

# The Messenger

A monthly publication of  
St. Paul Lutheran Church  
& Early Childhood Learning Center

## WhatsInside

- 2 Council Highlights
- 3 Pastor Page
- 4 Be a Christmas Angel
- 5 Scene-it
- 8 Going forward in worship
- 11 Advent Devotionals
- 11 Pew prayer shawls

## Advent - The most wonderful time of the year

★  
JOY  
NOEL  
ANGEL  
JESUS  
PEACE HOPE  
WISEMEN  
CHRISTMAS  
BELIEVE FAITH  
PRINCE OF PEACE  
THANK YOU

### ★ *Midweek Advent Family Gatherings*

Join us in preparation for the celebration of Jesus' birth with Holden Evening Prayer worship on Wednesdays at 7:00p (December 5 & 12). Prior to worship enjoy a soup supper with us at 6:15p (bring your own sandwich if you wish).

### ★ *Blue Christmas Worship*

A worship service for the longest night of the year, known as Blue Christmas. A reflective service for those who may find Christmas to be a difficult season. (Prior to worship a soup supper is served at 6:15p.)  
Wednesday, December 19 at 7:00p

### ★ *Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship*

Celebrating the birth of Jesus, the light of the world!  
4:00p Family-style • Santa, Holy Communion  
8:00p • Holy Communion & choir

Witness • Share • Encourage • Serve

## The gift of Christmas, one penny at a time

These jars won't be for canning, but for a special Advent collection project. Starting the first Sunday in Advent, December 2, pick up your Christmas jar at church. Then take it home and each day put all your spare change in it (or dollars) and bring it back on Christmas Eve. (This editor will certainly need two jars!)

We know this time of year we all are thinking of what gifts to buy for our family members and/or friends, so think of this like a **Christmas gift a day for Jesus**, where the gift will go towards helping the church ministries. A big thank you to Pr. Don Hillerich for the jars!



# Church Council Meeting



## Council Highlights • November

### November 15, 2018 meeting of the Congregational Council

- Received a progress report on The Sustaining Ministry Excellence Stewardship campaign.
- Received a progress report from the Church Musician Search Committee.
- Approval to recommend the Proposed 2019 Budget to the congregation at the December 9 Special Meeting. Also, at that meeting, we will elect Congregation Council members and the 2019 Nominating Committee.
- Approved continuing with one service until attendance increases or congregation input warrants two services. (See article in this newsletter.)
- Approved the acceptance of the donation of a new 47.1 cubic foot freezer from All Faith's Food Bank. (See article in this newsletter.)
- Approved collecting loose coins in jars, donated by Pastor Don Hillerich, beginning with Advent and concluding Christmas Eve. (See article in this newsletter.)
- The October minutes, pastor's report, and financial information may be found in the binder in the narthex. The November minutes will be available after approval at the December meeting.

~ The Executive Committee



**Dec. 9 Special Congregational Meeting  
(after worship to approve the  
2019 Budget, elect Congregation  
Council members and the 2019  
Nominating Committee)**

**Jan. 14 Ministry leader annual reports due**

**Feb. 24 Annual Meeting**



The Messenger is the news-  
letter of St. Paul Lutheran  
Church.

Mailing address:  
2256 Bahia Vista St.,  
Sarasota FL 34239-2499

Telephone: 941-955-6479 Fax: 941-955-8600  
ECLC Preschool 941-955-6480  
Email: [StPaul-Admin@verizon.net](mailto:StPaul-Admin@verizon.net)  
Preschool email: [StPaul-ECLC@verizon.net](mailto:StPaul-ECLC@verizon.net)  
Council email: [StPaul-Council@verizon.net](mailto:StPaul-Council@verizon.net)  
Pastor email: [prashley1010@gmail.com](mailto:prashley1010@gmail.com)  
Web site: [www.StPaulSarasota.org](http://www.StPaulSarasota.org)  
Editor: Debi Rado

St. Paul Lutheran Church is a member of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and  
the Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA.

Pastor: Rev. Ashley Nicolls

Synod Parish Deacon: Michele Hilton

#### Executive Committee

George Hutfilz, president  
Sandy Tull, vice president  
Sharon Wittren, secretary  
Marty Hillerich, treasurer

#### Congregation Council

Missy Craig, Marty Hillerich, George Hutfilz,  
John McAuliffe, Brian McCulley, JD Miller, Debi  
Rado, Sandy Tull, Sharon Wittren, Pastor  
Ashley Nicolls

#### Ministry Team Leaders

Sharing & Caring – Betty Smowton  
Christian Education – *Seeking volunteer leader*  
Communications – Debi Rado  
Early Childhood Learning Cntr – Marilyn Hutfilz  
Evangelism – Marty Hillerich  
Fellowship – *Seeking volunteer leader*  
Finance – John McAuliffe  
Food Pantry – George Hutfilz  
Outreach Ministry Fund – Curt Swenson  
Property – *Seeking volunteer leader*  
Social – Cindy Paxton  
Stewardship – George & Marilyn Hutfilz  
Worship and Music – Sharon Wittren  
Parish Secretary – Dorrie Parsons  
Director of Music – TBA

The Messenger is published monthly and  
distributed without charge to St. Paul Lutheran  
congregation members and friends.

Copyright ©2018 St. Paul Lutheran Church,  
Sarasota FL. Permission granted for reproduc-  
tion of individual articles with credit to source.

**OUR MISSION AT ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH** As a Holy Spirit-led family of God, we are called through Baptism to proclaim and bear witness to God's reconciling grace in Jesus Christ to all; so that by joyfully sharing God's Word and encouraging each other to service for the sake of others, our lives together make a difference for Christ and His kingdom.



# PASTOR PAGE

Greetings St. Paul Lutheran Church!

It is Christmas time once again. Lately, I have been thinking of a play I was in during elementary school. It was called "Christmas Then and Now." It presented Christmas throughout the years including WWI, The Depression, WWII, etc. What a wonderful way to reminisce (or learn in my case as an elementary school kid) about how Christmas was celebrated throughout the years.

In the church year we think of the time before Christmas as Advent. We celebrate it as a time of waiting for Jesus to be born into the world, all the while knowing that Jesus is in the world and waiting and expecting his return. I also think Advent can be a time of reminiscing. We know the end of the story, Jesus is born, but is born to die and rise for us. And so as we celebrate Advent, we reminisce of seasons of Advent and Christmases gone by. Here are a couple of my favorites.

For each Sunday of Advent we light a candle on the Advent wreath. While in college and seminary, I would see the first three candles lit, but then would go back to Minnesota to be with my family during the semester break and celebrate Christmas at my home congregation. I would never see the fourth Advent candle lit in the same place as the other three. I would come back from break and the Christmas season would be over. I guess I wasn't the only one to notice that fact. One of my seminary professors commented on it as he was giving his farewell speech during his Farewell and Godspeed service. He made the connection that at seminary it is appropriate that we will never have that final Advent candle lit. We are all waiting. First year students are waiting for their Clinical Pastoral Education, second year students waiting for internship, interns waiting for senior year, senior waiting for first call. And even the faculty and staff have their own waiting, even if it is just to find out about the students. So as every Advent comes around, I think of that time when I was waiting for what I have now received – a congregation to serve.

Thanks be to God!

I also love to think back on Christmas Eve worship at my home congregation in Minnesota. It is a congregation with Finnish heritage. In its over 120 years of history, worship there was first spoken in Finnish. To continue to remember its past, every Christmas Eve as the lights are turned off, as each person lights their candle, "Silent Night" is sung in English, but after all the verses are sung and each candle is lit, the choir from the balcony continues with one verse of "Silent Night" in Finnish. I would often be in the choir, but my last Christmas there I was sitting downstairs with everyone else. For the first time I could hear others singing Silent Night in Finnish rather than just the choir who had the phonetically printed words in front of them. The people I was hearing were the ones who knew the song from heart in their native language. Thanks be to God!

Blessed Advent Season and Merry Christmas!

~ *PrAshley*



# ADVENT

## Won't You Be a Christmas Angel?

This year's Christmas Angel Tree project, sponsored by the Social Ministry team, will benefit the families of our own Early Childhood Learning Center, the Peaceable Kingdom. This project, approved by the Congregation Council in September, will help some of the parents of our ECLC purchase and/or give gifts to their children this holiday season. Many of the school families struggle to meet their basic needs, including childcare, and don't have the resources to brighten their children's Christmas.

On Sunday, December 2, tags like the one above will be hanging from the Christmas tree in the Fellowship Hall. Please prayerfully consider choosing a tag and purchasing the gift listed on the back. Instructions will be on the front of the card. No gift wrapping please.

In addition, you may also wish to donate towards gift cards for the ECLC teachers. To do so, choose the denomination of Monopoly® money representing the amount you wish to contribute, write your name on the back, and attach it to the Christmas Angel Tree using the clothespins decorated by the ECLC students. You can then place your real donation in the offering plate or in the church office.

If you are unable to shop but would still like to help, monetary donations are most welcome. Please make your check out to St. Paul Lutheran Church and in the memo line write Angel Tree Project. You can give a cash donation in the offering (please write Angel Tree Project on the envelope) or drop off at the church office.

Please contact Pastor Ashley or Cindy Paxton ([cindypaxton@verizon.net](mailto:cindypaxton@verizon.net)) with any questions.



## St. Paul awarded Freezer Grant

At the Congregation Council meeting on November 15, the council voted unanimously to accept a grant award from All Faiths Food Bank for a new 47.1 cubic foot freezer to serve our food pantry.

St. Paul has partnered with All Faiths for many years to provide food to the needy in our community. Initially we received primarily canned and dry foods. Several years ago All Faiths began to move into fresh produce as well, and we received the gift of a used, large refrigerator from All Faiths to store fresh food safely. Recently All Faiths greatly expanded their capacity to store frozen foods, but we at the St. Paul food pantry were constrained by the capacity of the small household freezer in the food pantry room.

Considering that small freezer is at least twenty

years old, we leaped at the opportunity to apply for this grant, and All Faiths selected our pantry for the award. The new freezer will allow us to safely store and distribute frozen meat, frozen fruits and vegetables, and other frozen products.



As we continue to serve between 50 and 70 families each week, this new capability will enhance the breadth of the food we can serve our clients, and we are most grateful to All Faiths Food Bank for their recognition of our ministry with this generous gift award.

~ Submitted by George Hutfilz  
Food Pantry Ministry

# PRAISE AND PINCH FORM

As a congregation, we are committed to voicing our “*praises*” and “*not sitting on our pinches!*” To be a healthy and faithful community, we need to be open with one another about what we expect in all areas of our life together. If there is anything in our community life that brings you joy (*a praise*) or causes you to be concerned (*a pinch*), please share your feelings and questions here. Thank you for taking the time to communicate about the ways we are doing well in our ministry together at St. Paul, as well as the areas that need attention. Please place this form in the box in the narthex or Fellowship Hall, or mail to the church office.

I have a Praise:

---



---

I have a Pinch:

---



---

I believe the desired outcome (solution) should be:

---

Here is a specific question I would like answered:

---

Write your name below if you would like a direct response to your *Praise* or *Pinch*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

We will be sharing Praises and Pinches, along with any solutions, with the congregation. Please indicate your choice below.

- I authorize the use of my name if my *Praise* or *Pinch* is published in The Messenger newsletter.
- I prefer that my name be omitted from publication if my *Praise* or *Pinch* is published in the newsletter.

**Thank you for sharing your feedback with us so we can be more effective in the ministry of Jesus Christ that we do together!**

Every form will be evaluated by Mutual Ministry on a monthly basis.

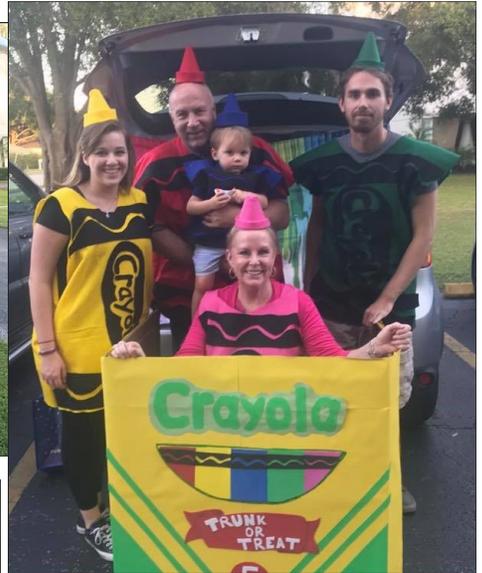
Mutual Ministry team members are: Jan Kruse, Mike Scherr, Barry Smith, and Pastor Ashley Nicolls (Jane French, alternate).



**By filling out a Praise and Pinch form, we keep our communication healthy. So don't keep those good feelings all to yourself, nor hold those pinches inside. Use this form or pick one up at church (in the narthex or Fellowship Hall). It's good to share!**

# ECLC Halloween Parade

**Scene-it  
at  
St. Paul**



# Baptized!

Ayla and Eryn Gwatney  
(parents David & Laura)

Congratulations on your baptisms and welcome to the body of Christ!

It was the first cold day of the year of course that they had their outdoor baptism planned, but they were good sports and were rewarded with two nice and warm prayer shawls to wrap around themselves (made with love by the Handcrafters Guild of St. Paul).



## Your Christmas purchases on Amazon.Smile earn “\$” for St. Paul

Make your gift purchases count. Did you know we get a percentage of every purchase you make on Amazon.Smile? It costs you nothing extra and it really adds up for St. Paul! If you haven't already, here is how to sign up:

1. Visit [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com).
2. Sign in with your Amazon.com credentials.
3. Select St. Paul Sarasota as your charitable organization to receive donations.
4. Start shopping!
5. Add a bookmark for [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.



<b>FROM YOUR FINANCE COMMITTEE</b>		
Report for year-to-date as of October 31, 2018		
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Income received:	\$ 198,249.92	\$ 236,555.17
Expenses:	\$ 272,521.94	\$ 284,832.56
St. Paul net	\$(74,272.02)	\$(48,277.39)
ECLC net position	\$ 23,845.69	\$ 43,396.53

**SUSAN G BURMASTER**  
*Realtor*

CELL: (941) 266-3650  
FAX: (941) 349-8090  
[susan.burmaster@floridamoves.com](mailto:susan.burmaster@floridamoves.com)

RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

Operated by a subsidiary of NRT LLC

# Visitations

PrAshley likes to visit people!

If you know of someone who would like a visit please let her know. She will visit people in the hospital, rehab center, or at home. If your friends have a need, she will also be available to them.

Then Jesus said,  
“Come to me, all of you who are weary & carry heavy burdens,  
& I will give you rest.” ~ *Matthew 11:28*

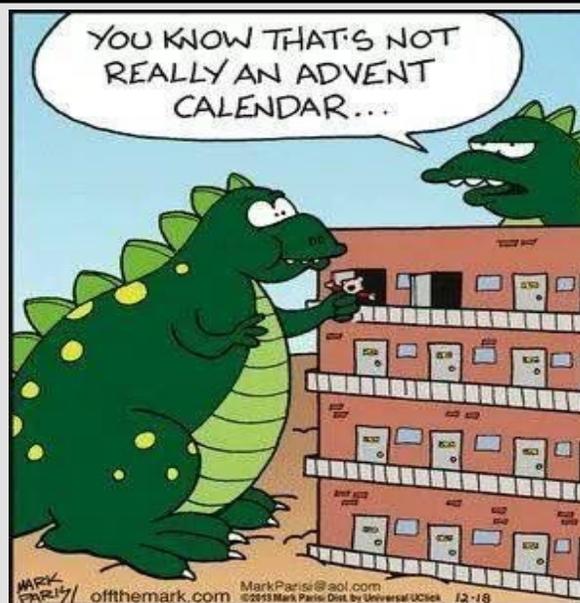
# Going forward in worship

With the input of the congregation at worship on Sunday, November 11, regarding what our worship schedule would be after the previous announced date of January 6, 2019, the Congregation Council approved the continuation of one Sunday worship service at 9:30a after January 6, 2019.

In fact, the precise wording contained in the approved motion is to “remain with the present schedule of one service on Sunday, with continued evaluation by Worship and Music and the Congregation Council, until attendance increases, or the wishes of the congregation warrants two services.”

Your input is appreciated and valuable, and we encourage you to keep expressing your desires regarding worship through the Praise and Pinch form. We, the pastor, Worship and Music members, and Congregation Council members always welcome your comments. We are grateful you are willing to share your thoughts with us as we continue to move forward together.

**Joke  
of the  
month**



# What the widow's mite taught me about generosity

By Amy Barnes ~ October 30, 2018 ~ Living Lutheran

With the arrival of autumn, many ELCA congregations enter a new season of stewardship. But finding new ways to foster giving can be a challenge for congregants and pastors. In examining my own stewardship, I found inspiration from an old story, which helped me see generosity in a new light.

The story of the widow's mite is often held up as an example of great generosity. Yet a closer examination of the words makes me think more about the tactile element of her gift and the act of giving it: *He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on"* (Luke 21:1-4).

Within the text, Jesus is the only person who sees the widow. No one else notices this woman, who is probably dressed in rough clothes, or sees her giving those two coins. I can only imagine there was silence as Jesus pointed her out to his followers, who were maybe too busy trying to get attention for their own giving and actions. The widow's faith and generosity stood out in its simplicity as an example.

When my church instituted its own widow's mite offering, leaders simply asked congregants to give their pocket change or extra bills—an offering above and beyond any normal giving by pledge or monthly gifts. Adding to the full experience of giving, every giver had to come forward and place the money on the altar.

For the first offering, I sat in the pew and dug coins out of my purse. They felt oddly foreign in my hand. I felt guilty there wasn't more—it was maybe a dollar in total. Unlike the widow, this was nowhere near my "complete livelihood." I wouldn't miss those coins. Then I thought more about how the widow must have felt. Those coins were basically her entire paycheck. She didn't stop to think about even the

could be transmuted into something more—more than money.

The experience helped me understand that generosity isn't just about stewarding our money. Martin Luther wrote: *If you are rich and see your neighbor is poor, serve him with your possessions.*

With the widow's mite offering fresh in my mind, the next time I made Goodwill donations I was careful to choose items that would help others—not just cast-offs. When I volunteered at our school's clothing drive, I imagined each donation keeping a child warm or a new pair of shoes helping them walk. Again, I found myself caught up in the weight of giving.

You see, one of our local donation centers weighs donations and gives gift cards to my church based on weight. I carefully measured out and weighed the donation. It was staggering to see it totaled only 30 pounds, which translated to less than \$50 in store gift cards. That direct tangible relationship of giving had a larger impact. Not only was I giving at a certain, very defined weight, I now knew that 30 pounds of stuff had been weighing me down.

At the next widow's mite offering, I was much more present. I better understood the weight of those two coins in the widow's hand. Again, I laid my coins at the altar. This time I felt the very weight of giving.



Amy Barnes is a freelance writer who has been published by a range of sites including Parabola, The New Southern Fugitives, McSweeney's, Romper and Simplemost.

basic needs of her life.

# St. Paul Mission Prayer

God of grace and love, you created us as your children and have brought us to St. Paul Lutheran Church. We are not perfect people, but this church is the perfect place for imperfect people. Thank you for your grace through Christ given to us. You call us to proclaim to everyone we meet that your grace is for them too. As a Holy Spirit-led family of God, we ask you to help us joyfully share your word and serve your people, so that together our lives make a difference in your kingdom here on earth. Strengthen us in our mission together; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen



## ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH CALENDAR OF EVENTS • DECEMBER 2018

### DEC 1 SAT

7:30A HOLY GROUNDS  
9:00A FOOD PANTRY DISTRIBUTION

### DEC 2 SUN

ADVENT BEGINS

### DEC 3 MON

1:00P SHARING & CARING  
5:15P GIRL SCOUTS MEET

### DEC 4 TUES

10:00A PRESCHOOL CHAPEL  
4:15P WORSHIP & MUSIC MEETING  
5:30P COMMUNITY MEAL  
6:30P SANCTUARY BELLS REHEARSE  
7:00P CHOIR/PRAISE BAND REHEARSE

### DEC 5 WED

8:00A PROPERTY MINISTRY MEETS  
6:16P SOUP SUPPER  
7:00P ADVENT WORSHIP

### DEC 7 FRI

9:30A FOOD PANTRY PACKING  
11:00A MAH JONGG  
6:30P DOMINOES GAME NIGHT

### DEC 8 SAT

7:30A HOLY GROUNDS  
9:00A BREAKFAST WITH SANTA  
9:00A FOOD PANTRY DISTRIBUTION

### DEC 9 SUN

10:30A SPECIAL CONGREGATION  
MEETING AFTER WORSHIP

### DEC 10 MON

7:00P GUITAR SARASOTA PERFORMS

### DEC 11 TUES

MINISTRY REPORTS DUE  
10:00A PRESCHOOL CHAPEL  
5:30P COMMUNITY MEAL  
6:00P SANCTUARY BELLS REHEARSE  
7:00P CHOIR/PRAISE BAND REHEARSE

### DEC 12 WED

8:00A PROPERTY MINISTRY MEETS  
6:16P SOUP SUPPER  
7:00P ADVENT WORSHIP

### DEC 13 THURS

3:30P EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETS

### DEC 14 FRI

9:30A FOOD PANTRY PACKING  
1:00P MAH JONGG

### DEC 15 SAT

MESSENGER DEADLINE  
7:30A HOLY GROUNDS  
9:00A FOOD PANTRY DISTRIBUTION

### DEC 17 MON

5:15P GIRL SCOUT TROOP 600 MTG

### DEC 18 TUES

10:00A PRESCHOOL CHAPEL  
5:30P COMMUNITY MEAL  
6:00P SANCTUARY BELLS REHEARSE  
7:00P CHOIR/PRAISE BAND REHEARSE

### DEC 19 WED

8:00A PROPERTY MINISTRY MEETS  
6:16P SOUP SUPPER  
7:00P BLUE CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

### DEC 20 THURS

6:30P COUNCIL MEETING

### DEC 21 FRI

9:30A FOOD PANTRY PACKING  
1:00P MAH JONGG

### DEC 22 SAT

7:30A HOLY GROUNDS  
9:00A FOOD PANTRY DISTRIBUTION

### DEC 24 MON

4:00P CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILY-STYLE  
8:00P CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP  
(BOTH W/HOLY COMMUNION  
AND CANDLELIGHT)

### DEC 25 TUES

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

5:30P COMMUNITY MEAL

### DEC 26 WED

8:00A PROPERTY MINISTRY MEETS

### DEC 28 FRI

9:30A FOOD PANTRY PACKING  
1:00P MAH JONGG

### DEC 29 SAT

7:30A HOLY GROUNDS  
9:00A FOOD PANTRY DISTRIBUTION

### DEC 31 MON

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

OFFICE HOURS: MON THRU FRI  
9:00A TO NOON



## Advent Devotional

The perfect way to spend time each day in reflection and prayer as you go through Advent.

If you do not receive your 2018 Advent Devotional before or after worship on November 25, they will still be available. Please contact Michele Hilton ([michelehilton@aol.com](mailto:michelehilton@aol.com)) or Debi Rado ([debirado@gmail.com](mailto:debirado@gmail.com)) so we can see that you get one.



## Happy Birthday

- Dec 3 - Theresa Alger
- Dec 6 - John Miller
- Dec 7 - John Puckhaber
- Dec 8 - Jean Panthana
- Dec 9 - Joyce Finke
- Dec 11 - Judy Roberts
- Dec 15 - Tyler Riley
- Dec 19 - Anselm Weber
- Dec 21 - Virginia McQuaig
- Dec 27 - Myrtle Krause
- Dec 27 - Curtis Swenson
- Dec 29 - Wilma Armstrong
- Dec 29 - Pamela Collis
- Dec 29 - Patricia Collis
- Dec 30 - Earleen Ashbrook

## Happy Anniversary

- Dec 7 - Peter & Evelyn Gulliksen
- Dec 10 - Jim & Judy Alberts
- Dec 21 - Barry & Brenda Smith
- Dec 31 - Dylan & Adriana Beetle

## Pew Prayer Shawls

The Handcrafters Guild of St. Paul has placed four of the prayer shawls made by them with love on the pews in the sanctuary. They are there to be used by anyone in need of warmth; whether because they are cold or because they need to feel wrapped up in the caring arms of those who made them.

When the worship service is over, kindly return them to the pews for another congregation member or guest to use.

If you know someone going through a serious illness or life change, let us know so we may gift them with one of the prayer shawls.



★  
**FOR  
 UNTO US  
 A CHILD IS BORN  
 UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN  
 AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED  
 WONDERFUL COUNSELOR  
 THE MIGHTY GOD  
 THE PRINCE OF PEACE**

*Have a very  
 Merry Christmas*

# St. Paul Lutheran Church

## & Early Childhood Learning Center

2256 Bahia Vista Street, Sarasota FL 34239

Phone 941-955-6479 Fax 941-955-8600

Preschool 941-955-6480

Website [www.StPaulSarasota.org](http://www.StPaulSarasota.org)

Rev. Ashley Nicolls, Pastor

### Sunday Schedule

9:30a Service of Worship

*with Children's Message*



## BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

Saturday, December 8

9:00-10:30 am

Children, you are invited!  
Join us and the Elves for breakfast,  
decorate cookies & make fun  
crafts to take home. At the end of  
this special time Santa will arrive!

Call to reserve a seat for  
your child/grandchild  
955-6479



Parents, bring your camera  
for photos with Santa!

