

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear friends,

We are moving quickly into Advent and it feels like time is flying. With everything going on in the world, it can be easy to not take time to slow down and breath. My hope and prayer is that Advent can be that moment for you this month. In Advent, we are preparing for the coming of Jesus and part of doing that is taking time for ourselves to reflect on where we are, where we have come from, and where we would like to go. How has God impacted your life this year? What is God calling you to do next? These are important questions and we know that the spirit is present in them.

There is a lot going on in December and I want to take time to present our Advent and Christmas Eve schedule here for all of you:

Wednesdays in December

St. Paul Lutheran Church will be hosting Advent Services on December 6th, December 13th and December 20th. Soup Potluck at 5:30 PM, followed by the Advent Service at 6:30 PM.

Christmas Weekend

St. Paul Lutheran Church Services

Advent Service: Saturday, December 23 at 4:30 PM

Christmas Eve Service: Sunday, December 24 at 4:30 PM, Sunday, December 24 at 11:00 PM

St. Martin Lutheran Church Services

Advent Service: Sunday, December 24 at 9:30 AM

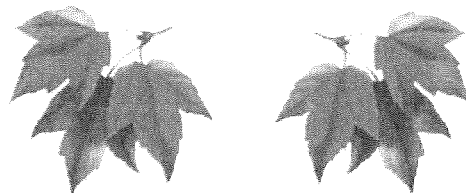
Christmas Eve Service: Sunday, December 24 at 7:00 PM

We hope you can join us this December to take a pause from all the chaos and be present together in Christian community.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Branden



The Stewardship Committee thanks you for your hours of volunteer work using your time and talents to serve in God's ministry. We also appreciate that you have chosen to respond to the three financial stewardship goals for 2024. The Intent Cards returned on Commitment Sunday will be tabulated by our administrative assistant and the totals posted on the Stewardship Poster in the narxex.



THE TIMING IS UNUSUAL!

The air conditioning equipment replacement approved at the July Voters' Meeting arrived in October and the installation by Watson Brothers was completed on November 14th. The system is operational just in time for the first snowfall!



It runs extremely quiet by remote control and should make worship comfortable in the summer months. Knowing that the temperature will need to meet a variety of expectations, next summer we will experiment until we find a happy medium.

A few walls are under repair and need paint touch up. Your patience will be appreciated. Jacques



Our Sunday School wishes to thank you!

On November 5th, the Sunday School students participated in filling shoeboxes for Samaritan's Purse—Operation Christmas gifts. The twenty shoeboxes were purchased with funds from the Thrivent Action Team Program. The remainder of the \$250 grant was used to purchase items that the students felt would make some practical gifts: toothbrushes, compressed washcloths, T-shirts, winter hats and fun items: coloring books, crayons, beanie babies, balls, tic tac toe games (they made) and card games. They each packed two boxes, then took them home to complete filling them to the top. On November 12th, the boxes were returned to the church and were then delivered to the collection site.

As part of the fund raiser, the students created pine cone Christmas ornaments which they sold after worship to raise the shipping funds (\$10.00 per box). Thank you for purchasing their creations They raised \$215.85. Now, they will follow delivery information on the web site to find out where their gifts were sent.

We are grateful for the Sunday School Director, Leann Smith, who organized the project that allowed these young children, ages 5-12, to "live generously" and to Thrivent for T-shirts & funds to help them show a generous spirit to other children—hopefully a trait that will be a part of their nature going forward.

Our Daily Bread

The December/January/February edition of "Our Daily Bread Devotion" is available for you to pick up. They are in the church office hallway. Please feel free to stop by and pick up a copy.



shutterstock 102945899

Dear Members and Friends of St. Paul,

In past years, the members and friends of St. Paul have shown their gratitude for the work and ministries of the pastor and staff at the end of the year.

For Christians, it is the time of joy when we celebrate God's interaction in our lives in the fulfilment of the promise of the Messiah and the beginning of Jesus' work of redemption.

This year we have the opportunity to acknowledge and thank:

Pastor Branden Hunt

Musical Leader Amy Fabick

Financial Assistant Deanna Moran and

Secretaries – Elyse Wiegand & Tracy Graven

for the leadership they provide in helping our congregation so that all of its services, ministries, activities, and events run smoothly.

To allow time to prepare the Christmas gifts, I ask that you show your generosity by December 17th by either putting your response in the offering plate or sending it to the office. If you write a check, please make it payable to St. Paul Lutheran Church.

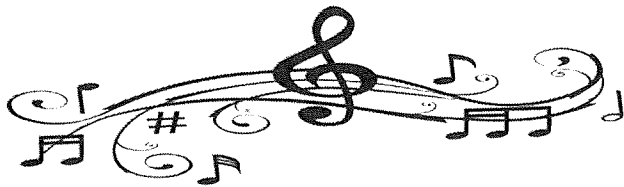
May you and your family have a blessed holiday.

Jacques Merkau,

Congregational President

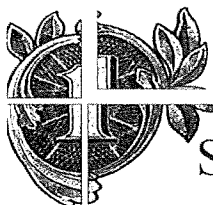
Altar Flowers

There will be sign-up sheets in the Narthex in **December** for 2024's Altar Flowers. Please consider signing up to host flowers.



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHOIRS OF ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

The choirs of St. Joseph Catholic Church are very excited to announce that they will present a Christmas concert Sunday, December 10, 2023 @ 3:00 p.m. at St. Joseph Catholic Church 1403 Seventh Street, Port Huron. Please come and invite your family and friends too! Our choir is very excited to share the spirit of Christmas with you!



Quarterly Giving Statements

The 3rd Quarter contribution statements have been emailed/mailed. If you did not receive yours or would like a hard copy, please email or call the office and let us know if you would like it mailed or placed in your box.

The October Offering of Letters, *Amplify the Voices of Those in Need*, netted 39 letters to three members of Congress urging renewed funding of the Farm Bill to feed hungry people here and abroad, most of whom are children. Praise to our God of peace and justice for this advocacy on behalf of those whose voices are not heard above countless, well funded self-interest groups.

A conversation with the Lord: Distraught Marilyn, "Give me Your peace!" The LORD's response, "You already have it. Take hold of it...by letting go."



Thank you to all the people who signed up to help with worship tasks during the 2024 calendar year. Thank you to the faithful for signing up to help again. Thank to those who signed up to help in new ways. Many hands make the work load lighter.

The newsletter will include a calendar of assignments for the current month and also a calendar with assignments for the next month, starting in January 2024. If you are unable to serve on the date assigned, please make arrangements to switch with another volunteer. The list of volunteers is posted in the hallway next to the office door.



Planning a Fund Raiser?

Present the idea to the Council for approval. Request the fund raiser form and a manila envelope in which to collect money during the event. Store the money envelope in the safe. At the end of the event, count the donations. Give the financial secretaries the envelope so it can be reported as income. Checks are issued every two weeks. Let the treasurer know. the amount of the check, contact person's name and the address for mailing.



HEART WORKS will be meeting on Tuesday, December 5th. However, this month Judy Halamka is going to host Heart Works at BLUE WATER LODGE, 2840 Keewahdin Rd, in Fort Gratiot. We will be meeting in an activity room off the main lobby. Come join us at 10:00 until noon, to enjoy knitting, crocheting, looming...and lots of fun conversation.

EPIPHANY PARTY

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 2024

Marilyn and Ron's house

8446 Lakeshore Road, Burtchville

Come one, Come all!

to celebrate the arrival of the Magi to worship the baby Jesus! Also known as Three Kings Day and Twelfth Night, be prepared for feasting, fellowship, and fun!

Gather at 5:30

RSVP to marilynknak@gmail.com or call

586-864-6903



Jacques Merkau, Council President

Jim Fortushniak -President Elect

Marcia Conard, Council Secretary

Julie Lusk, Treasurer

Kathy Strauss, Financial Secretary

Susan Koglin, Asst. Financial Secretary

Vacant-Financial Rep

Leanne Fortushniak, Evangelism Rep

Leann Smith, Parish Ed Rep

Vacant-Properties Rep

Diane Welsh, Stewardship Rep

Ann Preimesberger, Worship

COMMUNITY GARDEN
ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH
2023 REPORT

This was the fifteenth year for our Community Garden at St. Paul and it turned out to be our worst year yet. This year the production was **only 2,600 pounds** of produce that was donated to Mid-City Nutrition. **The Grand Total is 106,075 pounds since the garden was started in 2009.** Note: the garden was much smaller in the first few years.

2009	860 pounds	2016	10,800 pounds
2010	2800 pounds	2017	8700 pounds
2011	4300 pounds	2018	6750 pounds
2012	8400 pounds	2019	5310 pounds
2013	5850 pounds	2020	14,500 pounds
2014	7500 pounds	2021	10,330 pounds
2015	5500 pounds	2022	11,875 pounds
		2023	2,600 pounds

Due to increasing costs, we raised the rental rate on the garden plots from \$10.00 to \$15.00 per plot. The garden plots are 10' X 10' in size. If the gardener wanted more than 1 plot, they could rent more. We rented out a total of 60 plots to a total of 21 gardeners/families. The gardeners were responsible for taking care of their plot(s) per the Garden Guidelines and cleaning them up at the end of the season.

The Church's part of the garden was over .57 of an acre and we had a total of 26 great volunteers who helped this year. There were 13 members from St. Paul and 13 non-members. Nine were Master Gardeners. All help is greatly appreciated and I would like to give everyone who helped a great big thank you. We can always use additional help next year. Please let me know if you would like to help.

We had a large assortment of garden produce consisting of broccoli, green & yellow beans, cabbage, cantaloupe, cucumbers, dill, eggplant, kale, green peppers, potatoes, pumpkins, zucchini, yellow summer squash, acorn, butternut, hubbard, spaghetti squash, sweet corn, tomatoes, and watermelon.

This spring and early summer were the driest that I have ever seen. Then it started raining and stayed wet for the rest of the year. In my opinion the excessive rainfall is what caused the low yields. The Corn Man closed up 1 month early, and everybody in the area had poor gardens, unless they had raised beds. The garden was looking good at the beginning of the season.

Every year we try some new things in the garden. We need to look further at improving the drainage. This year we added an electric pump on the well. We tried using leaf mulch for weed control which we will continue next year. We have purchased a small trickle irrigation system for next year. A wiggle hoe has been built to help with weed control next year, a row marker has been built for straighter rows. Next year will be better.

The garden is funded with a \$250.00 Thrivent Action Team grant, the garden plot rentals and the garden fund restricted account

Respectfully submitted,
Don Strauss



*Your congregation is doing amazing,
wonderful, faithful ministry...
...but does anyone know?*

Do your own members even know?

***The Southeast Michigan Synod, ELCA presents a
Winter 2024 Leadership Series: Telling Your Congregation's Story***

*Learn how to tell stories for impact and inspiration, not just information
Learn how to organize a congregational storytelling team
Create a sustainable plan for sharing your stories for years to come*

Bring 2 to 4 folks who will form the storytelling team for your congregation, and by April they will have the tools and inspiration to help your story be told.

This series consists of four virtual sessions available live, via Zoom. These sessions will also be recorded and shared for later viewing.

All dates are Monday evenings at 7pm:

January 15

February 19

March 18

April 15

Individual consultation is available as needed

The cost per congregation is \$250, which can be paid for with a Thrivent Action Team Card.

Contact the Southeast Michigan Synod office for more details or to register —
313-821-1055 or b.fisher@semisynod.com or Paul Walters: paulewalters@gmail.com

Beyond the Bible

Beyond the Bible is returning from a short hiatus! The group is gathering ideas for their next book. Beginning in January, we will have food and fellowship as we work through our next selection. We tend meet monthly and read 50-75 pages per gathering. Anyone with book ideas or an interest in joining the group, please contact Lisa Schleicher at lj Schleicher@gmail.com

2024 STEWARDSHIP APPEAL

"You Have Been Treated Generously, so Live Generously"

Matthew 10:5-10

During the Stewardship Appeal Campaign, there were very special temple talks, which related to the three goal areas for 2024.

Sean Ewbank - Sustaining Ministry Excellence

Diane Merkau - The New GWIP God's Work in Progress, Second Year

Jan Thomas - The Electronic Sign Replacement

& Diane Merkau

Thank you ! Thank You! Thank You!

On Committment Sunday, November 12th, Intent cards were placed on the altar, as an offering and prayers for ability and financial income to meet intent were given. (If you would like an Intent card, extras were placed in the Narthex area and can be mailed back to the church office). Pastor Branden gave us a very uplifting service on how our Time, Talents and Treasures affect not only St. Paul , but also our community and worldwide neighbors, in working together. A thermometer poster board has been placed in the hallway, which will show our responses to the three goal areas. (In January, updates will be provided!)

The Stewardship Committee would like to Thank St. Paul for all your generous support and prayers.

Kroger Community Rewards Program

From **August 1, 2023 to October 31, 2023**, St. Paul Lutheran Church has received \$67.90 from 29 families' rewards on purchases at Kroger. To use the rewards program, you can register online at krogercommunityrewards.com. All **current participants** in the Kroger Community Rewards Program **do not** need to re-enroll this year to earn funds for St. Paul. The rewards program runs from May 2023 to May 2024. Our NPO number is RK460. **Registration is online only.**

Newsletter: The newsletter deadline for January Ray is Wednesday, December 20th, 2023. Articles may be submitted via e-mail (stpaulww@comcast.net), on a flash drive or in writing.



While all are not able to be face to face in worship in our Sanctuary, there are still opportunities to gather to hear God's Word, to pray, to sing and to be encouraged. Please join us at 11 AM on our Facebook page for our livestream service.

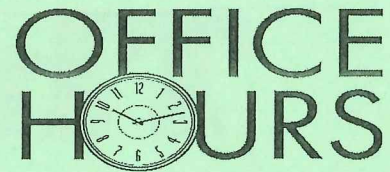


Prayer List



Prayer requests are welcomed and can be made on our Facebook page, by emailing the church office at stpaulww@comcast.net or with our connection cards. To keep the list current, please make your request each week you wish to have your loved one's name included in the prayers.

Monday, Wednesday & Friday 9:30-1:30
Tuesday & Thursday 9:30- 11:30



Sunday Services

1st service begins at 8 am

2nd service begins at 11am



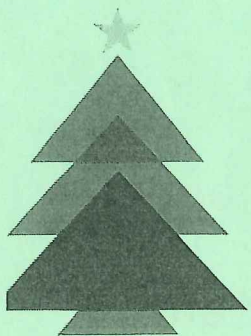
ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH
3790 WEST WATER ST
PORT HURON, MI 48060
(810) 982-9853

Sunday Worship 8 and 11 AM
Livestream at 11 AM on Facebook,
our YouTube channel,
or watch from the link on our website
stpaulww@comcast.net
Pastor Branden Hunt
stpaulpastorelca@gmail.com

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #660
PORT HURON, MI 48060

The Ray

Gather, Grace, Grow, Go



DECEMBER 2023