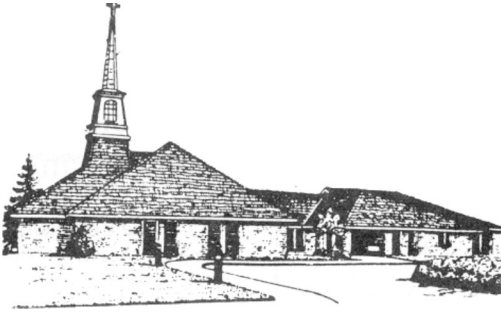




Winter Edition, 2024

## St. Paul Lutheran Church

PO Box 200  
277 W Pine Grove Rd  
Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868

---

# St. Paul Quarterly Letter

---

## A Message from the Pastor

Last year saw a notable shift in our congregation. We welcomed new families. We met our financial giving goal in November. We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of visitors. I can therefore gladly state that we experienced growth last year.

I, along with you, hope this continues. But growth brings its own challenges. We should, therefore, be mindful of these words penned by famed psychologist Abraham Maslow:

“Growth has not only rewards and pleasures but also many intrinsic pains and always will have. Each step forward is a step into the unfamiliar and is possibly dangerous. It also means giving up something familiar and good and satisfying. It frequently means a parting and a separation, even a kind of death prior to rebirth, with consequent nostalgia, fear, loneliness, and mourning. It also often means giving up a simpler and easier and less effortful life, in exchange for a more demanding, more responsible, more difficult life. Growth forward is in spite of these losses and therefore requires courage, will, choice, and strength in the individual, as well as protection, permission and encouragement from the environment.” – page 191, *Toward a Psychology of Being*

*Lord Jesus, we pray you make us courageous and strong so our congregation becomes a protected and encouraging place freeing us to perform experiments that allow your Kingdom to grow among us. In your blessed name, Amen.*

Pastor Paul Tomkiel

### In this Edition:

|                |        |
|----------------|--------|
| Council Report | Page 2 |
| Committees     | Page 3 |
| Prayer List    | Page 3 |
| Spring Baskets | Page 4 |

# Council President's Report

December 2023

Happy new year! May God bless you with joy and health throughout the year.

Here is an update on some of the exciting things that are happening in our congregation.

**Elected the 2024 Church Council** – Sally Kolesar has completed her maximum permitted third and final two-year term on council. She has provided strong leadership and has been a guiding light to help keep us pointed in the right direction. Thank you, Sally, for your outstanding contributions! Our Nominating Committee, consisting of Sally Kolesar, Delores Homan, and Randy Wills was tasked with nominating a replacement for Sally. The committee nominated Sydney Bennington as the new candidate for council for 2024. A special congregation meeting was held November 12. During the meeting, Joy Kling was also nominated to serve as an additional council member. The election was held and I'm happy to announce that Sydney Bennington, Eleanor Bird, Linda Govere, Joy Kling, Jeff Muthler, Lauren Muthler, Ann Reede, and William Stout are your St. Paul Congregational Council for 2024! Thank you Sally, Delores, and Randy for your support to the Nominating Committee and thank you Sydney and Joy for your willingness to serve on council!

**Restarting Adult Sunday School** – It's been a long time since we offered adult Sunday School, but a discussion at a recent fellowship event indicated that there is interest in restarting this. We are launching a trial run on January 14. See the separate story in the

newsletter for further details!

**Started ASHRAE Energy Audit** – This audit is paid for by the West Penn Power Sustainability Energy Fund (WPPSEF) grant that we were awarded earlier this year. Our contractor, Envinity, sent a representative for an on-site inspection at the church on November 16. The purpose of the inspection is to:

- a. Review the building's equipment and current operating conditions.
- b. Examine the building envelope for improvement opportunities.
- c. Determine solar renewable energy feasibility.

The next step is for Envinity to generate a report on their findings, which should be complete by the start of 2024. The entire audit is planned to take 3 months to complete, so we anticipate a February completion. We expect to be able to begin work on improvement activities identified in the report at discounted rates.

**Preparing the 2024 Church Budget** – Council has been working closely with the Finance Committee to develop the church budget for 2024. The budget will be presented during the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 28. Please mark your calendars now for this important meeting!

Enjoy the beautiful winter season!

Jeff Muthler

Council President

## Adult Sunday School Returns

Please join us on Sunday, January 14 for a trial run of Adult Sunday School! We plan to start at 9:15 am and will meet in the parlor (directly across the narthex when entering the church). We will be looking at "Carols of Christmas" by Ruth Buenting.

Each session focuses on one hymn. Participants will reflect on their personal history with the hymn, explore biblical connections in the texts, learn the history and legends associated with the hymn, and consider how the message of the hymn applies to their daily journey of faith.

The text easily lends itself to a rotational leadership so that the group can easily carry on without a dedicated leader.

## Music Program Notes

A big thank you to everyone who helped with the music this Advent and Christmas season! The choir and the instrumentalists all worked hard to create a meaningful accompaniment to the story of our Savior's birth.

The choir is always looking for more singers to join us. If you enjoy singing and like to have fun, then this is the group for you. We rehearse after church on the first, second, fourth, and sometimes fifth Sundays of the month in the choir room directly following the service. We would love to have you join in!

Michelle McMullen

Interim Music Director

## We continue to pray for:

### HOMEBOUND

Liz Perez  
Diane Kemmerer  
Marilyn Niemann  
Lois Corl  
Paul Anderson  
Lois Folmar  
Shirley Gilligan  
Leroy Dreibelbis

### FRIENDS/RELATIVES

Pastor Kelley  
Merle Eyer  
Ramona Book  
Marin Alexis Tomkiel  
Nathan Williams  
Fred Muthler  
Barry Anderson  
Cara & Holden  
Ruth Tier  
Sam Bernstine  
Marlene Chamberlin  
Sylvia Way  
Pam Brocious  
Millie Harper  
Ann Clymer  
Joshua Potter  
Jay Rudy  
Dave & Marlene Kling  
Brian Woodward  
Dennis Dean  
Don Veit

### OTHER MEMBERS

Eileen Butchkoski  
Janice Olsen  
Rich Olsen  
Pastor Paul  
Sally Kolesar  
Paul Anderson

## Worship Duties and Leadership

It has really been wonderful to see new people stepping up to help with worship duties the past few months. Please continue to sign up to help as ushers, acolytes, bell ringers, and live stream assistants. Over the next few months, you will see some new folks serving as readers and assisting ministers, newly trained by Pastor Paul. The new rotation will start in January. If you would like to be a reader or an assisting minister (you can choose one or the other) please let Michelle McMullen know.

Just a note – when the communion assistant is pouring into the small communion cups, please keep them still and we will bring the glass to you. A moving target it really difficult, especially for those of us with bifocals!

Editor's Note: Ron Strouse's name was inadvertently omitted from last month's list of Worship and Music Team members.

## St. Paul Teams

*One of the goals of this newsletter is to let our church family know about the committees/teams of the St. Paul — who they are, what their purpose is, what they do, and their current actions and activities. This month we will tell you about a group of dedicated members who often do their work behind the scenes.*

### Property Team

The Property Team members are Delorse (chair) and Joe Homan, Paul and Cinda Johnson, Ron and Debbie Strouse, Ephraim Govere, and Randy Wills.

The Property Team is responsible for so many things that it is difficult to name all of them, but we'll try to give our readers an overall view of their work.

The committee is responsible for the care and upkeep of the church building and grounds. Much of this they do themselves, sometimes with the help of congregation volunteers and occasionally with outside contractors, such as snow removers, repair people, and our building custodian. This includes office equipment, security, heating and cooling, the sewer system, and musical instruments.

Since St. Paul rents the basement floor to the Dyslexia Reading Center of Central Pennsylvania, they also take care of that organization's physical needs.

When an emergency arises, such as the flooding that occurred a few years ago, the Property Team takes over as general contractors to restore and repair the facilities and equipment.

## LEAD Journey

We appreciate the thoughtful responses everyone has given to our latest survey. You have given the Team a lot to think about as we move toward listening in focus groups. In February, we will be asking you to meet with us in small groups to discuss what we've heard from you so far and take another big step on our journey of discernment. This is the final step of introspective listening before we move out into the community.

Our next workshop with the LEAD facilitators is the first Saturday in February. Please continue to pray for the team as we learn more about how we can best engage with our community and learn what support they need.

## WELCA

WELCA is pleased to announce that we will be organizing Friendship baskets for members of our congregation who are unable to attend church. The baskets will be thoughtfully curated with various goodies to bring joy and comfort. We kindly request volunteers to contribute items for the baskets. Sign-up sheets will be available on the table in the Narthex as we get closer to the event. The baskets will be assembled by WELCA and blessed by Pastor Paul during our Palm Sunday service on March 24th. We ask congregation members to help deliver these baskets to recipients during the week leading up to Easter, which falls on March 31st of 2024.

*Third Sundays* are special at St. Paul, because that's when we get together for food and fellowship. It's also a time when we share announcements that we don't want to share on YouTube. We thank all of you who bring food to share, the people who have signed up to set up and clean up on those Sundays, and those of you who will pitch in and help even though you did not sign up. We invite you to join us, even if you can't bring anything. This is a great Sunday to bring in your Food Bank contributions!



A warm remembrance of last summer's Ice Cream Social on the lawn of St. Paul

## CHURCH BULLETIN BLOOPERS

A cookbook is being compiled by the ladies of the church. Please submit your favorite recipe and an antidote for it.

Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of things not worth keeping. Bring your husbands.

Potluck supper Sunday at 5 pm — prayer and medication to follow.

APRIL NEWSLETTER DEADLINE IS SUNDAY, MARCH 17.