November 2026 Volume 51 Issue 11

Journeys

Journeys is a monthly publication of St. Paul Lutheran Church

Embracing This Season of Transition

A letter to the people of St. Paul Lutheran Church

Grace and peace to you.

Transitions can stir many feelings at once. We may feel hopeful about what lies ahead, grateful for what has been, and uncertain about the road between the two. Yet this in-between time is not simply a season to endure. It is a sacred opportunity to listen, learn, grow, and prepare together for the future God is opening before us.

As your interim pastor, I am grateful to walk with you through this important season. My role is not simply to help St. Paul "get by" until a new pastor arrives. It is to help us take an honest look at our life together—our story, our strengths, our challenges, and our hopes—so that we can move forward with faith and purpose.

We will ask thoughtful questions, revisit habits that may no longer serve us, and celebrate the many ways God is already at work among us. Along the way, we will deepen our faith, strengthen our relationships, and renew our shared commitment to Christ's mission.
Scripture reminds us that, in Christ, we are being "built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God" (Ephesians 2:21–22). This means every person matters. Every gift has a place. Every voice can help us hear more clearly where the Spirit is leading.

Your Voice Matters
Soon, members of the Transition Team will distribute an anonymous Congregational Survey. I hope each of you will take time to complete it and return it to the team. The questions are designed to move us beyond surface impressions and into a hopeful, honest conversation about our congregation.
The team will compile the responses and share what it learns with the congregation. Your participation will help us see St. Paul more clearly and take faithful steps forward together.
As 1 Peter 4:10 teaches, each of us is invited to use the gifts we have received to serve others. In this season, one of those gifts is your perspective. Please share it truthfully in love.
Bible conversation and prayer will ground every step. We are not simply gathering data; we are learning to tell the story of God's people at St. Paul and listening for the Holy Spirit within that story.

Preparing Together for What Comes Next
One of our most important tasks will be completing the Ministry Site Profile, or MSP. The MSP is more than paperwork and more than a step on the way to calling a pastor.

At its best, it is a prayerful and honest portrait of who we are, what God has called us to do, and what kind of pastoral leadership will help us live into that calling. Although the Transition Team, Congregation Council, and Call Committee have particular responsibilities, the MSP belongs to the whole congregation. Its value depends on broad participation. We need your stories, your experiences, your hopes, and your prayers.

How We Will Listen and Learn

The Transition Team will meet for seven sessions, with some work between meetings. The team will:

- build trust and ease anxiety as we learn to work well together;
- name St. Paul's strengths, goals, and current ministries;
- study congregational energy, trends, and the needs of Fullerton and nearby communities;
- review our mission, vision, and values while imagining a faithful and realistic future;
- clarify what we hope for in our next pastor and what our pastor can expect from us;
- prepare a first draft of the MSP; and
- shape that draft into a final profile for review, approval, and posting on-line.

After the Congregation Council reviews the MSP, it will go to the Office of the Bishop for review and approval. Once approved, it will be posted so that potential pastoral candidates can prayerfully consider whether God may be calling them to serve alongside us.

Looking Ahead with Hope

The Transition Team will hopefully complete the MSP by late winter/early spring 2027. The Call Committee will begin training to do its work when the MSP is approved. The Congregation Council will select the Call Committee members, so please speak with a Council member if you feel called to serve.
Many factors shape the Call process, so we cannot promise a firm date for extending a Call. We will keep you informed as the work progresses.

Waiting can be difficult, but waiting is not the same as standing still. During this time, we can listen more deeply, serve more joyfully, and become more fully the congregation God is calling us to be. We can try fresh ideas, strengthen our ministry, and prepare to welcome our next pastor with clarity, unity, and renewed purpose.
The prophet Isaiah speaks God's promise: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19). I believe God is doing a new thing among us—not apart from our past, but through all that we have learned and all that we are becoming.

Thank you for your patience, your honesty, your prayers, and your love for this congregation. I am encouraged by the faithfulness I see in you, and I trust that Christ, our cornerstone, will guide us through every step.
Let us move forward together—with open hearts, listening ears, willing hands, and confident hope.

In Christ,

Interim Pastor Steve Awbrey
Keep looking up!

Visit our transition page at www.stpaulfullerton.org for the complete Ministry Profile.

COUNCIL CORNER

2026 Congregational Council:

President:
Monica
Farias

V. President
Derek Helwig

Secretary:
Maureen Burton

Treasurer:
Tom Pankow

Worship, Stewardship & Evangelism Minister: Debby Otto

Education, Family & Fellowship Minister: Lindsay Heddon

Property Minister:
Chris Heddon

Lay Minister:
Renee
Christensen

Community Minister:

Council Corner

It's Fall. Please join me in a moment of silence while I mourn the end of summer.

On behalf of the Congregation Council, I'd like to express our appreciation to everyone who has welcomed Interim Pastor Steve Awbrey to St. Paul. Pastor Steve has been with us for just about a month and has really hit the ground running—or, maybe more accurately, power walking!

It's been exciting to gain Pastor Steve's fresh perspective on the many opportunities before us at St. Paul. New ideas for growing our congregation and reaching further into our community are inspiring. While we certainly respect our history, we should also ask ourselves: What might be possible if more of us took a leap of faith and gave a new idea or a different way of doing things a chance?

Through the transition team process, we'll all have an opportunity to share our ideas and hopes for the future of St. Paul. I encourage everyone to think boldly about what lies ahead. Let's not become so focused on what we've always done that we lose sight of what we *can* do. Calling a new pastor will undoubtedly bring changes, so let's show potential candidates that we are open to new ideas and ready to support positive growth and change.

Of course, new opportunities and growth take **PEOPLE**! We need more than people who attend Sunday services and participate in church events—although those are important, too.

We need people who are willing to help carry out the work of the church through acts of service.

To those who already dedicate many hours to serving St. Paul, please know that your efforts are seen, valued, and appreciated! If you haven't yet found a way to get involved, or if you've taken an extended break from being engaged, please consider joining a ministry team, such as Evangelism, Stewardship, or Stephen Ministry. You could also help lead our congregation by serving on the Congregation Council, learning to operate the livestream, or joining the Altar Guild. There are opportunities to serve that require just a few hours a month, while others take less than an hour. Every contribution makes a difference!

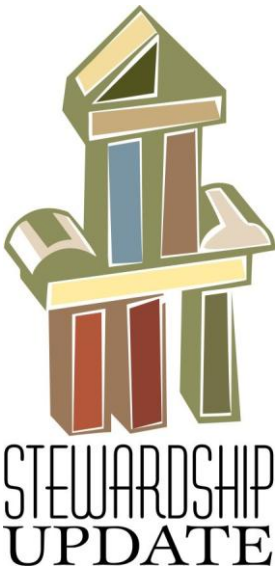
Speaking of service, please join me in thanking the small but mighty crew who came out for our workday on October 10. Chris Heddon, Christian Bakken, Rick Farias, and even Pastor Steve made great progress removing exposed rebar and replacing the caps on our retaining walls. There's still more work to be done, and we'll tackle that at a later date. A **BIG thank-you to Frank Tees** for getting our new LED sign up and running!

I hope everyone will join us for **Fall Family Fun Night on Friday, November 6!** Our Youth and Family Coordinator, Chelsey, has a fun evening planned for everyone.

May you all have a blessed Thanksgiving!

Monica Farias
Council President

Stewardship Update



Congregational giving in September was $3,703 lower than September of last year. Year-to-date giving is $37,404 higher than last year due to higher unexpected giving in 2026. Other Income in September was $280 higher than last year. Expenses in September, excluding major capital expenditures, were $14,329 lower than last year. The pastor and intern vacancies accounted for the majority of the reduction in expenses for the month compared to the prior year. The electrical line to the monument sign was repaired in September. Year-to-date expenses excluding deferred maintenance are running favorable to last year due to the ending of the intern position in September 2025 and the recent pastor vacancy.

We will continue to address deferred maintenance issues through 2026. Work on repairing roof leaks is planned for October.

We welcomed interim Pastor Steve Awbrey in early October to shepherd the congregation as we navigate the process for calling a new pastor for St. Paul.

	Sept 2026	Sept 2025	Total Year 2026	Total Year 2025
Congregation Offerings	$ 22,674	$ 26,377	$ 365,807	$ 328,403
Other Income	$ 7,727	$ 6,373	$ 74,469	$ 49,657
Expense Offsets	$ 25	$ 1,100	$ 10,760	$ 3,608
TOTAL REVENUE	**$ 30,426**	**$ 33,850**	**$ 451,036**	**$ 381,668**
Expenses before capital expendit	$ 29,735	$ 47,353	$ 381,829	$ 410,832
Major capital expenditures (*)	$ 3,288	$ -	$ 55,326	$ -
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$ 33,023**	**$ 47,353**	**$ 437,155**	**$ 410,832**
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	**$ (2,597)**	**$ (13,503)**	**$ 13,881**	**$ (29,164)**

(*) Major capital expenditures for 2026 include kitchen remodel and other planned maintenance projects

Thank you for your continuing financial support of our ministry and mission.
—Tom Pankow, Treasurer

Thank You

Thank you to all that supported our August & September Outreach Challenge in support of NGA (National Giving Alliance) raising funds that will go towards those in need. **We raised enough money to cover clothing for 9 – 11 young people depending on their age group.**

Our November Outreach Challenge will be inward looking. As my term on Council is coming to an end, please consider submitting your name for a 2-year term as Community Minister.

Community = A group of people having a particular characteristic in common; a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals. **Minister =** A person used to achieve or convey something.

Let me know if you are interested in learning more about the position; I'm happy to share my experiences and can give an overview of the commitment and expectations for this role. Please feel free to reach out to me at Church or you can call/text me on my phone 714-853-5234.

Christian Bakken

Worship, Evangelism & Stewardship Ministry

LET'S GET REAL..

Life moves quickly and before you know it we're moving into the holiday season, with so much to do: baking, cleaning, shopping, decorating, wrapping gifts, parties, special time with family and friends, hanging lights and last but not least… giving of our time, talents and treasure. I hope the latter is not last on your list of important things to accomplish in the coming season as there is much to do and many things that need our helping hands. We sure could use more ushers, especially on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, as well as additional readers on Sundays. But alas, we are launching a new app called "Sign Up Genius" which will enable you to sign up for a variety of activities. More information will come in the near future.

Not only are there many opportunities to serve at St. Paul, there are also ways to help in your community. Consider caroling at a retirement center, visiting someone who is sick or unable to get out, helping an elderly neighbor put up their Christmas tree or hang their Christmas lights, bake cookies for someone, help out at a food bank or soup kitchen, adopt a family for Christmas, invite a serviceman or woman who can't make it home to a Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner, or help out at an animal shelter, just to name a few. The list is endless.

I urge you this season to step outside your busy life and consider giving a little time to something significant or to someone in need of a little attention. A small act of kindness can make a difference and serve as a hope for others and when we help others it proves our love is real. So, let's get real this season! I leave you with these words from the Bible:

Matthew 25:35–40
"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me."
"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

God Blessings,
Debby Otto

CHURCH on a MISSION

Our Vision Statement

We are a Christ-centered, redeemed family of God, that loves our community, embodies service and care for all people, and shares our joy and faith in God's grace, mercy and love. As disciples of Christ, we pray to be led by God's Spirit. We learn and grow in wisdom through Scripture, and we embrace inclusivity in our ministry and mission.

Declaración de Visión

Somos una familia de Dios redimida y centrada en Cristo, que ama a nuestra comunidad, viviendo en el servicio y el cuidado de todas las personas, y que comparte nuestra alegría y fe en la gracia, la misericordia y el amor de Dios. Como discípulos de Cristo, oramos para ser guiados por el Espíritu de Dios. Aprendemos y crecemos en sabiduría a través de las Escrituras, y practicamos la inclusión en nuestro ministerio y misión.

Opportunities to join and serve with contacts:

Men's Bible Study - Tom Pankow 714-653-2548

Women's Bible Study - Joyce Wolf. 562-277-2137

WELCA - Diana Bock 714-469-7379
Sarah Circle - Sheila Richards 714-745-5043 Rehab Circle –
Greta Hobson @greta,goellrich@gmail.com

Evangelism/Stewardship - Debby Otto 714-616-2791

Property - Chris Heddon 562-260-3259

Health Ministry - Dawn Stone @dawnstone@yahoo.com

Stephen Ministry – Sarah Tees @sarahtees@hotmail.com

Sunday School and Youth Ministry - Lindsay Heddon 562-652-8438

Altar Guild - Sandy Johnson 714-420-2013

Prayer Group - Carol Pankow714-766-9027

Ushers - Debby Otto 714-616-2791

Sunday Scripture Readers - Add your name on the board Sunday Greeters and welcome team - Debby Otto 714-617-2791

Music and Choirs - Chris Winn @belcanto@aol.com

Community Ministry - Christian Bakken 714-853-5234

Esther Circle - Diane Collins 714-598-8122

Office Help - Isabel Cazares 714-879-8290

Sick and Shut-in Team - Debby Otto 714-616-2791

Sunday Worship Team - Isabel Cazares 714-879-8290

Food Bank at First Lutheran Church (Fullerton) - Mike Day 714-926-5553

Pathways of Hope (food donations) Jacquie Nolan
@Jacquienolan9@gmail.com

WELCA Update

It may still feel like summer at times (at least it does while I'm writing this), but we are in fact in the fall season and the month of November. For many of us, November heralds the start of the holiday season, and with the opportunity to not only give thanks to God, but to demonstrate thankfulness—often in service or giving to others.

Giving thanks to God opens a dialogue with Him to discern how to best serve others; where to allocate our time and our talents. SPLC's culture is based on honoring God by serving others. We serve others for God's glory, not to boast or brag or to be seen serving, but to genuinely help others. Sometimes this comes in the form of hands-on activities, sometimes it is monetary donations and sometimes it is donating requested or needed items. There are many ways to serve.

Serving and helping others, both within the SPLC family and community at large, is the cornerstone of SPLC WELCA. WELCA members support a variety of church needs, come alongside church members who need help, and donate to community needs. You're probably aware that most WELCA members are also active with local community organizations and non-profits.

WELCA's outreach includes support of the Ronald McDonald house that uses the aluminum pop-top tabs that we collect to help fund some of their programs. Ardis Carroll continues to deliver those tabs, so please keep collecting! You can drop them in the Tab Jar in the Narthex.

WELCA's Cheer coordinator Sally Moore supports those in our congregation by faithfully sending out cards of encouragement to members. She is always on the lookout for cheerful and funny cards, with or without messages printed; if you have any to spare please give them to Sally or Diana Bock.

For years, Janet Kitchen has brightened up our patio with posters themed to each month and containing a cheerful message. We have a collection of these posters and are looking for someone who can take the time to sort them and make sure that one of the many beautiful posters gets displayed each month.

There are a variety of different service projects supported throughout the year by WELCA and also through individual circles. We are always open to new suggestions and ideas. Recently Sarah Circle hosted Ladies Night Out and attendees were encouraged to bring boxes of cereal for Pathways of Hope; nearly 70 boxes were collected! Thank you to Sarah Circle for not only coordinating the donations, but for a fun night that included great conversation, delicious food and a cute, fast and fun craft.

Women of the ELCA

November 2026

WELCA not only connects SPLC women, it also helps connect us to our SPLC family and our community. Come to our events, or join a circle, or both! Our Circle leaders, listed below, are more than happy to speak with you and familiarize you with each Circle's demographics, activities and passions. Here's our list of Circles and the leader(s) to contact:

Esther: Diane Collins, 714-598-8122, dianec@servpro-legal.com
Pam Montgomery, 714-526-6417, jjjmother@yahoo.com
Elizabeth: Joyce Wolf, 562-277-2137, joylaine22@yahoo.com
Rahab: Greta Hobson, 714-390-5762, greta.goellrich@gmail.com
Sarah: Sheila Richards, 714-745-5043, sherichards@aol.com

A couple of calendar items for WELCA:

Nov 11 at 9:30 a.m. is WELCA's board meeting in the fellowship hall and all are invited to attend. We welcome new attendees and new ideas.

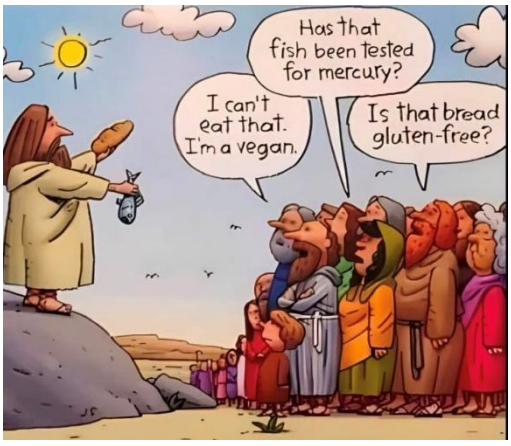
Nov 29 at 4:00 p.m. is Advent by Candlelight designed by Rahab Circle. Now in it's fourth year, Advent by Candlelight gives the women of SPLC the opportunity to gather for food, fellowship, songs and reflections on the miracle of Christmas. Please sign-up on the patio.

Wishing you a joyful November filled with God's blessings.

Karen

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, (knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.)"

Colossians 3:23-24



IN OUR Thoughts and Prayers

STRENGTH, HEALING, COMFORT, MERCY, PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING—For the people of every land and nation.

HEALING
Ning Amante
Dee Ermes
Natalie
Reggio Karen
Legel Ronald
Shirley Strom
David & Noelle Wallace
Clay Baxter—*Friend of Martha Huff*
Johanna—*Friend of a member*
Janet—*Mom of Renee Christensen*
Phil - *Friend of the Nygard Family*
Chris Jean—*Friend of Bill Meyer*
Carol Dahl—*Friend of Annette Nygard* Linda
Kathy & Mick Wallace
Brian Wallace
Zoe Kam— *Friend of Monica Farias*
Linda Nason
Carrie—Annette Nygard's great niece
Savannah - *David & Noelle Wallace extended family*
Jim & Sandy Roberts
George Marotz
Gloria Kam—*Friend and neighbor of The Farias Family*
Tommy Jordan
Terry - *Cousin of David Wallace*
Sophia—*friend of Reagan Fernandez*
Bob Spurlock
Terry Lacy - *friend of Sheila Richards*
Edgar Fagen - *Family member of Dale & Kathie Kottkamp*
Ginna Bennett - *Monica Faria's step mother*
George Von Gnatensky
Brian—*Barbara Littrell's son*

STRENGTH AND HEALING
Tom PeterS
Jim Siegfried - *Friend of Sue Bedell*
Bobbie Godeke—*Friend of Martha Huff*
Marjorie Legel
Todd Shaw
Kenny Sackett
Jack Sorter
Corinna Likes—*daughter of Ron & Linda Likes*
Wendy & Todd Golden - *Friends of Mike Day*
Charlie Castro
Chalentz
Sandy Johnson

COMFORT
Draxler Family - *on the death of John Draxler*

Don't forget our homebound and those in extended care facilities.

Ning Amante
211 E. Panorama Ct.
Brea, CA 92821-3443
714-332-8318

Dee Ermes
2525 N. Brea Blvd.
#118
Fullerton, CA 92835
714-256-7050

Janeen Ostby
1261 Montevideo Ave.
Placentia, CA 92870-3908

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE
9:30 a.m.—In-Person Worship &
Live Stream on Facebook

W. Chris Winn, Director of Music
Isabel Cazares, Office Administrator
Julienne Valenzuela, Nursery Attendant

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God's work. Our hands.