



St. Paul's Epistle

"St. Paul's Lutheran Church glorifies God by connecting people to Jesus through teaching, serving, caring, & telling!"

CELEBRATING
125
YEARS

St. Paul's Lutheran Church 1700 Carridale Street SW Decatur AL 35601 256.353.8759 www.StPaulsDec.com



Friends in Christ,

It is hard to believe that it is here already. The month of December! And with it Advent, Christmas and New Year's Eve! Doesn't it feel like we should only be half way through 2023, not at the end of it? I'm sure you've heard the saying (which I first heard from older members at this church) that "Life is like a roll of toilet paper. The closer you get to the end, the faster it goes!" How true, indeed.

Now, keep in mind that I am a Lutheran Pastor, not a Baptist one, as I share this brief story. Recently I went to Walmart to purchase some Michelob Ultra beer (in the small eight ounce cans, I'll have you know). At the "self-checkout" area you have to have one of the workers verify on the machine that you are of age. So, knowing that I'd need assistance right off the bat since I was only getting the beer and a box of donuts (quite a combo I know), I told the young worker I'd need her assistance to approve the purchase. And before I showed her my ID I said to her, "Well, how old do I look?" fully expecting that she would say that I appeared at least five years younger than I am, since I was dressed causal, not in my clerical. But when this millennial replied "forty-eight" I was shocked and dismayed that my age had been estimated as one year older than I actually am! I didn't even know what to say! In a bumbling reply I believe I commented that it must be all the gray in my beard. But truly, that fateful day at Walmart, my self-concept as one who was doing well in defying the march of time, was utterly crushed. A millennial had shattered my optimism and brought me back to reality.

"Time and tide wait for no man," Geoffrey Chaucer once famously said. The end is coming, both of our individual lives and of the world itself. This is an emphasis of Advent, and the end of the year moving into a new one also puts an exclamation mark on this point.

There is a glimmer of hope though, as you must surely be aware as one reading this church newsletter. That Hope at times may seem faint to us fallen creatures. But from the perspective of our Divine Lord, who created time, light, and life (to name a few), His Hope is an all powerful beacon shining the forgiveness of sins into a dark and dying world. Jesus Christ, the Son of God born in Bethlehem, came into our world, flesh and blood, to bring us forgiveness through His sacrifice on the cross. He brings us new life now, by grace through faith. And ultimately, Christ will physically make all things new (Revelation 21:5).

While reminders of our mortality may seem like a curse, I believe that in many ways they are evidence of God's mercy. Growing older in appearance, facing less than optimal health, and overwhelmed at the pace of time, all can be used by our God to direct the eyes of our heart to Him.

We sometimes may think that we would like to live in this present world forever. But, to be honest, that would be the worst thing possible. This world, and our lives, are clearly imperfect. What we need is new life. Real, and eternal, new life! And this is what the One born in Bethlehem came to bring. He came to announce that the end of the old order of things is on its way (Romans 8:20-21; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:3; Matthew 24:35). And He rose from the dead that we can know that it will fully come to pass (Revelation 21:4). He will make all things new, physically, including you and me who are in Christ. St. John wrote, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Therefore, may God's peace be with you this December, and always, in Christ Jesus.

In our Savior,

Pastor Aaron Kretzschmar

December 2023

- 8:15am Traditional Worship
In-Church & Facebook Live
- 9:30am Sunday School all ages
- 10:00am WZDK 98.5 FM Radio
- 10:45am CrossLife in the ARC

Holy Communion
December 5, 17, 24, 25

Staffed Nursery 8am until noon

Bible Study

Adult Bible Study
Book of Romans
Sundays 9:30am

Pastor's Bible Study 9:45am

Book of Matthew Bible Study
Wednesdays 10:30

Book of Exodus Bible Study
Wednesdays 6:15pm

Looking Ahead

1st Midweek Advent Worship
Wednesday, Nov 29 at Noon
in the Sanctuary

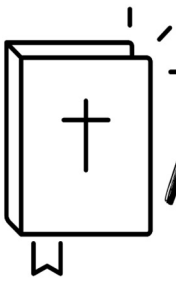
Tree Decorating
in Sanctuary and Lobby
Saturday, Dec 2 at 9am

First Sunday of Advent
Ladies Advent Tea
Sunday, Dec 3 at 2 pm

2nd Midweek Advent Service
Wednesday, Dec 6
at 7:30pm
Vintage Faith Church
411 Sherman St. Decatur, AL
(former St. Paul's location)



3rd Midweek Advent Service
Wednesday, Dec 13
at 12 noon in the Sanctuary



Notes from Miss Skylar



St. Paul's Family,

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.—Revelation 22:20-21 NIV

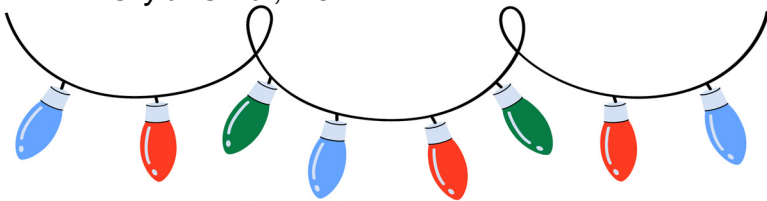
Thanksgiving has passed, December is here, which means our church has entered the season of Advent! Advent is the time in the church year when we prepare our hearts and wait with hope-filled expectation on the coming of Jesus. The season of Advents is about taking time to enjoy the journey instead of the rush to the destination. The specifics of how we prepare our hearts will look different from family to family and that's okay. The Advent season is a great time for families to celebrate "the reason for the season" – Jesus!

I hope you are participating in our Bible Reading Challenge where we are challenging ourselves to be in God's Word daily. I encourage you to join if you haven't already or continue as we are now in the final month of the year! To go alongside the Bible Reading Challenge, I want to challenge you and your family to read one chapter from the book of Luke every day of December; December 1st you read chapter one and December 2nd you read chapter two and so on. You will begin the month of December reading about Jesus' birth and read all about His life and ministry when He was here on Earth through the eyes of Luke. And on Christmas Eve,

December 24th, you will read about Jesus' Resurrection. This reading will be a wonderful reminder for you and your family during this season of Advent as we prepare for Jesus coming again.

God's Blessings,

Skylar Smith, DCE



Christmas Eve Family Service

Would your child or youth like to be a part of our Christmas Eve Family Service at 6pm on December 24th? Contact Skylar!

We need readers, greeters, and ushers! Let Skylar know if you have any questions.

2024 Middle School Youth Retreat

All 6-8 graders are welcome to attend the Southern District Winter Retreat January 12-14, 2024. Please let us know by Wed, Dec 6th, if your youth can attend! Cost is \$75. Talk to Skylar or Maribeth if you would like to attend or have any questions!

St. Paul's Young Adults

Saturday, December 16th | 6:30pm

To receive information and reminders

text "@yaanchor" to 81010



Children's Christmas Program
Sunday, December 10th, at 10:45am

Enduring Faith

December Sunday School Lessons

12/3 - The Rescuing Queen: Esther

12/10 - Christmas Program

12/17 - The King of Glory: David Worships God

12/24 - No Sunday School

12/31 - No Sunday School

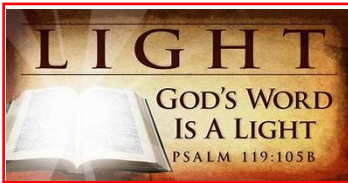
Bible Reading Challenge

December - Wrapped in Wonder

Join our 2023 Bible Reading Challenge! These daily readings look at verses that focus on a different theme every month. These verses may only take a few seconds to read, but we encourage you to read them multiple times throughout the day and spend time in prayer with God over the verses. We also encourage you, if you have the time, to READ MORE! These verses are a starting point!

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Day 1: Psalm 95:2 | Day 17: Romans 6:20-23 |
| Day 2: Isaiah 9:2-7 | Day 18: 1 Timothy 1:15-17 |
| Day 3: Isaiah 11:1-5 | Day 19: Titus 3:3-7 |
| Day 4: Isaiah 7:10-14 | Day 20: Galatians 4:1-7 |
| Day 5: Micah 5:1-5 | Day 21: Philippians 2:6-8 |
| Day 6: 2 Samuel 7:12-16 | Day 22: Psalm 103:1-5 |
| Day 7: Psalm 150 | Day 23: John 14:1-6 |
| Day 8: Luke 1:26-33 | Day 24: Daniel 7:13-14 |
| Day 9: Luke 1:34-38 | Day 25: Revelation 1:4-7 |
| Day 10: Luke 1:46-55 | Day 26: Revelation 3:20-22 |
| Day 11: Matthew 1:18-25 | Day 27: Rev. 22:12-13 |
| Day 12: Luke 2:1-7 | Day 28: Rev. 22:16-17 |
| Day 13: Luke 2:8-12 | Day 29: Rev. 22:12-16 |
| Day 14: Luke 2:13-20 | Day 30: Rev. 22:17-19 |
| Day 15: Matthew 1:1-16 | Day 31: Rev. 22:20-21 |
| Day 16: Psalm 100:1-5 | |

You can pick up a monthly bookmark at church, like our Church Facebook page to get the daily reading (and be sure to Like and Share the reading for the day so that your friends can see them too!), or text "@stpaulsbrc" to 81010 to get text message reminders.



Here are several studies along with our 2023 Bible Reading Challenge on page 2 to help us be in His Word and in His light!

Wednesday Morning Bible Study

10:30-11:30 am in Room 316

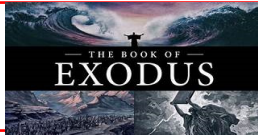
Hope to see you there! If you have any questions, please contact Skylar!

The Gospel of Matthew



Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Wednesday nights beginning at 6:00 pm in Room 317. Please join us!



Sunday Morning Bible Study

9:30 am Room 317

Join us for a interesting and lively discussions!



Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study

Nurturing Your Faith: Identity



Our identity as forgiven children of God is explored in Nurturing Your Faith: Identity. This Lutheran Hour Ministries Bible study, video hosted by Rev. Dr. John Nunes, examines how as Christians—forgiven for Jesus' sake—we are reconciled to God. Reborn to fellowship and active community, we are inspired to praise God for His great love.

Sunday mornings at 9:45am in the Fellowship Room.



Adult Confirmation Class

Wednesdays at 8pm
In-person and by Zoom
Talk to Pastor for more info



The Flower Calendar for 2024 is up in the breezeway. Sign up early for your special day!



Meet us in Room 316 every Thursday at 11am. Bring a friend!



**Sunday
December 3
2:00 - 4:00 pm**
in the Fellowship Room

There will be refreshments, music and a special time to fellowship. Please join us as we welcome in Advent. Our speaker is a representative from Sav-a-life of Decatur. A donation box will be available for anyone wishing to donate baby items to this ministry.



**LWML's
"Cookies by the Pound"
December 10!**

Cookies by the Pound will be held Sunday, December 10 immediately following the first service and will continue until after the Children's Christmas program. It will be held in the Fellowship room. The cost will be \$10 a pound. We hope everyone will come and shop. There will be lot's of delicious homemade cookies to choose from.



St Paul's Quilters meet in Room 317 each Wednesday at 10am. Join us! For more information contact Pete Alvis.



Your purchase of a poinsettia can recognize a loved one and also help to decorate St. Paul's.

The cost for a poinsettia this year is \$11.00

Quantity Ordered: _____

Name: _____

In Memory/or Honor of _____

(Please Circle One)

Please return to the Church Office mailbox along with payment to St. Paul's Lutheran Church by December 4.

December 2023

+ denotes Holy Communion celebrated during Worship

Church Nursery 8:00am - Noon on Sundays

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri	Sat
26 8:15am Traditional Worship & FbL 9:30am Sunday School 10:00am Radio 98.5FM Worship 10:45am CrossLife Worship	27 7:00am PS Ext Care (M-F) 8:45am Preschool (M-Th) 2:30pm KTT Afterschool (M-F)	28 8:30 9:30&11 Ex Class 9:30am Staff meeting 3:45pm Confirmation 6:30pm Elders meeting	29 10:00am Quilters 10:30am Bible Study 12:00pm 1st Midweek Advent service 4:00pm KTT Chapel 5:15pm Faithlinks dinner 6:00pm Bible study / 6:00pm Handbells 6:15pm Confirmation 7:00pm Choir / 7:15pm Praise Band 8:00pm Adult Confirmation	30 8:30 9:30&11 Ex Class 10:30am PS Chapel 11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry	1	2 9:00am Tree decorating in Sanctuary & Lobby Enchanted Forest in Founders Park - all month
3 First Sunday of Advent 8:15am Traditional Worship & FbL† 9:30am Sunday School 10:00am Radio 98.5FM Worship 10:45am CrossLife Worship† 2:00pm Advent Ladies Tea 5:00pm HS Youth Night	4 7:00am PS Ext Care (M-F) 8:45am Preschool (M-Th) 2:30pm KTT Afterschool (M-F)	5 8:30 9:30&11 Ex Class 9:30am Staff meeting 3:45pm Confirmation	6 10:00am Quilters 10:30am Bible Study 4:00pm KTT Chapel 5:30pm FaithLinks dinner 6:00pm Bible study / 6:00pm Handbells 6:15pm Confirmation 7:00pm Choir / 7:15pm Praise Band 7:30pm 2nd Midweek Advent service at Faith Vintage Church	7 8:30 9:30&11 Ex Class 10:30am PS Chapel 11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry	8	9 2:00pm KTT "Be U" event 10am Xmas program rehearsal
10 Second Sunday of Advent 8:15am Traditional Worship & FbL 9:00am LWML Cookies by the Pound Sale 9:30am Sunday School 10:00am Radio 98.5FM Worship 10:45am CrossLife Worship and Children's Program	11 7:00am PS Ext Care (M-F) 8:45am Preschool (M-Th) 2:30pm KTT Afterschool (M-F)	12 8:30 9:30&11 Ex Class 9:30am Staff meeting 11:30am Exercise class Christmas party 3:45pm Confirmation 6:00pm Education meeting 7:00pm Vestry meeting	13 10:00am Quilters 10:30am Bible Study 12:00pm 3rd Midweek Advent service 4:00pm KTT Chapel 6:00pm Bible study / 6:00pm Handbells 6:15pm Confirmation 7:00pm Choir / 7:15pm Praise Band 8:00pm Adult Confirmation	14 Newsletter articles due 8:30 9:30&11 Ex Class 10:30am PS Chapel 11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry 11:00am PS Christmas program w/ cookies	15 12:00 KTT	16
17 Third Sunday of Advent 8:15am Traditional Worship & FbL† 9:30am Sunday School 10:00am Radio 98.5FM Worship 10:45am CrossLife Worship† 5:00pm HS Youth Night	18 7:00am PS Ext Care Only (M-F)	19 8:30 9:30&11 Ex Class 9:30am Staff meeting 10:30am 125th Anniversary meeting 3:45pm Confirmation 6:00pm Preschool Board 7:30pm Fellowship Board	20 10:00am Quilters 10:30am Bible Study 4:00pm KTT Chapel 6:00pm Bible study / 6:00pm Handbells 6:15pm Confirmation 7:00pm Choir / 7:15pm Praise Band 8:00pm Adult Confirmation	21 8:30 9:30&11 Ex Class 11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry	22	23
24 9:30am One Service & FbL 10:00am Radio 98.5FM Worship 6:00pm Christmas Eve Family Worship and FbLive† 11:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship†	25 10:00am Christmas Day Worship†	26 campus closed	27 7:00am PS Ext Care (W-F) 6:00pm Handbell rehearsal 7:00pm Choir rehearsal	28 11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry	29	30
31 8:15am Traditional Worship & FbL 10:00am Radio 98.5FM Worship 10:45am CrossLife Worship	1 New Year's Day campus closed	2 7:00am PS Ext Care (T-F) 8:30 9:30 & 11 Ex Class 9:30am Staff meeting 3:45pm Confirmation	3 10:00am Quilters 10:30am Bible Study 6:00pm Bible study / 6:00pm Handbells 6:15pm Confirmation 7:00pm Choir / 7:15pm Praise Band 8:00pm Adult Confirmation	4 8:30 9:30 & 11 Ex Class 8:45am Preschool 10:30am PS Chapel 11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry	5	6



Dec 10 Elizabeth Buzbee
Dec 11 Bruce Asher
Dec 12 Danny Smitherman
Dec 13 Ean Nicholson
Dec 13 Brian Braswell
Dec 14 Vanessa Byer
Dec 15 Larry Lechner
Dec 17 Hala Parker
Dec 19 June Asher
Dec 19 Jocelyn Mitchell
Dec 20 Mike Bosco
Dec 20 Mark McMinn
Dec 20 John Nelson
Dec 20 Sadie Ringers
Dec 21 Aidan Carroll
Dec 21 Jake Locker

Dec 22 Brodie Winters
Dec 23 Jim Forthman
Dec 23 Ian Covington
Dec 24 Maggie Nicholson
Dec 25 Lana McCay
Dec 25 Seth Santaliz
Dec 28 Connor Baker
Dec 28 Matthew Kimmett
Dec 28 Rusty Nicholson
Dec 29 Evelyn Ricks
Dec 29 Joy McMinn
Dec 30 Emily Santaliz
Dec 31 Alison Gilchrist
Dec 31 Gary Herda



Dec 4 Gary & Tonya Herda
Dec 4 Ryan & Brittany Reece
Dec 9 Chad & Rhonda Kruger
Dec 9 Robert & Cindy Todd
Dec 18 Buddy & Kellye Jones
Dec 18 Tom & Peggy Pfaff
Dec 19 David & Roberta Graham
Dec 22 John & Nancy Fortune
Dec 24 Dwayne & Nancy Whiteside
Dec 28 Brad & Ashley Lawrence
Dec 29 Ron & Bobbie Seibert

Dec 1 Vicki Anderson
Dec 3 Dwayne Whiteside
Dec 3 Dallas Southers
Dec 5 Jack Blaske
Dec 5 Andrea Koenig
Dec 6 Janice Welch
Dec 7 Jett Schmelter
Dec 7 Dylan Ferguson
Dec 8 Carol Carlson
Dec 8 Penny Peebles
Dec 8 Ron Fritze
Dec 9 Jacob Cevallos

Serving the Lord in Worship this Month at St. Paul's

	December 3	December 10	December 17	December 24 One Service 9:30am	December 31
Elders	8:15am Mitchell Whiteside	Tim Nave	Joseph Woodbury	Mitchell Whiteside	Bill Darwin
Ushers	8:15am Mike Ater Bob Seibert Mike Johnson	Graham Peebles James Thrasher Michael Kimmett Mathew Kimmett	Jim Disher Ken Hamilton Micky Whiteside Mike Widmar	Rick Daniel Jack Blaske Tim Nave Oliver Nave	Mike Ater Bob Seibert Mike Johnson
Acolytes	8:15am Katelyn	Emma	Owen	Katelyn	Emma
AV Techs	8:15am Rich Maschke	Bob Sullivant	Rich Maschke	Gary Nagy	Bob Sullivant
Readers	8:15am Jeff Pittman	open	Nancy Neuendorf	Luke Frasher	Gary Nagy
Sanctuary Flowers	Open	Cindy Todd	Open	Tootie Johnson	Linda Hyde
Altar Guild for December: Sue Sullivant and Carol Henderson			Counters for December: Carol Morgan and Sue Bosco		
Elders	10:45am Tim Herfurth	Gary Nagy	Roy Weiland		Ron Fritze
Host families	10:45am Burrell family	Herfurth family	McRae family		Atkins family
AV Techs	10:45am Rick & Carol Morgan	James Gilchrist	Mike Ringers		Tim Herfurth



St. Paul's LWML is sponsoring a Christmas tree entry in the Decatur Enchanted Forest this year, located in Old Decatur across from the Old State Bank. The Forest has representatives from many Decatur organizations. Our tree is there to celebrate St. Paul's 125th Anniversary. The trees will be up during December, decorated and illuminated so you can enjoy a stroll during the day and/or at night time. Make sure to visit the Forest and enjoy the sights and sounds of Christmas! When you visit the tree, take a picture of yourself with the tree and send it to the church!



ATTENDANCE

2023 Year-to-Date Average Attendance
 In-church attendees 127
 Facebook sign-ins 14

FINANCES

Current Loan Balance: **\$223,994**

Financial Plan Activity thru October 31, 2023

YTD FirstFruits Giving: **\$ 393,115** PLAN: **\$375,000**
 YTD Total Expenses: **- \$ 383,111** PLAN: **\$409,210**
 Plan Activity thru Oct **\$ 10,004**

THANKS TO ALL for faithful giving in-person and online. Those giving by mail are GREATLY ENCOURAGED to give online. **Sending checks in the mail is the least safe way to donate.**

Currently, 35% of our Givers give safely online; to join them,

- go to the [website](#),
- download the Mobile app,
- snap the QR code, or
- contact the Church Office for a paper authorization form.

Online Giving is greatly encouraged!



VANCO



Secure Giving at www.StPaulsDec.com



Vanco Mobile app on [Google Play](#) or in the [App Store](#)



Serving in Advent

November 29 at 12pm

Elder: Bill Darwin

AV: Bob Sullivant

December 6 at 7:30pm
At Vintage Faith Church

Elder: Gary Nagy

AV: Bob Sullivant

December 13 at 12pm

Elder: Roy Weiland

AV: Bob Sullivant

Serving for Christmas and Christmas Eve

December 24

6pm Elder: Tim Nave

AV: Bob Sullivant

11pm Elder: Tim Herfurth

AV: Rich Maschke

December 25

10am Elder: Nagy

AV: Bob Sullivant



First Midweek Advent Service

Wednesday, November 29 at 12 noon In the Sanctuary



Second Midweek Advent Service

Wednesday, December 6 at 7:30pm
 Vintage Faith Church
 411 Sherman St. Decatur, AL

Third Midweek Advent Service

Wednesday, December 13 at 12 noon in the Sanctuary

Called Home to Heaven

Paul Goehler
 November 8, 2023



Please bless a family with children in need by taking a tag and donating a gift from the **Giving Tree** which will be in the Lobby beginning December 2.

Instructions are posted by the Tree; please make plans to stop by and help out again this Christmas.

The UNWRAPPED Gifts with tags are needed back by December 16 to the box in the Lobby.
Thank You!



Children's Christmas Program
Sunday, December 10th, at 10:45am

Food Baskets

prepared by our Lutheran Women in Mission at St. Paul's will also be given to our **Giving Tree** families.



The shoppers would appreciate monetary donations to help purchase food items, and these may be put in the Livingstons' church mailbox. Shoppers are also needed; please contact Dee Livingston at 256.355.8007 if you can help!



Join us for Hanging of the Greens

Saturday, December 2 at 9 am

Help us decorate the Sanctuary and the Lobby for Christmas - bring the family!
More hands make for more fun!



Preschool Christmas Program and Cookie Reception

December 14 at 11:00 am

All St. Paul's members are invited to join us as the children celebrate the season in song and movement.

We need several members to help us with our cookie reception. We will be putting cookies on trays and making/ serving punch in the Lobby. This is a great opportunity to talk to our parents and enjoy the children's program.

Please call 256-353-1353 if you can help on the 14th!

Bethany Eze, Director - St. Paul's Preschool

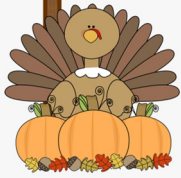
FIND 10 DIFFERENCES



St Paul's Lutheran Preschool 2023-2024



We are Thankful for YOU!



Thank you

I am so thankful for the St. Paul's Lutheran Church Family. My heart was so full from the program and then to see so many volunteers who brought food, helped in the kitchen, and served during the feast! It was AMAZING!! I am so grateful for each of you. Thank you for all of your support and generosity of the Preschool. Blessings to each of you and your families this Holiday Season and always.

Bethany A. Eze,
Director St. Paul's Preschool



This Month is all about Christmas.

December is sponsored by the number 5 and the color **Green**.

This month the children will learn about Christmas around the world and the Christmas story. The shape of the month is star and letters, Jj and Uu. **Our Bible stories and study will be about the angel's visit to Mary. Jesus is Born!**

Our Christmas Program and Cookie Reception is Thursday, December 14 at 11:00am.

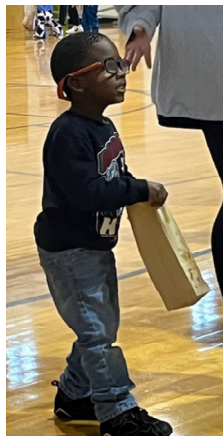
December 18 - January 3

RESERVED Extended Care ONLY. NO Core Preschool.

We will be closed December 25 and 26 for Christmas.



Our Thanksgiving Feast was a big success! Thanks to everyone who brought food, served in the kitchen or helped out in any way.



For more info and pictures of activities, please visit www.facebook.com/StPaulsDec.Preschool



Afterschool Care

Earn to Learn

Featured below are our 1st qtr Earn to Learn recipients. The highest point earners in each grade receives a \$10.00 gift card and a academic certificate. It is very possible to be the top, but not get recognized, because a progress report or report card wasn't submitted. Congratulations to: DeAndrio Abrams-K, Amari McClendon-1st, Trace Thompson-2nd, Karmyn Carter-3rd, Tayden Johnson-4th, Ayden Harris-5th, Derrian Wilson-6th, Breylin Carter-7th (not pictured), and Savannah Harris-8th on a job well done. Keep up the good work!



A special thanks to everyone who supported the spaghetti dinner and a Big shout out to Curtis and Leslie Parker for preparing the scrumptious meal!



Dec 18th
through
Jan 3rd

Charlotte Bradley, Director, KTT Inc
(256) 666-8601



For more info and pictures of activities, please visit
<https://www.facebook.com/KidzTweenzTeenzInc/>

CELEBRATING

125
YEARS

October 8, 2023

Celebrating with our Forefathers

*"The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep
darkness, on them has light shone. Isaiah 9:2*

Late one cold December night, Martin Luther was walking home through the woods when he noticed the stars shining through the boughs of the evergreen trees. He was so enthralled by a starlit tree and how it reminded him of the star over Bethlehem. He cut down the tree, took it home, and decorated it with candles to encourage his family through a cold dark winter. He said that the evergreen represented the eternal love of God and the steadfastness of their own faith. The candles represented the star that led the Wise Men to Christ.

Luther loved Christmas and is credited with moving the gift giving day from December 6th, St. Nicholas Day, to December 24th, Christmas Eve. He also wrote several Christmas hymns including *"From Heaven Above to Earth I Come."*

The German Lutherans who settled in New Decatur, Alabama in the 1890's brought their Christmas traditions with them. Some of those traditions we still celebrate today.

In a meeting on Christmas Day in 1899, the congregation decided to donate the Christmas Day offering to the New Orleans Orphanage, a Christmas tradition that continued until the donation was given to the Bethlehem Orphanage. In 2006, this donation was changed to the Bethesda Lutheran Home in Texas and continued through 2014 when the Elders changed the designated giving.

On December 1, 1903, the congregation decided to buy its first Christmas tree. Once Christmas was over, the limbs of the Christmas tree would be stripped from the trunk and the tree became the Lenten Cross which stood in the sanctuary throughout Lent. In 2005 with the departure of Pastor Dave Lewis, Pastor Reinhardt strongly suggested that we start using an artificial Christmas tree due to fire insurance concerns. He felt that decision should be made before we called a new pastor. The cross from the last live tree still stands in the sanctuary during Lent.

Another decision that was made at that meeting in 1899 was to buy Christmas presents for the children of the congregation. Members who grew up at St. Paul's remember the Christmas children's program was held at 6:00 pm on Christmas Eve. Gifts for the children of the congregation were put under the tree. After the program, Pastor Reinhardt would call each child name, give them their Christmas present, and give them a bag of candy. Pam Meadows remembers attending the Christmas Eve service at the Presbyterian church with her extended family and then coming to St. Paul's for the Christmas program. Her cousins came to church with her so they could also get a bag of candy. Another member remembers that if there were extra bags of candy, they would be given to children of guests attending the service. Sometimes Pastor Reinhardt would give a candy bag to an adult because they had been "good" throughout the year. As a side note, the minutes of the Ladies Auxiliary from the 1940's and 1950's record the motions to purchase the candy for the children's candy bags as well as candy for the shut-ins.

Even though it is not considered a traditional Christmas carol, the congregation sang Pastor Reinhardt's favorite Christmas carol, *"Edelweiss,"* every Christmas Eve.

Those who supplied and decorated the Christmas tree have changed over the years. In 1932, Louis Nebrig and William Pappenburg were appointed to provide the tree. At the same time, F. L. Nebrig was put in charge of decorating the tree, because, at 6' 6", he was the tallest man in the congregation and seemed the obvious choice. Later, the tree was supplied by Bud Kurz from his farm, and the tree was decorated variously by volunteers from the congregation, the Trustees and their families, the Inbetweeners, the Asher family and the Youth Groups, and the Bosco/Nicholson families.

Another longstanding tradition is the Giving Tree. The Prophets Youth Group organized the gift tags that were put on the tree with items listed for at least 5 sponsored families needs and/or wants. Members of the congregation would take a tag from the tree, buy the gift indicated, and return the gift to the church. The Prophets then wrapped the gifts. As part of the event, the Lutheran Women in Mission (LWM) donated money to the Prophets to help with the gift buying and wrapping. They also provide funds and do the grocery shopping to provide groceries for the families. On a designated day, the families would come to church to pick up their gifts and groceries.

Over time other traditions began and some were discontinued. While he served as Associate Pastor, Pastor Dave Lewis started the 11:00 pm Christmas Eve Service as a way of involving the high school students in the planning and execution of the service. They conducted the entire service except for the sermon. In the early years of this service, the goal was to finish by midnight so that the bell would ring at exactly midnight. It took several years, but this timing was eventually accomplished. Today, the service is timed so that the bell rings at midnight, or close to it, to usher in the birthday of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Even before this congregation was organized in 1898, those early worshippers gathered to worship on Christmas Day and to celebrate the birthday of their Lord and Savior. This was a significant expression of their faith in Jesus. It is up to us today to continue this tradition and remember that without Christmas there would be no Easter.

So, when you put up and decorate your tree this year, take a moment and remember Luther's words about the evergreen and the lights. We follow in the traditions of those who came before us sharing in their expressions of faith in their Lord and Savior. We also can celebrate this Christmas season with joy and gladness and look forward to Easter.

In 1535, Martin Luther wrote *"From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"* his children and to be used as part of family's Christmas Eve devotion. This hymn is based on the angel's announcement of Jesus' birth. Three verses from this hymn are included below.

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep;
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue,
That sweetest ancient cradle song.

Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto man His Son hath given,
While angels sing with tender mirth,
A glad new year to all the earth.

Martin Luther

Beth Hornish and Ron Fritze

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www.StPaulsDec.com

[www.Facebook.com/StPaulsDec](https://www.facebook.com/StPaulsDec)

Come visit St Paul's 125 Anniversary Christmas Tree (#7) at the Enchanted Forest in Founders Park by the Old State Bank during the month of December

Take a picture with our tree and email it to the church:
churchoffice@stpaulsdec.com



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*First Sunday of Advent
December 3*

*Midweek Worship Wednesdays at noon
November 29 and December 13
December 6 the service will be at 7:30pm
At Vintage Faith Church, 411 Sherman St NE*

December 10

*The KidLinks Children present
"Stellar Christmas – 10:45 a.m.
LWML Cookies by the Pound*

December 14

*Preschool Christmas Program – 11:00 a.m.
and Christmas Cookie Reception*

December 24

*One Service at 9:30am in the Sanctuary
Christmas Eve Family Worship – 6:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship – 11:00 p.m.*

December 25



Christmas Day Worship – 10:00 a.m.