



ST. PAUL

LUTHERAN MINISTRIES

302 N. Morrison St. Appleton, WI 54911

January 2026

A Reflection on Isaiah 9:2–7 for the Advent Season

If you've lived through enough Wisconsin winters, you know something about darkness. The sun slips away early, the evenings feel long, and even the warm glow of Christmas lights can't always chase away the heaviness that settles in this time of year. In a strange way, that makes Advent feel right at home. Advent begins in the dark—not because the church is gloomy, but because the Bible is honest. As Isaiah writes, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light."

Isaiah wasn't exaggerating. His people felt surrounded by trouble. Their leaders disappointed them. Their nation felt unstable. Their spiritual life had thinned out to little more than habit. And into that weariness, God spoke a promise—a promise of light that would break into their darkness, not because they finally figured life out, but because God refused to leave them there.

That promise still speaks to us today. We may not face Assyrian armies at our borders, but we know what darkness looks like. We feel it in our world—violence, division, confusion, a steady drip of bad news. We feel it in our own homes, too—in stress we can't quite shake, in worries that keep us up at night, in the ache of missing someone who used to be here this time of year. Advent doesn't tell us to hide any of that. It invites us to bring it into the open and lift our eyes toward the One who comes to meet us.

Isaiah describes this coming Savior with four names that are more than titles—they're promises.

Wonderful Counselor.

When life feels noisy and overwhelming, when the future feels uncertain, when decisions weigh heavy, Jesus comes as the One whose wisdom is never shallow or rushed. He listens. He guides. He speaks through His Word with a clarity no self-help book or YouTube expert can match.

Mighty God.

We don't need a seasonal mascot or a moral cheerleader. We need a Savior with real power—power to forgive sins, to conquer death, to stand against evil. Advent reminds us that the Child in the manger is the eternal God who stepped into our world with strength wrapped in humility.

Everlasting Father.

This doesn't blur the lines within the Trinity. Instead, it tells us that Jesus comes with a fatherly heart—steady,

protective, unchanging. When everything else feels temporary or fragile, He remains faithful. His care doesn't run out. His patience doesn't expire.

Prince of Peace.

And this peace isn't the polite, surface-level kind that just avoids conflict. It's the deep, reconciling peace that only Christ can bring—the peace of being right with God, forgiven, restored, and held secure no matter what else shakes around us.

During Advent, it's easy to get swept along by the rush of December. The schedules fill up. The shopping list grows. Christmas gets pulled closer and closer every year by the pull of the culture. But spiritually speaking, Advent is an opportunity to slow down, breathe, and admit how much we need the Light Isaiah promised.

Waiting is not wasted time. Waiting shapes us. Waiting opens our eyes. Waiting teaches us to pay attention to the promises of God instead of the anxieties tugging at our hearts.

So what might faithful waiting look like this Advent?

Maybe it looks like lighting a candle at home or in worship and quietly whispering, "Christ, shine in my heart."

Maybe it looks like five extra minutes in Scripture, letting the Wonderful Counselor steady your thoughts.

Maybe it looks like repentance—honest, humble, hopeful repentance that trusts the Savior who came not to condemn but to redeem.

Maybe it looks like hope—real hope, the kind that rests not on wishful thinking but on the rock-solid truth that God keeps every promise He makes.

Isaiah's prophecy ends with the assurance that the reign of this Child—the Light—will never end. Darkness does not get the final word. Not in the world. Not in your life. Not in the Church.

As we journey through Advent, may your heart be warmed by that promise. Christ has come. Christ still comes through His Word and Sacraments. And Christ will come again, bringing a dawn that no night can follow.

May His light guide your waiting, strengthen your hope, and fill your Advent with peace.

— *Pastor Justin Shrum*

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Worship Schedule

Sunday services: 8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Monday evenings: 6:00 p.m.

Our 8am Sunday service is on YouTube and can also be heard on the radio WOSH 1490 AM and 93.9 FM (recorded) at 9am.

New Series Starting in January: "Epiphany" comes from a Greek word that means "reveal." It is the season when you see Jesus begin his public ministry, revealing the reason the Son of God came to earth. During Epiphany, you will come to understand that when the true identity of Jesus is revealed, you realize your own true identity as well.

1/4, 1/5	Love's Pure Light Beams from Thy Holy Face
1/11, 1/12	Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One
1/18, 1/19	Jesus is the Lamb of God
1/25, 1/26	Jesus is the Light

Official Acts

Profession of Faith:

Dana Krause

Transfer In:

Chris & Jaclyn Kies and children

Adult Confirmation:

Kayla Werner

Olivia Rogers & son

St. Paul Worship Radio Broadcast to Change Station and Time

WNAM 1280 AM will be going off the air effective 1/1/2026. Starting 1/4/2026 our Sunday worship service will be broadcast on WOSH 1490 AM & 93.9 FM. Since those stations already have a different church broadcasting at 8:00 a.m., **our worship will be broadcast at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings.** This will be a recorded broadcast of our 8:00 a.m. service. Please help spread the word! This change brings a discount in service. If you would like to sponsor a Sunday broadcast, the cost is now \$200 per week. You can mail an offering to the church or give using our church app. Click on "Give" and then "Radio Broadcast." If you would like to donate as a memorial, please contact the office.

Spiritual Growth Opportunities

Our Sunday Morning Bible Class (9:15 a.m. in the church basement) will start a new course on January 4th. ***Defending the Faith*** is a six-lesson apologetics Bible study to help our members thoughtfully and lovingly engage in conversation with skeptics of the Christian faith. We do this using God's gift of reason which is rooted in gentleness and respect. All this with the goal of love towards our neighbor. Apologetics is a ministry of caring!

A new Bible class will review some of our Wisconsin Synod's history over the past 175 years, with an emphasis on our congregation's involvement in that history. The class will meet in the church basement, **Wednesdays** at 6:30 PM and repeating **Thursdays** at 9:00 AM, from January 7/8 to February 11/12. The class will be taught by our member and retired pastor, Fred Toppe.

New Starting Point Class Starts 1/11: Whether you're brand new to the Bible, exploring Christianity for the first time, or simply looking for a solid refresher, Starting Point is the perfect place to begin.

This 8-week course offers a welcoming, no-pressure environment to ask questions, discover what the Bible says, and learn the core truths of the Christian faith. We'll cover topics like:

- Who is God?
- Why do we need a Savior?
- What is grace?
- How does faith grow?
- Why the Bible can be trusted

Classes begin Sunday, January 11th, at 9:15 in the School Learning Center and run weekly for 8 sessions. Each meeting lasts about an hour and includes discussion, guided study, and practical application. Contact Pastor J (jshrum@stpaulappletonwi.com) if you plan to attend this class or sign up on the Church Center App. Click on "More" then "Groups" then "Starting Point."

Financials

Ministry Funding Plan Financials through Nov. 30th, 2025

	Nov.	YTD
Income	\$ 382,206	\$1,337,145
Expense	\$ 218,449	\$1,232,961
Deficit	\$ 163,757	\$ 104,184

School News

Mission Statement:

Using God's Word as our guide, St. Paul Lutheran School will raise up future generations of Christians in our community by assisting parents in the Christian teaching of their children and by striving for excellence in all areas of instruction.

Kindergarten Open House: Calling all kindergartners for the 2026-2027 school year! We have a kindergarten open house on Wednesday, January 28 3:30-5:30PM. Please join us to receive additional information and to meet our kindergarten teacher Mrs. Shrum. Tours of our facilities can also be done during this time. If you are intending to have your child attend kindergarten at St. Paul next school year, please fill out an [APPLICATION](#) and/or reach out to Mr. Kelley (jkelly@stpaulappletonwi.com) if you have any questions.

WPCP Reapplication Reminder for 2026-2027: As we look ahead to the 2026-2027 school year, the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP) is moving to a monthly application system. While this provides flexibility, seats are filled as applications are verified each month. Because our school has a limited number of Choice seats available, returning families are encouraged to apply as early as possible. **IMPORTANT** - Returning families are NOT guaranteed a spot. Seats may be filled by families who apply in an application before you.

Application Windows at St. Paul:

February 2, 2026 8:00 am - February 20, 2026 11:59 pm

March 1, 2026 12:00 am - March 20, 2026 11:59 pm

April 1, 2026 12:00 am - April 20, 2026 11:59 pm

May 1, 2026 12:00 am - May 20, 2026 11:59 pm

June 1, 2026 12:00 am - June 22, 2026 11:59 pm

July 1, 2026 12:00 am - July 20, 2026 11:59 pm

August 1, 2026 12:00 am - August 20, 2026 11:59 pm

Sept. 1, 2026 12:00 am - Sept. 14, 2026 11:59 pm

Applying early gives returning families the strongest chance of keeping their Choice seat. Make sure your proof of residency (W-2 or a recent utility/property tax bill) is ready to submit with your online DPI application. If you have questions or need help, please contact the school office—we're happy to assist.

LWMS News

THANK YOU: St. Paul members for supporting home and world missionaries through your generous offerings in 2025! Our home and world missionaries greatly appreciate your support and prayers!

LWMS MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2026:

March 19, 2026: Meeting at St. Paul

April 18, 2026: Spring Rally at Trinity in Neenah

May 21, 2026: Meeting at St. Paul

June 25-28, 2026: International Convention in Madison, WI

September 17, 2026: Meeting at St. Paul

October 3, 2026: Fall Rally at Grace in Oshkosh

November 19, 2026: Meeting at St. Paul

Please mark your calendars for these dates! We look forward to seeing you at our meetings in the church basement at 6:30 PM!

LWMS COLLECTION FOR CENTRAL AFRICA MEDICAL MISSION (CAMP) IN 2026:

The Central Africa Medical Mission has several ongoing supply needs for babies and toddlers as they travel to villages in Malawi and Zambia. LWMS will be sponsoring a collection of baby and toddler clothes, blankets, hats, etc. in April 2026 and May 2026 to send to CAMP. The supply list includes:

- Knit hats for babies and small children
- Baby blankets
- Onesies (newborn to 2T)
- Booties and socks
- Pants/Leggings (newborn to 4T)
- Washcloths (crocheted or bought)
- Knitted winter hats (newborn to adult)
- Short sleeve shirts (24 months to 4T)
- Sun hats (newborn to adult)
- Sweatshirts (24 months to 4T)

We are supplying this list now in case any crafters would like to make some of the supplies or for those who like to bargain hunt for after Christmas specials. More information will follow in March 2026.

A message from World Missionary Joel Hoff, One Africa, TELL Network:

'We are different.' It was a saying often repeated during our time together. For two weeks, leaders from the Gambela Evangelical Lutheran Church (GELC) in Ethiopia studied God's Word with missionaries Dan Kroll and Joel Hoff. Time spent in scripture helped the leaders not only become more confident in what they believed, but also helped them better understand what made their church different from all the others in Gambela.

The members of the GELC were able to demonstrate this difference in confession as well as practice. Over two days, 74 souls were baptized into God's family. Many of those precious souls were little children. This is significant because baptizing children is unheard of in many churches throughout Africa.

From conception, the Bible describes our condition. Sinful...hostile to God...dead in sin...lost...blind...hopeless. But God makes us different through baptism. Through water and Word we are forgiven...children of God...alive in Christ...found...seeing with the eyes of faith...and clinging to the everlasting hope that is ours through our Savior Jesus Christ.

By God's grace, the GELC church leaders will continue to study God's Word and teach what they have learned to their members. By God's grace, the families will continue to gather around God's Word and impress the truths of Scripture on their children. By God's grace, the leaders, the families, and those 74 baptized souls are different.

'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.' Acts 2:38, 39

World Missionary Joel Hoff, One Africa, TELL Network

What's New with Women's Ministry

Women's Ministry would like to thank everyone who has given us their time and talents during 2025 as we needed them. Many of our church ladies and men have helped us in various events. **We appreciate YOU** as we support St. Paul Ministries.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY WINTER DINNER INFORMATION: Women's Ministry dinner will be January 13, 2026 at Good Company in their Bourbon Street Room. There is a change made to the dinner. It has been decided to have an open menu so guests can order from the menu the food that best suits them. The approximate times for the gathering are as follows:

5:00 social time

5:30 dinner orders

6:00 dinner

Please contact Betty Techlin, cell 920 810-1964 or Kathy Schultz, cell 262 930-3276 to confirm your attendance. There will also be a signup sheet at the reception desk in the church narthex. Women's Ministry hopes you can come for this fun social gathering.



Kids Only – Thank you!

Thank you to the volunteers and parents that were asked to step in to help assist a child shop so we could keep the line going and everyone who donated gifts/bags to make the 2025 Kids Only a success. 675 gifts were wrapped. We were able to donate \$500 to the ECC and \$750 to St. Paul School. Thank you to Women's Ministry for providing the families with some baked goods and drinks while their child(ren) shopped. Thank you to everyone who helped to make the event a

success and the families for bringing your child(ren) shopping. We hope you enjoy your gifts!

As we look toward next year, we will be in need of many more supplies and gifts. We'll need the following: tissue paper, gift bags, brand new gifts for babies, boy items for age six to adult, teen girl gifts, and men's items (no clothing, please). Throughout the year, donations can be put in the Kids Only box in the church basement or brought to the school or ECC offices.

Thank you, *Sheryl and Jacki*

Old School Bell

During a recent project we found a big surprise. The large and heavy bell from our old school was found after it has been collecting dust in our storage room for many long years. It was made in 1893 by the Centennial Bell Company in Milwaukee. **We need your ideas about what to do with this cool item from St.**



Paul history. We feel if we are to keep it, it should be on display, and some money would be needed to accomplish this. Or do we auction it off, or do something else? We would love your ideas. Please reach out to Perry Abitz, Curt Jacobson, or the office. We need your input to help us decide what to do. Thank you.

Sunshine Cookies – Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who helped with our Sunshine Cookie distribution. This is a special way to remember our shut-ins and honor our Savior's birth. It doesn't get done without many people pitching in to help. We thank the bakers, the cookie tin preparers, the school kids who prepare Christmas cards and those who helped with delivery. Have a Blessed Christmas.

St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church and School Project Wish List

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Debt Retirement | \$ 98,543 |
| 2. ECC Room Dividers & Code Updates | \$15,000 |
| 3. Radio Broadcast Fund 2025 | \$2,185 |
| 4. Cordless Commercial Vacuum Cleaner | \$2,305 |

Any donations (large or small) given toward the item(s) is greatly appreciated. For a closer look as well as giving options, please follow this link: [Wish List Giving](#).

FVL News

The FVL Fans of Foxes Committee (work focuses on athletics) is in need of an additional 3-4 individuals that would like to be on the planning committee. If you have interest, please reach out to Tracey Ratzburg at triestoooge2401@yahoo.com to discuss the position.

FVL Christmas Break - School & SCRIP Office Hours
Mon., Dec. 22 – Fri., Jan. 2 – No school & all offices closed
Mon, Jan. 5 – School and regular Office hours resume
Nominations for FVL's Trout Educator Award are open through 1/31. This annual award recognizes an outstanding FVL teacher and assists with their professional development. For details, go to fvlhs.org/Trout-Award

Information for the 2026 season for Lutheran Vanguard of Wisconsin (LVW), a WELS high school marching band, has been posted to its website. The season will begin with a preview and rehearsal camp on January 3-4 to be held at FVL. LVW is open to all WELS members in grades 8-12. The summer schedule, eligibility, cost, registration procedures, and more can be found on the JOIN page. Go to lutheranvanguard.org for the information. If you have questions, please send an email (lutheranvanguardofwisconsin@gmail.com).

All FVL alumni are invited to join us on Friday, January 2, as our FVL Foxes take on Menasha in boys basketball. Come to cheer on our Foxes and get recognized during halftime of the varsity game! Tipoff is scheduled for 5:40 PM (JV) and 7:00 PM (Varsity). Stop by the Alumni Table for free admission and a chance to enter to win prizes.

Join us for a free seminar on Retirement Planning, sponsored by the FVL Mission Advancement Office. Hear professionals share helpful information regarding smart planning for retirement. Go to fvlhs.org/seminar to find details and the RSVP link for the seminar on Tuesday, January 13, at 6:00 PM.

Families can enroll at FVL for Semester 2 at FVL (Semester 2 begins January 5, 2026). Contact the Admissions Office at admissions@fvlhs.org or 920-560-5105 for details.

FVL's **Winter 2025-26 Legacy Magazine** is online at fvlhs.org/legacy.