

ANNUAL REPORT 2026

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church

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Welcome Home!



Saint Paul's Lutheran Church

2026 Annual Reports

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Staff

Business Manager	Nicholas Barber BusinessMgr@stpaulserie.org 814-833-1761 x1001
Director of Preschool Ministry	Melissa Collins PSDirector@stpaulserie.org 814-833-1761 x1002
Director of Child Development Center Ministry	Nancy Dahlquist CDCDirector@stpaulserie.org 814-833-1761 x1004
Director of Administration & Communication	Debbie Dravec Office@stpaulserie.org 814-833-1761 x1001
Maintenance Manager	Mark Helms Property@stpaulserie.org
Director of Music & Worship Ministry	Andrew Rainbow MusicDirector@stpaulserie.org 814-833-1761 x1001
Custodian	Steven Roward Custodian@stpaulserie.org
Pastor	The Rev. Erik Young (Pastor Erik) Pastor@stpaulserie.org 814-833-1761 x1008 310-686-6257 (mobile)

Leadership

Congregation Leadership Council

Terms Ending October 2026

1. Mike Barber
MikeBarber@stpaulserie.org
2. Bill Gross
BillGross@stpaulserie.org
3. Erich Zech
ErichZech@stpaulserie.org

Terms Ending October 2027

1. Joanne Erikson
JoanneErikson@stpaulserie.org
2. Larry Kessler
LarryKessler@stpaulserie.org
3. Marsha Szymanowicz
MarshaSzymanowicz@stpaulserie.org

Terms Ending October 2028

1. Vanessa Baran
VanessaBaran@stpaulserie.org
2. Joe Lang
JoeLang@stpaulserie.org
3. Kelly Zimmerman
KellyZimmerman@stpaulserie.org

Congregation Meeting Agenda

Sunday, October 18, 2025 at 10:15 AM

1. Call to Order (Joanne Erikson, Vice President)
 - a. Determination of a Quorum
 - b. Approval of the Agenda
 - c. Opening Prayer (Pastor Erik Young)
 - d. Approval of October 2025 Annual Meeting Minutes
2. Reports
 - a. Recognition of Staff and Volunteer Leadership
 - b. Pastor's 2027 Vision Narrative (Pastor Erik Young)
 - c. Questions / Acceptance of Annual Reports
 - d. Elections
 - e. Report of the Nominating Team
 - f. Nominations from the Floor
 - i. Congregation Council
 - ii. Synod Assembly Representatives
 - iii. Erie Lutheran Conference Reps
 - iv. Nominating Team
 - v. Audit Team
 - g. Casting the Ballot
 - h. Report of Ballot Results
3. Budget
 - a. 2026 Year-to-Date Financial Reports with Year-End Prediction (Bill Gross, Treasurer)
 - b. 2027 Ministry Spending Plan
 - c. 2027 Mission and Ministry Commitment
4. Other Business
 - a. Old
 - b. New
 - c. Other
5. Installation of 2026-27 Congregational Council
6. Motion to Adjourn (Joanne Erikson, Vice President)

Congregation Meeting Minutes

Sunday, October 12, 2025 – Following the 9 AM Worship Service

Congregation Council President Joe Lang called to order St. Paul's Annual Congregational Meeting at 10:15 AM. Secretary Marsha Szymanowicz determined that a quorum (10% of the voting members, being 23 voting members) was present with 53 members signed in and registered for the Annual Meeting. Pastor Erik opened the meeting with a prayer. Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting were approved by a motion from Rick Hetrick, seconded by Terry Moyer, and approved unanimously.

Joe Lang recognized and thanked St. Paul's awesome staff and faith community members who volunteer their talents and time for our many ministries. Pastor Erik Young shared his vision of St. Paul's mission and ministries for 2026 with focus on our 1-, 3-, and 5-year plans and developing a Stewardship Team. Joe Lang presented the 2025 Annual Report for St. Paul's for the congregation's acceptance. 2025 Annual Report was approved by a motion from Wayne Gardner, seconded by Vanessa Baran, and approved unanimously.

Joe Lang moved to congregation elections. Votes were decided by ballot and names underlined below were electees.

Karen McKenna, Vanessa Baran, Kelly Zimmerman, and Jessica Kidd were candidates for open Congregation Council positions.

Rick Hetrick and Mary Hetrick were candidates for Synod Assembly representatives. A youth delegate will be determined by Council.

Kevin Kuric and Larry Kessler were identified for Erie Lutheran Conference representatives.

Kelly Zimmerman and Jessica Kidd were candidates for the Nominating Team.

No votes were needed to break any ties for any nominated position, and accordingly, upon motion and second, a unanimous vote elected the nominations by acclamation.

Treasurer Bill Gross thanked all for being generous stating that we are on the right track. Expenses have been a bit high this year between maintenance and utilities and the water leak. Bill then presented the 2025 YTD Performance and 2026 Budget Proposal. Bill presented 3 deficit budget scenarios to the congregation:

Plan A (34,453.88)

Expenses are the same.

Increase 5% in giving.

Plan B (13,669.77)

No audit this year. Do one every other year instead.

Keep the position of a Director of Youth open.

Raise the facility fee for the gym.

Increase 5% in giving.

Find a less expensive snow plowing service.

Plan C (7,269.77)

No audit.

Director of Youth Ministries position put on hold.

Reduce youth retreats.

Cut staff.

Worship supplies dropped (this would include cantors and instrumentals for special services, substitute musicians and materials).

Raise the facility fee for the gym.

Increase 5% in giving.

Bill stated that Council supports Plan B. There was much discussion about a Youth Director position; why do we need one, should we spend money that we do not have, and what are the benefits. Bill mentioned that because we allocate the money for the position does not mean we will hire. The budget is merely a plan and it is not set in stone. The budget just enables us to take action.

Pastor also mentioned we have to think about what we want VS what we need; how do we get to where we need to be. Pastor stated that no one wants a deficit budget. Pastor asked that we consider increasing our tithes and giving by 5%. Papers were passed out for people to make a commitment to help St. Paul's.

A vote was taken on which budget plan St. Paul's would move forward with. The congregation voted to go with Plan B, with two congregational members voting for Plan C.

Old Business

Larry Kessler reported on the Erie Lutheran Conference and gave his thanks for the support of the congregation. Over 30% of the survey responses came from St. Paul's. They will have a meeting at the end of October to form a plan. There will be a forum held on November 9, 2025 to share recommendations.

New Business

Cindy Dohanic requests more participation in taking care of the outside of the church. Joe Lang will have John Erikson put together a schedule for people consider helping. Barb Davies suggested that there be signup sheets for certain sections and then if something was spotted, we would know who to call.

Finally, Pastor Erik led the installation of all elected persons to Congregation Council and Synod Assembly, with all in attendance voicing their support of these representatives and asking for God's guidance and protection.

The Annual Meeting adjourned at 11: 40 am upon motion, second, and unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marsha Szymanowicz

Congregation Council Secretary

MarshaSzymanowicz@stpaulserie.org

Ballot Job Descriptions & Information

It is required that all nominees for all ballot positions must be confirmed voting members of our congregation in good standing.

Congregation Council:

C12.01. The voting membership of the Congregation Council shall consist of the pastor, the officers of the congregation, and at least five (5) and no more than nine (9) members of the congregation, one of whom may be a confirmed youth or young adult member. Any voting member of the congregation may be elected, subject only to the limitation on the length of continuous service permitted in that office...

The regular Congregation Council meeting happens every third Tuesday of the month at 6:15 PM. Along with other collateral duties, members of the council also meet with the committees to which they serve as liaison.

Synod Assembly Congregational Representatives:

The NW PA Synod Assembly happens in June every year at Thiel College in Greenville, PA. Every one of the seventy-plus congregations in our synod are asked to send their rostered leaders and one male, one female, and one youth or young adult delegate to speak to the mission of our synod at this event and to vote on their congregation's behalf. Upon the completion of this assembly, these representatives bring back to the church council and the congregation what they saw, heard, and experienced. For more information, visit the synod's website: www.northwesternpasynodelca.org.

Erie Lutheran Conference Representatives:

The purpose of the Erie Lutheran Conference is to be a shared ministry among the ELCA congregations within Erie County. Each church appoints two representatives to the ELP Council, who in turn direct, focus, and coordinate the combined mission and ministries of the conference to best serve our community together in the name of Jesus. Our two representatives bring back to the Congregation Council reports and suggested actions from these meetings. The Conference generally meets once a quarter on a Thursday night.

Nominating Team:

C13.02. A Nominating Team of four (4) voting members of this congregation, two of whom, if possible, shall be outgoing members of the Congregation Council, shall be elected at the annual meeting for a term of one year. Members of the Nominating Committee are not eligible for re-election for more than two (2) consecutive terms. It shall be the duty of the Nominating Team to nominate candidates for election to the Congregation Council and the Nominating Team at the annual meeting. Nominees must be voting members.

Audit Team:

C13.03. An Audit Team of three voting congregation members shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Audit Committee members shall not be members of the Congregation Council. Term of office shall be three years, with one member elected each year. Members shall be eligible for re-election. It shall be the duty of the Audit Team to audit books of the congregation following the close of each calendar year and conclude the audit by July 1 of the following year. A report of the audit shall be made available to the congregation at that time.

Congregation Council President

It has been my pleasure to serve as President of the Church Council this year. You can rest assured that we have a committed leadership team and it is our mission to serve God. I personally want to thank Joanne, Erich, Vanessa, Bill, Joe, Kelly, Marsha, and Larry for all their hard work and dedication.

We are continually amazed by everything our church does both within the congregation, and throughout the wider community. Much of this work happens behind the scenes, and the Council thanks everyone who contributes.

The office staff of Debbie and Nick are awesome and provide invaluable communication and financial expertise for our church. The Maintenance Team of Mark and Steven do an excellent job of cleaning and maintaining our building and grounds. We'd be lost without you. Our childcare and preschool programs continue to excel and provide a top-notch service to our community. We thank Nancy, Bridget, Melissa, and the teachers for all they do. The music program and choir led by Andrew greatly enhances our worship service. Our ears are blessed by his talents and those of the accompanists': Brendan, Christine, and William.

The Food Pantry, altar care, grass cutting, and yard cleanup teams are definitely some of those "behind the scenes," and we thank everyone involved for their good works. Thanks to the quilters for all their handiwork and special congratulations on the 10,000-quilt milestone! Our various team members and other volunteers are too numerous to name in this letter but a BIG thank you to everyone involved!

I would like to especially thank Ron Till for decades of service with the Property Team and the multiple projects that he has managed for our church.

Thanks to Pastor Erik for his exceptional leadership and spiritual guidance. Thanks, again, to the whole congregation for all the gifts you have given to the church! Please continue to pray for everyone at St. Paul's and ask God to lead us on our everlasting journey.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mike Barber

Congregation Council President

President@stpaulserie.org

Pastor

In the greater scheme of things, not a lot has changed since my Pastor's Report last year. That is exactly what we want to hear when we are going the right direction in terms of mission and ministry. We continue to grow in numbers and in depth of faith. People continue to put their money where their mouth is, as giving toward the mission and ministry that we are doing continues to increase. Again, these are not the goals we are aiming for but are instead benchmarks from which we can measure the effectiveness of our service within the Kingdom of God in our little corner of the world.

As for our ministry here: We, as a congregation, added thirteen members into this faith community since last October. Nine were transfers with Reaffirmation of Baptism into membership; the other four were children and adults who were baptized. Additionally, we confirmed via the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism one young adult into full voting membership in our congregation. What this all represents for us as a community of faith is continued growth and continued morphing into who God wants us to be as the People of St. Paul's in this time and place. I will loudly repeat what I told you all last year in my report: Why this matters to us is the same reason new generations matter to families – we carry on our faith traditions into a new day, ever-developing to better relate and witness in word and deed to those whom God puts in our path. We welcome our newest members on board with us to serve Christ, serve each other, and serve the world.

As we celebrate those things, we had one church family move away and additionally buried three saints attached to our church family since last All Saints' Day. I have had the privilege of saying over and over that saying goodbye to people we love and miss is never easy, but this separation is not forever; this is the promise of Christ the people of StPaulsErie have been declaring together in this place since our congregation was founded.

In a cupboard in our church office, we have a number of long, skinny boxes. They all contain tubes of, you guessed it: architectural plans and blueprints. One says "Basement Unit 1948." Another, "1961 Master Plan." And then there is the "Chapel-Lounge 1953," and the "Fellowship Hall 1986," and "[Sanctuary] 1978," and so on. These aged, rolled-up papers were created by architects who were commissioned to design a meeting place for a neighborhood congregation calling themselves St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Erie. They worshiped here and they called it home. They expanded that meeting place to best serve the evolving nature of this faith community. Almost 80 years ago this group of Christians decided to assemble something that would continue to grow, building a legacy that would outlast even their own earthly breath.

These saints of God had a vision – what we can now look back on and call *foresight*— and through it created a place of mission and ministry that still carries on today. It carries on through more than just their foresight and through their generous giving while they were here with us, but also through the

gifts they left for StPaulsErie upon their death. Thanks to them we now worship here; we now call it home. Because of them we have a Preschool and Child Development Center that brings love, care, and the Word of God to children and their families; a Food Pantry that feeds the hungry; a quilting group that covers the cold and unfortunate; a meeting hall where recovery groups can gather; a gym where the neighborhood can meet and celebrate; and the list goes on. That mission and ministry has been bequeathed to us and is now fully our responsibility.

To give some perspective on what the ancestors did: it's a little bit like planting a tree. It's not about the shade now, but the foresight to plan the shade that will be needed by the generations to come. This is why we plan; this is why we look ahead now. We know that StPaulsErie is not just about us in the here-and-now — it also encompasses the legacy of those who have gone before us and the needs of those who will come after us. While regular offering¹ is an important marker for us as stewards of this congregation's mission and ministry, it is not the only one that needs our attention. The Stewardship Team, serving at the behest of the Congregation Council, will be spending its foreseeable effort and focus on Legacy Giving. Partnering with the [ELCA Foundation](#), together we will learn how to best utilize the gifts we have during our time here on earth and how to do the same for when that time for us comes to an end.

As I expressed last year: Marie and I are still absolutely thrilled to be here as part of this faith community and we are still planning on retiring out of this call... in about 15 years. If there is one thing that I learned in this life thus far: 15 years flies by faster than you want or expect it to. I want my legacy here to be one of growth in faith community members and in the depth of their faith. I also want my legacy to be one that leaves this mission and ministry in a place of financial stability so that, as new generations of the faithful have new ideas for mission and ministry, they are able to step out into the world in the name of Christ and serve God's Kingdom accordingly.

For now, keep doing what you are doing: people are seeing Christ in you and through the work you do. Because of that, people want to be part of the mission and ministry with us here at StPaulsErie. So do me a favor: begin your estate planning, using your legacy to make safe for the future those things with which God has entrusted to you today – those things that make StPaulsErie what it was yesterday, is today, and will be tomorrow.

Serving God and serving others alongside you,

Erik Young

Pastor

Pastor@stpaulserie.org

¹ Great job on your regular giving/offering, People of StPaulsErie!!!

Director of Administration & Communication Ministry

Great teamwork is the foundation of our success. Thank you to all the members whose time and energies embody discipleship. Your commitment to our mission and ministry is the beating heart of St. Paul's. It is a privilege to support you and work alongside you.

St. Paul's administration tasks include keeping our organization organized, efficient, and operational. This includes scheduling, communication, record-keeping, and office management.

Communication encompasses graphics, brochures, announcements, bulletins, newsletters, and annual reports, with an ongoing emphasis on our social media presence. We have 942 followers on Facebook, 246 followers on Instagram, 116 subscribers on YouTube, and 12 followers on Bluesky. Our average online worship service viewership is 17 per week (through August 2026) and our worship videos are shared on Facebook and YouTube. Our website continues to be a highly-used resource for our school families, as well as rental groups. We totaled 5,440 visits (from August 31, 2025-August 31, 2026) with 95% of traffic to our website coming from new users, with many of them using our calendar and contact links to connect with our church office or schools. 66% our users are also on mobile devices, so it has been very important to make sure everything we share is mobile-friendly.

I extend a special thank you to Cheryl Till for meticulously and lovingly attending to weekly communion and everything altar care-related, like paraments, altar clothes, linens, and robes. I will miss the weekly touchpoint with you! As in years prior, thank you to Nick Barber for being my right-hand man. You quietly keep things running behind the scenes. Thanks, also, to Mark Helms for responding to all things sideways concerning our facility. And to the membership of our faith community, thank you, again, for everything you do to keep us connected and engaged.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie Dravec

Director of Administration &

Communication Ministry

Office@stpaulserie.org

Director of Child Development Center Ministry

The mission of the Child Development Center is to provide children and their families with high-quality childcare in a nurturing, caring and happy environment that encourages the social, physical, emotional, and intellectual development of each child. Through intentional experiences, we strive to instill a lifelong love of learning to help every child build a successful future.

Serving children from six-weeks-old through the end of fifth grade, our center has supported over 64 families in the past year alone. Our current enrollment includes: 15 children in the infant /toddler program, 17 children in the preschool program, and 30 children in the school-aged program.

Our before- and after-school program serves students from Asbury, Grandview, and Tracy elementary schools. We also continue to expand our highly popular summer camp, which remains a favorite among both children and parents.

We provide much more than coverage for working parents—we deliver a rich, age-appropriate educational environment using a state-approved curriculum aligned with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. Inclusivity is central to our values. We proudly welcome all families, regardless of a child's unique needs, and partner closely with therapists from Early Intervention and Behavioral Health. We are also deeply committed to supporting families navigating extenuating circumstances, such as foster care placement or the loss of a loved one.

We continue to collaborate with Pastor Erik to foster stronger connections between our center, church members, and the broader community by opening all of our events to everyone. Fully licensed by the Department of Human Services, we are proud to hold a STAR 4 rating—the highest level achievable in the Pennsylvania Quality Rating Improvement System (Keystone STARS).

I want to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who has supported the Child Development Center through our various transitions and growth. Heartfelt thanks to our extraordinary staff for their dedication, care, and daily excellence with the children. Also, thanks to our families for entrusting us with your precious children every day. Finally, thank you to the church & community for your unwavering support and ongoing partnership.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Dahlquist

Director of Child Development Center

CDCDirector@stpaulserie.org

Director of Music & Worship Ministry

As I look back on another year serving as Director of Music at St. Paul's, I am reminded how fortunate I am to be part of a congregation that cares deeply about worship, music, and one another. Music continues to be an important part of our life together, helping us express our faith and draw closer to God. I am grateful for this congregation's encouragement as we continue to grow our music ministry while remaining rooted in the traditions of our Lutheran faith.

Our choir currently has twenty members, and I am continually thankful for the dedication and enthusiasm they bring to worship each week. Their willingness to share their gifts and give their time makes the choir a special part of the life of St. Paul's. I am equally grateful to all those who contribute music throughout the year through solos, ensembles, instruments, and other special offerings. Each contribution enriches our worship in its own way.

Behind every worship service is a team of people whose work often happens out of sight but makes an enormous difference. Our Worship Team and multimedia volunteers give generously of their time and creativity to help our services run smoothly and to welcome those worshipping both in person and online. I am also grateful to Megan for her continued work preparing our weekly worship slides.

I want to offer a special word of thanks to Cheryl Till, who has faithfully led our Altar Care team. Cheryl has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure the many details surrounding our worship services were cared for and everything was ready each week. Her dedication has been an enormous gift to St. Paul's. As Cheryl steps back from this responsibility, she leaves a significant hole to fill, and we will certainly miss her leadership and care. Thank you, Cheryl, for all you have done to make our worship together possible.

Our music library has also seen a transition this year. I want to thank Nancy Ulrich for her faithful service as music librarian before her move away. We are grateful for the care she gave to this important ministry. I am pleased that Bev Loomis has taken on the role, helping us maintain and care for the music that supports our worship throughout the year.

Looking ahead, we continue to consider opportunities to expand the ways we make music together. One possibility is the return of our bell choir. If there is sufficient interest, I would love to see this beautiful form of worship become part of our congregation's life once again.

We will also continue the tradition of The Longest Night, our musical, candlelit service held during the Christmas season. While this time of year brings joy for many, it can also be difficult for those experiencing grief, loneliness, or other challenges. This service offers a quiet space for reflection, comfort, and hope. We will gather for The Longest Night on December 20 at 7:00 p.m.

Above all, I am thankful for the people who make this ministry possible. The encouragement and kindness that Megan, our family, and I receive from this congregation mean a great deal to us. It is a privilege to serve St. Paul's. On behalf of our section leaders, Brendan Daugherty, Christine Daugherty, and Will Steadman, thank you for your continued support and for allowing us to share in the musical life of this congregation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrew Rainbow

Director of Music & Worship Ministry

MusicDirector@stpaulserie.org

Director of Preschool Ministry

Preschool welcomes back Jenna Atkins and Mel Sinclair as our preschool teachers. Melissa Collins (director) and Michelle Kohler are the pre-k teachers.

Our preschool is Monday, Wednesday and Friday. We currently offer two traditional preschool classes, a morning class and an afternoon class. Ages range 3-5 years-old. These classes are two and a half hours each. The morning class is 9-11:30 am and afternoon class is 12:30-3 pm. Monthly tuition is \$180. We also offer a pre-kindergarten program that ranges in age from 4 1/2 -5 years-old. This class is 9 am-2 pm and monthly tuition is \$245.

We continue to have monthly community helpers come in to do activities with the kids. We also host two Parents' Night Out, which has been a huge hit. Kids and teachers wear their pajamas on a Saturday night from 6-9 pm, while engaging in a lot of fun activities and food.

Our mission is to provide a strong educational foundation for children. We accomplish this by providing a caring and safe environment where children learn through the joy of adventure and hands-on play. In a loving atmosphere, the children also develop emotional and social skills. We send home a monthly newsletter to inform parents about general information and upcoming events and activities. We also use an app to send pictures and updates, and it allows the parents to easily get a hold of the teachers.

We want to thank Pastor Erik for his continued support of our children and program. Also, many thanks to Council and St. Paul's congregation for all their help throughout the year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Collins

Director of Preschool

PSDDirector@stpaulserie.org

Community Care Ministry

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

-James 2:14-17

St. Paul's Community Care Ministry is supported by many volunteers who, by and through God's grace, accomplished many ministry projects:

Patchwork of Love

Patchwork of Love had a productive and rewarding year! A landmark 10,000 quilts have been completed and blessed. Patchwork of Love has gifted many new, large quilts, baby and lap quilts, knitted hats, knitted scarves, and pairs of mittens/gloves this year. This venerable ministry donated quilts to Bethesda Children's Home, Girard and Pfeiffer-Burleigh kindergartens, St. Paul's new members, high school and college graduates, and to fifteen families in our Giving Tree ministry. Patchwork of Love has about 25 quilters, and approximately 16 quilters gather each Tuesday morning for quilting in Clare-Wolfe Lounge.

Lutheran World Relief Personal Care Kits

St. Paul's congregation again contributed personal hygiene articles for the preparation of a record number Personal Care Kits this year. This ministry is led by Peggy Fuhrman. The care kits are distributed after assembly by congregation volunteers on God's Work. Our Hands. Day of Service & Rally Day. Thanks to all!

St. Paul's Food Pantry | Reverse Advent Calendar

St. Paul's partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank continues its ministry operation of our food pantry this year. Our food pantry accepts food donations from the congregation and receives food from Second Harvest Food Bank. Distribution of grocery bags of food occurs every last Thursday of the month. Typically, 15-20 families are served each month. Thanks to Cindy Dohanic, Linda Martz, Debbie DeCoursey, and all of the many volunteers for the successful start to this important outreach ministry. Gabe Chiapa coordinated our Reverse Advent Calendar for day-to-day food contributions to benefit the St. Paul's Food Pantry. We thank all in our faith community who donate many bags of food.

Hot Dog Supper

The Hot Dog Supper at Holy Trinity Pasta and Soup Kitchen was a success on May 28, 2026. Our volunteers served over 50 people and also donated cooked food to Community Shelter Services.

ELCA World Hunger Appeal

Gabe Chiapa coordinates the ELCA World Hunger Appeal campaign during Lent and ELCA Good Gifts program during the Advent season.

Erie County CROP Hunger Walk

St. Paul's efforts for the 2026 CROP Walk resulted in a resounding success. Thanks to the generosity of the sponsors and walkers, our gift to Erie County CROP Walk may be a new record. While the financial results will not be final until later this fall, we hope to exceed last year's records! Gabe Chiapa took over St. Paul's coordination in this ministry from Peggy Fuhrman, who served many years. Gabe's efforts were a great success. Thanks to everyone who helped, and to all who participated and donated.

The Christmas Giving Tree

Sara Beilharz coordinates the Giving Tree ministry which again was performed virtually. This ministry helped provide a Christmas to 15 families. Each family receives gifts from St. Paul's congregation and quilts gifted by Patchwork of Love. Thrivent provided a \$250 Community Action Grant, and we gratefully received monetary donations from St. Paul's congregation. This ministry needs volunteers and we are looking to our congregation for help with this venerable ministry.

The Christmas Cookie Tray Team

Led by Terry Moyer and Ruth Moyer, the Cookie Tray Team ministry continues to thrive with 2025's record results of more than 100 cookie trays. All cookies were donated by St. Paul's members, along with fudge cups, candy canes and wrapped candy. Thanks to the many congregation members who helped with baking, sorting and delivery!

Sock Drive

Our 2025-2026 Sock Drive to benefit those experiencing homelessness was fruitful. More than 950 pairs of new men's socks were collected and distributed to St. Patrick's Haven, along with some knit hats and gloves. This is a record! Thanks to all for your generosity! This ministry will begin again soon, so we appreciate your generosity to come this fall and winter.

Thanks to all our St. Paul's volunteers for answering the call of the Holy Spirit, and may God bless our congregation members for their generous support of these important ministries!

Respectfully Submitted,

Gary Bax

Community Care Team Leader

ServiceAndOutreach@stpaulserie.org

Congregational Care Ministry

The Congregational Care Ministry engages in many different activities which are supported by a dedicated group of people. We are grateful for and want to thank everyone, both named and unnamed in this report, who were willing to give their time and talents to care for the members and friends of our congregation.

- Bereavement luncheons provide physical comfort, sustenance, and offer a connection to those who are grieving.
- Our visitation team shares time with church family members, including those who are homebound. The visits provide support and encouragement; communion is also offered. Greeting cards are also always appreciated.
- Prayer shawls continue to be made by various volunteers and are available in St. Paul's entryway for members to distribute to friends and family in need. Our thanks to all who lovingly made these beautiful treasures this past year.
- Grief books were mailed to members who suffered the loss of a loved one in 2025-26. Our thanks to Terry Moyer for taking on this project.
- Greeting cards were sent out monthly to our members who serve in the military. Our thanks to Barb Davies who faithfully mailed these cards and keeps the addresses up-to-date on the bulletin board in the hallway of St. Paul's, should anyone wish to correspond with any of our service members.
- We continued our soup ministry in 2026, handing out soup to the sick and shut-ins in need. If any member of St. Paul's is doing a visitation, feel free to stop by the church kitchen and take a container of soup from the chest freezer to give to the person you are visiting. Our thanks to all who provided homemade soups for distribution.
- The Christmas cookie tray ministry is organized by Terry & Ruth Moyer. Seventy-nine cookie trays were assembled and delivered the weekend of December 20 & 21, 2025. The cookie trays for 2026 will be done on Saturday, December 19 and Sunday, December 20. Trays will be shared with sick and shut-in members, friends of the congregation in need, Millcreek first responders, three warming shelters (the Upper Room, St. Patrick's Haven, Our Neighbor's Place), and the Giving Tree families.
- The Faith, Family and Friends Ministry hosted the following events this year: new member reception on February 22, Lenten soup supper on February 25, coffee hour on April 19, coffee hour to honor Pastor Erik upon his US Army War College graduation on June 28, and Pulpit Exchange coffee hour on September 20. We will also be hosting Reformation & Confirmation coffee hour on October 25, & Thanksgiving Feast on November 15.

My thanks to the members of Faith, Family & Friends team for a great job this year. It takes many faithful people to keep up with a busy ministry like this one. I would like to thank everyone who made a visit, sent a card, said a prayer, drove someone to the doctor or to church, baked cookies, knitted a prayer shawl, called to check up on someone, and made soup. The list of good works goes on and on. All these seemingly small kindnesses are appreciated more than words can say.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry Moyer

Congregational Care Team Member

CongregationalCare@stpaulserie.org

Property Ministry

As I step down from the role of chairperson for the property ministry that I've had the pleasure to serve for many years, I want to thank Joe Lang for agreeing to take over for me next month. I also want to personally recognize and thank Ron Till for his many, many years of serve, commitment and dedication to St. Paul's congregation and the care of this facility. His plethora of knowledge and experiences has kept this facility up and running to its fullest potential for many years. Thank you and God bless.

Just a few costs of note in 2026 (as of 8/31):

- \$0.00 Lawn & garden upkeep - We have volunteers mow & garden in the summer; thank you!
- \$7,818 Snow removal services for 2025/2026
- \$5,618 Repairs & maintenance
- \$2,704 Janitorial & cleaning supplies
- \$2,003 Pest control
- \$9,388 Electricity
- \$7,326 Natural gas
- \$2,267 Trash & recycling removal
- \$1,708 Water & sewer

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Frey

Property Team Member

Property@stpaulserie.org

Team Members: Ron Till, Mark Helms, Joe Lang, Steven Roward, John Erikson

Worship Ministry

The Worship Team has been striving for ways to better serve our faithful and supportive congregation. We are focusing on a common thread to tie the service together which includes the readings we hear, the prayers we pray, the hymns we sing, and the praise offering by the choir. Altar Care follows the church calendar for the colors we see and the altar cloth and banners that adorn our sanctuary. We schedule readers, communion assistants and acolytes. The slides you enjoy from the projector are created by Megan Rainbow. We submit monthly articles to the newsletter that focus on worship and the aspects of our Lutheran faith. And we continue to send cards to visitors that fill out the welcome card in the pews, the shut-ins, and the people on the prayer list. Should you know of anyone who needs a bit of encouragement please let us know and it will be an honor to send a card.

On All Saints Day we provided an opportunity for our loved ones who have gone home to Jesus to be remembered with the citing of their name, a picture on the screen and ringing of bells. An opportunity is offered for family and friends to come forward to light a candle in their memory. This service is especially moving and reverent, and is an amazing remembrance of those we love and a reflection on the life that they lived.

Lent was a blessing with the soup suppers and the teaching and preaching by Pastor Erik. We received ashes (prepared by Pastor Erik from last year's palms) on Ash Wednesday and had a Maundy Thursday service that included the stripping of the altar. Good Friday services rotate between the 7 Lasts Words, The Stations of the Cross, and Tenebrae service. This year we had Tenebrae service that was a very powerful spiritual experience. Many thanks to Brenden Daugherty who spoke powerfully from the back of the church. On Easter Sunday we all rejoiced because He has risen (He has risen indeed!).

Rally Day this year was very exciting this year. The children had the opportunity to participate in the blessing of their backpacks. Choir returned for the season. Worship Team had the honor of hosting the coffee hour. Our new adult Christian Education program was launched. And in addition, Community Care were assembling their care kits. It was wonderful to see so many of us gathered for fellowship and continuing our service.

Once again, Christmas was a magical time in our sanctuary. We were inspired by the arrival of the star (made by Larry Kessler and Ron Till). The Advent wreath with the candles for hope, peace, joy and love was at the altar. The lights were up, the trees were decorated with the Chrismon's (made by the women of the church and the youth), the altar cloths (made by Ruthy May) adorned the altar, and garlands of greens and berries were everywhere. The manger was in a place of honor in front of the altar and the manger characters were donated by Larry and June Kessler (in honor of their children). The angels

singing praise and the stars that top the trees were donated by the Zinrams (who have moved to Clarion). Baby Jesus arrived on Christmas Eve. Our beautiful sanctuary was filled with tradition, warmth, comfort and love. Our theme this year was "Words for the Beginning." It filled our Advent season with words that we need to hear again and again. Each word was represented by a quilt square that was crafted by Patchwork of Love quilters. The final presentation was a quilt that was presented to the congregation.

Longest Night is one of the most reverent services that we offer to the congregation. It is an opportunity for all to reflect on the year, to remember the good times, to mourn the losing of our loved ones, and to rest in the warmth, fellowship and love of our church family. Worship Team provided an opportunity for all to come forward and light a candle for their loved ones.

None of our services would be complete without the assistance and creativity of Megan Rainbow. We are so grateful that she is sharing her talent with us and she is so faithful with operating the projector and creating the slides. We offer her and her assistants Brendan Daugherty, Amelia Young, and Aubrey Nair our deepest thanks.

And many, many thanks to our wonderful team for their hard work and dedication to St. Paul's: Andrew Rainbow (our talented leader), John Damico, Joanne Erikson, Becky Holcomb, Larry Kessler, Amy Nupp, Beth Kuric, Sue Lang, Ruth Mussett, Cheryl Till, Megan Rainbow, and Marsha Szymanowicz.

We all thank you for the opportunity and the honor of serving our church family.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marsha Szymanowicz

Worship Team Secretary

Worship@stpaulserie.org

Records, Data & Statistics

Baptisms: 4

DiLuzio, Alex John
Flanigan, River Austin
Hiatt, Rowan Clay
Hughes, Sophia Elizabeth

First Holy Communion: 1

Ambrose, Katherine

Affirmation of Baptism (Confirmation): 1

Gould, Quinn

Marriages: 0

Funerals/Deceased: 3

Blaszczyk, Candis R.
Farver, Betty Lou
Szymanowicz, Jim

Transfers In: 9

Ambrose, Jeff
Ambrose, Julie
Ambrose, Katherine
Harper, Erin
King, Denise
King, Ron
Owen, EJ
Owen, Jessika
Smith, Sandy

Transfers Out: 2

Ulrich, Joe
Ulrich, Nancy

Total Official Disciple Membership as of August 31, 2026: 333

Average Weekend Worship Attendance as of August 31, 2026: 102

Average Weekend Online Attendance as of August 31, 2026: 17

Finance Ministry

2026 is a year that has been financially mixed, starting negative but turning positive. We started the year with a budgeted deficit of almost \$18,177, but are on-track to potentially overcome that and finish around parity. On the income side, we're benefitting from weekly offerings that have been exceeding forecasts, increased Erie Gives Day donations, and increased facility usage income. Expenses have stayed largely to-budget overall, but, at the detailed-level, savings from a vacant Youth Ministry Director position balanced out increased utility costs and several other smaller items. If current giving and expense trends continue as they have been year-to-date, we are projected to finish the year with a net surplus/deficit of around zero!

Considering this, we crafted, and are requesting approval from the Congregation Council, a balanced budget for 2027 that supports the ministry plan for the coming year. This budget takes care of our ministries, staff, and property, while considering the demonstrated giving performance of the congregation over the course of 2026.

To note: to achieve this balanced budget, the Director of Youth Ministry position does not have funding for 2027. However, there is the possibility of Council to amend the budget to include funding for that role if the congregation can increase giving sufficiently to support it and expenses otherwise stay within overall forecasted amounts. Also, this budget does not include a contribution to the Building Fund, which covers larger & long-term facility maintenance expenses; we should prioritize adding this back into the annual budget within the next year, as funds & other priorities allow.

We truly appreciate the work of the church staff and other volunteers in the execution of the financial and accounting duties throughout the year. These included but are not limited to: weekly counting and depositing of the offering, creating and mailing statements, paying bills, maintaining the ledger, and creating and distributing reports.

In summary, 2026 is a financially challenging year, with a deficit that is on-track to be overcome, thanks to the diligence and efforts of many. We are entering 2027 in a directionally more positive financial position, and we look forward to enabling the maximization of our ministries in a fiscally responsible way.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Gross

Treasurer & Finance Team Leader | Finance@stpaulserie.org

Team Members: Joanne Erikson, Nick Barber, & Mike Barber

2026 Income/ Expense Report (as of 8/31/2026)

Thank Offering, Tithes, and Giving

Regular Offering	\$ 170,563
Weekly Envelope, Loose, Initial, Seasonal, Sunday, School, Flowers, Bulletins, Free Will	
Facility Usage Donations	\$ 48,573
General Usage, Preschool, Child Development Center	
Other Income	\$ 5,725
Donations Back - Reimbursement, Miscellaneous, Erie Gives Day, Interest	

Thank Offering, Tithes, and Giving	\$ 224,862
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Worship Ministries

Music Ministry	\$ 30,462
Director, Special, Seasonal, Substitutes, Instrumental and Vocal, Section Leaders, Sheet Music	
Altar & Sanctuary Supplies	\$ 810
Decorations, Candles, Oil, Tapers, Bread, Water, Wine, Grape Juice, Pew Cards, Envelopes, Pencils	
Worship Planning	\$ 1,321
Substitute Pastor, CCLI, Copyrights, Sundays and Seasons Books, Calendars, Online Subscriptions	

Worship Ministries	\$ 32,593
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Faith Formation Ministries

Confirmation Ministry	\$ -
Affirmation of Baptism Sunday Celebration, Books, Bibles, Certificates, Resources, Subscription, Retreats and Outings, Camp	
First Communion Ministry	\$ -
Books, Folders, Resources, Challises, Bread, Certificates	
Sunday School Ministry	\$ 312
Curriculum and Supplies, Christmas Program, Celebration Sunday, Bibles, Teacher Recognition	
Youth & Children Ministry	\$ 2,892
Directors, Events, Retreats and Outings, Supplies and Resources, Youth Gathering	

Faith Formation Ministries	\$ 3,204
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Congregation Care Ministries

Prayer and Care Ministry	\$ 467
Faith, Family & Friends, Funeral/Memorial Receptions, Home Communion Supplies, Prayer Shawl Supplies, Greeting Cards, Cookie Trays, Soup, Home Touch Mailings, Welcome Baskets, Bereavement Meals	

Congregation Care Ministries	\$ 467
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Service & Outreach Ministries**Churchwide and Synod Support Ministry****\$ 12,664**

ELCA, NWPAsynod Mission Support

Service & Outreach Ministries**\$ 12,664****Communications Ministries****Advertising and Marketing Ministry****\$ 1,362**

Constant Contact Email, Web Calendar, Website Hosting, Banners, Brochures,

Social Media, Canva, Zoom

Communications Ministries**\$ 1,362****Administration Ministries****Pastoral Leadership****\$ 66,898**

Salary, Benefits

Office Administration**\$ 37,246**

Director of Administration, Business Manager, Benefits

Office Equipment & Materials**\$ 4,042**Copier Lease, Copier Usage, Office Equipment Maintenance, Offering Envelopes,
Bulletins, Copy Paper, Office, Finance and Kitchen Supplies**Fees & Surcharges****\$ 2,243**Bank Fees, Credit Card, Database Online Fee and Backup, Payroll Processing Fees,
Vanco Fees, QuickBooks, Audit**Postage & Shipping****\$ 486**

Postmaster, Regular Stamps

Other Administration**\$ 7,013**Human Resources, Worker's Comp, Synod Assembly Expense, Staff Appreciation,
Council Materials**Administration Ministries****\$ 117,927****Facility & Property Ministries****Repairs & Maintenance****\$ 22,291**Regular Repairs and Maintenance, Snow Removal and Treatment of Parking Lots
and Sidewalks, Janitorial Supplies, Maintenance Manager**Sexton & Cleaning Services****\$ 4,400**

Custodian

Building**\$ 27,588**Mortgage, Property Insurance, Fire Extinguishers, Pest Control, West Ridge Fire
Donation, Security Doors**Utilities****\$ 23,663**Natural Gas, Electricity, Water and Sewer, Telephone, Internet, Waste and
Recycling Removal**Facility & Property Ministries****\$ 77,941****TOTAL INCOME****\$ 224,862****TOTAL EXPENSES****\$ 246,160****NET INCOME****\$ -21,298**

MIF Mortgage Balance: \$181,952 Mature Date: January 1, 2035

Preschool Ministry (as of 8/31/2026)

Preschool Revenue	\$43,193
Total Preschool Revenue	\$43,193

Preschool Expenses

Preschool Program & Operations	\$2,232
Preschool Human Resources	\$39,901
Preschool Administration	\$5,250
Preschool Other Expenses	\$470
Total Expense	\$47,853
PRESCHOOL NET REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES	
-\$4,660	

Child Development Center Ministry (as of 8/31/2026)

Child Development Center Revenue	\$388,506
Total Child Development Revenue	\$388,506

Child Development Center Expenses

CDC Program & Operations	\$11,950
CDC Human Resources	\$337,351
CDC Administration	\$42,795
CDC Vehicle Expenses	\$5,693
CDC Other Expenses	\$7,729
Total Child Development Center Expenses	\$405,518
CHILD DEV. CENTER NET REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES	
-\$17,012	

Designated Giving and Donations (as of 8/31/2026)

Youth Fundraising	\$3,799
Memorials	\$9,195
Music (Memorials)	\$2,015
Patchwork of Love	\$62
Food Pantry	\$4,961
Thrivent Choice Dollars	\$10,395
Erie Community Foundation Interest	\$11,161
Building Fund	\$26,472
Pastor Discretionary Fund	\$1,548
St. Paul's Contingency	-\$37,649
Preschool Contingency	\$26,473
Child Development Center Contingency	\$81,907