

THE MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 2026

Stay True to the Way of Love



Beloved in Christ,

The last month in Minnesota has been enormously difficult in some truly unconscionable ways. While Duluth has remained relatively calm, for which we are all grateful, the situation in the Twin Cities is pulling on many of our hearts. As people of faith, it is our duty to see and witness to what is happening there.

Over the last month, I have been deeply moved by your outpouring of love and care for this escalating situation. Countless of you have asked how we can do our part, what our task is now, and how we can live into our faith in this moment. I have also seen you at work in the community, doing what ever small part is yours to do. We have held vigils, lit candles, sung grounding songs, and marched with our neighbors in Minneapolis. There will be more ways, certainly, to care for one another in the days ahead.

All of us have our unique call in this moment. But, one thing is certain: the foundational answer to any "what should we do" question begins with one simple thing. Pray. Pray for the people most affected by this. Pray for the vulnerable, the wounded, and the incarcerated. Pray also for those we may consider our enemies, those who are perpetrating harm, and for those caught in the middle. Prayer is the one option available to all of us, regardless of physical ability, emotional bandwidth, resources, time or talent.

A few weeks ago, I shared a prayer with you that might help ground you during this time. It is one that I often use. It is called the Jesus Prayer, which is easy to use as a mantra or a breath prayer or something to write down and keep with you.

Traditionally, it goes, "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me."

But, for these difficult days, I ask that you pray it in such a way that reminds us that we are in this together. I ask that you make a slight modification, praying it instead like this:

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us."

I pray this can ground and care for you, draw you near to Jesus so that you can find the light. Make no mistake—the light is out there. It is shining in the face of the helpers. It is there, standing beside the most vulnerable. It is there, empowering our Episcopal churches to spread networks of love and care throughout this state. Today, more than ever, it is our job to continue to name the light, see Jesus in the face of another, and stay true to the Way of Love.

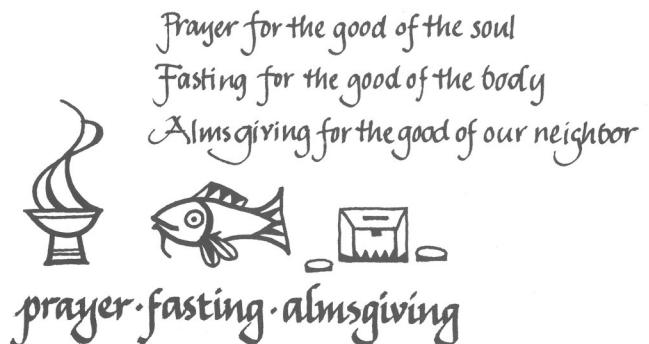
Peace,
Maggie

Lenten Retreat

Saturday, March 14

Parish-Wide Lenten Retreat

Join us for a day of Lenten workshops, prayer, meals, and good company. We will gather together as a whole congregation for a day of learning and prayer. The first session begins at 9:00 am. Learn to make prayer beads, bake pretzels (and learn what they have to do with Lent), learn about ancient Christian spiritual practices, eat together, and close the day with a Taizé-style sung prayer service at 5:00 pm.



Grandparent Sunday

Sunday, February 1, 10 am

Elders and grandparents play a vital role in the spiritual lives of young people. Jesus' grandparents are not mentioned in the scriptures, but Mary and Joseph receive support from many elders along their journey. Elizabeth, Anna, and Simeon are just a few. This Sunday we celebrate the role that

grandparents and elder mentors have in the lives of children. We will bless new grandparents and invite children to come to church with their grandparents. There will also be a forum after church about grandparents' and elders' roles in the faith lives of children.



February & March Forums

6:30 pm, Wednesdays, Parish Hall

February 4 – Current Events Discussion

This will break from the typical saints-based forum topic to create space for people to discuss events as they are unfolding in Minnesota right now.

February 18 – Ash Wednesday

March 4 – St. Cuthbert & St. Aidan

March 18 – The Real St. Patrick: Beyond Green Beer

With Thanks

For all God has given me, I have given an offering online. This card is a representation of my gift.

St. Paul's has had online giving options for several years. Those offerings are in the "cloud" and not seen tangibly during our Sunday worship service. We have a new way to acknowledge those gifts and bless them on Sunday morning. Starting in February, we will have laminated cards at both entrances with the words you see written above in italics. These online pew cards are available for anyone who gives online to pick up when they receive their Sunday bulletin. When the offering plates are passed, you may place your cards in the offering plate. They will be blessed and taken up to the High Altar.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Smith, Verger

Rummage Sale



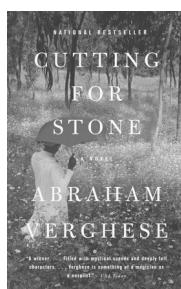
Extra - extra, calling all Rummage Sale Volunteers of 2025! We want to thank you for all that you do. So, we're having a pizza party on **Thursday, February 12**, in the Parish Hall, between 5:00 pm-7:00 pm, to say 'thank you'. Please RSVP to Jim Sontag at 908-239-5596. We'll see you there, and we'll have more information on our upcoming Rummage Sale in 2026 to share!

Save the Date for our next Rummage Sale: Saturday, May 2, 2026!

New Additions to the Olcott Library

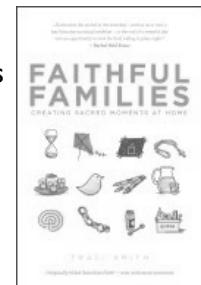
[The Crucifixion in Irish Art](#) by Peter Harbison. Fifty selected examples of Irish art, represented in photos and text from the ninth to the twentieth century.

[Cutting for Stone](#) by Abraham Verghese. Twin brothers are born of a secret union between an Indian nun and a British surgeon. Orphaned by their mother's death and their father's disappearance, the brothers come of age as Ethiopia hovers on the brink of revolution.



[Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home](#) by Traci Smith. This book contains more than 50 easy-to-implement, meaningful ideas for transforming your family's everyday activities into sacred moments.

[Family Faith Walks](#) by Kelly J. Haack. Month by month ideas for on-the-go family activities for families with children ages seven to eleven.



**The
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH**
David Locke



[The Episcopal Church](#) by David Locke. Examines the history of the church as well as controversies that surrounded liturgical reform and the ordination of women.

Respectfully submitted,
Faye Witt, Librarian

From Your Bookkeeper

Dear Parishioners,

Your 2025 Giving Statements needed for filing your tax returns were emailed to you on January 14, 2026. Please check your spam/junk folder since they go out in a mass group from our software service.

Thank you all for your incredible generosity to St. Paul's Church! Your contributions allow St. Paul's to be a vital part of the community and keep our programming alive.

Please continue to submit Intent Cards for the 2026 Operating Budget. We are about \$60,000 and 30 pledges short of our goal. It is the Operating Budget that keeps St. Paul's working in the community annually.



Special Note: When making your contribution to the Capital Campaign or Annual Pledge, please note on the memo line of your check which of those the contribution is to be credited.

December 2025 financials were presented to the Finance Committee and Vestry at their December meetings, as well as to the congregation at the Budget Forum on January 18.

Below is a summary of the December General Operating Fund results:

MONTHLY FIGURES: November	This Month	Year-to-Date
Total Pledges collected	\$33,486.03	\$392,910.50
Total non-pledged collection	\$6,667.87	\$69,058.61
Investment support	\$7,181.48	\$91,445.49
Total Income	\$47,335.48	\$553,414.60
Total Expenses	\$56,250.93	\$566,466.72
Amount over/(short)	(\$8,915.45)	(\$46,052.12)

*The 2025 year-end deficit was \$46,052.12.

If you have any questions, please call my office or email me at bookkeeper@stpaulsduluth.org.

Christine Melone, Bookkeeper

The St. Paul's Church Scholarship Fund

Because education is one of the most important elements of a successful society and a key factor in the well-being of a community, the Mars family established a Scholarship Fund in 1989 for members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Graduating seniors from high school or high school graduates, of any age, are eligible to apply. The scholarship recipients are chosen by a committee of people who also are members of St. Paul's and/or members of the Mars family.

The criteria to be considered are active church participation, completion of high school or GED, a demonstrated interest in completing a college or trade-oriented education process, and submitted

recommendations. The awards are renewable annually for four academic years.

APPLICATIONS FOR NEW SCHOLARSHIPS for the 2026-2027 school year must be submitted to the Scholarship Committee by March 15, 2026. Application and letter of recommendation forms are available through the St. Paul's Episcopal Church website. www.StPaulsDuluth.org Click on the Connect tab then scroll down to Scholarships on the sidebar.

Christine Melone, Bookkeeper



Keeping Our Community Strong

I am writing on a bitterly cold morning and wondering where to begin! I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling like I don't have the right words right now. I'm going to keep this brief and to the point, focusing on the positives. I know it's been a busy and uncertain time, but I hope you take time to celebrate the good things happening here at St. Pauls. Show up for our community, show up for our kids, and show up for yourself. It might seem difficult to know where to focus, but when I slow down enough, I remember the foundation of our church: practicing the way of love. It seems far simpler when I remember that. Just keep putting one foot in front of the other and remember that if you're facing God, you're going in the right direction.

Here's what's happening in the coming weeks:

February 1: Grandparents Sunday. You don't have to be a grandparent in order to participate in this special event. In Children's Church, we'll study the story of Simeon and Anna, and there is a forum after the 10 am service to discuss how we can support our young parishioners as they develop their faith. All are welcome!

February 17: Shrove Tuesday Variety Show and Pancake Brinner! Please sign up to bring pancakes, and add your sparkle to the annual Shrove Tuesday Variety Show at St. Paul's! We are looking for an Emcee, Entertainers of all Ages, Kitchen Helpers, and Decorators. Come one, Come all! Eat and be silly before Lent begins the next day. This event goes from 6:00-8:30 pm. Sign up on our website, and there will be more announcements about how to get involved in the coming days.

February 22: kids' coffee hour. We will focus on Lenten Spiritual practices. Snacks will be served, and we will gather in the kids room after the 10 am service, until noon.

March 14: Please stay tuned for more information on our first Lenten retreat! This will be an all-ages event with different stations around the church.

Other Reminders:

Are you an artist? Our confirmands have been busy making three murals focused on the themes of Faith, Love, and Community that will be unveiled in May when they are confirmed. As part of this project, they are also curating an Art Show. We are looking for submissions of all kinds from artists of all ages. 2D and 3D art is welcome, Elli Ersperer and Anna Keto are

taking the lead on gathering submissions, and all pieces will be installed in the Parish Hall.

Middle School Meetups

The next meeting will be after church on February 15 the Faith Formation Office on first floor. Of course there will be snacks! We'll discuss current events and talk about St. Valentine. The meeting will go until noon.



Volunteers Welcome!

We still need helpers in the kitchen for Wednesday night meals. The signup has been live for a few weeks, and we are seeking helpers to bring meals, set up, and clean. It is posted on the website. Orientation help is available if you have questions.

EpiscoPAL

Maybe you've noticed a new colorful zine floating around the Sanctuary. This is an interactive bulletin for kids to enjoy that is made by yours truly. I have been trying to make one every month, and am always looking for contributors. Maybe you have a poem, recipe, snippet, or drawing you or your child would like to share? You are invited to give them to Sophie on paper or via email. The next issue will be coming out in February, and the focus will be love, of course!

Lastly, I want to say that my work feels very important to me right now. I have been wondering how to safely participate in the resistance to what I see happening in our state. I am thankful that I have such a clear answer to how I can be a good neighbor — I get to work here. Our Bishop has been very clear about the stance he's taken, and I want to share that my involvement at St. Paul's brings me lots of peace and consolation. If you are feeling like you don't know where to begin — being here is a great place to start. It's hard doing anything alone, and keeping our community strong is how we get through this. Please email me if you'd like to be a part of one of the many moving pieces Faith Formation has going.

Be well, walk in love.

Sophie Gray,

Faith Formation Coordinator

**Sign UP TO HELP SERVE A
WEDNESDAY NIGHT MEAL!
USE THIS LINK:**

<https://stpaulsduluth.org/sign-up/>



The Rt. Rev. Craig Loya, X Bishop of ECMN, will celebrate Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation with St. Paul's, Duluth, on Sunday, May 17 at the 10 am service. Please mark your calendars!

Outreach Committee Update

For 2026, the Vestry has allocated \$7,200 to the Outreach Committee (which is 2% of the pledge amount) to be given out as grants during 2026. The Committee will also hold fundraising activities throughout the year to boost these funds.

Parishioners are invited to submit a grant request to be considered at our next quarterly meeting. There's no deadline; applications come in on a rolling basis. While Committee members themselves submit requests for such organizations as Damiano, Safe Haven, Life House, Laundry Love,



Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault, parishioners can also request funds for organizations that help those in need. To receive the grant request form, and to obtain more information, contact Zabelle Stodola at kzstodola@ualr.edu

Respectfully submitted,
Zabelle Stodola

NEW THIS SPRING: ST. PAUL'S ART SHOW

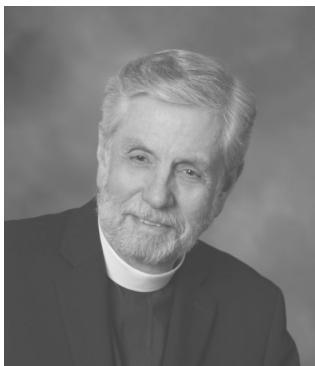
This year the Confirmation Class is holding an art show on May 24 to showcase their own projects as well as art from the congregation. If you would like to showcase your art of any kind, written, visual, or performing, please contact us by April 1, by filling out the Google form. Please reach out to Sophie or the Confirmation Class if you have any questions. You can also reach us through the following email: joanneerspamer@gmail.com

Please use this QR code to fill out the Google form.

Submitted by Anna Keto,
on behalf of the Confirmation Class



From Father Rick



Dear Friends in Christ,

As I said at the Parish annual meeting last Sunday, it has been a gift and joy to serve you and to get to know you personally over the past five or so years. I have been more than a bit overwhelmed by your kind words and gratitude for my ministry and time together with you. I will be following all of your won-

derful work and ministry going forward, knowing that you will be setting an example of Christian discipleship that we all can admire and hope to emulate. My prayers and best wishes to you all. Thank you!

Faithfully yours in Christ,
Fr. Rick Swenson

Deadline to submit items for the March issue of *The Messenger* is
8:00 am, Thursday, February 19, 2026.

Please email items to:
office@stpaulsduluth.org

LAY MINISTRY SCHEDULE – FEBRUARY 2026

Please find a sub if you are unavailable for your scheduled date.

	February 1	February 8	February 15	February 22	March 1
ALTAR GUILD	K Leonard	S Hall	C Miller	D Kolquist	K Leonard
	S Cox	A Sadowski	L Hultkrantz	S M Anderson	S Cox
	M Malone	K Timmerman		S Sommer	M Malone
		L Kania		T Jansen	
LECTOR 8 am	A Mackenzie	J Pastor	M Gustafson	J Pastor	A Mackenzie
LECTORS 10 am	K Smith	M Gustafson	J Pastor	N Constance	J Pastor
	S Sommer	A Harrington	A Peterson	Z Stodola	M Spencer
PRAYER LEADER	A Sundberg	P Peterson	O Morin-Swanson	L Brunfelt	H Hansen
VERGER	K Smith	K Smith	K Smith	K Smith	K Smith
LEM	K Smith	N Constance	J Pastor	N Constance	J Pastor
CHALICE	S Sommer	M Gustafson	K Baumgarten	N Diener	M Spencer
BEARERS	N Diener	Z Stodola	K Smith	Z Stodola	S M Anderson
ACOLYTES	J Shambour	J Sadowski	E Erspamer	C Gustafson	A Keto
	Q Wall	R Wall	H Buck	T Halverson	S Peterson
	S Keto	Q Wall	M Spehar	S Sundberg	S Keto
LIVESTREAM	C Meehan	D Barthel	J Austin	N French	J Austin
NURSERY	A Rennan	A Rennan	A Rennan	A Rennan	A Rennan
	E Erspamer	Y Quinn-Sikorski	J Schreck	E Erspamer	E Erspamer
COFFEE HOST	SM Anderson and N Constance	R Hauschmidt	W Copeland & M Chilson	B & K Silverness	C Andrews and J Peterman
USHERS	N Schuld	M Brown	D Morin	G Olson	N Schuld
	W Tabory	S Brown	K Swanson	R Lyle	J Wall
	J Wall	D Kolquist	J Sontag	M Gustafson	R Finkel
	R Finkel	R Silverness	H Schreck	P Waite	
LOCK UP	S Gray	M Brown	T Diener	J Austin	D Pederson

Ash Wednesday February 18

Noon: Lectors: N Diener, A Harrington

Chalice: S Sommer

Verger: J Pastor

5:15 pm: Lectors: N Constance, M Spencer

Chalice: Z Stodola, S M Anderson

Verger: K Smith

Acolyte: T Halverson

Lock Up: S Gray

Other Altar Guild Duties for February

February Linens:

S Hall, K Leonard

Bread-Baking:

M Dragich



St. Paul's Episcopal Church
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Duluth, MN 55812

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Visit our website:
www.stpaulsduluth.org

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and Talent Show

Tuesday, February 17, 6:00 pm

This intergenerational and collaborative evening of fun is the last chance we get to kick up our heels before Lent begins the next day. If you, or your family, would like to share a talent, please sign up on the sheet on the stairwell heading downstairs from the Sanctuary. If you would like to be a part of helping with the evening, there is a sign-up sheet for that as well. Singers, dancers, musicians, jugglers, jokers and poets — come on down! www.stpaulsduluth.org/sign-up



Ash Wednesday
February 18, 2026
Services in the church at
12:00 pm and at 5:15 pm,
both followed by a simple meal
in the Parish Hall

