cows at the fair and cared for her pet ducks, chickens, and dogs Petey and Bailey.

"If she walked into school without a smile, her teachers knew something was wrong," Amanda said. "She was just a happy girl. She made friends with everyone she came across. She had no struggles in life until we got to this roadblock."

Last fall, Zoey was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of 12 and died in November, just six weeks after her diagnosis. Her battle with cancer was brief but intense, requiring numerous blood and platelet transfusions that provided her with precious time to spend with her family. Inspired by Zoey's resilience and radiant spirit, her parents have turned their grief into a mission to help other families facing similar challenges.

The SmileLikeZoey Blood Drive is an initiative by Zoey's parents Ryan and Amanda to honor their daughter.

"We talked about blood donation daily

with her medical team," Amanda recalled. "Zoey needed multiple transfusions a day, and it was always in the back of our minds to do something to give back. We created a memorial for Zoey called 'SmileLikeZoey' to carry on her legacy."

Neither Amanda nor Ryan were active blood donors before Zoey's illness, but their experiences motivated them to become regular donors.

"It's our way of giving back to everyone who experiences childhood cancer," Amanda said. Ryan added, "The St. Paul blood drive will be my second time donating blood. Blood donations plays a critical role in the treatment and recovery of cancer patients. Donations help others like Zoey fight these childhood cancers."

The SmileLikeZoey Blood Drive has already seen significant community support. The first drive was held at Zoey's school in North Scott, followed by another at Ryan's John Deere office. St. Paul holds the third blood drive this month.

"We were shocked by the turnout at Zoey's school. We got almost three times the amount of donors we expected," Ryan shared.

Ryan and Amanda are committed to honoring Zoey's legacy through various initiatives in addition to the donation of

blood. They advocate for childhood cancer awareness and research through dance marathons at the University of Iowa, North Scott Schools and beyond, and have established scholarship and memorial funds in Zoey's name.

"We want Zoey to be remembered as a fighter, a strong person," Ryan said. "Her smile and spirit inspire us to keep going and help others."

SmileLikeZoey Blood Donor Day at St. Paul

Volunteer to help others battling serious injury and illness at the spring Blood Donor Day in honor of Zoey Carney on Wednesday, May 14, 1:30-6 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Can't make it to the May 14 blood drive? Stop into ImpactLife anytime during the month of May to donate blood and tell them its for SmileLikeZoey or use sponsor code 6105 at your donation.

Sign up online at stpaulqc.org/sign-ups. Contact: Sara Olson-Smith, sara@stpaulqc.org.

A note from Congregational Council President:

Greetings St. Paul,

I am writing to you as I finish my third month as president of the Congregational Council. What an exciting and humbling opportunity to serve St. Paul after all of my years as a member at this exceptional place.

I have lived in Iowa most of my life. Spring seems to unfold differently each year, but you can always count on each day being different from the last. St. Paul has been going through a period of change the past nine months, but what I experience every day shows me that the St. Paul core values, especially Courageous Service and Extravagant Generosity, are alive and well. The St. Paul staff continue to seek improvements every day, and the congregation explores new ways to serve each other, the community, and the greater church.

I was part of a large group of volunteers that just completed the renovation of the 2025 Main Street house. All of you that had an opportunity to view the result of those efforts will agree with the much-heard comment: "It's not just a house; it is a home." What a satisfying project, and such a great opportunity to make new friends and work alongside them. Thank you to all who took part in this labor of love!

A large group of members have been working hard with the Community Outreach Ministry initiative. They have identified a variety of needs in the Quad City community and are looking to take the former Madison Market efforts in a new direction. However these efforts manifest themselves, I am confident that we will see the heart of St. Paul shine brighter than ever.

A Blessed Spring to all,
Ron Mullen, *council president*



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

giving ministry coordinator

St. Paul seeks qualified candidates for the position of giving ministry coordinator. This part-time position (lasting from Oct. 1 to Jan. 31) plans, coordinates, and implements the annual stewardship program. Essential responsibilities include fostering a spirit of gratitude, overseeing the financial pledging process, collaborating with communication staff to inspire stewardship, and managing pledge records and follow-up strategies. The role demands strong organizational and leadership skills, confidentiality, and the ability to work with the church database and stewardship team.

campus supervisor

St. Paul continues to search for candidates for the position of Campus Supervisor. This role oversees the church campus exterior grounds, volunteers, and campus contract coordination. The campus supervisor recruits and coordinates volunteers to help maintain the campus. Responsibilities are flexible and can be tailored to the applicant's skills and interests.

Learn more about these opportunities at stpaulqc.org/employment. Interested candidates for either position should send a letter of interest, resume, or questions to employment@stpaulqc.org.

WORSHIP at St. Paul

► May 3 & 4

Third Sunday of Easter

Preaching:

5pm & 9am: Katy Warren
8/11:15am: Mark Niethammer

Liturgical tradition:

5pm/8 & 9am

Contemporary Open Spirit:

11:15am

► May 10 & 11

*Fourth Sunday of Easter
Mother's Day Weekend*

Preaching:

5pm & 9am: Mac Mullins
8/11:15am: Sara Olson-Smith

Liturgical tradition:

5pm/8 & 9am

Contemporary Open Spirit:

11:15am

► May 17 & 18

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Preaching:

5pm & 11:15am: Katy Warren
8/9am: Maddy Tyler

Liturgical tradition:

5pm/8 & 9am

Contemporary Open Spirit:

11:15am

► May 24 & 25

*Sixth Sunday of Easter
Memorial Day Weekend*

Preaching:

5pm & 9am: Sara Olson-Smith
8/11:15am: Mark Niethammer

Liturgical tradition:

5pm/8 & 9am

Contemporary Open Spirit:

11:15am



ST. PAUL
LUTHERAN CHURCH

2136 Brady Street
Davenport, IA 52803

12TH GRADE MILESTONE:
Baccalaureate breakfast

Sunday, May 18, 10:15-11 am

Baccalaureate is a milestone recognizing the lives of graduating high schoolers. Graduating seniors and their families gather in Fellowship Hall with intentional conversations, prayers, and blessings.

Sign up online:
stpaulqc.org/signups

