



ST. PAUL

LUTHERAN MINISTRIES

302 N. Morrison St. Appleton, WI 54911

December 2025

Focus on Advent

Advent might be one of the most misunderstood seasons of the church year. The world is already in full "Christmas mode" by mid-November—lights up, music on repeat, sales everywhere. Meanwhile, the church quietly slips into a season that is not quite Christmas yet, but something deeper, more focused, and desperately needed: Advent.

The word *Advent* means "coming." During these four weeks before Christmas, we're not just circling dates on a calendar or trying to survive another December. Advent is the church's yearly call to slow down, look up, and remember who is coming, why he came, and that he will come again.

Advent has a threefold focus.

First, we look back and prepare to celebrate Christ's first coming in humility—born of a virgin, laid in a manger, wrapped not in royal robes but in simple cloths. The Son of God stepped into our world not to inspire us, but to save us. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Advent helps us approach Christmas not as sentiment, but as rescue: God entering our darkness with his light.

Second, Advent focuses us on Christ's coming right now in grace—through his Word and sacraments. In a season where schedules are packed and hearts are anxious, Jesus still comes personally to his people. He speaks forgiveness into guilty consciences, gives his body and blood for the strengthening of weary believers, and comforts troubled hearts with his promises. Advent reminds us that we don't just remember a baby long ago; we receive a living Savior today.

Third, Advent teaches us to look ahead to Christ's second coming in glory. The readings for this season are full of watchfulness and urgency. Jesus says, "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (Matthew 24:42). The world treats December as the end of a shopping year; Advent reminds

us there is a Day coming that will not be marked by discounts and decorations, but by trumpet sound and the visible return of Christ. For believers, that Day is not something to fear, but to long for.

That is why Advent has a tone that is both joyful and sober. The colors, the candles, the hymns—all of them gently push back against the noise of the season and invite us to repentance and hope. We confess that our hearts are often distracted, our love grows cold, and our eyes drift from the promises of God. At the same time, we hear again the good news that Christ came precisely for sinners like us.

In a world that wants everything "now," Advent teaches us to wait. Not a passive, bored waiting—but an active, hopeful one. We wait by hearing the Word, by gathering in worship, by praying, by serving, by encouraging one another. We wait, knowing that the same Lord who once came in weakness and who now comes in grace will soon come in glory.

So as the calendar fills and the days get shorter, let Advent do its quiet work in your heart. Light the candles. Come to midweek services. Open your Bible. Sing the hymns. Listen again to the promises. Your Savior is coming. He has come. He will come again. "Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

— Pastor Matt Holtz

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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.



Midweek Advent Series 'Bible Songs of Christmas':

People love Christmas music! It seems to be played earlier and earlier every year. There are many popular tunes, and some songs even have words that point us to the reason for the season, the birth of Jesus, our Savior. Did you know that the Bible has songs of Christmas? They were sung to announce Christ's birth. We have only the words of those songs, not the music, but Christian composers through the ages have set those words to music. This year we look at the background and words of those songs to help us prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child.

New Series 'Imminent Arrival: Do you remember the feeling when someone important is about to arrive at your place? It's a mixture of anticipation and excitement and nervousness. Did you make all the correct preparations? Will the person be happy to see you? When and how will the person arrive? Will there be any surprises? During these weeks before Christmas, we



anticipate the imminent arrival of Jesus. He's an important person! We are about to celebrate his birth. He could return on judgment day at any time. But in worship we realize that he impacts our lives when the Bible is read and when the sacraments are administered. Suddenly we feel the excitement of an imminent arrival.

12/3	The Song of Mary
12/7, 12/8	Imminent Arrival of the Judge
12/10	The Song of Zechariah
12/14, 12/15	Imminent Arrival of the Messiah
12/17	The Song of the Angels
12/20	Children's Christmas (9am & 10:45)
12/21, 12/22	Imminent Arrival of Emmanuel
12/24	Christ the Savior is Born (6pm)
12/25	Holy Infant So Tender & Mild (10am)
12/28, 12/29	Son of God
12/31	New Year's Eve (6pm)

Midweek Advent Special services

We will have three midweek Advent services on Wednesdays coming up, beginning December 3rd. Services are at 3:30pm and 6:00pm, with a fellowship meal served between (from 4:30pm – 6pm). Join us for worship and fellowship! Tentative menu is as follows:

12/3: PTO serving tacos

12/10: Women's Ministry serving brats & hot dogs

12/17: Northright Financial & the Londre family serving pulled pork, green and baked beans, and sweet potatoes

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."

Official Acts

Baptisms:

Marceline Abitz, daughter of Luke & Bethany Abitz

Marriage:

Mackenzie Falck and Peter (River) Olsen

Transfer In:

Michele Jeske
Brian & Jeannie Tews
John & Amy Metts and child

Profession of Faith:

Marty Kalepp

Transfer Out:

Matthew & Kelsey Gaffney and children

Financials

Ministry Funding Plan Financials through Oct. 31st, 2025

	Oct.	YTD
Income	\$ 158,960	\$ 954,939
Expense	\$ 247,044	\$1,014,511
Deficit	\$ -88,084	\$ -59,572

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.

You are invited to join us for the Children's Christmas services on December 20th. Worship times are at 9am & 10:45am in the church sanctuary. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" Luke 2:11.

There will be no school and the office will be closed from December 22nd through January 2nd. Normal hours will resume on Monday, January 5th.

LWMS News

A message from Home Missionary Orie Thomford, Our Savior, Burlington, IA:

Jesus proclaimed, 'Go and make disciples.' For over two thousand years, Christians have shared their faith with words and actions. It's easy, right? Go. Share Jesus. Make disciples. There are so many countless ways to do that!

What is just one way Our Savior Lutheran Church does that? Door-to-door food drives! It's simple: we partner with a local, non-religious food bank. We buy some paper grocery bags. We staple information and invitations to the bags. We drop them off in neighborhoods and invite everyone to fill the bags with food. We communicate with them to pick up the bags and bring them to the food bank. We invite them to church.

Will this translate into souls won for the kingdom? We pray that it will. This is just one way we love and invite others to church.

The opportunity is incredible! Through these efforts, I've shared the gospel multiple times. God has brought one person into our new member class and one family to visit our church. When the weather warms up, you can be sure Our Savior will be sharing our faith and love with others in our town.

'My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.' John 15:12

Home Missionary Orie Thomford,
Our Savior, Burlington, IA

What's New with Women's Ministry

We met on Tuesday, November 11 in the church basement for a meeting. Here are the items discussed:

- Fall Festival:
 - 110 adults & 21 children's meals were served.
 - The soup sale was well received with 122 quarts from 23 different cooks donated. All but 13 were sold on Sunday. The remaining 13 were put in the church freezer & sold within the next week.
 - All 32 bags of Peppernuts were sold on Sunday.

- 48 baskets were prepared for the Raffle. Of these 4 were from the ECC, 18 from the grade school, 4 from congregation members, & 22 from local businesses.
- Profits totaled \$3,918.23.
- Our church hosted the seminary choir on October 26 & provided a beautiful church service for us. About 85 choir members & some spouses were served roast beef, mashed potatoes/gravy, corn & desserts. The cost was about \$500 which the Women's Ministry provided.
- There was some discussion on the December 13 Bake Sale held with the Kids Only sale & help with the Sunshine Cookie distribution on December 15. The congregation is invited to prepare baked goods & if possible, help with the cookie distribution.
- The ECC & Women's Ministry will again hold a drive for donated items in December. WM will give ECC a \$300 Sam's Club gift card for purchasing the Free & Clear laundry detergent. WM voted to fund the ECC Wish List up to \$1,000.
- The school needs a new laminator. WM voted to fund up to \$2,500 for this. Items from the grade school Wish List & church Wish List will be discussed at a later meeting.
- We voted to continue giving a \$25 memorial or celebration contribution to the radio broadcast ministry for Women's Ministry members.

WM will serve the **December 10 Advent meal**. The plan is to serve brats, hot dogs, beans, salad, chips & bars. Please join us for church & food as we prepare our hearts for the Savior's birth.

Our Winter Gathering will be held on **January 13 at Good Company**. If you would like to join us, that would be wonderful. Please call Betty Techlin (920 810-1964) to register or for more information.

We hope & pray everyone has a blessed CHRISTmas season.

Offering Update

A growing number of our members do not utilize their provided church envelopes due to online giving. In order to save this cost, envelopes will not be printed for those who have not used them in the past year. In December, you will either find a box of envelopes in your church mailbox, OR a yellow giving slip with your new number on it. There will be generic offering envelopes available on the kiosk in the narthex. Anyone may utilize these envelopes, but please be sure to put your giving number and name on them so we may update your contribution statement appropriately for tax purposes. If you do not receive 2026 envelopes and would like a set, please contact the office 920-733-9061 or office@stpaulappletonwi.com.

Giving Thanks!

As we come to the end of the year, we reflect the spiritual and physical gifts from God to us. He has provided for us both in times of trial and in times of plenty. In response, Psalm 116 asks what we can return to God in thanks for all His goodness to us and answers with *"I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord"* (v.13), *"I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people"* (v.14), and *"I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the Lord"* (v.17). Financial thank offerings and volunteer time continue to allow St. Paul Lutheran Ministries to preach, teach, and confess the truth of God's salvation for sinners to us, the Fox Cities, and beyond. Please take some time this month to consider if your financial blessings enable you to give an increased offering to St. Paul Lutheran Ministries at the end of this year and into next year. Thank you for your past gifts and your consideration for future gifts!

Rejoice, my heart, be glad and sing:

A cheerful trust maintain,

For God, the source of ev'rything

Your treasure shall remain.

Did not His love and truth and power

Guard every childhood day?

And did He not in threat'ning hour

Turn dreaded ills away? (Paul Gerhardt, tr. John Kelly)



Christmas Poinsettias

There will again be poinsettias beautifying the church during the Christmas season. We will have 18 small plants for \$15 each remaining. If you would like to purchase one in memory of or in honor of someone, or 'just because', please contact the school office (733-9061 or office@stpaulappletonwi.com). Monetary donations to the altar flower fund are appreciated as well, and can also be made in memory of loved ones.

Open Positions: Janitorial Team & ECC Float Teacher

St. Paul Ministries has an immediate opening for someone to join our **janitorial team**. The position is split between the school and the ECC and will require 30-35 hours per week on average, typically afternoons and evenings. Responsibilities include routine cleaning (vacuuming, dusting, mopping, restroom sanitation), empty trash and maintaining cleanliness in classrooms and common areas, and reporting maintenance needs. Qualifications include experience in janitorial work (preferred), ability to work independently and on a team, strong attention to detail and organization. Must be able to lift up to 30 pounds. The ECC is also hiring for a **full**

**WE'RE
HIRING!**

time float teacher in our classrooms. We offer flexible scheduling, a variety of working environments, and a competitive hourly wage (based on past work history). Please contact facilities@stpaulappletonwi.com (janitorial position) or cschulz@stpaulappletonwi.com (ECC) for more information.

Kids Only Shopping Event

The "Kids Only" Shopping event and Bake Sale will be held in our gym on Sat., Dec. 13th from 12:30 - 2:30. All kids from St. Paul Lutheran Ministries (Ages 4 years old - 8th grade) are invited to come and do their Christmas shopping. Each child may purchase up to 10 gifts for their family/friends at \$2 per item to ensure there are enough for everyone (special circumstances considered). Any NEW gift donations are greatly appreciated (especially for men and teens), along with donations of gift bags and tissue paper. Donations can be dropped off in the church basement or office. If you have any questions, please contact Jackie Sievert (920-851-9436) or Sheryl Wert (920-858-6553).



Bake Sale & Sunshine Cookies

It's Cookie Time! Women's Ministry will again have a bake sale with the Kid's Only event on Saturday, Dec 13. If you like to bake and wish to donate to the bake sale, items can be brought to the school kitchen on Saturday after 9am. The bake sale will run the same hours as Kid's Only sale, 12:30-2:30. Any baked items remaining will be sold after church services on Sunday/Monday.

If you bake and bring cookies for the shut-ins, please have them to the church kitchen by 8:30am Monday, Dec 15 and mark the cookies as "Sunshine Cookies." That morning, we will begin the process of distributing & packaging cookie tins for our shut-in members starting about 8:30am in the church basement. For those who volunteered to deliver cookies, you can pick up your tins and a list to those people to whom you are to deliver the cookies starting Monday after 11am on the school stage. If you arrive before 1:30, kitchen staff will normally be still there to open the gym door; however, if it is later, please go to the church office. Pick them up and deliver during that week, if possible. Thanks everyone.

ECC Update

Thankful Thursdays are an event that has been taking place every Thursday in November in our 3K room. The children take turns saying what they are thankful for, it gets written down on large chart paper, and hung up for all to see. Some of the things the children mentioned they are thankful for include what you would expect: mom and dad, grandma and grandpa, Jesus, God, toys and dolls, etc. Some of the things the children mentioned are a little

more unexpected: when brother gives me kisses, ice cream, beans, the "God Bless America" song, my bedtime, lots of markers that work, etc. One little girl in particular, every week, answered similarly: brother kisses, giving mom and dad kisses, and when brother plays with me. To this little girl, she is thankful for her immediate family. Life is just that simple for her. As adults, we also cherish the things in life that matter most to us, namely our Lord, our faith, and our family. May you all have a blessed Thanksgiving celebrating what matters most to you!

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

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Debt Retirement | \$ 99,545 |
| 2. ECC Room Dividers & Code Updates | \$15,000 |
| 3. Cordless Commercial Vacuum Cleaner | \$2,500 |
- 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

Coming events - go to fvlhs.org/news to find details:

President Loberger will present floor plans, renderings, and details of FVL's **proposed building expansion** at regional meetings around the Federation.

Visit fvlhs.org/news for details.

Meeting schedule:

- DEC 1, 6:00 PM - Riverview-Appleton
- DEC 11, 6:00 PM - St. Mark-Green Bay
- DEC 14, NOON - FVL (before the Christmas concert)
- DEC 15, 6:00 PM - Emanuel-New London

Athletics Livestream - Beginning this season, there is a fee to access our sports streaming service-Hudl. The change is part of our conference's collective effort to standardize streaming across all member schools. Go to fvlhs.org/hudl to get signed up.

The FVL Choirs invite you to attend their annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, 12/14 at 2:00 PM. The concert is free, and all are invited to join with the choirs as we celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus. It will also be livestreamed on the FVLHS YouTube Channel.

FVL is hiring! We are looking for an assistant to the Activities Director and the Business Office. Find details and the application at fvlhs.org/about/employment.

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 tristoooge2401@yahoo.com to discuss the position.

FVL Christmas Break - School & SCRIP Office Hours
Monday, December 22 – Friday, January 2 – No school and all offices closed; Monday, January 5 – School and regular School & SCRIP Office hours resume.