

APRIL 2026

The magazine of St. Paul Lutheran Church

# journey



# From dust to spring blooms



**ON THE COVER:**  
Painted chalices for the fourth-grade Communion milestone

## journey

APRIL 2026

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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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The seasons of the church year shape our rhythms, marking moments of reflection and growth. We know what to expect when Advent approaches and again when Lent rolls around. These seasons come with practices, themes, and invitations we anticipate each year.

I was reminded of this while thinking back on an Ash Wednesday service during my time in seminary. As we gathered for worship, we expected to hear the familiar words: *Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return*. What we did not expect was the way one of our professors reframed that message.

He caught us off guard by saying, “You are a beloved clump of dirt.”

This proclamation came with two clarifications. First, we were lovingly created from the earth, formed with care and intention by God. Second, dirt is not lifeless. Dirt fosters growth. Given time, care, and the right conditions, it can nurture something beautiful.

Ash Wednesday begins Lent by reminding us of our origins. From there, Lent becomes a season of tending the soil. For 40 days, we experiment with rhythms meant to change our pace and help us pay closer attention to God and one another. But Lent was never meant to be the end of the story.

In the natural world, growth rarely happens overnight. Seeds take time to root. Shoots slowly push through the soil. And habits, like plants, need time before they become part of the landscape.

You may have heard the claim it takes 21 days to form a habit — an idea circulated because three weeks feels manageable. But research suggests something different. A 2009 study found that forming a new habit takes an average of 66 days, with more complex habits taking longer to settle into daily life.

That timeline made me think differently about the rhythms we already follow.

Lent lasts 40 days. Easter lasts 50.

Together, they create nearly the exact window researchers say it takes for new habits to take root.

In the church calendar, Easter is not a single day but a season: 50 days stretching from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. Often called Eastertide, it follows

the journey of the disciples after the resurrection: from the empty tomb, through encounters with the risen Christ, to the giving of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church at Pentecost.

If Lent prepares the soil, Easter is the season when new life begins to grow.

I’ve been thinking about this as I begin my time at St. Paul. A new apartment, new job, and new church community mean new routines across the board. After two months, some rhythms have begun to settle in, while others I’ve had to restart from square one.

Our Lenten theme of *Changing Pace* has provided the perfect backdrop for reflecting on what I hope those routines will become. It has also made me wonder what happens if we approach the season of Easter with the same intentionality we bring to Lent.

What if the practices we experimented with during these 40 days don’t end Easter morning, but continue to grow through the 50 days that follow?

Sabbath might become a steady rhythm rather than a temporary discipline. Simplicity might shift from an experiment to a lifestyle. Silence, slowing down, or solidarity might begin to shape our days in lasting ways.

Maybe this is part of what resurrection life looks like: not a single dramatic moment, but a season of steady growth. And perhaps this is what the season of Easter is for.

After all, beloved clumps of dirt were made to bloom.



*Sarah Yotter*  
**SARAH YOTTER**  
pastoral intern

# Looking Up

## A persistent leak leads to a long-overdue renewal of the sanctuary tower.

If you've stood outside St. Paul and looked up, you've seen it: the sanctuary tower, rising above the roofline, capped with a large cross. It's easy to take for granted. It was designed that way.

But for years, water has been finding its way inside — slowly, stubbornly, despite every effort to stop it. This spring, that changes.

After extensive investigation, St. Paul has confirmed the source of the problem and approved a plan to fix it for good. The project will remove the tower's exterior barrier system, replace the failed waterproofing system underneath, install new cement board siding, and replace all eight windows.

Miles Thompson, former operations director, has been living with this problem since his first day on the job.

"Since I started at St. Paul, there's been an ongoing leak in the sanctuary tower. We spent a lot of time and effort figuring out what it was — resealing windows, replacing pieces of the roof, doing whatever we could to stop it from leaking."

A team from Des Moines eventually conducted a detailed water test that confirmed what had long been suspected: the waterproofing system behind the tower's exterior stucco-like finish had failed. The fix required removing the entire exterior surface to get to the problem underneath.

The good news is that the new materials are built to last. Cement board siding will replace the original exterior finish, and all eight tower windows will be new and sealed from the outside.

"This material is supposed to last a long time. It's essentially a lifelong product. And the new windows will be properly sealed from the exterior. That tower should not leak."

Scaffolding is expected to go up after Easter, with work beginning shortly after. How long the project takes depends on what crews find once the exterior is opened up. If the interior walls show no significant moisture damage or mold, the project could wrap up within a few months. If there are more serious issues inside, the timeline could stretch.

"We don't know until it's opened up and once you open it up, you have to address any issues right away. We're hoping and praying that when the time comes, there aren't significant issues."

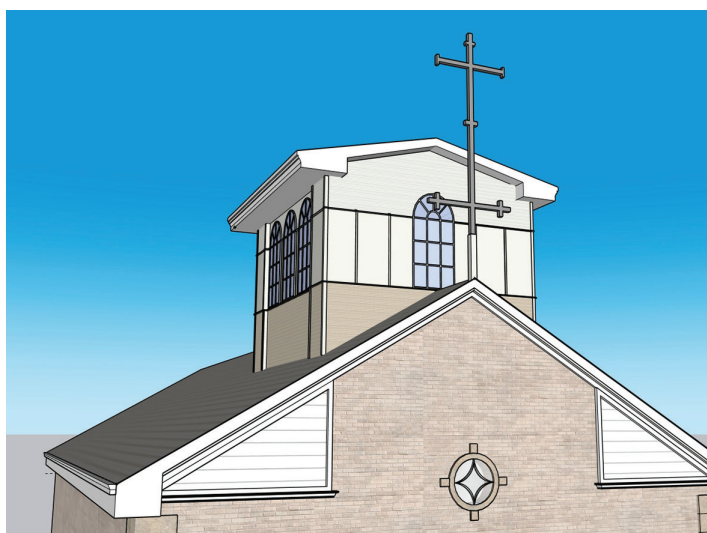
People walking by this summer may notice scaffolding on the exterior and, potentially, inside the building as well. Worship services are not expected to be disrupted unless more serious issues are found.

Budgeted at just under \$267,000 with a contingency, the cost reflects the realities of the work: everything happens 60 feet in the air. Scaffolding, lifts, and a crane to remove and replace the large windows all add up. Money for the project will come from the Capital Improvement Fund, which safeguards the church's daily ministry budget from large and sometimes unanticipated expenses of a capital nature.

The tower has always been more than a practical structure. Like the steeples and bell towers of older churches, it serves as a visible expression of faith — what Miles calls "a modern architect's interpretation of a steeple." When the work is done, it won't look dramatically different. But it will be sound and it will be dry.

"Preventive maintenance will be key going forward — every 10 to 15 years, sending someone up on a lift to reseal everything. If we do that, this fix should hold for a very long time."

For now, St. Paul people can look forward to a tower that is renewed, protected, and ready for decades to come — cross and all.



# april HAPPENINGS

## Faith milestones for all ages

### ► Fifth Grade Milestone | Navigating New Beginnings

Families of fifth graders are invited to share a meal and conversation on Sunday, April 12, 12:30 p.m. We'll play games and have meaningful discussions about the transition from children's to youth ministries and all of the exciting things that the next few years bring! Sign up at [stpaulqc.org/signups](http://stpaulqc.org/signups). Contact: Ellie Lindmark, [ellie@stpaulqc.org](mailto:ellie@stpaulqc.org).

### ► Ninth Grade Milestone | Blessing of the keys

Ninth-graders and their parents come together on Sunday, April 19, 10:15-11 a.m. for conversation about new responsibilities in life, including the ability to drive. Meet in Fellowship Hall. A blessing is said over car keys. Sign up at [stpaulqc.org/signups](http://stpaulqc.org/signups). Contact: Ellie Lindmark, [ellie@stpaulqc.org](mailto:ellie@stpaulqc.org).

### ► New! Adult Milestone | Recent Retirees

Those who have recently retired in the last couple of years are invited to gather on Tuesday, April 14, 10 a.m. for coffee and conversation. Led by Rev. Elaine Olson, recently retired pastor and spiritual director, we'll share stories, connect with others navigating this new season, and explore meaningful ways to spend this next chapter of life! Sign up at [stpaulqc.org/signups](http://stpaulqc.org/signups). Contact: Sara Olson-Smith, [sara@stpaulqc.org](mailto:sara@stpaulqc.org).

## St. Paul to host three upcoming concerts

**Quad City Flutes Unlimited** brings beautiful flute music to St. Paul on Friday, April 24, 7 p.m. This ensemble of dedicated adult flute players has been performing in the Quad Cities since 1983, sharing their love of music through seasonal and community concerts. Enjoy an evening of talented local musicians performing together. Free and open to the public.

**The Nova Singers** will perform *Duruflé Requiem* on Sunday, April 26, 4 p.m. at St. Paul. Tickets are available at the door or online at [novasingers.com](http://novasingers.com). Nova Singers is a 20-voice ensemble with a nationwide reputation for expressiveness, virtuosity, and innovative programming.

**The Augustana College Alumni Choir** performs at St. Paul on Saturday, May 2, 2 p.m. This ensemble brings together voices from across the decades, reuniting in harmony to celebrate a shared musical heritage. Contact: Chris Nelson, [chris@stpaulqc.org](mailto:chris@stpaulqc.org).



## Sing 'Hallelujah Chorus' on Sunday, April 12

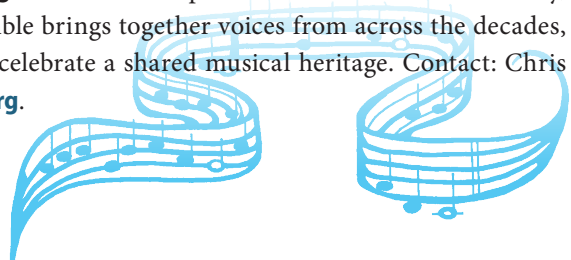
On Sunday, April 12, the 9 a.m. service includes a magnificent expression of Easter faith: *The Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *The Messiah*.

Singers of all abilities (middle-school-age and older) are invited to sing. Come rehearse with choir director Nathan Windt on that day, April 12 at 8:30 a.m. in the Music Room. Contact: Chris Nelson, [chris@stpaulqc.org](mailto:chris@stpaulqc.org).

## Cinema and Spirituality

Guided by Abby Olcese's *Films for All Seasons*, discover how film can deepen your understanding of faith and the church calendar.

On April 21, 6:30 p.m., at The Last Picture House in Davenport (325 E. 2nd St.) watch *The Iron Giant* (1999). Sign up at [stpaulqc.org/signups](http://stpaulqc.org/signups). \$5 tickets (cash preferred). Contact: Tim Suddarth, [timsuddarth@yahoo.com](mailto:timsuddarth@yahoo.com).





## WELCA Spring Gathering

Come together with women of the ELCA on Saturday, April 25, 9:30 a.m., gather in the Chapel and Library Commons for a spring celebration! The morning begins with a short business meeting and worship service. Dr. Derek Ball presents on the art of forgiveness. Enjoy refreshments, conversation, and the joy of connecting with women in this time of fellowship and renewal.

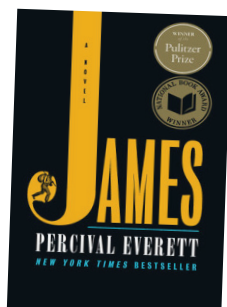
The gathering is open to all St. Paul women and guests. Contact: Linda Kern, [lindak12@hotmail.com](mailto:lindak12@hotmail.com). Sign up at [stpaulqc.org/signups](http://stpaulqc.org/signups).

## Heart|Soul|Mind to explore Women of the Bible

Pastor Mark Niethammer leads the popular Heart|Soul|Mind Bible study on Thursdays, 9:30 a.m., in Fellowship Hall. Beginning in April, discover the diverse and powerful stories of biblical women — from Eve and Ruth to Mary and Lydia — and explore their enduring relevance for faith today. Questions? Contact Mark Niethammer at [mark@stpaulqc.org](mailto:mark@stpaulqc.org).

## Faithful Readers

On Thursday, April 9, 7 p.m., conversation focuses on *James* by Percival Everett. Join fellow book lovers for thoughtful discussion, diverse perspectives, and meaningful connections over great literature. All books are available in the Book Corner. Contact: Katie Hanson, [katie-hanson@augustana.edu](mailto:katie-hanson@augustana.edu) or Dave Crowe, [davidcrowe@augustana.edu](mailto:davidcrowe@augustana.edu).



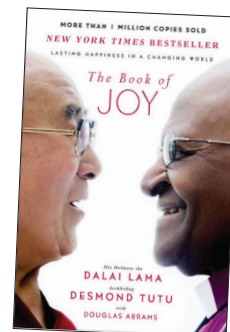
## Walking the Grief Journey begins April 26

Gather on three Sundays, April 26-May 10, 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](http://stpaulqc.org/signups). Contact: Sara Olson-Smith, [sara@stpaulqc.org](mailto:sara@stpaulqc.org).

## Occasional Tuesdays Book Group starts in April

Connect over an inspiring book on Tuesdays, April 7, 14, and 21, 7-7:45 a.m., Library Commons. In *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*, Nobel Peace Prize Laureates the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu share conversations about finding joy in the face of adversity. Through wisdom, humor, and profound friendship, they explore how joy is possible, even in a changing world filled with challenges.

The book is available in the Book Corner. Sign up online at [stpaulqc.org/signups](http://stpaulqc.org/signups). Contact: Katy Warren, [katy@stpaulqc.org](mailto:katy@stpaulqc.org).



## communion milestone for fourth-graders

The evening service on Maundy Thursday marks the special time when St. Paul fourth-graders receive Holy Communion. For several weeks, they have been learning about these gifts of bread and wine, given and shed for God's people.

We welcome to the Lord's table these children and their families, remembering them in prayer as they grow in Christ:

- |                 |                 |                    |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Caroline Aitken | Jace Gisel      | Maverick Lukowicz  | Ike Springer    |
| Finn Barnes     | Paisley Hamann  | Grayson Mahieu     | Ruby Stellinga  |
| Charlie Berger  | Roush Harker    | Storm Munos        | Cormack Vens    |
| Paul Burns      | Shawn Mukabane  | Sevi Peck          | Eleanor Walters |
| Ryan Carter     | Allen Kaufman   | Elle Pettis        | Jack Warnemunde |
| Connor Elpers   | Gavin Kinzenbaw | Wyatt Reiling      | Lillian Weis    |
| Will Esbaum     | Maisey Kolwey   | Lucy Reller        |                 |
| Claire Ferguson | Rosie Kolwey    | Mildred Schnekloth |                 |
| Lily Ferguson   | Sophie Kramer   | Ginny Sivertsen    |                 |



A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE

# 129 House

A familiar address on the northwest corner of St. Paul's campus is quietly becoming a hub of community impact.

The 129 House has long been home to the St. Paul residency program and the office of counselor Steve Kalber — and Steve isn't going anywhere. But the house has taken on a new purpose: three nonprofits with deep roots in the St. Paul community have licensed the space at a nominal charge, making it a shared home base for ministries that are changing lives near and far.

This is not a landlord-tenant arrangement. It is a relationship built on shared values — a recognition that St. Paul's five core values of Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Formation, Courageous Service, and Extravagant Generosity don't stop at the sanctuary doors. They spill out into the neighborhood, into the larger Quad Cities, and, in one remarkable case, all the way to the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Camp Shalom has been serving campers in the region for nearly 50 years, tracing its origins directly to this congregation. Humble Dwellings has transformed hundreds of empty houses into homes for families who simply needed a hand. Empower Tanzania has spent more than 15 years working alongside rural Tanzanian communities to address the root causes of poverty — not with handouts, but with partnership.

Three organizations. Three missions. One address.

What unites them, beyond a shared zip code on the northwest corner of St. Paul's campus, is a conviction that faith calls us outward. That caring for neighbors means showing up, rolling up sleeves, and listening well. And that even the most ordinary act of kindness — furnishing a bedroom, fixing a cabin roof, tutoring a child after school — can become something sacred.



CAMP SHALOM

Peace rooted here

For Gary and Chris Gibney, Camp Shalom has never really been separate from St. Paul. It started here.

Camp Shalom, a Christian outdoor ministry in the Quad Cities area, was born when St. Paul purchased land in 1974 to create an outdoor ministry for its youth. A young camper named it “Shalom” — the Hebrew word for peace. In 1996, the camp became an independent ecumenical ministry, opening its doors to the broader community.

The Gibneys, lifelong St. Paul members, have given decades of their time to keep the camp thriving. Gary has helped build and repair cabins, put roofs on buildings, and has spent years mowing the grounds — six to seven hours every Wednesday during camp time. Chris has cooked for retreats and sewed and laundered the more than 60 curtains around the camp each year, even storing them in their home during the off-season. Their daughter Maggie served as program director for eight years.

“Camp is my ministry,” Gary said, recalling a conviction he first felt during his own confirmation.

For campers, the experience is unlike anything they encounter at home. “There's not so much social pressure out there,” Chris said. “Kids let down their guard. A real sense of camaraderie develops.”

The Gibneys hope more St. Paul people will get involved — whether through volunteering, donating supplies, or simply showing up for a work weekend.

“There is something for everyone,” Gary said. “A willingness to learn is all you need.”

● [Learn more at campshalomia.org](https://www.campshalomia.org)

# 3 organizations • 3 missions • 1 address



HUMBLE DWELLINGS

Home is everything

Tricia Judge wasn't looking for a job when she found Humble Dwellings. She was looking for a way to serve.

"I felt like I had the organizational and leadership skills to do this," she said. "And everyone I've met at Humble Dwellings is doing it out of pure service. Those are good people to be around."

Humble Dwellings, a faith-based 501(c)3 nonprofit, transforms empty living spaces into furnished, welcoming homes for people in need across the greater Quad Cities area. It began with one act of kindness — filling a home for a man and his two young daughters — and has grown steadily ever since. In 2025, the organization served 165 families and more than 400 individuals.

Tricia serves as a lead volunteer, meeting with clients, selecting furniture and household items, and coordinating move-in day teams. Clients come through referrals from social service agencies — people escaping homelessness or domestic violence, young parents, individuals recovering from addiction or navigating mental health challenges.

"We try really hard to meet their preferences — whether it be colors, themes, if the kids like Hello Kitty," she said. "So it feels like their home."

She describes small moments that feel like confirmation: a shower curtain donated from a car trunk that happened to match perfectly, turning up in the St. Paul parking lot at exactly the right moment.

"Small miracles happen with every job," Tricia said. "It's God's way of saying keep going."

St. Paul people can get involved by donating gently used furniture and household items, or by volunteering on a move-in day team.

• [Learn more at humbledwellingsqc.org](https://humbledwellingsqc.org)



EMPOWER TANZANIA

Empowering people

Todd Byerly wants to be clear about one thing: Empower Tanzania is not a charity.

"We don't do relief," said Todd, the organization's executive director and a former St. Paul operations director. "We're interested in people. And empowering people."

Founded in 2008 by a group of Iowans — including Todd and his wife Lori, who served as ELCA volunteer missionaries — Empower Tanzania works in partnership with rural communities in the Same and Mwanza districts of northeastern Tanzania. The need is staggering: two-thirds of Tanzanians live below the income poverty line of \$1.25 per day, and Tanzania's population of more than 71 million is projected to nearly double by 2050, placing intense pressure on education, health care, and water resources.

Empower Tanzania's approach is grounded in listening. "We listen, listen again, and listen a third time before offering a suggestion," Todd said.

The project Todd is most proud of is the Same Learning Center, launched in 2017. Six primary schools identify their most vulnerable students — children whose families cannot afford uniforms, school supplies, or exam fees. The center provides after-school tutoring, Saturday enrichment sessions, life skills, snacks, and a full meal. Since its founding, 100 percent of graduates have been accepted into secondary school. Last year, the center's students outperformed all other students in the Same District on national exams. Beginning in 2024, graduating students receive four years of secondary school tuition.

Empower Tanzania also manages four major water projects, a six-acre demonstration farm, and a community tree-planting program to address the region's reliance on charcoal and firewood.

"Education changes everything," Todd said. "The local people know the problems they face — and in most cases, know the answers."

• [Learn more at empowertz.org](https://empowertz.org)

# Tending the Earth **together**

A handful of people from many faith traditions turn small actions into something much larger.

Connie King has been planting native species in her yard for years — watching for butterflies, waiting for birds, noticing what grows and what doesn't. For a long time, she did it quietly and mostly alone.

That changed about a year ago, when a handful of people from different faith communities in the Quad Cities gathered at St. Paul, after attending an online faith and climate webinar and decided they didn't want to just watch. They wanted to do something.

Today, that gathering has grown into the Interfaith Creation Care group, a coalition of people from diverse faith traditions who meet monthly at St. Paul to share resources, learn from one another, and make the case that caring for the earth is a deeply spiritual act — no matter what one's tradition.

## In action

The spark was simple: St. Paul member Becky Wiese, who knew about an annual faith and climate webinar, set up St. Paul as a host site. A handful of people showed up. They signed in, swapped emails, and Becky asked if anyone wanted to keep meeting. They did.

Former St. Paul teaching pastor Peter Pettit helped connect the group to other faith organizations in the area. Connie figured out how to put together a newsletter. A logo was developed. By June 2025 — just a couple of months after that first webinar in April — the group sent out its first issue.

Each month, the group, open to anyone in the community, gathers over the lunch hour—intentionally timed so working people can come — to swap information, share what different congregations are doing, and talk about what resources are available. The group is still small, only about half a dozen people show up reliably to every meeting, but its reach is growing.

The monthly newsletter is the group's primary output, and it covers more ground than you might expect. Recent issues have included features on everything from recycling programs and native plant sources to water conservation and well-building in Tanzania. The formula is part reporting, part resource guide, part inspiration.

The group has highlighted the Moline Trinity Lutheran TerraCycle program, collecting cellophane from cereal boxes and other hard-to-recycle materials, and that the local mosque has committed to eliminating plastic bottles. It's pointed readers toward Wild Ones and the Hauberg Estate for native plantings, and to Wildscaping QC for help transforming yards into wildlife-friendly habitat.



Connie King

## Faith as motivation

For Connie, creation care is not a political cause. It is a theological one.

"This past January, Everett Hamner spoke on the topic *Who is your neighbor* and that's what this whole thing is all about for me. If we truly want to treat people the way they want to be treated, to be neighbors, we have to take care of this planet," Connie said. "It affects everyone."

That framing — creation care as an act of neighbor love — is one reason the group has been able to

build bridges across different traditions. Connie believes the impulse to tend the earth is not uniquely Christian, or even uniquely religious.

“You look at every faith, and even non-faith, they have at least one tenet in their tradition that says we take care of each other,” she said. “We are all trying to have a world where there's enough good water to drink, food to eat, a warm place to sleep. I think we're more alike than we are different.”

## Hope

Connie is careful to name what sustains her in work that can easily feel overwhelming. The answer, consistently, is community.

“You don't do faith alone, you do it in community. That's where it's most effective and that's what we're trying to do with this group. It's not like I'm shouting from the mountaintop into the wind,” Connie said. “Climate change is such a huge thing that people throw up their hands and say, ‘I can't do it.’ But there are small things. To me, that is what Jesus was showing us. A whole community doing small things to help creation would turn out to be a very big thing.”

She thinks about her five great-nieces and nephews, ages 2 to 8, and about what kind of world they will inherit.

“They are going to grow up in a more desperate world than I did. I try to do whatever I can so that they don't get to the point where people are fighting over drinking water. We still have the ability to create a world that works for everyone,” Connie said. “Even in my little corner of the world, I've made a difference. If that difference can keep expanding bit by bit then we can make a better future for our children.”

## Open invitation

The group meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 12 noon in the dining room at St. Paul, with a Zoom option available for those who can't be there in person. To connect with the group or subscribe to the monthly newsletter, email [interfaithcreationcare@gmail.com](mailto:interfaithcreationcare@gmail.com).

## Get involved

**2026 Faith + Climate Forum:** On Saturday, April 25, 11 a.m.–4:30 p.m. (connection time begins at 10 a.m.), St. Paul hosts the livestream of one of the nation's largest gatherings at the intersection of faith and environmental action. This year's theme is *The Future We Choose: Faith in Action for a Thriving Tomorrow* with keynote speaker Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, author of *What If We Get It Right?* This free event is open to all — bring your passion for creation care and a sack lunch! Coffee, tea, and cookies provided.

**Want to keep the conversation going?** The Interfaith Creation Care group meets Monday, April 28 at 12 noon to debrief and brainstorm. All are welcome.

**Join the neighborhood clean-up crew:** On Saturday, April 11, 10 a.m.-12 noon, gather to pick up trash and debris in the blocks surrounding the St. Paul campus. This event embodies the spirit of courageous service and it's fun for the whole family! It's two hours that make a big difference in the St. Paul corner of the world. Supplies and snacks are provided. Sign up online at [stpaulqc.org/signups](http://stpaulqc.org/signups). Contact: Jessica Taylor, [jessica@stpaulqc.org](mailto:jessica@stpaulqc.org).

**Soil Stewards** are a group of folks who love being outside and caring for the beautiful campus St. Paul is blessed to call home. This volunteer group plants, transplants, weeds, trims, and keeps the grounds looking beautiful. Anyone is welcome to join! Contact: Peg Iglehart, [peg.iglehart@gmail.com](mailto:peg.iglehart@gmail.com).



# Farewell Miles Thompson

**After four years as operations director, Miles Thompson leaves behind a legacy of systems, spaces, and volunteers — and now steps into a new role while looking forward to life in the pew.**

Miles Thompson didn't set out to work for a church, but his background in horticulture, landscape design, and management lent itself well to his position.

He came to St. Paul through his wife Margaret, and what began as a connection became a calling. During COVID, Miles stepped in with his videography services to make online worship not just a possibility, but a work of art. For four years, he has served as operations director, quietly holding together the systems, spaces, and people that make ministry possible.

His fingerprints are everywhere, even where few would think to look. The new chiller in the mechanical room. The renovated 2025 Main St. house. A building-wide technology overhaul. Emergency protocols. Creative sanctuary lighting. A migration to Microsoft Teams for security and encryption. The kind of work that, when done well, disappears into the background.

But the accomplishment Miles returns to most is not a system or a structure. It's the people. Under his leadership, St. Paul cultivated a broad network of volunteers — soil stewards tending the grounds, tech assistants running sound and lights, a crew that shows up to mow and maintain the massive lawn. Miles saw each of them not

as help, but as the congregation living out its own courageous service.

"My biggest passion was to include our people in running and maintaining this beautiful building and campus. The renovation of the residency suite was a great example of how St. Paul people take such ownership and care in this place. The product is much better than we ever could have received by hiring a company," he said. "The tech assistants ensure worship runs smoothly and the soil stewards maintain and beautify the campus in ways only they can. Truly being a congregationally-led church was important to me."

He will miss Sundays most. The short conversations in the gathering area and sanctuary. Knowing people by name and checking in on how they're doing. He spoke of greeting guests at the front door, walking someone to the restroom, the quiet joy of getting a room prepared just right before people arrive — chairs spaced, tables clothed, floors vacuumed, along with the help of building manager Matt Spencer and facilities technician Jim Akright. He wanted people to feel it, even if they couldn't name what they felt.

Miles is moving on to a pre-construction role with Modern Companies, a firm

based in the Cedar Rapids area with an office in the Quad Cities. The work suits him — operational planning, vendor coordination, analyzing the market. But the bigger draw is simpler: weekends with Margaret, and his sons, nine-year-old Christian and six-year-old Charlie.

"I realized that I've never spent an Easter morning or Christmas Eve with my younger son Charlie, who just turned six," Miles said. "I needed to be Dad."

He is grateful. He is ready. And he is not really leaving — Miles and his family remain members of this congregation, and he says he looks forward to plugging back in from the pew.

"These five years are some of the most cherished years of my working career. I built a lot of confidence in my work and in my role as a leader. I feel really good about how I'm leaving this place," Miles said. "I hope St. Paul continues to do good things. I look forward to plugging in as a member and I can't wait to reconnect with people when we return."

## Join the St. Paul team!

We're seeking a full-time Operations Director to oversee facilities, technology, and campus operations. The ideal candidate brings strong operational and systems leadership, demonstrated financial and budget stewardship, and the ability to manage multiple priorities with a calm, solutions-focused approach. Learn more and apply at [stpaulqc.org/employment](http://stpaulqc.org/employment).

## Council Notes

Council gathered on a beautiful Thursday evening, just days after a March blizzard. Lenten Wednesdays have filled Fellowship Hall with meaningful conversation, shared meals, and the spirit of *Changing Pace* in worship.

Council reviewed membership updates for February. St. Paul welcomed eight new families into the congregation. Worship attendance continues to be strong for the year.

Several staffing updates were shared. Hilary Erb will finish the program year leading the Cantate Choir (grades 1–5). Council expressed gratitude to Malie Niethammer for stepping up to lead the Cantate Choir during this transition period.

The personnel committee moved quickly to review the operations director position description. Council expressed gratitude to Matt Spencer for taking on additional responsibilities during the interim period. Todd Byerly — who previously served as St. Paul’s operations director before Miles Thompson — is stepping into the role on an interim basis. Council voted to affirm the hiring

of Cooper Schou for a newly created digital media assistant position. This role will oversee worship slides and sound for weekend services and special events, and will support the St. Paul worship podcast and other emerging media needs.

The associate pastor call committee continues its work, now six months into the search. The role was originally envisioned to lead mission and outreach endeavors and growing small group ministry. The pastoral staff and committee has reconvened to revisit that vision, shifting the focus toward adult learning opportunities — including chapel forums, Bible studies, and more. This updated direction reflects the evolving needs of St. Paul people. The committee will continue reviewing candidates as names are submitted.

Pastoral resident Maddy Tyler’s time at St. Paul will conclude this summer. Farewell receptions will follow services on the weekend of July 18 and 19. Conversations with regional seminaries regarding a new intern are ongoing, and work on the pastoral residency continues.



## Farewell to Margaret Thompson

Margaret Thompson didn’t just teach children to sing — she taught them to sing with sincerity. For nearly 15 years, Margaret, a lifelong member, has stood at the front of St. Paul children’s choirs with patience, passion, and an unmistakable gift for drawing out something real from young voices. She has shaped the annual Christmas Pageant into something the congregation looks forward to every single year — not just for the sweetness of it, but for the genuine worship it has become under her care.

What Margaret built at St. Paul is harder to measure than rehearsal schedules or performance counts. It lives in the kids who still remember the words to songs they learned at eight years old. It lives in the teenagers who grew up in her choirs and now sit in these pews with a different understanding of what it means to worship. It lives in the parents who watched their children transform — not just into singers, but into participants in something larger than themselves.



## WORSHIP at St. Paul

► **April 5**  
*Easter Sunday*  
*No Saturday evening worship*

**Preaching:**  
6/8am: Sara Olson-Smith  
9:30/11:30am:  
Mark Niethammer

**Liturgical tradition:**  
6, 8, & 9:30am

**Contemporary Open Spirit:**  
11:30am

► **April 11 & 12**  
*Second Sunday of Easter*

**Preaching:**  
All services: Sarah Yotter

**Liturgical tradition:**  
5pm/8 & 9am

**Contemporary Open Spirit:**  
11:15am

► **April 18 & 19**  
*Third Sunday of Easter*

**Preaching:**  
All services: Katy Warren

**Liturgical tradition:**  
5pm/8 & 9am

**Contemporary Open Spirit:**  
11:15am

► **April 25 & 26**  
*Fourth Sunday of Easter*

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

**Liturgical tradition:**  
5pm/8 & 9am

**Contemporary Open Spirit:**  
11:15am

► **May 2 & 3**  
*Fifth Sunday of Easter*

**Preaching:**  
5pm/9am: Maddy Tyler  
8/11:15am: Sarah Yotter

**Liturgical tradition:**  
5pm/8 & 9am

**Contemporary Open Spirit:**  
11:15am



**ST. PAUL**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

2136 Brady Street  
Davenport, IA 52803



## **Vacation Bible School: June 15-19**

Kids learn to be menders of the universe as they explore daily themes of Feed, Heal, Forgive, Pray, and Rest. Sign up online at [stpaulqc.org/signups](http://stpaulqc.org/signups).

### **Vacation Bible School**

Age 4-Fifth grade,  
8:30 a.m.- 12 noon

### **678 Week**

Grades 6-8,  
8:30 a.m.- 12 noon

### **Volunteer**

There's a job to fit your gifts,  
8 a.m.- 12 noon