

# EPIS<sup>+</sup>LE



*St. Paul's Lutheran  
The Church On The Hill*

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## Pastor's Message

### *The Greatest Love of All*

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Matthew 22:37*

As Valentine's Day approaches, love fills the air. It's a time to exchange cards, chocolates, and flowers as symbols of affection for those we hold dear. But what if, this year, we paused to reflect on the greatest love story ever told? A love so pure, so boundless, that it changed the world forever? This love, is God's love for us.

God's love is not like human love—it is perfect, unconditional, and eternal. In fact, God *is* love. *"God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."* 1 John 4:9-10

Valentine's Day is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on what Jesus Christ did for us. God sent his Son into the world not because we deserved it, but because he loves us so deeply. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the ultimate expression of that love. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus gave us the gift of forgiveness, redemption, and eternal life.

Jesus gave his life to show you how much you're worth to him. His arms were stretched wide on the cross, saying, in essence, "I love you this much." No Valentine card, no bouquet of roses, no box of chocolates could ever compare to the depth of the love Jesus has for you.

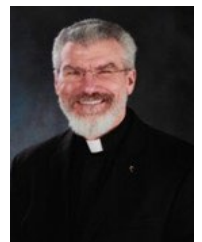
So, how do we respond to such a love? What is the best Valentine we can give back to God?

The best Valentine we can give to God is our love—expressed through our faith, our worship, our obedience, and our service to others. When we love God with all our hearts, we reflect his love in the way we treat those around us. We become his hands and feet, sharing his light with a world that desperately needs hope and kindness.

This Valentine's Day, let's go beyond the chocolates and cards. Let's take time to thank God for his incredible love. Let's remember the sacrifice of Jesus, who gave everything for us. And let's commit to loving God and loving others with the same selfless, generous love that he shows us every day. You are God's masterpiece, his beloved child, and nothing can separate you from his love.

Happy Valentine's Day, and may God's love fill your heart today and always!

Your servant in Christ Jesus,  
Pastor David Viles



**FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS**

- 1 Jason Plochberger
- 1 Bridget Dalton
- 2 Kevin Pistel
- 2 Curt Stubinger
- 2 Elroy Stubinger
- 3 Morgan Schroeder
- 3 Mark Strobel
- 6 Ryan Ferrell
- 6 Huxton Rhodes
- 7 Dash Heidbreder
- 8 Donita Stubinger
- 10 Abigail Gonzalez
- 11 Wanda Ferrell
- 12 Madison Linnenbrink
- 12 Trevor Collins
- 14 Abbie Linsenbardt
- 14 Bob Murphy
- 15 Julie Nelson
- 17 Don Buchta
- 18 Mark Fischer
- 18 Jerry Koestner
- 18 Matthew Kalaf
- 20 Debby Koestner
- 20 Tyler Soell
- 27 Mark Kalaf
- 27 Maura Tierney

**FINANCIAL UPDATE**

Month/Day	Attendance Phys./Virtual	Offering
<i>JANUARY 05</i>	<i>00 / 582</i>	<i>\$ 2,355.00</i>
<i>JANUARY 12</i>	<i>01 / 332</i>	<i>\$ 465.53</i>
<i>JANUARY 19</i>	<i>85 / 364</i>	<i>\$ 4,433.00</i>
<i>JANUARY 26</i>	<i>86 / 207</i>	<i>\$ 3,957.00</i>

**Additional Income:**

**Initial Envelope: \$232.00**

**Epistle Postage: \$50.00 To Date**

**Deep Appreciation for Special Gift: \$2,000.00 on Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>.**

Sadly, due to the ice and snow our church was forced to close on the first two Sundays of January. Pastor David did manage to make it to church and do a live broadcast on FaceBook so God’s Word could still go out to the congregation and all others who regularly tune in to join us for Worship. Praise be to God we were able to clear the parking lot and return to normal attendance during our last two Sundays of the month.



**Souper Bowl Sunday, a time to Feed the Hungry. Please drop off canned goods in the Narthex. February 2nd and February 9th**



- 10 Glen & Donita Stubinger 1973
- 14 Daniel & Paige Olsen 2020 **5 Yrs.**
- 24 Patty & Scott Duncan 2014
- 27 Peter & Susan Neenan 1989



**Continued prayers for:**

The family of Marilyn Brandt (mother of Scott Brandt), Laura Oelrichs, Erma Stark, Roger & Nancy Thompson, Stacy McNamer, Debbie Boyce, Patty Ott, Jerry Koestner, Don Buchta, Julie Carel, Jackie Tinsley, and all those we hold dear in our hearts.

**Thank You Church Family**

We deeply appreciate the love and support following the loss of my beloved sister, Cindy Forck. Your generous donations, heartfelt cards, and sincere prayers have brought immense comfort during this difficult time. We cherish your kindness and compassion. May God bless you abundantly.

## **Congregational Council Meeting, January 13, 2025**

† A six o'clock pm regular monthly meeting of the Congregational Council of St. Paul's ELCA, Lohman, Missouri was called into session by Council President Zola Finch. Council members present were Kent Nelson, Jana Thompson, Ashleigh Hillen, A.J. Ferrell, Misty Schroeder, and Frank Pascoe, with Stacy Bubach absent. Also in attendance were Church Treasurer Michelle Collins and Pastor David Viles.

† The President requested approval of the previous Council minutes; this was done upon a motion by Kent Nelson, seconded by Jana Thompson and approved by all. The President requested Church Treasurer Michelle Collins to present her monthly review of St. Paul's financial status. She distributed a four-page summary of all financial expenses and income. Her report showed a year-to-date balance of cash and investments of \$306,702.25. She reported that an audit of her financial accounting would be completed prior to the Annual Congregational meeting on January 19th. Income totals for December 2024 showed a total of \$24,996.11, with expense totals for December 2024 at \$9,141.83.

The Church Treasurer requested the Council to consider and discuss the need for planning to carry on the weekly and monthly financial recording done by recently retired Financial Recording Secretary Marie Schepelerle. There was discussion of who would continue the gathering and tallying of each Sunday's collection amounts. The need for checks and balances for those handling this important duty were discussed, with the obvious conclusion that at least two persons would be needed to fill this need. President Finch said she might do the gathering of Sunday collections when she was in attendance. The Council member on Sunday duty might also do this. No firm decision was made and further discussion will be needed to resolve this critical need.

† The President requested that Pastor Viles present his monthly report of recent duties and activities. Pastor's report showed seven December meetings with parish and local groups, including Lohman Lion's Club, Lohman City Council, and the delivery of TV's and screens. Pastor met with our Freundschaft Gruppe and attended the lovely Council meeting at the home of President Finch. He had a large number of visits and consultations with our parishioners and others. Pastor unpacked and erected our sanctuary Christmas tree, and put up outside decorations on the front of the Church. He conducted the funeral for Ladine Heidbreder. He purchased the LED candles and batteries for our Christmas play. He updated our Church Website and video service. He created and emailed the December Epistle. Pastor presided at two Communion Sunday services, as well as three non-Communion Sunday worship services in-person and online with Facebook. He also planned and presided at the mid-week Communion Christmas Eve service in person and online with Facebook live.

### **President Finch requested our Committee chairpersons to present their reports on recent activities:**

**Evangelism:** Misty Schroeder reported no December meeting. No meeting with Trinity Russellville parish has taken place to discuss the suggested joint Sunday services. She is hoping this will be forthcoming soon. Misty announced a spaghetti luncheon is planned for Sunday, April 6th immediately after services.

**Technology:** Pastor announced the sanctuary screen monitors are here at St. Paul's, and it is hoped they will be erected in the very near future. The need for additional workers to operate and perform the needed balcony duties was much discussed. As always, it is hoped some of our teens and young adults will step up to this task.

**Worship & Music:** No in-person meeting has been held but January and February hymn choices have been chosen on-line by the participating committee members directed by Kathy Meller.

**Parish Education:** Council members were unanimous in their praise of the Christmas Eve program. The church was filled and all who attended were so very pleased at how it transpired. A.J. Ferrell reported that the committee members have made sure the items used in the Christmas play will be easier to locate and manage by not putting them back in the church attic. This includes costumes and other items. A.J. reported that the schedule for Sunday School in 2025 will remain the same schedule as in this past year.

**Church Improvement:** Kent Nelson reported the illuminated cross on the outside front of the Church has been repaired. The company which did the repairs had several issues in getting the repair done but all worked out in the end. Thanks to the Kalaf family [Diane & Mike] who have paid for its repair Kent Nelson reported that our contract with the company doing snow removal has been renewed for the year. There was brief discussion of our continuing need for pest control both for the church and parsonage. It is anticipated that Steve's Pest Control will again be on call.

**Stewardship & Finance:** The 2025 Church Budget is complete and is part of the items included in the Annual Report package to be distributed at the January 19th Annual Congregational meeting.

**Mutual Ministry:** There was no December meeting held. Jana Thompson reported that her committee has previously discussed preparation of a new Congregational Pictorial Directory. Jana asked the Council members if they also thought a new pictorial directory was something needed. All who expressed an opinion thought a new one would be desirable. Jana said Debbie Boyce is contacting the companies that do this work. There was brief discussion of the need to carry on with collecting children's books and where and how they would be displayed in and out of the Church. There was pleasure expressed for the Book Barn which Harry Thompson has constructed to house the books already collected.

**Old Business:** Discussion concerning the need for new Council members for vacant positions for 2025 followed. This will be a topic discussed at the upcoming Annual Congregational Meeting on January 19th. Three Council positions are currently vacant.

**New Business:** President Finch brought the recommendation to the Council that the Church Secretary's position needed an upgrade in salary. The recommendation was to increase the hourly wage to conform to current pay standards. After discussion this was agreed to by a motion offered by A.J. Ferrell, seconded by Misty Stubinger, and agreed to by all.

**Rental Forms:** President Finch presented to the Council a formal Agreement form for persons who might want to rent our vacant parsonage in the future. The need for such a formality had been discussed at previous Council meetings. There followed general discussion of how and when the Parsonage might be used by renters and by our own congregational members. Formal agreement paperwork is required by our current Church Insurance company, and the agreement presented by President Finch to the Council will meet this requirement should a third party rent the building. President Finch also distributed formal paperwork for groups or individuals wanting to rent our Parish fellowship halls for an event [wedding reception, birthdays, etc.]. This is a form which Pastor and the renter both sign to agree with its stipulations concerning rental fees, type of event, start and end times, etc.

At 7:50 President Finch declared the meeting in adjournment. The meeting ended with a recitation of the Our Father led by Pastor Viles. The next Council meeting will be held on Monday, February 10th, 2025 at 6 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Frank Pascoe, Council Secretary.

## **ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES    January 19, 2025**

The annual Congregational Meeting of St. Paul's Church was called into session by Church Council President Zola Finch immediately after the closing of Sunday worship. Fifty-five parishioners were present in the Church sanctuary, and seven parishioners registered themselves online. Current members of the Council also present were Kent Nelson, Amberlyn Ferrell, Jana Thompson, Ashleigh Hillen, and Frank Pascoe. Also present were Church Treasurer Michelle Collins, Church Secretary Debbie Raithel, and Pastor David Viles. The total attendance thus met a required quorum for decision making at an annual congregational meeting.

President Zola Finch requested Pastor Viles to begin the meeting with a prayer. After the prayer, President Finch asked for approval of the minutes of last year's annual meeting which was held on January 21st, 2024. The approval was given upon a motion offered by parishioner Erika Gerth, seconded by parishioner Jerry Koestner and approved via voice vote.

President Finch touched upon a number of points contained in her printed annual report. She lauded our Facebook streaming of services and the excellent internet speeds. The new carpeting and the overall improvement of our sanctuary and building were praised. The church's good financial health was cited. She praised the work of an excellent new Altar Guild, citing numerous festivities, and wonderful meals. Pastor Viles' service and dedication to his position were enumerated and praised. Her pleasure and praise for the year 2024's accomplishments were evident. At this point Pastor David Viles presented the highlights of his 2024 year's review.

Foremost in his remarks were sincere thanks and appreciation for our congregation's support after the tragic loss of his dear wife of 43 years, Donna Viles. He offered profound thanks for our members' care and support during this life altering event.

Pastor reported with pleasure the number of baptisms and weddings that occurred during the year. Pastor detailed the three member's funerals and the honor given them. Pastor showed great delight in the flourishing children's ministry which has grown this past year. His ecumenical work in Lohman and our area communities was noted. Pastor's remarks and his detailed written report speaks so very effectively about how each one of us can make a difference and become more deeply involved in the life of St. Paul's church.

President Finch at this point called the congregation's attention to the various committee Reports included in the agenda's pages. These included written summaries from Evangelism and Outreach Committee by Chairperson Misty Stubinger, Mutual Ministry by chairperson Jana Thompson, Worship and Music Chairperson by Ashleigh Hillen, and by the Margaret Circle Chairperson Erika Gerth.

This year's printed 2024 annual report detailed changes and key developments regarding St. Paul's Safety and Security Ministry, Fire and Tornado preparedness, evacuation plans, safety Committee reactivation, and Medical Emergency Procedures. The report emphasized and detailed the importance of finding a leader and members of the Safety Committee. New members will need training. There is always a need for prayers for St. Paul's safety future.

President Finch requested Gus Fischer to come forward to give an update regarding insurance issues involving the Stewardship and Finance Council Committee, for which Gus will be a representative on the 2025 Church Council. Gus spoke about our new insurance contract with the firm called Insurance Board, replacing our previous insurance company, Church Mutual. The new company, however, has some reservations concerning our vacant Parsonage and the hosting by St. Paul's of the 4th of July fireworks on the church grounds. These are issues still needing to be resolved soon with Insurance Board.

President Finch requested the Chairman of the annual church financial audit Committee to come forth. Jerry Koestner reported that the Audit Committee had reviewed all of the year's financial records and found them to be complete, accurate, and fully true in necessary detail. He praised the work of retiring Church Treasurer Kay Pascoe and the smooth transition to our new Church Treasurer Michelle Collins. His report was accepted upon a motion offered by Gary Elliott, seconded by Bill Gerth and given unanimous verbal consent.

The President requested the Chairman of Church Improvement Kent Nelson to discuss the upcoming installation of TV monitors and vertical wall screens to be hung in the church sanctuary. The new screens and brackets are here already and will require volunteers to help install the screens and volunteers to learn to manage the slides.

At this point, Kathy Meller, Chair of the 2025 Nominating Committee, consisting of Kathy Meller, Dan Tschirgi, and Delores Vlach, was asked to give an update on finding the three new Church Council members for three-year terms starting in 2025. Only two of the three positions have been found to date. New parishioner Debi Berry has volunteered to fill the vacant position of Council Secretary, and Gus Fischer has agreed to become Chairman of Stewardship and Finance. A Chairperson for Church Technology is yet to be found. Debbie Raithel has accepted the vacated chair of Mutual Ministry, as Jana Thompson's term as chair has ended. Approval of the Church Budget was the next item to be brought before the assembly. After some discussion about the budget for the coming year, a motion to approve it was made by parishioner Jerry Koestner, seconded by parishioner Harry Thompson, and approved by all via voice vote.

President Finch thanked the retiring Church Council members and gave each a departing gift. These were Stacy Bubach, Frank Pascoe and Jana Thompson.

The 2024 Annual Report contains detailed reports and activity summaries by numerous Church organizations. These include WELCA, STARS, ST. Paul's Travel Group, Junior Lutherans, Parish Education, The Fruendschaft Gruppe, Stewardship Committee, Church Improvement Committee, and a detailed Financial Report containing all the 2024 financial activities as well as the Proposed 2025 Budget.

Without objection from any congregational member present, President Finch declared them all approved en masse as received.

A call for adjournment of this annual meeting was then requested by President Finch and was accomplished upon a motion from parishioner Jerry Koestner, seconded by parishioner Gary Elliott, and approved by all.

Respectfully submitted by Frank Pascoe, Secretary, Retired

### **STARS: Erika Gerth/Jeannette Fischer**

Our STARS group will resume meeting on Wednesday, February 19, with lunch served at 11:30.

#### **Understanding Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia**

Our program will be given by Teresa Brown, a Dementia Care Certified Program Manager for the Alzheimer's Association Greater Missouri Chapter. Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. Join us to learn about the impact of Alzheimer's, the difference between Alzheimer's and dementia, stages and risk factors, current research and treatments available, and Alzheimer's Association resources. Teresa Brown, our presenter, and her family have been touched by Alzheimer's disease twice, which left her with a motivation to provide a light to others who find themselves on the journey, especially in rural communities.

In honor of winter temperatures, our menu will be soup and sandwiches. If you would like to volunteer to contribute a pot of soup, please let Rose Strobel know when you call to make reservations. If you plan to attend, please make reservations with Rose at 782-4553 or 694-3634 by Monday, February 17.

### **Margaret Circle: Erika Gerth**

Margaret Circle's members look forward to getting together on Tuesday, February 4th for the first meeting of 2025! We will meet at the Church at 6:30 PM. Donita Stubinger will host, and Ruth Stubinger will lead us in the study of God's Holy Word. We thank God for our many blessings and take joy in giving back from our abundance. As a group, we make decisions regarding agencies which would benefit from our offerings. Margaret Circle welcomes all women of the church and their friends!

### **Mobile Food Pantry: Audrey Bunch**

NO Mobile Food Truck in JANUARY 2025.

### **Fruendschaft Gruppe: Jeannette Fischer**

We are thankful for the 18 volunteers who arrived on Saturday, January 4, to remove all Christmas decorations and dismantle the Christmas tree. Our work was easy thanks to Kathryn who previously removed all outdoor decorations and to Pastor David who arrived early to take down the top section of the tree. After everything was stored away we treated ourselves to a wine, cheese and soup supper. Thanks to Erika and Rosemary for providing large crockpots of delicious soup. Our regular meetings will resume on Monday, February 10, with dinner at 5:30. Our main work detail will be to set up quilt frames and supplies in preparation for quilt tacking days. If you plan to attend, please make reservations with Jeannette at 782-4594 by Sunday evening, February 9.

### **Quilts, quilts, quilts: Jeannette Fischer**

Quilt tacking days have been scheduled for February 11 and February 17 beginning about 8:30 A.M. If you are available those days and enjoy good food, fellowship and mission work, please join us. We are happy to report that Donita has generously volunteered to serve lunch.

### **WELCA: Donita Stubinger:**

WELCA met after the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 19, 2025 in the back of church. Thanks to all of the women who attended. It was decided to give money to the Russellville – Lohman Fire Department, the Lohman Community Building, and the Lohman Lions Club.

Discussion was held on fixing up the parsonage to make it look like it was being lived in for security reasons and insurance coverage. Thanks to Rosemary Heidebreder and Audrey Bunch for taking on this task by putting up window coverings that are already there or purchase some new ones. Also, discussed was getting a motion light for outside and a lamp on a timer for the inside. Blanket making days were set for February 11 and 17. It was also approved to purchase some items needed for the church kitchen including a new Shark small vacuum to use on the steps and to clean up small messes. Thank you to Jeannette Fischer for the closing prayer.

### **Jr. Lutherans: Donita Stubinger**

Jr. Lutherans are meeting in the church basement Sunday, February 2, 2025 to work on a valentine heart frame to take to the residents at Primrose Retirement Home. It will be an exciting day, we will eat donuts at the Fellowship Breakfast, work on crafts, eat lunch here at the church and motor over to Primrose Retirement Home to deliver our heart frames to the residents. We want to thank Jenita Gibler for setting this event up for us. We even have her picture in one of the frames from last year. Since we have had so many ask about our missed trip to the ice-skating rink in January, we are trying to make arrangements to go the end of February – more details will be posted in the church bulletins. We are looking forward to working at the Pancake and Sausage Breakfast in March. To raise our funds back up for special events, we are planning a free will offering spaghetti luncheon here at the church on April 6 for a Sunday brunch, 11:00 am. to 1:30 pm. Also, in April we will have our Easter Egg Coloring Party. If anyone has any ideas or suggestions for activities we would greatly appreciate your input.

## Calendar of Events and Schedules

- February 2nd**, Sunday: Children’s Bell Choir and Children’s Sunday School
- February 2nd**, Sunday: Fellowship Hour in the Basement after Worship
- February 2nd**, Sunday: Jr. Lutherans Crafts and trip to Primrose Retirement Center
- February 4th**, Tuesday: Margaret Circle meets in the Church basement at 6:30 p.m.
- February 8th**, Saturday: Abby Rhodes Basement Rental for Huxton’s Birthday party.
- February 10th**, Monday: Fruendschaft Gruppe meets in the basement at 5:30 p.m.
- February 10th**, Monday: Church Council will meet in the Sunday School room upstairs at 6:00 p.m.
- February 11th**, Tuesday: Food Pantry Volunteers at Trinity Lutheran in Russellville at 1:00 p.m.
- February 11th**, Tuesday: WELCA Quilt makers will meet in the Church Basement beginning at 8:00 a.m.
- February 16th**, Sunday: Children’s Sunday School
- February 16th**, Sunday: Baptism of Lucy England, daughter of Miranda and Luke England.
- February 17th**, Monday: WELCA Quilt makers will meet in the Church Basement beginning at 8:00 a.m.
- February 18th**, Tuesday: Basement reserved for Lohman City Council 5:30 p.m.
- February 19th**, Wednesday: STARS will meet for lunch at 11:30 a.m. and presentation: Alzheimer’s Disease
- February 19th**, Wednesday: Mutual Ministry Meeting at 5:30 p.m.
- February 22nd**, Saturday: Epistle News Deadline, please have all articles in as soon as possible.

Bulletins are normally printed on Wednesdays. Pastor David normally plans Fridays as his day off.

### Council Schedule

Feb. – 02	Debi Berry	Ashleigh Hillen
Feb. – 09	AJ Ferrell	Gus Fischer
Feb. – 16	Kent Nelson	Debbie Raithel
Feb. – 23	Misty Schroeder	Dan Tshirgi

### Acolyte Schedule

Feb. – 02	Lucas Plochberger
Feb. – 09	Oliver Stoermer
Feb. – 16	Madeline Stubinger
Feb. – 23	Morgan Schroeder

### Greeters Schedule

Feb. – 02	Audrey Bunch	Jerry Koestner
Feb. – 09	David Russell	Trish Russell
Feb. – 16	Donald Weber	Marie Scheperle
Feb. – 23	Rosemary Heidbreder	Richard Heidbreder

### Readers Schedule

Feb. – 02	Jana Thompson
Feb. – 09	Michelle Collins
Feb. – 16	Erika Gerth
Feb. – 23	Bill Gerth

### Song Leader

Feb. – 02	Kathy Meller
Feb. – 09	Dan Tschirgi
Feb. – 16	Dan Tschirgi
Feb. – 23	Kathy Meller

### Audio / Video Technician

Feb. – 02	Dan Tschirgi
Feb. – 09	Roger Pennell
Feb. – 16	Roger Pennell
Feb. – 23	Dan Tschirgi

### Organist / Keyboard

Feb. – 02	Zola Finch
Feb. – 09	Zola Finch
Feb. – 16	Zola Finch
Feb. – 23	Zola Finch

### Communionware for the Month

**Laurie and Jerry Koestner**

### Communion Assistants

Feb. – 09	Laurie / Jerry Koestner
Feb. – 23	Jason Plochberger

### Altar Flowers for the Month

**Audrey Bunch**

\* Communion Days noted in Yellow