

Sunday Worship at 9:30 a.m.

# ST. PAUL'S CONNECTION

## January 2026



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Website

Visit us on our Website at [www.stpaulucelgin.org](http://www.stpaulucelgin.org) and  
Facebook at St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Elgin, IL

Browse our Church Calendar on our website to keep up to date on  
our various events. You can find the calendar on our website at  
[www.stpaulucelgin.org](http://www.stpaulucelgin.org) and click on the  
calendar link



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### What's in this Issue:

- From the Pastor
- Ministry Spotlight
- Soup or Chili?
- Poinsettias & Brittney Trees
- Diaper Ministry
- Christian Education
- Author Visit & Family Fair
- Financially Speaking
- End of Year O&A Support
- January Birthdays & Anniversaries

### Save the Date:

- Diaper Collection; Sunday, Dec. 4
- Star Word Sunday; Sunday, Jan. 4
- PADS; Tuesday, Jan. 6 & 20
- FreeCycle; Sunday, Jan. 11
- Super Bowl Sunday; Sunday, Feb. 8
- Author Visit & Family Fair; Sunday, Feb. 22

**Church:** 40W720 Plank Rd., Elgin, IL 60124

**Office:** 12N268 Switzer Rd., Elgin, IL 60124

**Mailing:** P.O. Box 5598, Elgin, IL 60121

**Phone #:** 847-628-6118 / **Email:** [stpauls4me@yahoo.com](mailto:stpauls4me@yahoo.com) / **Website:** [stpaulucelgin.org](http://stpaulucelgin.org)

**Office Hours:** Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Rev. Liz Patz, Pastor

Sherry Severing, Administrative Assistant

Jon Kobel, Choir Director

Ron Zemke, Interim Pianist



*Breathe.* That was my star word for 2025. Star words are an exercise in prayerful contemplation: letting the word hop on your train of thought with unlimited rides. As we prepare to receive a new word, I invite you to reflect on your 2025 word (if you remember it). How did it teach you? Inspire you? What did it reveal to you about faith and God? Or why did it NOT inspire you? If you'd like please share your 2025 star word experience with me at [pastorliz24@gmail.com](mailto:pastorliz24@gmail.com).

When I pulled the word BREATHE last year, a core memory was unlocked. When I was 14 I went with my boyfriend to the Bally's gym. I had never been to a gym and never worked out with weights. (I lied about my age to get in.) As I was given a tour of the equipment, I tried each machine. I felt strong and capable. Leg press, lat pull. I was nailing it. Then all of a sudden, I felt the room go dark. I woke up on the floor surrounded by paramedics. I had passed out. The heavy lifting wasn't the problem. I had forgotten to breathe. All these years later, I still remember to breathe when heavy lifting, but I also understand the wisdom of breathing to regulate my spirit as much as my oxygen. My memory and my word joined forces to remind me of Paul's wisdom in Philippians, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (4:13). This is the wisdom that came to mind every time I saw my word.

This year I kept the word card in my wallet. I didn't plan it this way, but every time I searched for my insurance cards, I saw the reminder: BREATHE. A deep breath in the midst of anxiousness is a good idea in general, but breathing as prayer, breathing to receive God's presence and guidance, that reminder was a gift to me. Breathe and know that I am God.

What memories will this year's star word unlock for you? How will the Spirit work through your word to teach you, guide you, inspire you, heal you? Whatever your word in 2026 or your relationship with it, I hope you will give it a chance. Tape it to a mirror. Keep it by your computer. Post it on the fridge. Like the Bethlehem star guided the way to Jesus, let your star word be a creative prayer practice; let it hop on your train of thought and move you closer to Jesus.

Peace,  
Pastor Liz



## Sunday, January 4th Star Word Sunday

We celebrate Epiphany with the choosing of your very own "star word." Like the magi were guided to Jesus by the star, we use our word to guide our thinking about how God is at work in our lives and what good work we are being called to in 2026.

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## MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

### Creation Care



In November, the council voted to create our newest ministry at St. Paul's: the Creation Care Ministry. The seeds were planted in April when David Schoenknecht visited St. Paul's. David is a Naturalist at Hawthorne Hill Nature Center in Elgin. David invited St. Paul's (and all Elgin churches) to participate in the Churches of Restoration Chicagoland cohort. I put an invitation out to the congregation and among those interested, Eric Hayley and Ron Zemke enthusiastically stepped forward to participate. The cohort is sponsored by A Rocha USA and equips churches to implement projects that live out God's call to care for creation and equip others to do likewise, right where we're planted. "You cannot care for what you do not love and you will not love what you do not know." Our goal with this ministry is to recultivate our connection with God's creation around us with hands on learning, study, prayer, and restorative projects.

Ron, Eric, and I attended the inaugural workshops in September and October, gathering with other churches from Evanston to Champaign. Our 2026-27 project goals for St. Paul's include helping the congregation connect with our core mission value "Love of Creation" with outdoor experiences, a book study, and native plant restoration on our church property. Council approved \$1000.00 for the Creation Care ministry in the 2026 budget and we will also apply for an \$800 matching grant. Eric Hayley will join the council in 2026 as the Creation Care representative.

Please watch the video using this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXcejwJMHKA> to learn about the cohort and the inspiration for St. Paul's newest Creation Care ministry. Are you inspired to participate in this ministry? Watch the weekly news for our next meeting.

Pastor Liz, Eric Hayley and Ron Zemke  
Creation Care Ministry

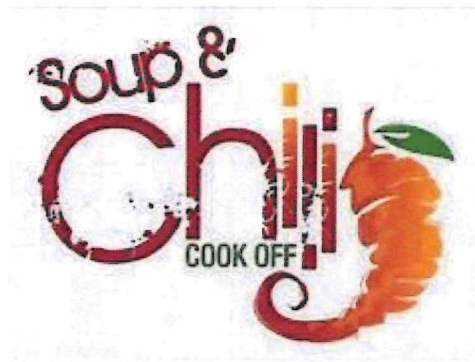




## Next FreeCycle Sunday, January 11

Bring items Sunday morning to the back of the hall across from the nursery. People have asked about making a monetary donation when they take from the FreeCycle table. Donations are never necessary, but always welcome! Monies donated from the FreeCycle tables will support the new Creation Care Ministry.

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## Soup or Chili?

Super Bowl Sunday is February 8th this year, and in the past we have had a chili cook -off and also a 'Soup'er bowl cookoff.

If you plan on attending this year, please give us your vote as to what you would like to see us do. Let Janet Werner know if you would prefer soup or chili or you can email the church office at [stpauls4me@yahoo.com](mailto:stpauls4me@yahoo.com).

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## Christmas Poinsettias given to decorate our Sanctuary:

### Given By:

Paula DeFarno  
The Gary Deihls Family  
The Deins Family  
Their Family  
George Jacobs  
Their Family  
The Kamp Family  
Jon Kobel  
Arnold Lauber

### In Memory Of:

Jerry Vetter, & Verona & Bill Mursewick  
Rich Deihls & Shirley Deihls  
Linda Deins  
Albert & Arlene Huber  
Elaine Jacobs & Elmer & Sylvia Jacobs  
Frank & Mary Kaiser  
Donny Kamp  
John Kobel, Doris Kobel, & Mary Ellen Kobel  
Hildy Lauber

**Given By:**

Mike & Ginny Mursewick  
 Tommy & Rev. Liz Patz  
 Chuck & Tammy Rath  
 Rita Rucker  
 Polly Russell  
 Bill & Karen Snyder  
 Dale Volkening Family

Jennifer Volkening

Ken & Mona Volkening

Elsie Ward

Rev. James Werner & Family

Janet Werner

Mike & Karen Westerman

**In Memory Of:**

Mose, Toni, Janet, Barb, Marie, Carol, Nancy, Nadine, & Barb  
 James & Phyllis Patz & Edmond Acosta

Our Loved Ones We Have Lost

Mother Jeanette Franks

Minna & Gertrude Bohner

Our Parents

Ruby & Bill Schultz, Gerda & Bert Carlson, Nancy Werner, &  
 Rodger Carlson

Patsy Massey, Ruth & Ray Volkening, Deana Gilbert, & James Lehman

Ray & Ruth Volkening, Patsy Massey, Otto Berger, Brian Volkening,  
 Deana Gilbert, & Larry Followell

Ralph Ward

Edward & Henrietta Werner & Nancy Werner

Edward & Henrietta Werner

Jim & Mary Westerman & Ray & Ruth Volkening



## Brittany's Christmas Trees decorating our front and side walks:

(brittanys-trees.com supports SADS research in memory of young Brittany Valene.)

**Given By:**

Kerry Hanrahan  
 Huber Family  
 George Jacobs  
 Myron & Linda Meglin  
 Mike & Ginny Mursewick  
 Paula DeFarno  
 Diane Peterson  
 Bob & Judy Reimer  
 Dale & Sandy Volkening,  
 Kevin Volkening, Karen  
 Westerman, & Barb Kamp  
 Ken & Mona Volkening

Fred & Karen Vollman

**In Memory Of:**

Charles Hanrahan

Albert & Arlene Huber

Elaine Jacobs & Elmer & Sylvia Jacobs

Our Parents

Mose, Toni, & Janet, Bob, Marie, Carol, Nadine, Jerry Vetter, Nancy &

May, Verona & Bill Mursewick

Eileen & Robert Andresen

Bertha Heine, Arlene Reimer, & Bonnie Reimer

Ruth & Ray Volkening

Ray & Ruth Volkening, Patsy Massey, Otto Berger, Brian Volkening,  
 Deana Gilbert, & Larry Followell

Norm & Marie Bumsted & Ralph & Verna Vollman





## MINISTRY NEWS

### Diaper Ministry

#### January 4th Diaper Collection

The first Sunday of the month at St. Paul's is our diaper collection. We continue to collect **sizes 1-6** and the diapers can be dropped off in the narthex, to the left of the entry doors. Your generosity and dedication to the diaper ministry is truly appreciated.

Thank you for your continued support with donating diapers the first Sunday of the month. Your generous donations directly empower our community outreach efforts and provide essential, yet expensive necessities for families experiencing diaper insecurity in our community.

#### Volunteer Mondays & Wednesdays

We continue to bring diapers to the community playgroups twice a month. Diapers are ready for you to take on Sunday or pick-up from the church office. It's a super simple volunteer opportunity - pick-up diapers, go to the location, set out the sign, and distribute a pack of diapers to moms that ask for one. Sometimes no one at the play group needs diapers - and that's ok!

Thank you for representing St. Paul's and helping families keep their little ones dry, healthy, and happy.

Sign-up sheets are on the hall bulletin board.  
Please consider helping at the following events:

Zion Lutheran Church (330 Griswold, Elgin)  
First Monday of the month - 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Izaak Walton (899 Jay St, Elgin)  
Last Wednesday of the month - 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

*Together, we are "Changing Lives One Diaper at a Time"*

Blessings, Karen Smith, Karen Snyder, Barb Kamp



# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

## New Year Nursery Make-Over

Please contact Karen Smith if you are interested in helping create a fresh new space for our littlest ones at St. Paul's.

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## Save the Date: February 22nd Author Visit & Family Fair

We are so excited to welcome Traci Smith, a best-selling author and speaker known for her work on practical faith practices for families on Sunday, February 22nd. She will lead our worship service and a one hour hands-on experience for all after church.

We're so excited to welcome her and we highly encourage families to join us for this amazing opportunity as we begin the Lenten season. More information coming in the new year.

CE Ministry,

Karen Smith, Council Chairperson

Karen Westerman, Ken Volkening, Kylie Smith, Janet Werner, Ginny Mursewick

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## Scripture Keys to a Joyful New Year:

**H**old fast to your faith (Hebrews 4:14)

**A**ssemble with the saints (Hebrews 10:25)

**P**ray earnestly every day (1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18)

**P**ray for great blessings (Malachi 3:10)

**Y**ield not to temptation (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

**N**eglect not your talents and opportunities (Galatians 6:10)

**E**xamine yourself daily (2 Corinthians 13:5)

**W**ork diligently for the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58)

**Y**ield your members to righteousness (Romans 6:11,16)

**E**xercise yourself in godliness (1 Timothy 4:7)

**A**im at sinless perfection (Hebrews 6:1)

**R**edeem the time (Ephesians 5:15, 16)

— Gus Nichols

# Puzzle!

In the New Testament, followers of Christ are called by many names. Use the hints to fill in the blanks. Need help? Check an NIV Bible for the missing letters.

D \_\_\_\_\_ s  
(Acts 6:7)



C \_\_\_\_\_ n P \_\_\_\_\_ e  
(1 Peter 2:9)



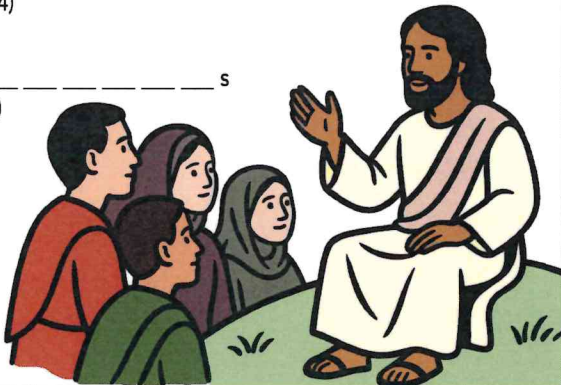
S \_\_\_\_\_ s of C \_\_\_\_\_ t  
(1 Corinthians 4:1)

C \_\_\_\_\_ s  
(Acts 11:26)

B \_\_\_\_\_ s and S \_\_\_\_\_ s  
(1 Thessalonians 4:9-10)

B \_\_\_\_\_ s  
(Acts 5:14)

W \_\_\_\_\_ s  
(Acts 1:8)



Answers: Disciples; Chosen People; Servants of Christ; Christians; Brothers and Sisters; Believers; Witnesses



## TRANSLATE GOD'S WORD

The Bible we use is translated into English from other languages. "Translate" the verse below using the code.

CODE	E=△	L=□	R=+
A=■	G=●	M=↗	S=■
B=X	H=◀	N=⋈	SH=☼
D=◀◀	I=▲	O=⊕	T=♪
	K=	P=□	TH=♥

Y

W F

W

W

U

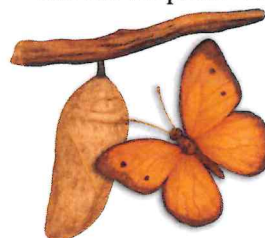
Proverbs 3:13

Answer: Happy is the one who finds wisdom and the one who gets understanding.



## Bible Quiz

Fill in the blank to complete this verse from 2 Corinthians:  
"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new \_\_\_\_\_.  
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."



- A) Creation
- B) Beginning
- C) Season
- D) Covenant

Answer: A (See 2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV)



# Financially Speaking

The total 2025 receipts through November were \$235,388.98 which includes giving for fixed expenses as well as charitable giving. See below:

	November	Year-to-Date
<b>Offering</b>		
Pledged Offering	\$14,655.00	\$146,520.00
Contributions (Non-Pledged)	\$2,005.00	\$20,454.00
Loose Offering	\$345.00	\$3,781.00
<b>Denominational Support</b>		
OCWM (Illinois Conference)	\$760.00	\$6,820.00
One Great Hour of Sharing	\$0.00	\$315.00
Neighborhoods in Need	\$5.00	\$515.00
Strengthen the Church	\$0.00	\$415.00
<b>Church Fund Support</b>		
Land, Building and Equipment Fund	\$2,075.00	\$13,075.00
Coffee Hour donations	\$113.00	\$813.00
General Fund	\$26.00	\$1,185.80
Scholarship Fund	\$0.00	\$1,400.00
“J” Dollars	\$34.00	\$698.00
<b>Specific Ministry Support</b>		
Music Fund	\$0.00	\$265.00
Mission Projects	\$0.00	\$1,165.00
Diaper Ministry (Including May Community Drive)	\$50.00	\$2,805.00
Fellowship and Hospitality	\$0.00	\$200.00
<b>Seasonal Giving</b>		
Easter Breakfast	\$0.00	\$460.00
Lent/Easter Offering	\$0.00	\$2,796.00
Heritage Fest	\$0.00	\$2,723.00
<b>Church Project Support</b>		
Member Donation Toward Sanctuary Sound Equipment	\$0.00	\$2,000.00

	September	Year-to-Date
<b>Community Support</b>		
Pads 5K Sponsorship	\$0.00	\$1,080.00
Elgin Pride	\$0.00	\$122.00
Pads Emergency Appeal	\$0.00	\$2,360.00
Bienvenidos Emergency Appeal	\$0.00	\$1,640.00
<b>Other</b>		
CD Interest	\$0.00	\$11,2969.77
Memorial Giving	\$0.00	\$4,046.00
Miscellaneous	\$0.00	\$67.07
Christmas Flowers	\$30.00	\$30.00
Initial Offering (Related to Giving Envelope)	\$0.00	\$375.00
150th Celebration Dinner	\$0.00	\$51.00
Donation to CE for VBS	\$0.00	\$3,465.00
\$1,000 Donation to CE for Confirmation	\$0.00	\$266.34
Christmas Trees	\$490.00	\$1,000.00
CE Pumpkin Sale	\$0.00	\$640.00
Craft Fair	\$260.00	\$480.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$20,848.00</b>	<b>\$235,388.98</b>

Your year end contribution statements will be mailed out in mid January.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this report or on your statements.

Karen Westerman,  
Financial Secretary  
847-727-9973

## Save the Date

### Congregational Meeting

### Sunday, February 1

Annual meeting immediately following worship. We will celebrate a year-in-review of our life together and vote on the 2026 budget and officers. The budget and annual ministry reports will be available by email and hard copy before the meeting.

OPEN AND AFFIRMING COALITION OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*Thank  
You*



Thank You for Your Donation to The Beloved Fund.

## End-of-Year O&A Support

St. Paul's made two end-of-year donations using monies budgeted in 2025 for Open & Affirming Outreach. We made a \$150 donation to Elgin Pride in support of their mission: *to cultivate celebration, education, visibility, and safe spaces to accelerate equity and inclusion for greater Elgin's queer and marginalized communities. We also made a \$200 donation to the Open & Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ.*

From the Open & Affirming Coalition of the UCC:

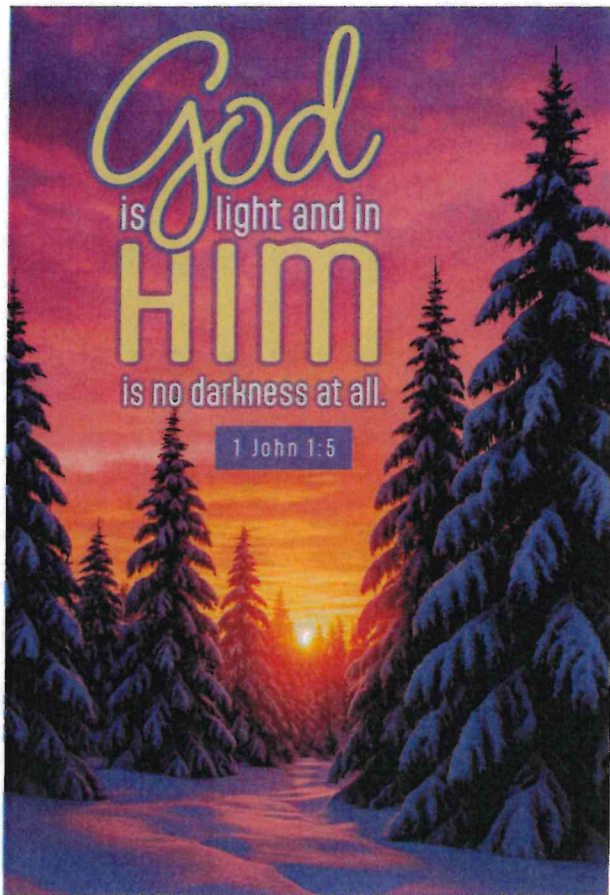
*Thank you for your generous gift to The Beloved Fund. Because of you, this movement is stronger.*

*Your contribution played a direct role in helping us unlock our 2-for-1 matching grant, meaning your impact is being tripled to support churches, leaders, and communities committed to living out God's radical welcome. What you gave is now doing even more than you first imagined—and we are deeply grateful.*

*At the heart of the Open and Affirming movement is a simple truth: every person is beloved by God. Your support helps ensure that, even in challenging times, the church continues to show up with courage, clarity, and compassion for LGBTQ+ people and all who are too often pushed to the margins.*

*Every contribution—large or small—strengthens the ministry that strengthens all of us.*





### Worship Online

Watch our Services live on YouTube every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. or watch them when you have time. Just scan the QR Code or go to YouTube and search St. Paul's United Church of Christ



### Online Giving

Your gifts to the church provide for our ministries and programs. To make an online donation scan the QR Code or go to our website at [www.stpaulucelgin.org](http://www.stpaulucelgin.org) and click on the give link.



### February Newsletter Deadline: **January 19th**

If you have an article you would like included in the next Newsletter, please submit it to the office by emailing [stpauls4me@yahoo.com](mailto:stpauls4me@yahoo.com) no later than the deadline!