

WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

“God, be
MERCIFUL
to me,
a sinner!”

Luke 18:13, NRSV



OPEN DOOR POLICIES:
Lowering Our Defenses

Ash Wednesday

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

March 5, 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

God's Surprising Strategies for Getting Sinners Back Home: Whenever someone accuses us of doing wrong, it's easy to get defensive. We make excuses. "I'm not that bad." We try and balance the scales. "Okay, that was wrong. But look at all the good I do!" We play the comparison game. "At least I'm not like him!" With our defenses go up, repentance is impossible.

God, however, has a strategy for lowering our defenses. He assures us that his door is open, and that his home is the place we don't need to pretend to be something that we're not—perfect. Our Father does not ask us to come to him and confess our sin so that he might know what we've done. He already knows. He asks us to repent so that we might fully know what we've done. Only when we grasp the true weight of our sin, will we call out to God for mercy. When we do, God is always quick to forgive.



ABOUT ASH WEDNESDAY: Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, reminding us of our mortality and calling us to repent. The ancient practice of imposing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful is what gives Ash Wednesday its name. The church father Tertullian (c. A.D. 160-215) writes of the practice as a public expression of repentance and of our human frailty that stands in need of Christ. Ashes can remind us forcefully of our need for redeeming grace as they recall words from the rite of Christian burial—"earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust..."—words that will someday be spoken over us all.

Today's service includes a celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. For personal preparation, consider using the Questions for Examination on page 11 of this service folder or Christian Questions on page 295 of the blue hymnal.

Those Serving in Worship

Pastor Peter Plagenz; Accompanist, Kristi Perry

Ash Wednesday

Remain seated.

Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

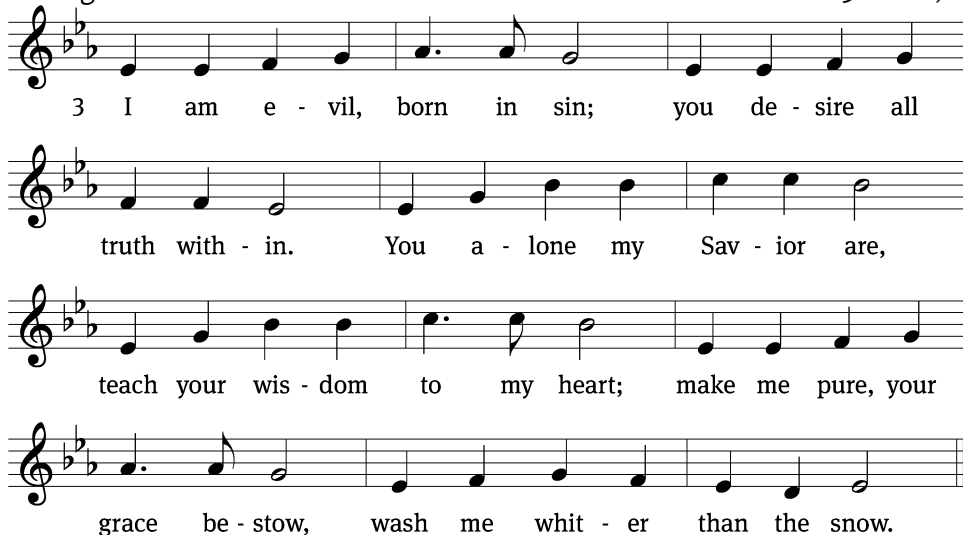
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight.

All Sing:

51D God, Be Merciful to Me



3 I am e - vil, born in sin; you de - sire all
truth with - in. You a - lone my Sav - ior are,
teach your wis - dom to my heart; make me pure, your
grace be - stow, wash me whit - er than the snow.

Text: Psalter, 1912, alt. Tune: Richard Redhead. Text and tune: Public domain

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

All Sing:

51D God, Be Merciful to Me

5 Gra - cious God, my heart re - new, make my spir - it
right and true; let me not a - ban - doned be,
let your Spir - it dwell in me; your sal - va - tion's
joy im - part, stead - fast make my will - ing heart.

The musical score consists of four staves of music in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The first staff begins with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G4, then a quarter note A4, a quarter note B-flat4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B-flat4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4. The second staff continues with a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, a quarter note B3, a quarter note A3, a quarter note G3, and a quarter note F3. The third staff continues with a quarter note E3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note C3, a quarter note B2, a quarter note A2, a quarter note G2, a quarter note F2, and a quarter note E2. The fourth staff concludes with a quarter note D2, a quarter note C2, a quarter note B1, a quarter note A1, a quarter note G1, a quarter note F1, and a quarter note E1, ending with a double bar line.

Text: Psalter, 1912, alt. Tune: Richard Redhead. Text and tune: Public domain

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.

Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

All Sing:

51D God, Be Merciful to Me

7 No at - tempt - ed sac - ri - fice has ac - cept - ance
in your eyes; bro - ken hearts are in your sight
more than sac - ri - fi - cial rite; con - trite spir - it,
plead - ing cries, you, O God, will not de - spise.

The musical score consists of four staves of music in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The first staff begins with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G4, then a quarter note A4, a quarter note B-flat4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B-flat4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4. The second staff continues with a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, a quarter note B3, a quarter note A3, a quarter note G3, and a quarter note F3. The third staff continues with a quarter note E3, a quarter note D3, a quarter note C3, a quarter note B2, a quarter note A2, a quarter note G2, a quarter note F2, and a quarter note E2. The fourth staff concludes with a quarter note D2, a quarter note C2, a quarter note B1, a quarter note A1, a quarter note G1, a quarter note F1, and a quarter note E1, ending with a double bar line.

Text: Psalter, 1912, alt. Tune: Richard Redhead. Text and tune: Public domain

Confession

Brothers and sisters in Christ, God created us to know joy in fellowship with him, to love all people, and to live in harmony with all creation. But sin separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, and so we do not enjoy the life our Creator intended for us. By our sin we grieve our Father, who does not desire us to come under his judgment, but to turn to him and live. Therefore, God in his mercy has sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take our place under the law, to suffer for us, and to die the death we deserve. God made Jesus, who had no sin, to be sin for us so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God.

During the forty days of Lent, we fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. The time of Lent reminds us that to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, we must also know the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor.

Let us confess our sins, ask our Father for forgiveness, and commit ourselves to this struggle.

Most holy and merciful Father,
**we confess to you and to one another that we have sinned by our own fault,
by our own grievous fault
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.
Have mercy on us, Lord.

We have been deaf to your call to serve as Christ served us.
We have not been true to the mind of Christ.
We have grieved the Holy Spirit.
Have mercy on us, Lord.

We have placed our wants before your will.
We have gratified the desires of our sinful nature.
We have merited your punishment now and forever.
Have mercy on us, Lord.

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness.
The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives
we confess to you, O Lord.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, our manipulation of other people,
our anger when our selfish aims are denied, and our envy of those more fortunate than
ourselves
we confess to you, O Lord.

Our love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,
our negligence in worship and prayer, and our failure to show the faith that is in us
we confess to you, O Lord.

Forgive us, Lord, for the wrongs we have done. For our blindness to human need and suffering
and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,
forgive us, Lord.

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward others, and for our prejudice and
contempt for those who differ from us,
forgive us, Lord.

For what we think or say or do that is at variance with your will,
forgive us, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.
Hear us, Lord, for your mercy is great.

Imposition of Ashes

At the direction of the ushers, those who desire to receive the sign of ashes may come forward. All are welcome—member and visitor, young and old. Ashes are not necessary for true repentance, which is purely a matter of the heart. They are simply a sign that has historically been used to show sorrow over sin. The pastors will apply ashes in the form of a small cross on the forehead or on the back of either hand. As he applies the ashes, the pastor will say: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Once all who desire ashes have received them, the service continues as follows:

Accomplish in us, Lord, the work of your salvation
that we may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and suffering of your Son,
bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.



Absolution

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live. He sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins and 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 T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

During these days of Lent, let us implore God to give us renewal and his Holy Spirit. May we continue to abide in the true faith and at the last be received by him through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Word

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Almighty and merciful God, you never despise what you have made and always forgive those who turn to you. Create in us such new and contrite hearts that we may truly repent of our sins and obtain your full and gracious pardon; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading

2 Samuel 12:1–13

The Lord sends the prophet Nathan to call King David to repentance. Nathan lowers David's defenses by telling the king a story about an immoral rich man.

¹So the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came and told him this:

There were two men in a city. One was rich and one poor. ²The rich man had a large number of flocks and herds. ³The poor man did not own anything except one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He raised it so that it grew up together with him and his children. It ate from his food and drank from his cup. It slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. ⁴When a traveler came to the rich man, the rich man was unwilling to take an animal from his flock or from his herd to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. So he took the lamb from the poor man and prepared it for the man who had come to him.

⁵David's anger flared up against that man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this is as good as dead. ⁶In place of that lamb, he will restore four lambs, because he did this and had no pity."

⁷Nathan told David, "You are the man."

This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says.

I anointed you king over Israel. I rescued you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I gave the house of your master to you, and I gave the wives of your master into your embrace. I gave you the house of Israel and the house of Judah. If this was too little, I would have added even more. ⁹Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in his eyes? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword. You have taken his wife as your own wife. You have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰So now the sword will not depart from your house forever, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.

¹¹This is what the LORD says. Look! I am raising up disaster against you from your own house. Right in front of your eyes I will take your wives and give them to your neighbor, and he will lie down with your wives in the sight of the sun. ¹²Because you acted in secret, I will do this in front of all Israel in broad daylight.

¹³David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”

Nathan said to David, “The LORD himself has put away your sin. You will not die.” (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading

2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2

God sends ambassadors to make his appeal to sinners, imploring them to be reconciled to God.

²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, inasmuch as God is making an appeal through us. We urge you, on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹God made him, who did not know sin, to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

¹As fellow workers we also urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. ²For he says:

At a favorable time I listened to you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you.

Look, now is the favorable time! See, now is the day of salvation! (EHV®)

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel

Luke 18:9–14

To lower the defenses of those who were self-righteous, Jesus tells a parable about what makes us righteous in God's eyes—trusting in God's great mercy.

⁹Jesus told this parable to certain people who trusted in themselves (that they were righteous) and looked down on others: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple courts to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself like this: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of all my income.’

¹³However the tax collector stood at a distance and would not even lift his eyes up to heaven, but was beating his chest and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’

¹⁴“I tell you, this man went home justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated

Hymn of the Day

916 *Today Your Mercy Calls Us*

Sermon

Stand

Luther's Small Catechism

Confession

First: What is confession?

Confession has two parts. The one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the pastor as from God himself, not doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven.

Second: What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

Third: How can we recognize these sins?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, employer, or employee? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you hurt anyone by word or deed? Have you been dishonest, careless, wasteful, or done other wrong?

Fourth: How will the pastor assure a penitent sinner of forgiveness?

He will say, "By the authority of Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Be seated

Prayer of the Church

Lord God, gracious Father, we thank you for setting your Son's sacrifice between us and sin's reward. By your Spirit work in us through the gospel, give us repentant hearts, make our faith firm in Christ, and enliven us to serve you faithfully.

Have mercy upon us, Lord, according to your unending love.

Lord God, almighty Father, renew your Church throughout the world that it may constantly look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Bless us with faithful ministers who always proclaim Christ's cross and resurrection for the salvation of the world.

Have mercy upon us, Lord, according to your unending love.

Lord God, loving Father, in your mercy you abundantly supply our needs of body and soul. Create in us the mind of Christ, that in humility and generosity—considering not only our own interests, but also the interests of others—we may be merciful to those in need. Direct our efforts to help poor, lonely, troubled, and ill people.

Have mercy upon us, Lord, according to your unfailing love.

Lord God, heavenly Father, comfort all who are mourning the death of people they loved. Lift their eyes to the cross where your Son defeated death and to the empty tomb where he assured us that we will live with him forever. Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Have mercy upon us, Lord, according to your unfailing love.

Lord God, heavenly Father, look with favor upon all sick, injured, and recovering people. If it be your will deliver them from their infirmities. Let them hear of your unfailing love.

Have mercy upon us, Lord, according to your unfailing love.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Lord God, eternal Father, we praise you that you have delivered the Christian souls who have gone before us from this world of dust and ashes to paradise. As their prayers continually ascend before your throne, join our prayers to theirs as fragrant incense. Hear us for the sake of him who was crucified for us and always intercedes on our behalf, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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.



Musical Offering

Questions for Examination

- † Do I believe that I am a sinner in need of forgiveness?
- † Do I believe that Jesus died on the cross to win forgiveness for me?
- † Do I believe that Jesus offers his true body and blood with the bread and wine in this sacrament?
- † Do I believe this sacrament strengthens my faith and strengthens me to live a God-pleasing life?
- † Am I a member of a church that belongs to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) or Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS)?
- † If you answered “no” to any of these questions, please hold off on communing with us today. Following worship, one of the pastors would be happy to explain why we ask you to do this.

The Sacrament

Stand

Preface

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Proper Preface

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who brought the gift of salvation to all people by his death on the tree of the cross so that the devil, who overcame us by a tree, would in turn by a tree be overcome. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:



Holy, Holy, Holy

Tune: ANTHES

1046 Sanctus (Ger) - ANTHES



1 Sing, "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of hosts on high,
2 Ho - san - na in the high - est! How blest is Christ our King,



your ev - er - last - ing glo - ry fills earth and sea and sky."
who died as our Re - deem - er, e - ter - nal life to bring!



Our voic - es cry, "Ho - san - na!" Lord, hear our hum - ble plea:
How blest are you, Lord Je - sus, now com - ing in God's name!



in mer - cy, come and save us; in love, come set us free.
"Ho - san - na in the high - est!" our grate - ful hearts pro - claim.

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Tune: Friedrich K. Anthes; Public domain

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We give thanks to you, O God, through your dear Son, Jesus Christ, whom you sent to be our Savior, our Redeemer, and the messenger of your grace. Through him you made all things; in him you are well pleased. He is the incarnate Word, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. To fulfill your promises, he stretched out his hands on the cross and released from eternal death all who believe in you.

As we remember Jesus' death and resurrection, we thank you that you have gathered us together to receive your Son's body and blood. Send us your Spirit, unite us as one, and strengthen our faith so that we may praise you in your Son, Jesus Christ. Through him, we glorify and honor you, O God our Father, with 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.

Words of Institution

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my T body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my T blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

O Christ, Lamb of God

1054 Agnus (Ger) - WEM IN LEIDENSTAGEN

Tune: WEM IN LEIDENSTAGEN



- 1 Lamb of God, our Sav - ior, Christ, who takes a - way
- 2 Je - sus, in your mer - cy, make us pure with - in;
- 3 Let your end - less mer - cy ev - er - more in - crease;



all the world's trans - gres - sions, lis - ten as we pray:
cleanse us by your per - fect sac - ri - fice for sin.
com - fort us with par - don, calm us with your peace.

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Be seated

Distribution

Choir Anthem

Communion Song

Distribution Hymn

654 Jesus Sinners Does Receive

Stand

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this saving gift. We pray that through it you will strengthen our faith in you and increase our love for one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, 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

562 Jesus Paid It All



Acknowledgments

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News & Announcements

Join us for Supper!

Today after worship

You are invited to a fellowship supper in the cafeteria immediately following the service. The Board of Fellowship will be serving chicken and beef tips with gravy. Come enjoy some time with your brothers and sisters in Christ!

These suppers will continue through Lent following the Wednesday services.

Defending Your Faith

Mar. 9 | 9:15 am

As we engage in apologetics (defending our faith) we recognize that we cannot argue anyone into faith and that no rational argument is foolproof. Our goal is to show love to our neighbor. This Sunday, our regular Bible study will begin a video-based study on apologetics featuring Wisconsin Lutheran College theology professor, Dr. Michael Berg. Join us from 9:15-10:15 in the cafeteria to learn how to defend your faith!

Family Fun Night on Thursday Mar. 6 | 5:30 PM

An indoor kickball tournament is planned for the Family Fun Night this Thursday, March 6, 5:30-8:30 pm. Food and drink will be provided, but you are welcome to bring a dish to pass. Everyone in the church or school family is welcome to attend.

Food Pantry Volunteers Needed Mar. 17-21

St. Paul's will be serving at the food pantry the week of March 17. Volunteers are needed to fill grocery orders. The hours are Monday, Thursday & Friday from noon to 3:45 pm and Tuesday from 4:00 to 6:45 pm. If you can help, please contact Kaytlyn Peardot (970-413-0883 or kaytlyn.peardot@gmail.com).

Upcoming Events

- Mar. 14 & 15 Peter Pan at NLHS
- Mar. 16 Lent/Easter Concert at NLHS
- Mar. 16 Community Hygiene Drive Ends
- Mar. 22 Youth Bowling Event



Links for Easter for Kids registration and volunteer signup can be found on our website, or sign up at the Ministry Table in the Welcome Center.



www.stpaulswr.org

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