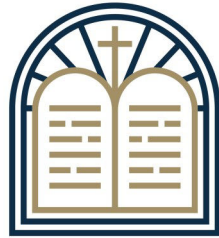




St. Paul's EPISTLE

March 2025 edition



LORD, HAVE MERCY

It is one of the most common prayers of God's child. "Lord, have mercy!" Mercy is the withholding of punishment or negative consequences that a guilty person deserves. Thus, when we pray, "Lord, have mercy," 1) we are acknowledging that we have lived in ways deserving of God's condemnation and punishment, and 2) we are begging God to *not* condemn or punish us.

How important is that prayer? If you cannot say it with sincerity, you cannot be saved. For if you cannot speak that prayer, you cannot possibly believe you need a Savior. Therefore, God gave us his law, in part, so that we would see our need for mercy. St. Paul writes, "I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law" (Romans 7:7). And God gave us the gospel that we might know he has shown us mercy.

Thus, it is good and right that in this solemn season of Lent, we would review God's law as revealed in the Ten Commandments and connect it with Christ's passion. We will do this during our midweek Lenten Services on Wednesdays at 5:00 pm.

We will see how we have shattered all the Commandments. We are deserving of punishment for our incessant idolatry, for demonstrating irreverence and despising God's rest, for treating others like trash not treasure, for failing to live with integrity, and for abusing God's commandments.

However, will we also see how Jesus took the suffering we deserved upon himself. Seeing both, may the Spirit empower us to pray, "Lord, have mercy!" and confidently believe that in Christ, we have God's mercy in inexhaustible abundance. †

Reaching out with
the love of Jesus.

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Worship
Sunday at 8:00 & 10:30AM

www.stpaulswr.org

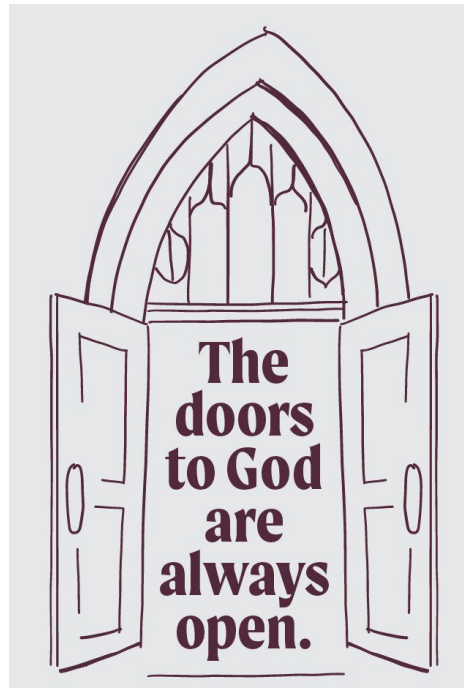
OPEN DOOR POLICIES

God's Surprising Strategies for Getting Sinners Back Home

When a wayward child wanders far from home, how does a loving parent pursue them without driving them further away? One thing that parent does is let the child know that there is an ongoing open-door policy. The child knows they will always be welcomed back home. Likewise, when we wander from God, he always keeps his door open for us. But God doesn't just passively wait for us to return. He lovingly pursues sinners in ways that make them long for home.

In the Church Year, we have come to the season of Lent. The word Lent comes from an old English word for spring: "lengthen," when the days grow longer. For over 1400 years the Church has set aside the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter as a time of repentance and renewal. In this 40-day journey to the cross and tomb, we will see the surprising strategies our heavenly Father uses for getting sinners back home: lowering our defenses; one stands, everyone else sits; no detours allowed; always present, always patient; grace instead of condemnation; and hiding treasure in the trash.

Come to worship; the doors to God are always open. He wants you close to him and the loving care he offers. †



EXTRA OPPORTUNITIES TO WORSHIP DURING LENT



Ash Wednesday, Mar. 5
at 5:00 PM



Midweek Lent Services
Wednesdays, Mar. 12, 19
& 26, April 2 & 9 at 5:00 PM



Holy Thursday, April 17
at 5:00 PM



Good Friday, April 18
at 12:10 & 5:00 PM

WHERE IN THE BIBLE DOES IT STATE THAT WE ARE TO CELEBRATE THE LENTEN SEASON?

The short answer is: "It doesn't."

In Old Testament times God spelled out the weekly day of worship (the Sabbath) and the three major annual festivals. As New Testament Christians we are free from the ceremonial laws that commanded observance of those days and festivals (Gal 4:9-11; Col 2:16-17).

In New Testament freedom, Christians many centuries ago designed the festivals and seasons as a way of putting special emphasis on the passive obedience and victorious resurrection of our Lord.

As Christians, the opportunity to attend special, additional worship services can pull us in different directions. Our sinful nature, of course, abhors anything good and godly, and wants nothing to do with regular or special worship services. On the other hand, our new self echoes the sentiments of King David: "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" (Ps 122:1). Our new self has that joyful attitude whether we are talking about regular or special worship services.

And so, during this season of Lent, our new self finds extra reasons to say: "I love the house where you live, O Lord, the place where your glory dwells" (Ps 26:8).

wels.net/faq/celebrating-lent/

A BELATED 125TH ANNIVERSARY MEMORY

By Sue Kulhanek

I didn't think of this until after the 125th anniversary celebration, but I thought it still would be fun to share how St. Paul's "captures" its single female teachers.

In the generation before mine, there were five young women called to St. Paul's at various times who eventually married into the congregation. For you old timers who remember them, they were Florence Hafermann, Beata Wittenberg, Ruth Krueger, Loretta Matthews, and Lois Wittrock. Lois is still with us today!

Fast forward several years and it started again with my generation when I was called here as a college graduate, met this young Pioneer leader named Tom Kulhanek, and also married into the congregation. Within the next few years, I was followed by Carol Zastava and Kim Mittelstaedt. Now we are in the third generation, with Rachel our present kindergarten teacher, marrying Ross Provost. Who knows who might we next! God certainly seems to want the ladies he calls here to stay and continue to service Him in Wisconsin Rapids. †



Above: The school children sang for the 125th Anniversary service.

Right: Mr. Randy Pahl emceed the program at the anniversary luncheon.

THANK YOU

I would like to thank God for having His Word preached and taught at St. Paul's Lutheran for 125 years. I would like to thank the anniversary team for making plans for the celebration. I would like to thank all the people who set up the gym, served beverages and dessert, and cleaned up after the celebration. If we didn't have people willing to donate their time and talents, I don't think the celebration would have been such a success. A special thanks to all the past and present pastors who preached God's Word to us over the past 125 years. Also, all the past and present teachers who teach our children about God's word daily.

With God's Blessings,
Alan Verjinsky
Board of Fellowship †



Left to right: Our current pastor, Peter Plagenz; our former pastors, Lucas Proeber, Carl Schroeder, Martin Baur & Norm Paul; and the grandson of J.J Baum, St. Paul's first pastor.



CALL UPDATES

After the last newsletter, Mrs. Fiecko received a call to Divine Savior Academy in Doral, Florida. This call will be to serve as their 7th grade math and science instructors. Mrs. Fiecko is such a big part of our congregation and school at St. Paul's. Please keep her and her family in your prayers.

Miss Tara Winecke has returned the call to teach in the primary grades at St. Paul's. Miss Winecke was thankful for all of the people who reached out to her while holding the call. She was genuinely impressed with the ministry and passion for St. Paul's. Please keep her in your prayers as she continues her ministry in Waterloo. †



"Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully,
and shout for joy."

Psalm 33:3

For many hundreds of years musical instruments have been part of Christian worship and praise to our God. Although we don't know when this particular Psalm 33 was written, it probably goes back to several hundred years B.C. We do know that the pipe organ was invented in ancient Greece around 200 B.C., but the "modern" version of organs with the ability to "stop off" separate sets of pipes didn't appear until about 1500. This invention resulted in a much wider range of sounds and volume as organists were now able to "pull out all the stops". The piano arrived around 1700 A.D., and the clavichord was developed by Yamaha in 1709. With that bit of history, we still to this day appreciate the enhancement of our worship services through the playing of these instruments by our skilled musicians. Thank you to this group of talented ladies as we too, shout for joy as we worship Him! †

Pictured above: Destinee Fiecko plays the organ as the brass accompany her during the 125th anniversary service.



ANNUAL HYGIENE DRIVE

The annual Help for the Homeless Hygiene Drive is coming up Feb. 23 – Mar 16. This drive helps stock the shelves of 121 homeless and crisis programs in 20 Wisconsin communities. In Wisconsin Rapids, our donations go to The Family Center, FOCUS Food Pantry, and The Hannah Center. Last year \$15,559 worth of hygiene and cleaning products went to local crisis programs in our area. The goal of the program is the supply a year's worth of products to each agency. Donations remain in the community they come from.

You can help by purchasing new, unused hygiene products and cleaning supplies. The most urgent needs include: Soaps: laundry, dish, soft, shower gel, 2-in-1 shampoo; trash bags (shelters especially need these for bedrooms); diapers (sizes 3-6 and Pull-Ups); deodorant (unscented); wet wipes; toilet paper; paper towels; disposable razors; and tampons and maxi pads. Look for donation bins in the Welcome Center. †

TWO-THIRDS OF THE WAY!

By Staff Minister Randy Pahl

As I typed the title to this month's article I happened to realize that it has been quite some time since I've had a bit of trivia for you. However, I didn't have a question in mind until right now, and by the way, this piece of trivia does not involve music! So, here goes nothing. "Taking a look at our article's heading, beginning with the 1st of March we will be two-thirds of the way through...?" If you can share the correct response with me, I will be delighted to share the answer with those who are still bewildered. ▢

This year our basketball season tipped off back in January and carries all the way forward into March. One of the contests that still needs to be reported to you occurred back on the 28th of January – a home confrontation against Immanuel, Wisconsin Rapids. In a game that wasn't de-

termined until the very end, a missed shot at the buzzer saw the Panthers come up two points shy of sending the contest into overtime. Next, we headed into February where on the 7th Trinity, Marshfield was the culprit as they came to town only to drive away with the win. Also, the 10th saw a game that was rescheduled due to inclement weather back in January, as St. Peter's, Schofield picked up a "W" on our home turf. One more contest is still on the docket for the 25th of February as the Panthers will trek up to St. Peter's seeking to exact a measure of revenge on the Crusaders. Meanwhile, the schedule for March holds two season ending tournaments. The first being the annual Northland Lutheran tourney on Saturday, March 1st while the second is a two day Friday-Saturday affair the following weekend at Luther Prep in Watertown.

Finally, the month of March sees a student-free day taking place on the 7th as the teachers gather together for professional development. The 21st brings the official end to quarter number three, while the month wraps up with Spring Break running from the 24th through the 28th.

And, now, lest we fail to mention the most important of all the events, the 6-week journey of Lent begins on March 5th and runs through the 12th of April. As we "survey the wondrous cross" may we not only see with our eyes and hear with our ears, but also share with our lips and actions that our suffering Savior is also the almighty God who lived and died and rose again so that all people might live forever with Him in the glories of heaven! †



Left to right: Outdoor fun, dress like a movie character day, building bridges in preschool.

WHAT'S EASTER ALL ABOUT?

Rabbits, baby chicks, colored eggs, maybe a new outfit? If kids don't hear about Jesus and his resurrection, Easter doesn't make much sense. What is there to celebrate anyway?

Help us share the good news about Jesus' victory over death at Easter for Kids on Saturday, April 12. This half-day, VBS-style event needs lots of volunteers especially on the morning of the event. The children rotate through stations where they do a craft, hear a lesson, sing, make a snack, or play games. Leaders and helps are needed at each stations. We also need lots of people willing to guide groups of children between stations, so everything runs smoothly.

There are also opportunities to help with things like registration, childcare for children under age 3, preparing and serving lunch, and setup & takedown. Choose an area that best suits your talents. Last year 66 children attended!

Easter for Kids runs from 9:00-11:45 am on April 12 with a lunch afterwards. There are signup sheets on the Ministry Table or look for the link on our website under the Serve tab. †

Come Celebrate the Joy of Easter!

Make Projects
Play Games
Make & eat snacks
Sing songs

EASTER for Kids

Register at stpaulswr.org Ages 3-10
Babysitting provided

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

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APOLOGETICS: DEFENDING THE FAITH

New Bible Study Series

By Pastor Peter Plagenz

How would you define apologetics? Narrowly speaking, apologetics is “defending the Christian faith by reason with gentleness and respect.” The Apostle Peter writes, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (1 Peter 3:15-16).

So, it's the task of apologetics to use every bit of knowledge available as we engage skeptics with the goal of proclaiming Christ crucified. We become all things to all people (1 Corinthians 9:18-23). Because we care about skeptics and their thoughts, we want to be able to have thoughtful conversations with them about questions regarding Christianity.

As we engage in apologetics, we recognize that we cannot argue anyone into faith and that no rational argument is fool-proof. Yet, we still engage. Our goal is to show love to our neighbor. If we can think clearly about the faith we know to be true and the arguments which stand against it, we will be able to speak clearly, sharing the truth of God's Word with those who need it most.

This 6-8 week series utilizes videos featuring WLC theology professor, Dr. Michael Berg. Join us for Apologetics—Defending the Faith on Sunday mornings from 9:15-10:15! Keep an eye on the Sunday announcements for the official start date. †

FINANCIAL MINUTE

By Michael Anderson – Financial Secretary

Weekly envelope giving for the month of January was uncharacteristically low. This is the lowest monthly total since I have been in office (about 5 years). Perhaps it is the cold winter

weather that has affected our giving total. Both school tuition and fees for service (hot lunch and before/after school care) totals are up this month. The second half of St. Paul's tuition

assistance (\$3,360) was applied, which accounts for some of the tuition increase. Pray that the weekly envelope giving drop was a one-time event and numbers rebound going forward.

A quick look at the numbers for the month are:



	Weekly Envelopes	School Tuition	Fees for Service
July	\$51,441	\$ 1,252	\$ 1,124
August	\$69,460	\$57,774	\$4,524
September	\$56,802	\$69,143	\$4,019
October	\$57,836	\$ 8,923	\$ 3,949
November	\$55,559	\$ 10,349	\$ 3,596
December	\$66,852	\$ 21,028	\$ 2,417
January	\$42,972	\$23,599	\$ 5,921



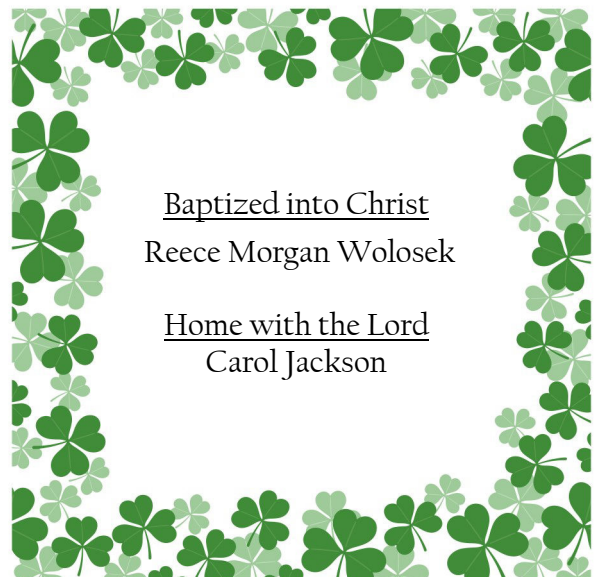
Amazing Grace: As of this writing, the 125th anniversary campaign has generated over \$32,000 in gifts. Because these funds are designated to help us eliminate our mortgage, **an additional \$25,000 principal payment** was added to the \$13,650

March 1st mortgage payment. Our current mortgage balance is \$786,432. You can expect to see a \$36,000 drop next month! Pray that hearts are moved to continue in our quest to eliminate our debt to enable us to put those dollars to work in ministry.

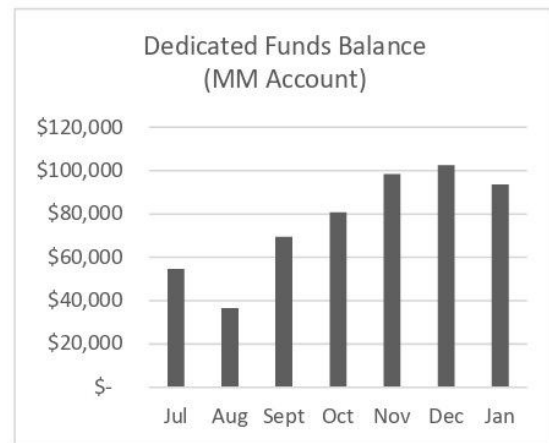
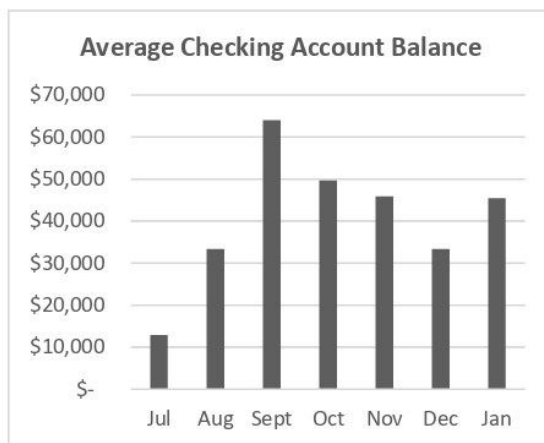
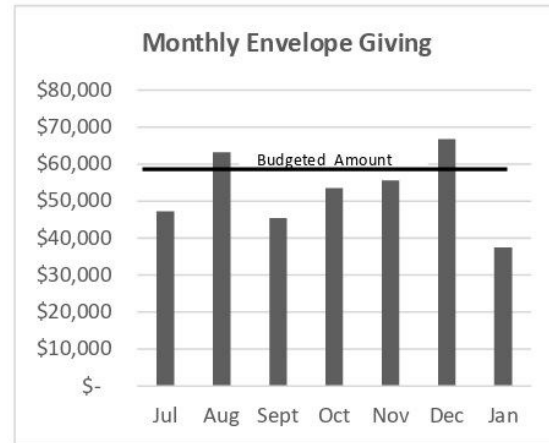
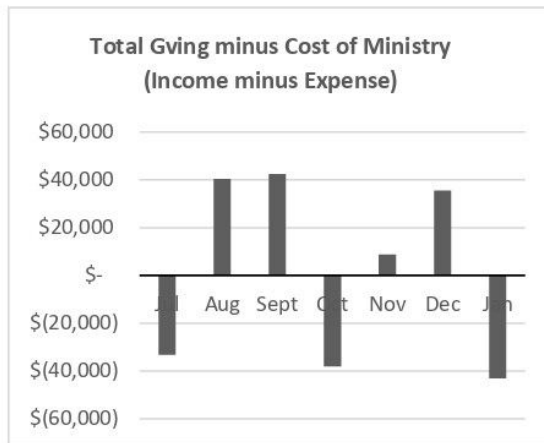
As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me in person, via email at 5JAnderson@charter.net, or my cell at 715-321-3541. My goal is to help you better understand where we stand financially as a church.†

THANK YOU TO DIME & DOLLAR THRIFT STORE

We recently received a check for our tuition assistance fund in the amount of \$660. Each month, Dime & Dollar sends 90% of its net sales to support Northland Lutheran High School. The additional 10% is sent to the churches who provide the volunteer manpower, to help fund their educational ministries. St. Paul's is a recipient at least twice each calendar year. Be sure to thank those faithful workers from our congregation and help support the store with your donations and volunteering! †



**St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church
January 2025 YTD Financials & Comments**



- > Weekly Envelope giving for January was \$37,491, well below the budgeted giving level of \$59,500. YTD, the Weekly Envelope Giving monthly total is at \$375,653 which is 90.2% of the budgeted giving level of \$416,500. Recall at month-end December the Weekly Giving total was at 94.7% of budget. A review of the past 67 months of financial reporting showed January's Weekly Envelope giving to be the lowest level recorded.
- > School income for January was up markedly at \$23,599 bringing the total for this category to 91.1% of the budgeted total of \$210,794. At month-end December school income was at 87.5% of budget. January's school income was the third highest for this fiscal period.
- > Total expenses for January were \$114,733 bringing the YTD total to \$655,702, which is 84.4% of budget. The top 2 expense categories (salary, health premium) were at 87.8% and 79.6% of budget, respectively. The third major expense item is the mortgage, which is right at budget.
- > Overall, the month of January concluded with a significant operating deficit of (\$43,131), however, there still remains an overall operating surplus of \$20,592 for the fiscal year. At this same point last year there was an operating surplus of \$17,556.

SPECIAL GIFTS & MEMORIALS

through February 16

Amazing Grace Campaign

- In honor of Edna Haferman's 100 birthday given by James & Nancy Haferman
- In honor of W.O. Johnson's 43 years of teaching given by James & Nancy Haferman
- In memory of Carol Jackson given by Herb Jackson, George Hathaway, Randy & Carla Mayes, Linda Pollnow, and Kathy Jackson
- In memory of Eugene & Gail given by Ruth Bauman
- In memory of their departed family members given by Mark & Marla Maxwell

Hospitality Fund

- In memory of Carol Jackson given by Herb Jackson

Current

- In memory of Carol Jackson given by Jill Kane, Huntz & Marilyn Link, Jerry & Barb Blum, Stephanie Bathke, Barb Manz, and Betty Meyer
- In memory of Linda Lucht given by Jean Schroedel, Shelly Schroedel, Scott Schroedel, Betty Meyer, Marla Mueller, and Sandy Krause

Endowment Fund

- In memory of Carol Jackson given by Jim & Jeanne Jackson and Mike & Judy Anderson
- In memory of Linda Lucht given by Mike & Judy Anderson

Mortgage

- In memory of Carol Jackson given by Carol Newsom, Rob & Sue Lipke, and Anita Simenson

Preschool

- In memory of Linda Lucht given by Linda Pollnow and Friends & Family

School

- In memory of Linda Lucht given by Chuck & Marcie Oestreich

St. Paul's Tuition Assistance Fund

- In memory of Carol Jackson given by Tom & Barb Reitz and Edna Haferman
- In memory of Linda Lucht given by Tom & Barb Reitz

CATECHISM CORNER

When we speak of Christ's humiliation, we aren't using the word as we commonly do, as if someone had done something embarrassing or worthy of shame. **What do we mean when we speak of Christ's humiliation?**

Philippians 2:6-8 Though he was by nature God, he did not consider equality with God as a prize to be displayed, but *he emptied himself by taking the nature of a servant. When he was born in human likeness, and his appearance was like that of any other man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.*

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that *although he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich.*

Jesus' life and work, from the time of his conception, were very different from what we would expect of the Son of God. He chose not to make full use of his divine powers. Instead, he voluntarily submitted to a very humble and lowly life that ended with death on a cross.



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Phone: 715-421-3634
E-mail: churchoffice@stpaulswr.org
March 2025 edition



Midweek Lent Schedule

Only One Service
Wednesdays, Mar. 5– Apr. 9

Worship at 5:00 PM
Meal at 5:45 PM

Pastor Peter Plagenz · 920-689-3036 · pastorplagenz@stpaulswr.org