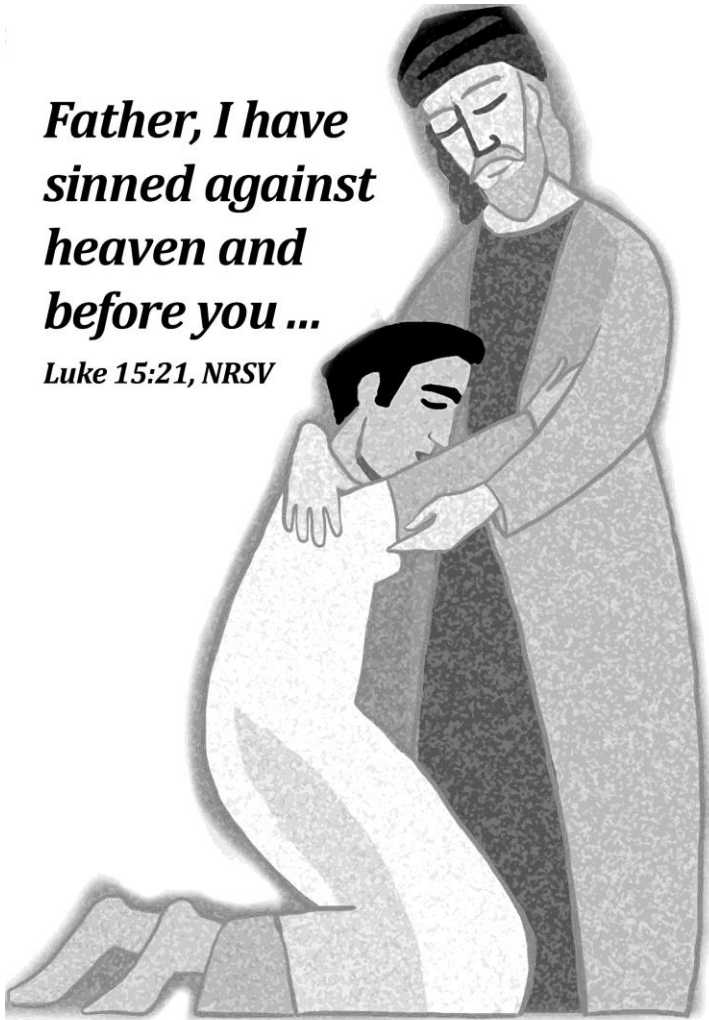


# WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

***Father, I have  
sinned against  
heaven and  
before you ...***

*Luke 15:21, NRSV*



Open Door Policies:  
Grace Instead of Condemnation  
*Fourth Sunday in Lent*

# St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church | Wisconsin Rapids, WI

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March 30, 2025



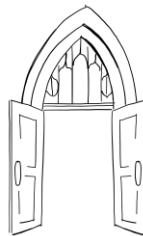
## Welcome To Worship

If you are a visitor to our church, we extend you a warm welcome. We are happy you are here. Please fill out a Connect Card to let us know how we might continue to serve you.

It's encouraging to see parents bring their families to worship the Lord. If your child becomes restless, you can use the Family Room to calm them. Quiet bags and children's bulletins are also available to keep little ones busy. Restrooms are located in the hallways along either side of the worship space. For those with special needs, large print copies of the service folder and listening devices are available from the ushers. One of our ushers can help you find the restrooms or family room and answer any other questions.

## Service Notes For This Service

We assume people get what they deserve. We assume that what goes around comes around. We assume God helps those who help themselves. Those assumptions are false. God does not operate on the principle of merit but of grace. No one is beyond the reach of God's grace. God never turns it off. At the entrance of God's open door is not a Father looking to condemn us, but a Father who has eagerly longed for our return. When we do, he takes us in his loving arms and assures us we are still his child. When the weight of our sin makes us fearful of God's condemnation, he reveals his grace yet again.



## Those Serving in Worship

Preacher: Rev. Glenn Seefeld; Liturgist: Garth Perry; Accompanist: Sue Kulhanek

## Acknowledgements

The Service: Setting One from Christian Worship with Opening for Sundays in Lent (Year C). Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, Evangelical Heritage Version® (EHV®) © 2017 Wartburg Project. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Liturgical and musical settings of Scripture based on text from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

# The Service

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## Welcome

## Hymn

579 *His Mercy Is More*  
Song leaders on st. 1; cong on all remaining

Stand

## Invocation

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

## Confession and Absolution

When God's children rebel and wander from his ways, he desires that they return to him for pardon and peace through his Son. The courts of heaven resound with joy when a single wayward child returns home.

**There is rejoicing in the presence of angels of God over one sinner who repents.** Luke 15:10

Children of God, the time to turn to our Father for forgiveness is now. God made Christ our sin that we might become his righteousness. He implores us to be reconciled to him, promising:

**In the time of my favor I heard you,**

**and in the day of salvation I helped you.**

2 Corinthians 5:21-6:2

Congregation sings:

916 *Today Your Mercy Calls Us*

3 To - day our Fa - ther calls us, his Ho - ly Spir - it waits;  
his bless - ed an - gels gath - er a - round the heav'n - ly gates.  
No ques - tion will be asked us how of - ten we have come;  
al - though we oft have wan - dered, it is our Fa - ther's home.

Text: Oswald Allen, 1816–1878, alt. Tune: Friedrich K. Anthes, 1812–after 1857. Text and tune: Public domain

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

**Holy God, gracious Father, I am sinful by nature and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have not loved you with my whole heart; I have not loved others as I should. I deserve your punishment both now and forever. But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins with his innocent suffering and death. Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

*Silence for meditation and reflection*

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

Congregation sings:

916 Today Your Mercy Calls Us

2 To - day your gate is o - pen, and all who en - ter in  
shall find a Fa - ther's wel - come and par - don for their sin.  
The past shall be for - got - ten, a pres - ent joy be giv'n,  
a fu - ture grace be prom - ised, a glo - rious crown in heav'n.

Text: Oswald Allen, 1816–1878, alt. Tune: Friedrich K. Anthes, 1812–after 1857. Text and tune: Public domain

## Lord, Have Mercy - Kyrie

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For minds set on heavenly things, for hearts that long for heavenly glory, and for the will to bear our earthly crosses, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the gifts of humility and repentance, for faith that finds security in Christ and does not use God's patience as an excuse for sin, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For perspective to see that, apart from Christ, gain is loss, and in Christ, loss is gain, and for the perseverance to press on and take hold of our heavenly prize, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

**Amen.**

*Congregation sings:*

*916 Today Your Mercy Calls Us*

4 O all - em - brac - ing Mer - cy, O ev - er - o - pen Door,  
what should we do with - out you when heart and eye run o'er?  
When all things seem a - gainst us, to drive us to de - spair,  
we know one gate is o - pen, one ear will hear our prayer.

The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a '4' indicating the time signature. The lyrics are: 'O all - em - brac - ing Mer - cy, O ev - er - o - pen Door, what should we do with - out you when heart and eye run o'er? When all things seem a - gainst us, to drive us to de - spair, we know one gate is o - pen, one ear will hear our prayer.'

Text: Oswald Allen, 1816–1878, alt. Tune: Friedrich K. Anthes, 1812–after 1857. Text and tune: Public domain

## The Word

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

## Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, you receive us as your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge your merciful goodness, give thanks for all your benefits, and serve you in willing obedience; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Be seated*

## First Reading

Isaiah 12:1-6

God's grace turns the fear of our condemnation into the joy of our salvation.

<sup>1</sup>In that day you will say: I will give thanks to you, LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger has turned away, and you comfort me. <sup>2</sup>Surely God is my salvation. I will trust him and will not be afraid, because Yah, the LORD, is my strength and song, and he has become my salvation.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. <sup>4</sup>In that day you will say: Give thanks to the LORD! Proclaim his name. Declare among the peoples what he has done. Proclaim that his name is exalted! <sup>5</sup>Sing to the LORD, for he has done amazing things! Let this be known in all the earth! <sup>6</sup>Shout aloud and sing for joy, daughter of Zion, for the Holy One of Israel is great among you! (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

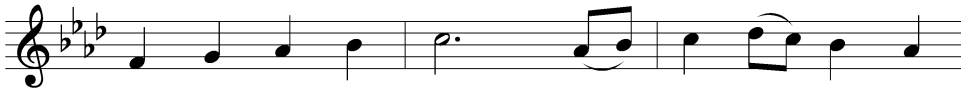
## Psalm of the Day

32B How Blest Are Those

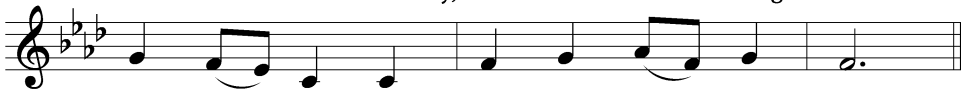
Our condemnation is replaced with grace as the LORD forgives our sin.



1 How blest are those the LORD for - gives; how  
2 I si - lent - ly con - cealed my guilt, but  
3 I then con - fessed my sin to you, my  
4 Let all the faith - ful pray to you while  
5 You hide me, LORD; you hold me fast in



glad they are to hear their sin is gone, their  
then I groaned all day; your heav - y hand, like  
griev - ous guilt and shame, and you for - gave my  
you may still be found; you place them safe a -  
all ad - ver - si - ty, sur - round - ing me with



guilt a - toned, their rec - ord clean and clear.  
sum - mer heat, took all my strength a - way.  
wick - ed - ness by your most gra - cious name.  
bove the flood, se - cure on high - er ground.  
faith - ful love and songs of vic - to - ry.

Text: Michael D. Schultz © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 719903  
Tune: Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second, 1813, ed. John Wyeth; Public domain

## Second Reading

Romans 8:1–10

*In Christ Jesus, God has already condemned all sin. For us there is only grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

<sup>1</sup>So then, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>For in Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup>Indeed, what the law was unable to do, because it was weakened by the flesh, God did, when he sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin. God condemned sin in his flesh, <sup>4</sup>so that the righteous decree of the law would be fully satisfied in us who are not walking according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

<sup>5</sup>To be sure, those who are in harmony with the sinful flesh think about things the way the sinful flesh does, and those in harmony with the spirit think about things the way the spirit does. <sup>6</sup>Now, the way the sinful flesh thinks results in death, but the way the spirit thinks results in life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For the mind-set of the sinful flesh is hostile to God, since it does not submit to God's law, and in fact, it cannot. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>But you are not in the sinful flesh but in the spirit, if indeed God's Spirit lives in you. And if someone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, but your spirit is alive because of righteousness. (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

Stand

## Gospel Acclamation

Luke 15:10

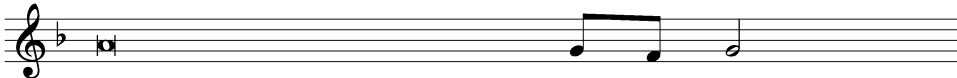


Refrain



Glo - ry, praise, and hon - or to you, Lord Je - sus Christ.

Tone



There is rejoicing in the presence of the an - gels of God

Refrain



over one sinner who re - pents.

Tune: © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 719903

## Gospel

Luke 15:1–3,11–32

*How does God respond to those who object to or are enraged by his grace? He responds with more grace.*

<sup>1</sup>All the tax collectors and sinners were coming to Jesus to hear him. <sup>2</sup>But the Pharisees and the experts in the law were complaining, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

<sup>3</sup>He told them this parable: <sup>11</sup> “A certain man had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup>Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all that he had and traveled to a distant country. There he wasted his wealth with reckless living. <sup>14</sup>After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>He went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>He would have liked to fill his stomach with the carob pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup>“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, and I am dying from hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will get up, go to my father, and tell him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’” <sup>20</sup>He got up and went to his father.

“While he was still far away, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, hugged his son, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

<sup>22</sup>“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick, bring out the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup>Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us eat and celebrate, <sup>24</sup>because this son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.’ Then they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup>“His older son was in the field. As he approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>He called one of the servants and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup>The servant told him, ‘Your brother is here! Your father killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup>The older brother was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.

<sup>29</sup>“He answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I've been serving you, and I never disobeyed your command, but you never gave me even a young goat so that I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours arrived after wasting your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

<sup>31</sup>“The father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. <sup>32</sup>But it was fitting to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.’” (EHV®)

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

*Be seated*



## Children's Message

### Hymn of the Day

576 *Amazing Grace*

### Sermon

**GOD WANTS US ALIVE, NOT DEAD**

1. We are alive through Jesus
2. We are alive for Jesus

*Stand*

### **Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.**

**The third day he rose again from the dead.**

**He ascended into heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.**

**From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*Be seated*

### **Prayer of the Church**

Gracious Lord, according to your will and promise, you sent your Son into our world to atone for sin and restore eternal life. You planned his path to the cross, and he followed it perfectly. Your Spirit led him to endure the temptations of Satan, but he triumphed. Your own people rejected his message, but he persevered.

**He confronted the blindness of unbelief, the confusion of doubt, and the hurt of death but was not deterred as he proclaimed your kingdom to the least, the last, and the lost.**

Guide us to follow Christ by faith as we walk the road of temptation and trial. Spare us from falling into Satan's traps, and steel our resolve as his partners confront us. Teach us to use your Word as a weapon to fight against all devilish lies and deceptions.

**When we fall—and we surely will—lift us up again with your forgiveness and grace.**

As we hear and contemplate the holy record of our Savior's passion and death, use the sharp message of the law to empty us of pride and self-reliance. Humble us as we view the Savior in his humility, remembering and believing that he endured the cross so we might be freed from its horror.

**In his suffering show us our healing, in his grief show us our joy, and in his death show us our life.**

Protect all who are bearing the cross of persecution and disdain. Supply your power to those fighting temptations and addictions. Watch over all who are sick and suffering in body, mind, and heart. We pray especially for children who are abused, forsaken, or ignored.

**Comfort all your troubled people with the sweet peace that only Jesus can bring.**

Give wisdom and resolve to the leaders of our government that their rule may bring prosperity to our land and peace to our people. Supply insights to those who seek cures and invent devices to make our lives on earth better and safer. Inspire creative minds to touch our hearts in ways that reflect your creating love.

**You desire that we bask in the glory of your redemption; according to your will, may we also enjoy the wonders of your creation.**

*Special prayers and intercessions*

Hear us as we pray in silence.

*Silent prayer*

Hear our prayers, Lord, for the sake of Jesus, whose journey to the cross we remember during the days of Lent. Comfort and strengthen us by his life and death on our behalf, and thrill us as we look forward to celebrating his victory on Easter.

**Amen.**

### ***Special Prayers This Week***

† For Kevin & Lynn Proeber, who we have called to serve as teachers in our school.

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†  
†  
†  
†  
†

## Connect Card and Offering

Please take a moment to fill out a Connect Card. After a few moments, the ushers will come forward to collect the offering. You may place your Connect Card and any offering you brought in the plate as it is passed. Moved by God's love in Christ, we offer him our first and best gifts, purely out of thanks to him. If the gospel message has moved you to give and you would like an electronic option, you can scan this QR code with your mobile phone. It will connect you with our website's giving page.



## Amazing Grace Video

*Stand*

Blessed Lord, you have given us your Holy Scriptures for our learning. May we so hear them, read, learn, and take them to heart that, being strengthened and comforted by your holy Word, we may cling to the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

## Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

**Amen.**

*Be seated*

## Hymn

523 How Deep the Father's Love for Us



# Take Home Questions

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## Isaiah 12:1-6

1. Some in the world today view God as an angry, vengeful God. How do you know that the Lord has turned his anger away from you?
2. Agree or disagree: Based on v. 2, a believer will never be afraid of anything.
3. What “amazing things” (v. 5) can we make known to all the world?

## Romans 8:1-10

4. Why was the law powerless to bring about our salvation? How did God bring about our salvation?
5. In v.5 Paul says that what is on our minds (and in our hearts) is based on whom we are in harmony with. What do we think about if our lives are in harmony with the sinful flesh? What do we think about if our minds are in harmony with the Spirit who has brought us to faith in Jesus?

## Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

6. Compare and contrast the sins of the two brothers. How are both demanding their father’s blessings over and above their father himself? How are the ways they are pursuing those blessings completely different?
7. In what ways do you see the sin of the younger son in yourself now or in your past? What about the sin of the other son?
8. How does the father in this parable display the love of God in various ways? What comfort does that give to you in your life?

# News & Announcements

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**This Sunday's Bible Study Hour:  
Apologetics—Defending Your Faith  
How Would a Lawyer Look at the Evidence?**  
Join us in the cafeteria from 9:15 to 10:15 AM

## **Congregational Meeting Next Sunday**

April 6 | 12:30

Our Spring Congregational Meeting is next Sunday, April 6 at 12:30 pm. A lunch will be served after the late service until the time of the meeting to allow everyone to enjoy time together with our church family. The meeting time begins with an open forum where will be discuss the 2025-2026 Ministry Plan and get ministry updates. Members, please check you mailslots for a packet of reports, and prayerfully review them before the meeting.

## **Come to *The Magic Flute***

April 2 | 1:30

Our school invites you to *The Magic Flute* this Wednesday, April 2 at 1:30 pm in the gym. Professional artists from Opera for the Young will perform alongside students from our school. This fun adaptation of Mozart's classic opera is set in outer space. It is coming-of-age story is about coping with life's trials and learning to forgive. We hope you can come!

## **Handbell Festival**

April 6 | 2:00 pm

Both our Joyful Ringers Handbell Choir along with our school's Junior Handbell Choir will join other handbell choirs from the region for a Handbell Festival next weekend. On Saturday, they will enjoy fellowship, learning, and rehearsals as part of a mass choir. Then on Sunday at 2:00 pm, they will perform a concert, which is open to the public. The festival takes places at Trinity Lutheran Church and School in Brillion, WI.

## **Pies Available at Discount This Sunday**

Need a dessert for Easter? We have several frozen take-and-bake apple pies left from our fall bake sale. We are offering these at a discounted price of only \$10, so we can clean out our freezer. To pick up a yummy pie, please see Carol Brown in the Welcome Center after the service.

Proceeds from the fall bake sale were used in part to purchase water bottle fillers for our drinking fountains. The remaining funds, including the sale of these pies, will go to the Amazing Grace Campaign to pay down the principal of our mortgage.



## Mission Rally to be held at St. Paul's

April 26 | 9:00 - noon

The Wisconsin River Valley Circuit of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) will hold their spring mission rally here at St. Paul's on Saturday, April 26 from 9:00 to noon. As the host congregation, we need to supply volunteers to prepare rally materials, set up the facility, handle registration, serve breakfast snacks, and more. While Sisters on a Mission will spearhead this effort, we need more volunteers. If you can help, please sign up at the Ministry Table, which is now located across from the mailslots.

## I Am Blessed! Teen Bible Study

April 6 | 6:00 pm

Connect with teens from across the country through an online teen bible study. Have you been unhappy lately – sad or unsettled? Maybe you know something's wrong, but you can't quite put your finger on it. Maybe you see all the happiness and success of other people and you're frustrated it can't be yours. Why can't I be happy? Why can't I be blessed? If you've ever felt like that before, this Bible study is for you! Teens from all over the country will have the opportunity to read and study Psalm 32 together as they are reassured in this most important truth—"I am blessed!" Look for the "Register Now" link at [wels.net/national-teen-bible-study/](http://wels.net/national-teen-bible-study/).

## Easter for Kids in Two Weeks

We still need some key leaders and many helpers to make our Easter for Kids run smoothly. This important event helps share Christ's resurrection with children that may not attend our grade school and Sunday school and may not even attend church regularly. We always get several children from the community. Having a full crew of volunteers is essential. Please check out the Ministry Table (which is now located across from the mailslots) to see what areas still need help. You can also find a link to the online sign-up on our website under the Serve tab.

Also on our Ministry Table, we have a list of items needed for the lunch. If you plan to donate something, be sure to note it on the sign-up sheet, so we don't end up with too much of one thing and not enough of another.



Come Celebrate the Joy of Easter!

Make Projects  
Make & eat snacks  
Play Games  
Sing songs

**EASTER**  
for Kids

Register at [stpaulswr.org](http://stpaulswr.org)

**April 12, 2025**  
9:00 TO 11:45 am  
Lunch to follow  
St Paul's Lutheran Church 311 14<sup>th</sup> Ave S  
(across from Splash Pad)

Ages 3-10  
Babysitting provided

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Sunday	8:00 AM	Worship
	9:15 AM	Bible Study in the cafeteria
	9:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Worship
	2:00 PM	Co-ed Volleyball in the gym
Monday	4:30 PM	Choir Practice in the Balcony
Tuesday	6:45 AM	Men's Bible Study at From the Ground Up Coffee Shop
	9:45 AM	Women Walking in the Word in the Resource Center
	6:30 PM	Unified Board Meetings
Wednesday	8:35 AM	Principal to Parent Bible Study in the Welcome Center
	8:55 AM	School Chapel Service
	<b>5:00 PM</b>	<b>Lenten Service</b>
	<b>5:45 PM</b>	<b>Fellowship Meal</b> ( <i>Bible Book Group serving Hearty Soups</i> )
	6:30 PM	Catechism Class in the Bible Study Room
	6:30 PM	Handbell Practice in the balcony
Thursday	7:00 AM	Men's Small Group at From the Ground Up Coffee Shop
Sunday	8:00 AM	Worship
	9:15 AM	Bible Study in the cafeteria
	9:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Worship
	<b>12:30 pm</b>	<b>Congregational Meeting</b>
	2:00 PM	Co-ed Volleyball in the gym

## Attendance Report

Last Week's Attendance: 184

## Amazing Grace Update

Thru Mar. 23: \$73,031 toward mortgage principal  
 Goal: \$125,000 in 125 days (by May 31)

## Next Sunday

Theme: Open Door Policies:  
 Hiding Treasure in the Trash  
 Readings Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14;  
 Luke 20:9-19

**HOLY WEEK WORSHIP  
 SCHEDULE**

**- April 13-20 -**

Passion Sunday at 8:00 & 10:30 am  
 Holy Thursday at 5:00 pm  
 Good Friday at 12:10 & 5:00 pm  
 Easter at 7:00 & 9:30 am





311 14th Ave S | Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495 | 715-421-3634 | churchoffice@stpaulswr.org  
Pastor Peter Plagenz | 920-689-3036 | pastorplagenz@stpaulswr.org