



# St. Paul Lutheran

January 2024 NEWSLETTER

## From the Pastor:

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It's a New Year which means it's also the season of New Year resolutions. As is normally the case, the most common resolution made is to be healthier (i.e. lose weight, work out more, be more active, etc.). Yet, I heard on the news that another resolution is becoming far more common this year: to be more active in faith (pray more, go to church more, read the bible more). Indeed, it's commendable and beneficial for us all to be more active in our faith.

This got me thinking, also. What if we as a Church made a New Year's resolution? What would it be? We don't often think about a church (or an organization) making a resolution, yet why not?! Maybe for us it would be more regular worship attendance; or maybe greater participation in bible study; or maybe it's to help more people this year both physically and spiritually. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see these things take place here?

It seems fitting then that the Epiphany season is upon us. Epiphany is another "green" season, marked by the colors displayed for the season. These green seasons are meant to be seasons of growth. So how can we grow in Epiphany? Epiphany is all about revelations. It's the great revelations showing Jesus to be God. Jesus's baptism, calling the disciples, casting out demons, and culminating this season in the Transfiguration. Growth in the church isn't just numerical, though that is good to see also. Growth is also inward. It's growing in the knowledge of God as he reveals himself to us.

Even as a Church, there are many things we can work on. Not only as individuals but collectively, we should seek such improvement. But consider the growth desired and the means by which it is accomplished. St. Paul writes for us, **"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," Ephesians 4:11-13.** Our growth isn't individual. Rather, it's collective... *"until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God"*!

As a Church, then, let us work towards such growth. Let us aim to build one another up in the faith so that we may all hear again the wonderful epiphanies, revelations of Jesus Christ. Let us hear in bible study, in worship, and in our daily conversations the love of God revealed for us on the cross. It's not enough if just one of us should find growth. The church is the body of Christ. It's us together hearing and growing into Christ that we may more effectively, impactfully, and lovingly preach Christ crucified to the world.

Pastor Sorenson

### Happy Birthday!

Andrew Hopfensperger– 1/8  
 Marilyn Gramdorf– 1/12  
 Renee' Taylor-Jackson– 1/12  
 Linda Williamson– 1/18  
 Jack McGill– 1/19  
 Caroline Dahn– 1/29

### Altar Flowers

January 7- (None)  
 January 14- (None)  
 January 21- (None)  
 January 28– LuAnne Rommel for  
 her mother's birthday

### St Paul Online:

Visit our website: [www.stpaulmadison.org](http://www.stpaulmadison.org)

**Facebook**– @StPaulMadisonLCMS

**YouTube**– St Paul Lutheran Church  
 (services and sermons online)

Note: You do NOT have to have an account in order to view these pages.

### Contact us

St Paul Office– 608-244-8077  
[office@stpaulmadison.org](mailto:office@stpaulmadison.org)  
 Pastor Sorenson (Cell) 317-690-5204  
[pastorsorenson@stpaulmadison.org](mailto:pastorsorenson@stpaulmadison.org)

### Serving in January

#### Altar Guild

Bonnie Kaschinske & Kim Sorenson

#### Tellers

Jamie Meise & Berta Nelson

#### Ushers

#### January 7

Richard Beal, Randy Buss, & Tom Niemczyk

#### January 14

Rick Van Dusen, Ray Hellmer, & Leo Lakpa

#### January 21

Jerry Meise, Jamie Meise, & Dan Dierks

#### January 28

Richard Beal, Randy Buss, & Tom Niemczyk

### DATES TO REMEMBER

**January 14** – Pack up Decorations

**January 21** – Leadership Meeting

**January 30** – Vets Connect

### Un-Decorating Christmas



As the Christmas season ends this month, we will be taking down our Christmas Decorations on **January 14 after service**. We would love if you could stay after with us to help us pack up our decorations for next year.

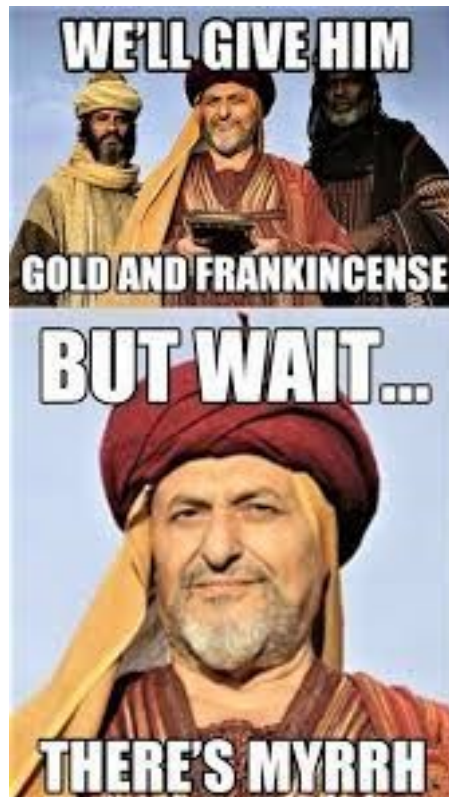
### Giving Statements

Giving Statements will be available to you on or before January 31. They will be printed and placed into your CHURCH MAILBOX for you to pick up.

A digital copy will also be emailed to the email we have on file for you. If you do not receive it, please check with the office to make sure your information is correct.



If you find any errors on your giving statement, please notify the office so we can correct the error and print you a new copy.



### Sunday Bible Study

We are just finishing our study of Revelation on Sunday mornings. We will be starting a new study on the **letter of James** this month (1/14). Join with us as we dive into this important letter to the Church. Handouts will be available for all who desire. Speak with Pastor Sorenson to receive one!

Take Note

Please send any items you'd like mentioned in our monthly newsletter to the office at [office@stpaulmadison.org](mailto:office@stpaulmadison.org), or please call the office at 608-244-8077.

**ALL NEWSLETTER ITEMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE LAST MONDAY OF EACH MONTH.**

## St Paul Financial Update

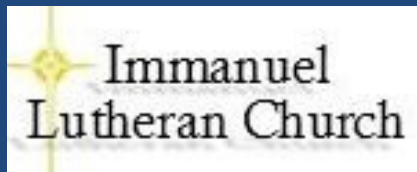
### GENERAL FUND INCOME AND EXPENSES

|                               |             |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| December 2023 Actual Income   | \$18,628.70 |
| December 2023 Actual Expenses | \$15,757.92 |
| December 2023 Net             | \$2,870.78  |

### DEBT

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Unpaid Balance on Mortgage Loan (12/31/2023) | \$163,871.31 |
|--|--------------|

# LCMS Madison Church Partnership



## Eastside Church Partnership: Past, Future, and Present

### Partnership Past: Where have we been?

Early in 2023, District Missions Executive Nathan Meador first suggested the idea of a church partnership between the LCMS churches on the eastside of Madison. The argument was simple, yet compelling: Wouldn't we be stronger together than we are apart?

Over the following months, this idea was discussed with the pastors and leadership of each congregation. By the end of summer, a group of churches had all agreed to explore this partnership together: Immanuel, St Paul, Monona, and Our Savior Deaf. A partnership committee was formed, including the pastor and several members from each congregation. This committee has been meeting monthly ever since, starting on August 27<sup>th</sup>.

The committee divided their work into two categories: dating and marriage. Before anyone would be ready to commit to a formal church partnership (marriage), it would make sense to get to know each other better (dating). To this end, the committee's goal was to schedule at least one "date," or joint event, a month. Over the second half of 2023, we surpassed that goal to great success. Here is a list of the events we held last year, all of which were well attended:

May 18: Ascension Service at St Paul

Aug 20: Potluck at Monona

Sept 24: Eyes that Hear Presentation at Monona

Oct 29: Reformation Service at Immanuel

Nov 22: Thanksgiving Eve Service at Monona

Dec 6: Advent Midweek Meal/Service at St Paul

Dec 13: Advent Midweek Meal/Service at St Paul

Dec 14: Carols and Candlelight Service at Immanuel

Dec 20: Advent Midweek Meal/Service at St Paul

Dec 25: Christmas Day Service at St Paul

### Partnership Future: Where are we going?

It is our intention to continue "dating" in 2024 as well. We have already discussed doing joint Lenten midweek services and have begun talking about Holy Week. That said, we have now been "dating" long enough that it is time we start talking about "marriage."

Our joint events have been wonderful, and they have all met or exceeded our expectations. However, we have only scratched the surface of the partnership idea. It has far more potential left to be explored.

We could go on for pages about all the potential collaborations we could do together. Many of you have already offered intriguing suggestions to the partnership committee. We have so many ideas, it will be challenging to narrow it down into something manageable.

However, the most important thing a formal partnership (marriage) must do for our congregations is revitalization. All of our congregations have been declining for decades. This partnership is an opportunity to change that.

### Upcoming Dates:

**January 14 (1:30pm)– Partnership Council**  
(Monona)

Every church has a natural life cycle. It starts strong and full of life. People are excited to join and be a part of something new. It grows and grows, until eventually it plateaus. A church may stay on this plateau for a short or long time, but eventually the decline begins. Every year, the church has less money, fewer volunteers, and lower attendance. The church's activities have to be pared back over and over, and people are far less interested in joining a sinking ship. Eventually, things become unsustainable, and the church closes.

This life cycle is why revitalization is so important. For a church to exist past its natural life cycle, it needs to reinvent itself. It has to start over again, forming a new life cycle back at the beginning, where people are excited to join and take part in the new future being built. Our congregations are all near the end of their life cycles, but this partnership is brand new. Our "marriage" is an opportunity for a new beginning for us all.

### **Partnership Present: What's our next step?**

It is time to start talking seriously about a "marriage," or a formal partnership. We are hoping to start these discussions late January or early February. To that end, we will be planning a meeting at each congregation. They will be after church on a given Sunday and probably involve a potluck as well. We might even surprise you with a guest preacher that Sunday.

So, keep an eye out for announcements in the coming weeks. We have a lot of exciting things to talk about!

Pastor Michael Erdman  
Immanuel Lutheran Church



### ***Joint Advent & Christmas Day Services***

We loved seeing our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ over the Advent season as they joined us here at St. Paul for dinners and services. Here is the attendance for all of our joint services:

#### **Service Attendance:**

December 6– 42

December 13– 28

December 20– 30

December 25– 33