

NOVEMBER 2026

The magazine of St. Paul Lutheran Church

journey

Outside the frame



ON THE COVER:
Hadley Bishop

journey

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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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Several years ago, a friend took me to a museum for an exhibit by the artist Edward Hopper. Now, I should say from the start that art appreciation and art history are subjects in which I am seriously lacking. I was never taught to enjoy great art, and I never pursued it on my own.

Anticipating this time with my friend, I confessed my lack of knowledge on both the artist and how to best appreciate what I was about to see. I then asked how I needed to look at these paintings. What do I need to look for?

"Look for the light."

My friend's answer probably isn't unique to Hopper. Whether it's one of his lighthouses or one of his urban pieces, look for the light. What does it reveal? Then of course, when you find the light, notice what is in the shadows.

Look for the light…and go to the shadows because the shadows will reveal something that the light cannot. Perhaps his most famous work, *Nighthawks* is a great example. It is a diner scene, beautiful curved glass walls encase a rather usual evening out at a diner. A couple sits down for dinner; a lonely looking gentleman is near them. The interior of the diner is too bright though, blindingly so. That's what you see.

But the shadows...go there. What do you find? Well, loneliness. The street is empty; the other windows are bare. And, most importantly, there is no door to this diner. The shadows reveal what feels like a hermetically sealed scene, and you can't help but feel their loneliness and isolation.

Find the light, then go to the shadows.

I like that idea and not just for learning how to enjoy new artistic expressions.

It's a good way to look at a life of faith, too.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness." Discipleship, at its simplest, is learning to look the way I was taught to look that day: find the light first.

So where is the light shining in your life? Look for the places God has been at work, often quietly. A word spoken at the right moment. Forgiveness given or received. Bread and wine placed in your hands. A neighbor's kindness. A reason to get up in the morning. Faith doesn't begin with our effort to find God, but with God's light already falling on us. We look for the light because it was there first.



Then go to the shadows.

This is the harder part, and it's tempting to skip it. In the shadows are the things we'd rather not see: old resentments, habits we excuse, the ways we've pushed neighbors to the margins, the ways we've turned from God and neighbor. But here is the gift of following Jesus: we can look honestly at our shadows without being afraid of them. The light that reveals them is the same light that forgives them. Our tradition reminds us that we are at once saint and sinner, and that every day we return to our baptism, dying to what is old and rising to what is new.

And the shadows aren't only within us. They're also where our neighbors are: the grieving, the lonely, the overlooked, the people standing just outside the frame of our attention. Disciples go there too, not because we carry our own light, but because we follow the One who does.

Look for the light. Then go to the shadows. It's not a bad description of the Christian life. We give thanks for what grace has shown us. We face honestly what it reveals. And we follow Christ into the places still waiting for morning.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."



MARK NIETHAMMER
senior pastor



Courageous service, carefully stewarded

More than 21 percent of the St. Paul budget goes out the doors each year to serve neighbors near and far. St. Paul takes that seriously, and so do the people who help guide it.

The Mission Board is made up of Pat Baldwin (chair), Kelly Janoski, Steve Evans, Dave Tews, Jayne Rose, and Cherie Blackwell with St. Paul deacon Joel Moore as staff support. They are members of this congregation who give their time to answer a big question: *How do we use what we've been entrusted with to do the most good?*

A calling to serve

Pat Baldwin, having previously served as a member of the St. Paul congregational council, joined the board because serving others has always felt central to the life of the church.

"I wanted to be more involved in helping decide how we can support people in need and make a difference in our community and beyond," Pat said. "I believe in the work this congregation is doing in the community and wanted to help lead those efforts."

Ask Pat what people misunderstand about the board, and the answer is simple.

"I think a lot of people assume the mission board just decides where the money goes. There's actually a lot more to it."

That "more" is slow, thoughtful work. The board spends time learning about organizations, talking about needs in the community, and asking questions. It reviews the partners St. Paul already supports, looks at new organizations around the area, and considers how each one fits with St. Paul's core values.

To help with that discernment, board member Cherie Blackwell developed a framework for evaluating each organization. It shows how closely a partner aligns with St. Paul's core values and where our financial support can meet real needs. It keeps the board's decisions grounded and consistent.

Behind it all is a conviction that benevolence dollars are not windfalls. They represent the hard work and extravagant generosity of St. Paul people.

"The money we're entrusted with comes from people who work hard and give generously because they want to help others," Pat said. "We have a responsibility to use those dollars carefully and make sure they have the greatest impact possible."

Why "courageous"?

The board's guiding framework is built on the idea of courageous service.

"Helping people isn't always easy. Sometimes it means getting out of your comfort zone or walking alongside people who are facing tough situations. Courageous service means being willing to step up and help when there's a need, even when it's not easy or convenient," Pat said. "It's putting your faith into action and serving others because it's the right thing to do. I've seen that kind of courage in so many people at St. Paul."

What's ahead

In 2027, St. Paul launches a new mission focus, *Be the Neighbor. See what God does.* It invites the whole congregation to show up for those around us, with opportunities to serve alongside the partners the board is working so carefully to understand.

Pat has a simple hope for what people will see.

"I hope people see that God can do incredible things through ordinary people. I hope they see lives changed, needs met, and hope restored. Most of all, I hope they see what can happen when a church comes together with a heart for serving others."

COMING UP IN 2027

BE THE NEIGHBOR
See what God does.

St. Paul's 2027 mission focus invites us to show up for those around us and watch God work through ordinary acts of service. Four quarters of focus (Housing, Food, Community, Wellbeing) bring volunteer opportunities and a closer look at the partners the St. Paul community supports.



november

HAPPENINGS

Advocacy in action: A mental health advocacy workshop

Most of us want to help when someone we love is struggling. Fewer of us feel ready to. Come to an experiential workshop at St. Paul on Thursday, Nov. 12, 6 p.m. Haley DeGreve, founder of The Gray Matters Collective, provides room to practice.

The evening focuses on being present with people experiencing mental health challenges. Learn about mental health advocacy, identify resources, and take time to reflect on our own challenges and the barriers that can keep us from showing up for others.

Anyone is welcome. Facilitated by St. Paul members Joe and Cherie Payne. Sign up at **stpaulqc.org/signups** to help plan for spacing. Contact: Steve Kalber, **steve@stpaulqc.org**.

Habitat for Humanity

On Saturday, Nov. 21, put on a tool belt and help build through this ecumenical ministry. St. Paul volunteers work alongside families who dream of owning a home — and do the work necessary to make that dream a reality. No previous building experience is necessary. Choose a morning shift from 8 a.m.-12 noon or an afternoon shift from 12 noon-3:30 p.m. To help, visit **stpaulqc.org/signups**. Contact: Pam Garrett, **pam@stpaulqc.org**.

Upcoming faith milestones

Tenth Grade Milestone | Share, Save, Spend

On Sunday, Nov. 8, 10:15-11 a.m., tenth-graders and their families gather in Fellowship Hall for the Share, Save, Spend milestone. This is a moment for teens and parents to pause to talk about money intentionally. Sign up at **stpaulqc.org/signups**. Contact: Ellie Lindmark, **ellie@stpaulqc.org**.

Four-Year-Old Milestone | Pray and Play

On Sunday, Nov. 15, 10:15-11 a.m., four-year-olds and their parents explore prayer and learn how to talk with God through fun, interactive stations. This engaging experience helps little ones discover new ways to connect with God in their everyday lives. Each child receives a prayer book. Meet in Friendship Hall. Sign up at **stpaulqc.org/signups**. Contact: Abbey Cathelyn, **abbey@stpaulqc.org**.



Food and care ingathering

Fill a bag with nonperishable food items and toiletries and bring it to church for St. Paul's annual Thanksgiving ingathering for the Friendly House Food Pantry. Your generous donation helps provide food and essential items to local families in need this Thanksgiving. Items may be brought for Thanksgiving Eve worship on Wednesday, Nov. 25, 7 p.m. or the following weekend, Nov. 28 & 29. Or, write a check to St. Paul, put Food Pantry in the memo line, and drop it off or mail it to church.

What's needed? Soups, mac & cheese, canned meat (chicken & tuna), cereal, peanut butter, jelly, toilet paper, bar soap, laundry soap, diapers, wipes, and feminine hygiene products (tampons and pads).

Interested in helping to sort the food received? Stop by on Sunday, Nov. 29 from 9 a.m.-12 noon and help when you can for as long as you are able. It's a great service project for all ages! Questions? Jessica Taylor, **jessica@stpaulqc.org**.

Youth Friendsgiving potluck

On Sunday, Nov. 22, 6 p.m., high schoolers, friends, and Sunday Night Live (SNL) alum are welcome to gather for a Friendsgiving potluck. This SNL tradition is an opportunity to share a meal and celebrate friendship. Bring a friend and a dish to share! Contact: Ellie Lindmark, **ellie@stpaulqc.org**.

Summer mission trip announced!

St. Paul youth in grades 9–12 are invited to spend July 11–16, 2027 in Chicago, Ill., for a summer mission trip centered on serving others, growing in faith, and building meaningful connections. Sign up at **stpaulqc.org/signups**. Contact: Ellie Lindmark, **ellie@stpaulqc.org**.

Help clean up the St. Paul neighborhood

The St. Paul corner of the world is a beautiful place. On Saturday, Nov. 7, 10 a.m.-12 noon, St. Paul people gather to pick up trash and debris in the blocks surrounding the campus. It's called the *Make It Yours* Neighborhood Cleanup. A great service project for all ages! Sign up at **stpaulqc.org/signups**. Contact: Jules Irish, **julesi@mchsi.com**.

Season of Advent

Christmas Pageant placements on Nov. 8

Christmas Lights is a pageant for children in PreK–grade 6, celebrating family and the joy of Christmas. Speaking parts are open to grades 3–6. Placements for speaking roles are Nov. 8, 10:30 a.m. Rehearsals are Wednesdays, Nov. 11 & 18, Dec. 2 & 9, at 5:30 p.m. (6:45 p.m. for speaking roles), and Dec. 12, 9-10:30 a.m. Sign up at **stpaulqc.org/signups**. Contact: Abbey Cathelyn, **abbey@stpaulqc.org**.

Family Advent Learning on Nov. 29

On Sunday, Nov. 29, 10:15-11 a.m., families of all ages are welcome to gather for an Advent lesson, joyful carols, and a family craft activity that turns our focus toward the wonder and anticipation of Jesus' birth. Meet in Fellowship Hall. Sign up at **stpaulqc.org/signups**. Contact: Abbey Cathelyn, **abbey@stpaulqc.org**.

WELCA Advent by Candlelight

On Monday, Nov. 30, 6-8:30 p.m., begin your Advent experience with fellowship, food, and a festive message with women of the ELCA. Individual tables are set in holiday attire. All women of St. Paul are welcome to attend and bring guests. Sign up at **stpaulqc.org/signups** or at the Info Center. Contact: Carol Kerker, **carolkerker@gmail.com**.

Adult learning

Sundays, 10:15-11 a.m., in the Chapel

Nov. 1: Christian Nationalism

Eric Stewart, Augustana College

Christian Nationalism merges political ideology with faith in ways that distort Christian teaching and undermine religious freedom. Examine what it is, why it has gained traction in recent years, and its corrosive effects on both church and democracy.

Nov. 8: Our Neighbors, Then and Now

Julie Nelson, Black Hawk State Historic Site

The Indigenous peoples of the Quad Cities region have deep roots here stretching back centuries, yet their history and ongoing presence often remain unknown. Julie Nelson shares the story of the tribes who first inhabited this area and the living Indigenous communities here today.

Nov. 15: Advent Organ Devotional

Chris Nelson, St. Paul director of music ministries

The Advent Organ Devotional is a musical journey through the season of Advent. Twenty-seven organ works trace Advent's inner movement from listening and waking to warming, radiance, and ultimately the joy of Christmas.

Nov. 22: Mark in a hurry

Mark Niethammer, St. Paul senior pastor

This Advent season begins a focus on the Gospel of Mark. Come for an introduction to the shortest, most urgent, and most surprising of the four gospels. Explore what sets Mark apart: its fast-moving pace, a Jesus who keeps telling people to be quiet about what they've seen, and parables that read less like lessons than like riddles to be lived with rather than solved.

Nov. 29: Matthew and Luke at the manger

Eric Stewart, Augustana College

As Advent begins, the stories of Jesus' birth take center stage. The Gospels of Mathew and Luke tell slightly different stories, highlighting the meaning of Jesus' birth and life in different ways. These stories highlight themes in each Gospel that give us a richer picture of how early Christians understood Jesus.

Curious about what's coming next? Scan the QR code to discover learning opportunities through the end of the year.

growing in joy

This year, we're Growing in Joy! All thanks to the generosity of the St. Paul community.

Every household is invited to make a financial commitment that sustains our shared ministry and mission in the coming year. Each pledge, large or small, helps St. Paul be the neighbor to the community around us, and together we get to see what God does with it.

Your support of Daily Ministry for 2027 helps joy keep growing, here and across our community.

Growing up

"Growing up at St. Paul and being in confirmation, I've learned I can rely on God in tough situations and anytime I feel stressed or anxious. I look forward to being confirmed here, where I was baptized as a baby, because St. Paul has always been a comforting and safe place for me. The pastors have helped me explore and grow in my faith and I know if anybody is struggling, they're there to help. St. Paul has helped me understand that I can always rely on God to lead me down the right path." — *Hadley Bishop*

"We started coming to St. Paul when we lived in west Davenport, pregnant with my oldest, who's now 18. We've moved several times and ended up in Bettendorf, which is far away, but we've never found anything quite like St. Paul. It feels like home. I want my kids to know there's something so much bigger than what we see every day, and that they can lean on God when they're scared, sad, or happy. When we come here, we feel fulfilled. These days Hadley looks forward to Sunday without any reminders from me. She's totally in tune with her faith. I hope she always feels loved and forgiven." — *Jessie Bishop*







Pledge in print

During the week of Nov. 2, watch for a letter from Pastor Mark. The envelope includes your financial pledge card for Daily Ministry 2027. Take some time to consider, and if you can, grow your pledge. Return your cards on Joy Weekend, Nov. 7 & 8.

Pledge online

Complete your pledge online. Scan the QR code below, pledge through the St. Paul app, or visit **stpaulqc.org/pledge**.

Growing in community



"Since we joined St. Paul, I've gained a growing appreciation for the wisdom and insights of our clergy. Despite not being a religious person, I try to listen carefully to the sermons and scripture readings, and I enjoy discussing Sunday's messages with my wife and friends. Attending services nourishes my marriage to my wife Peg and refreshes my mind and soul. We've gained many new friends, and our family is eternally grateful for Pastor Katy marrying our son and his husband.

For the first time in my life, I actually look forward to going to church on Sunday! Prior to joining St. Paul, Peg and I attended a funeral that was officiated by Pastor Sara. She was wonderful, and we had a strong feeling we were surrounded by like-minded people. If you're new and still finding your place, St. Paul doesn't pressure people to join, so take your time and decide after attending many services and other events. Hang around, have a donut and gab with others after services. St. Paul people are friendly, accepting, and genuine." — *Dave Iglehart*



Growing in family

"There have been five generations of Schnekloths at St. Paul. John's grandfather helped found this church, his father served on council, John served on council, and his mother taught Sunday school for years. I've volunteered in a number of ways over the years. Today our son Hans and his wife Kaitlyn are active on many levels, and the fifth generation is developing fast. Our children are so appreciative of the faith formation they received growing up at St. Paul, from preschool to Camp Shalom.

Serving is a tradition that ties in with our faith. If you have that strong faith, you feel called to help where your strengths are. Our parents were wonderful role models, and that carried over to us, to our kids, and someday to their kids. It just seems natural that serving ties in with your faith.

Now we get to share Sundays with Hans and Kaitlyn's kids. It's really a treat. We know that at St. Paul our kids and grandkids will grow up knowing they are accepted for who they are. Our family's faith tradition brings us joy and peace, and it carries us through the hard times."

— *John and Cindee Schnekloth*

It's a promise

A pledge to your congregation is a financial promise. It's your best indication of what you would like to give during the coming year. It's possible that one could give whenever one feels like it, absent of a pledge. But that does little to help the church plan its ministries and mission, locally and globally. It also turns giving into an ad-hoc exercise instead of a long-range spiritual practice that reflects and keeps your life priorities. So pledge, please!

It's a building block

Every St. Paul member is asked to complete a pledge commitment. It's one of the expectations of belonging to a congregation that is moving in the same direction. Our Daily Ministry Budget is shaped entirely on the upfront generosity of member pledges. Without them, we have no operating budget.

It's first fruits

The Bible calls this kind of considerate giving *first fruits* giving. As an ancient farmer would have pulled the best vegetables and fruits to make an offering to God, we aim not to give what's left over from our living. As unselfishly as possible, we pledge to God ahead of other financial responsibilities. Challenge your giving to grow each year. That's how our church grows its impact. Remember, it's a faith-based estimate of your personal desire and potential.

fall@st. paul

It's been a fall full of faith and fun for St. Paul people. Worship, confirmation, the NAMI Walk, Golden Agers, kids' learning, youth group, and more! We gather during this beautiful season to be in the presence of God and each other.





































Familiar faces, new roles

The business office at St. Paul is in a season of change: a new face, a new title, and a farewell.

Welcome Rachel Wollett, *business office assistant*

Rachel and her family came to St. Paul in 2011, looking for more youth programs.

"St. Paul had exactly what we were looking for," Rachel said.

Her mother, Mary Brown, made the move too. Rachel's children, Ben, 23, and Arlo, 21, were both confirmed here, and Rachel served as a confirmation leader when they were younger.

Before joining the staff, Rachel worked as a hairstylist, which Rachel called "the most fun and also extremely challenging." For five years Rachel also worked as a paraeducator at Bettendorf High School with students with special needs.

"I liked that because I was there with my son the whole time he was there," Rachel said.

Rachel and her husband, Joe, a St. Paul host, celebrate 27 years of marriage this month.

Away from work, Rachel loves vintage and resale shops, yard sales, and the farmers market. Movie date nights, especially mysteries and thrillers, are a family favorite. Lately she's been getting into crafting more. She loves decorating for holidays and has taken up diamond painting.

Rachel already knows the St. Paul front desk, having filled in for receptionist Jennifer Garvey, and managed the Book Corner this summer into early fall during manager Andrea Spencer's parental leave.

"Now I'm everywhere," Rachel jokes.

Rachel brings her positivity to brighten the second floor of the church.

"I'm never in a bad mood. I'm happy, friendly, and willing to help. I'm a team player," Rachel said. "If my friends had to choose three words to describe me, they would say: friendly, loving, and positive."

Rachel finds herself excited to come to work each day.

"When I first started coming here, it felt like I was meant to be here. I look forward to meeting more St. Paul people.



Being around happy people excites me," Rachel said. "This is a place where I want to go to work. Everyone is so welcoming. It's nice to come to a place where everyone is hospitable and supports each other."



Tony Runkle's role expands

Tony Runkle has a new title: stewardship coordinator.

From October through January, Tony leads the congregation's giving ministries. He plans, coordinates, and implements the annual stewardship program, oversees the financial pledging process, and manages pledge records and follow-up strategies. He also collaborates with communication staff to inspire stewardship and foster a spirit of gratitude.

Tony will become a more permanent fixture in the St. Paul business office throughout the year. He is taking on additional business office responsibilities, including accounting and financial coordination.



Farewell, Allison Winter

St. Paul bid farewell to business office assistant Allison Winter at the end of September. Allison joined the business office in July 2022 and has spent her time at St. Paul maintaining records, coordinating bulk mailings, assisting with accounting, and supporting staff wherever needed. In the past year, she helped strengthen the Karibu Market partnership with Tapestry Farms and supported Saturday evening fellowship efforts. Allison and her husband, Ken, a former St. Paul visitation chaplain who recently retired from hospice ministry, look forward to spending more time with family in retirement.

Council Notes

October's council meeting was held one week late to accommodate schedules. Notes from the October and November meetings will appear in the December edition of *Journey*.

Nomination forms to recommend yourself or others for several 2027 elected leadership positions will be available later this month at the Info Center. The Nominating Committee welcomes all suggestions from within St. Paul by Monday, Dec. 14. Leave completed forms at the receptionist's desk.

Youth and childcare rooms get refreshed!

This fall, two important rooms got well-deserved makeovers: the youth room on the lower level and the childcare room in the preschool wing.

A brighter place to ask big questions

The youth room is where St. Paul youth in grades 6-12 gather for 678 Nights, Sunday morning learning, Sunday Night Live, and more. Faith grows in that room, and Youth director Ellie Lindmark wanted the space to reflect that.



The changes are hard to miss. Every wall has fresh paint. The "carpet monster," the tiered seating area, has new carpet, and pillows and blankets make it feel more like a living room than a classroom. New artwork hangs throughout. Building manager Matt Spencer and volunteer extraordinaire Denny Reichenbacher put in the work on the painting and other projects.

"As a high schooler and middle schooler, you're trying to figure out so many things in life, and faith is just one of them," Ellie said. "The room gives kids a space where they can freely and openly talk about their faith with safe adults who are all asking the same questions. Those adults don't have all the answers. They ask the big questions alongside students and help them navigate big feelings."

One room for the little ones

On the main floor, just off the Library area, the childcare room is going through a transition of its own, made possible by the St. Paul Memorial Committee.

After talking with parents and asking for feedback, Childcare director Brittany Guy heard the same message again and again: families prefer to have all their children in one room.

"We listen and value the feedback of our parents," Brittany said. "Thanks to their important guidance, we combined the two childcare age groups into one room."

Previously, the nursery was split between an infant room and a larger room for older children that was shared with the preschool. The preschool graciously moved upstairs so the nursery could use that larger space. To make it work for both age groups, the room needed a gate to divide the ages, a cushioned floor mat, and replacements for items the preschool had generously shared. The nursery will keep its existing shelving and most of its toys.

For Brittany, the change is about trust.

"Our program evolving and adapting to the changing needs of the congregation shows how invested we are in forming lifelong relationships with children and strengthening our relationships with parents."

WORSHIP *at St. Paul*

Oct. 31 & Nov. 1
All Saints Weekend

Preaching:
5pm/9 am: Sara Olson-Smith
8/11:15 am: Katy Warren
Liturgical tradition:
5pm/8 & 9am
Contemporary Open Spirit:
11:15am

November 7 & 8
Joy Weekend

Preaching:
All services: Mark Niethammer
Liturgical tradition:
5pm/8 & 9am
Contemporary Open Spirit:
11:15am

November 14 & 15
Season after Pentecost

Preaching:
5pm: Justin Marquis
8/9/11:15 am: Sarah Yotter
Liturgical tradition:
5pm/8 & 9am
Contemporary Open Spirit:
11:15am

November 21 & 22
Reign of Christ

Preaching:
All services: Sara Olson-Smith
Liturgical tradition:
5pm/8 & 9am
Contemporary Open Spirit:
11:15am

November 28 & 29
First Sunday of Advent

Preaching:
5pm/9 am: Katy Warren
8/11:15 am: Mark Niethammer
Liturgical tradition:
5pm/8 & 9am
Contemporary Open Spirit:
11:15am

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LUTHERAN CHURCH

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