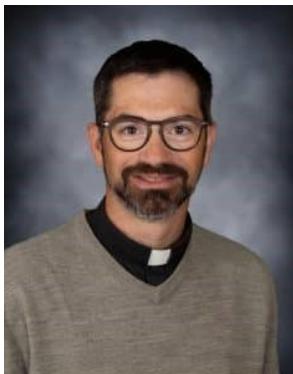




JANUARY EPISTLE

ST. PAUL'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, SCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER (ECC)

JANUARY 2026



When you see what's new?

Jason A. Scheckman, Associate Pastor

As I look back on 2025, I continue to be humbled by all the new faces that the Lord of the Church has brought to the body of Christ here at St. Paul's. For those who are the new faces, we are so glad to have you here among us! Welcome, and thank you for making this family in Christ your own.

For those of you who have been here for some time, thank you for your continued investment in the life of the body of Christ here at St. Paul's. As you look around and see faces that are new to you, please take the time to introduce yourself. It's entirely possible you might meet for the first time someone whose family has been a part of the St. Paul's community for generations, or for several years, or just a few weeks, either way it will be a joy to get to know other members of the family.

There's a great value in the hospitality of saying hello, and being willing, even in small ways, to serve those around you. The impact can be eternal!

As we come close to the middle of the third season of CHRIST in ALL THINGS, the podcast has become a reliable and relatable way for us to share with you all things that are important and interesting in our life together. Recently Pastor O'Donnell and I talked about "Liturgical Hospitality" because we have a deep conviction that a consistent, Scripture-based order of service, or "liturgy"—especially sung liturgy—is better for the faith-formation of all ages. You see, the Divine Service—the Word and Sacrament worship of the Church—is a wedding feast. It is the "marriage supper of the Lamb," (Rev 19.9) where Jesus Christ Himself is our host and the substance of the feast. So, it's really helpful—and pretty important—that those who are learning the rituals of the feast are willing learners, humble . . . and welcomed and taught the rich practices of the Church's wedding feast by people with generous and hospitable hearts.

If you haven't had a chance to tune into the podcast lately, there's a few episodes you won't want to miss including those two about "Liturgical Hospitality". We also interviewed both Ruth Polcha (along with her daughter Kathy Mueller) and Mimi Gebel. Not only did we get to know these two front pew sitters better but were fascinated by their stories. What a blessing to have you two among us here. If you'd like to listen, you can go to Christinallthings.org on your computer, or use a podcast app on your phone or tablet (like Spotify or Apple Podcasts) and search for "Christinallthings" (yes, all in one word).

So, as we welcome what the Lord of the Church will bring us in 2026, please dear family in Christ, let me impress upon you the importance of the welcome you extend to one another. It is a gift that keeps on giving as Christ is with us in all things.

In His Grip, (John 10:28-29)

Pastor Jason A Schockman



Dispatches from The Office

Rev. Lance Armstrong O'Donnell, Senior Pastor

Be Transformed. Winter Workshops

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2, ESV)

I am pleased to announce *Winter Workshops* during the "Word on Wednesday" period, 6:30-7:45p.m., January 7 – February 11, 2026. We are doing this potluck-style, so we encourage participants not only to bring their Bibles and writing utensils, but—if able—to bring something to drink and some food to share. Participants will "break bread," study the scriptures, discuss, and learn together.

BIBLICAL FINANCE FOR YOUNG ADULTS (high school - 30ish ☺)

Taught by Dale Stratil



Young adults, you are making financial decisions that will affect you the rest of your lives. Why not have a sound Biblical basis upon which to make those decisions? We will be covering topics such as budgeting, emergency funds, saving, investing, debt, insurance, purchasing a house, mortgage, retirement planning, and of course, generous giving. We are going to merge your Christian walk and your financial walk into one cohesive walk with the LORD. *"He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (Micah 6:8). Click [here](#) to sign up.

LEARNING CHRISTIAN MEDITATION (middle school – adults)

Taught by Pastor Lance O'Donnell

Stressed out? Struggling at work or school? Relationships with family or friends strained? Significant decisions looming? Every area of your life can be transformed by learning to meditate on the Word of Christ. We're not talking about "mindfulness" here, nor about developing the habit of reading devotions. *Christian meditation* is a relaxed form of concentration on God's Word. In this class you'll learn how to "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." (Col 3:16) You'll develop a practice of meditation that fits your personality, and through the Word of Christ—as you'll discover—the Holy Spirit will help you discern the will of God and live in Godliness, confidence, and contentment. Click [here](#) to sign up.



(continued →)

SABBATICAL UPDATE AND REQUEST

Connect - Explore - Create

In the November 2025 *Epistle* I wrote about “dealing with disappointment,” with particular attention to Plan A of my sabbatical that had just fallen through. Since that time Plan B also fell through. I have neither the long-term place to stay in a location that connects me to old family and friends in friends in my native state, and I did not receive the smaller grant that enabled me to make such a trip.

This sabbatical is important to me and to future pastors, so even if it’s not what I had wanted for myself, I am committed to making it come to pass, making it work for me, and establishing the precedent so that St. Paul’s knows how beneficial a sabbatical can be. In three years, after his youngest graduates from high school, it will be perfect timing for Pastor Schockman to have his sabbatical. If my trailblazing here has to be a bit more challenging than I’d hoped, so be it. *God’s will be done.*

Because of the necessary addition of two full-time-equivalent positions, flat enrollment in the school, and congregational giving that is just beginning to match our growth, our congregation is still very much attempting to climb out of a deficit position. I cannot fundraise for a sabbatical when we’re in a deficit, so I’m not asking for money. I am going to do this as cheaply as possible, and so my Plan C is to stay in Wisconsin. Here’s my request: *if you have a cabin that would be a good, quiet place for me to work on my novel, please consider gifting me a few days, or a week or so this summer.* I’m praying that I can piece together a number of short-to-mid-term stays at various places.

My sabbatical theme—and the personal mission that I keep on the white board in my studio at home—is “Connect-Explore-Create.” I hunger to *connect* with Christ, beloved family, and friends; *explore* God’s creation and learn new things through study and serendipitous travel; and *create* new works of literature that imbue the gritty reality of existence with Christian hope.

If you’re able to donate some cabin time to me between Memorial Day and Labor Day, please email me at podonnell@splco.org or call the office at 262-567-5001. Thank you very much for prayerfully considering. –lao_+

BTW, on January 11, 2026 our “Life Application Bible Study” on Sunday mornings will be a fascinating look into the letter of *Jude*. You’ll discover that there’s a lot more life application there than you might think! Please join us.

Yours in Christ,



Pastor Lance O'Donnell
Commemoration of Adam and Eve
19 December, A.D. 2025



"And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new. Also, He said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true" (Revelation 21:5).

In January there is a great deal of "new" talk. Parties are held to ring in the "new" year. "New" year's resolutions are made to set a "new" course of life in the "new" year. There is date forgetfulness as checks and other forms are filled out without using the "new" year on the dateline.

We use all this "new" talk because there is very often so much wrong with the old in us. We think back to the "new" resolutions from the previous year that only lasted a few weeks. That "new" person did not shed any pounds and instead, picked up a few. The "new" habits of going to the gym were soon replaced by even more time on the couch binging on Netflix. The "new" person who does not lose their temper, use sarcasm as a lethal weapon and spend more money than necessary, but who worships, prays and serves the Lord and the neighbor, never seemed to stick around. We need "new" talk because the Old Adam is alive and well within every one of us.

But this promise of "new" is a matter of stewardship. It is the Lord Himself who makes the promise of all things being new. These words recorded by St. John are not pious wishes or hopeless promises. They do what they say. YOU, that one baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection, are NEW! These words are indeed trustworthy and true. This "new" comes to you in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It comes free of charge, even without our prayer.

This stewardship of "new" is not a vague, someday kind of stewardship either. You are NEW now! Forgiven. Reborn from above. The old is gone, nailed to Calvary's cross and buried and rotting in a tomb that was only borrowed by Jesus for His resurrection rest. The Gospel is what makes us NEW every morning. Remembering your baptism, you are new. Confessing your sins and receiving absolution makes you new. Hearing the Gospel filling your ears makes you new. Feasting on Christ's body and blood in the Holy Supper makes you new.

These mercies, totally undeserved as they are, are entrusted to us to steward TODAY even as we long for the Last Day. But we know how often we fail in this stewardship. We hoard God's creation as if it belongs to us. We belittle and devalue our neighbor because they look or sound or act in a way that we do not like. We seek to make the Holy Word of God softer and more palatable for those, or even ourselves, who refuse to confess sin as sin and repent. We value our comfort over truth, our reputation over faithfulness and our treasure over making sure that people get to hear of the Jesus who has done so much for the world and us.

We, as stewards of the Gospel, need to be made new every day. This is exactly what the Lord does. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel last year, so He gives us a new year. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel yesterday, and He gives us a new day. We failed in stewardship of the Gospel in the last few minutes, and yet in mercy our newness comes with each tick of the clock! Because that is how the Lord works.

As we see this working of all new things in us, it then calls us to be stewards of this newness to the world. This starts right in our own homes. It radiates out to our neighbors. It beams out from our congregations. This newness is teamed at the circuit, district and Synod levels all to shine the newness of the Gospel to those who need it.

Your new talk starts in the newness of the Gospel. Steward this treasure in this new year and this new day. It starts with a new you in Jesus. This is indeed trustworthy and true.

NOVEMBER MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Baptism

Matthew Damion Hopkins

Received by affirmation of faith

Robert Gerdes

Elizabeth Knea

Deaths

Robert Buchta

Alexander Knebel

Baptized 2026 Confirmed 1246



January's Hymn of the Month: *In Christ Alone*

This is a relatively new hymn, too new to be included in our hymnal, which means we have lots of information about its history.

This was the first hymn that Keith Getty and Stuart Townend wrote together. Getty, a musician, had been looking for inspiration to write what he calls "modern hymns," which have a modern feel while teaching the faith and being singable for a congregation. He met Townend through a mutual friend and was impressed by the hymns he had written already, such as "How Deep the Father's Love for Us." Townend listened to some melodies that Getty had been working with and was inspired to write a song about Christ's life. The two spent some months collaborating and eventually published "In Christ Alone" in 2001.

This hymn speaks about Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, and what that means for all of us. The first stanza speaks of what Christ is for us: my hope, light, strength, comforter. In His love for us we find peace to face the storms and fears of our life. The second and third stanzas are a clear proclamation of Jesus' earthly life. He was born a helpless baby, died to satisfy God's wrath against sin, and rose again, showing His power over sin and the grave. The final stanza makes these historical facts personal for us. We were bought with Christ's blood, and no powers in heaven or on earth can take us from His hand.

This month, join in singing this hymn that so beautifully proclaims what Jesus has done for us, and reminds us that no matter what the new year may bring, here in the power of Christ we stand.



Piggly Wiggly Receipt fundraiser

If you shop at Piggly Wiggly, please deposit your receipts in the designated box in Fellowship Hall. The money raised from your receipts helps to continue the programming for our youth.

Information about the MS & HS youth group is available through:

- Email: splyouth.group@splco.org
- Instagram: [splyouthocon](#)

January Events

- † January 4 High School Youth Group 7-8:30pm
- † January 11 High School Youth Group 7-8:30pm
- † January 18 High School Youth Group 7-8:30pm
- † January 25 NERF CLASSIC



Registration deadline for attending the LWML Winter Getaway on January 30-31 in Fond du Lac is January 16th. Rev. Keith GeRue, US Army chaplain and serving as Associate Pastor and Principal at Trinity, Menasha and assigned to the 452 Combat Surgical Hospital, Milwaukee is the guest speaker.

The theme is from Joshua 1:9 "*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed. GOD IS WITH YOU wherever you go.*" Information is available on the LWML website. Anyone who would like to contribute to the Gifts from the Heart ingathering can find the list of items needed by the collection bin in the Fellowship Hall. Items for LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces include: Gum, mints, single-serve drink packets, Chapstick, and individual packages of granola bars, beef jerky, nuts, crackers.

Anyone who is a Thrivent member and would like to help supply sheets for quilts with a grant would be appreciated. Contact Pat Menden (262-719-6008)

Join us for our next meeting, Tuesday, February 3rd, at 6:00 pm in room 219. Remember your MITES!

There is NO meeting in January.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPONSOR A RADIO BROADCAST?

Our radio broadcast over WTKM is a very important outreach for our congregation. Below are the dates open for 2026. Please prayerfully consider sponsoring one of these Sundays. The cost for 2026 has increased to **\$135.00**. We praise God for this valuable community outreach.

Feb. 1	Apr. 19	Jun. 21	Aug. 9	Sept. 20	Nov. 1	Dec. 6
Feb. 15	May 3	Jun. 28	Aug. 23	Oct. 11	Nov. 15	Dec. 13
Feb. 22	Jun. 7	Jul. 12	Sept. 6	Oct. 18	Nov. 22	Dec. 20
Mar. 15	Jun. 14	Aug. 2	Sept. 13	Oct. 25	Nov. 26	Dec. 27

If you are interested in sponsoring a Broadcast please fill out the bottom portion of this page and hand it into the church office. Thank you. Any questions please call Heather in the church office 567-5001.

NAME _____ DATE: 1st CHOICE _____ 2nd CHOICE _____

Please dedicate to (i.e. in memory of, wedding anniversary, to the Glory of God, in honor of...etc.)

JANUARY 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				¹ NO SCHOOL OFFICE CLOSED	²	
4 8:00 am Divine Worship 9:15 am Sunday School 9:15 am Public School Confirmation 9:15 am Adult Bible Study 10:30 am Divine Worship 7:00 pm HS Youth Group	5 5:30 pm Lord's Cupboard Drive-Thru	6 Boys' Warrior Classic	7 Boys' Warrior Classic 6:30 pm Biblical Finance for Young 6:30 pm Learning Christian Meditation	8 Boys' Warrior Classic 6:30 pm Praise Team Rehearsal	9 Boys' Warrior Classic	10 Boys' Warrior Classic 7:30 am Journeymen 5:00 pm Divine Worship
11 8:00 am Divine Worship 9:15 am Sunday School 9:15 am Public School Confirmation 9:15 am Adult Bible Study 10:30 am Divine Worship 11:00 am New Member Sponsor Thank You Luncheon 7:00 pm HS Youth Group	12 6:00 pm Lord's Lambs Giveaway	13 Girls' Warrior Classic 5:30 pm Board of Operations Meeting 6:00 pm Board of Elders Meeting	14 Girls' Warrior Classic 11:00 am Caring Through Sharing Group 6:30 pm Biblical Finance for Young Adults 6:30 pm Learning Christian Meditation	15 Girls' Warrior Classic 6:30 pm Church Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm Praise Team Rehearsal	16 Girls' Warrior Classic	17 Girls' Warrior Classic 8:00 am Women of Joy 5:00 pm Divine Worship
18 8:00 am Divine Worship 9:15 am Coffee Fellowship Hour 9:15 am Sunday School 9:15 am Public School Confirmation 9:15 am Adult Bible Study 10:30 am Divine Worship 5:00 pm Reformation Tap Society	19 NO SCHOOL 5:30 pm Lord's Cupboard Drive-Thru 8: Meal	20	21 6:30 pm Biblical Finance for Young Adults 6:30 pm Learning Christian Meditation	22 6:30 pm Church Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm Praise Team Rehearsal	23	24 7:30 am Journeymen 5:00 pm Divine Worship
25 8:00 am Divine Worship 9:15 am Sunday School 9:15 am Public School Confirmation 9:15 am Adult Bible Study 10:30 am Divine Worship 6:00 pm Youth Group Nerf Classic	26 6:00 pm Lord's Lambs Giveaway	27	28 6:30 pm Biblical Finance for Young Adults 6:30 pm Learning Christian Meditation	29 6:30 pm Church Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm Praise Team Rehearsal	30	31 7:30 am Journeymen 5:00 pm Divine Worship

January 2026



WITNESSES

ALL MITES MAY BE RETURNED in the Large Mite Box in Narthex. Additional Mite Boxes for personal use are also available.

*Commemoration Days are examples of those in whom the saving work of Jesus Christ has been made manifest to the glory of His holy name and to the praise of His grace and mercy

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

January 1st
Joanne Abel
January 3rd
Donna Fortmann
January 4th
Julie Kummrow
January 8th
Dale Swenson
January 10th
Pat Benes
Diane Bleke
January 12th
James Abel
Barb Boldt
Kathy Mueller
January 13th
Charles Muecke
January 17th
Tom Miller
January 19th
Wayne Schoenherr
January 21st
Michael Duffy
January 22nd
Duke Maynard
January 26th
Barb Brockway

For our members 70+ years



MEMORIALS

Alex Knebel	\$25.00
Nate Zastrow	\$2370.00
Robert Reddelien	\$20.00

ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

(The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod)

210 E. Pleasant Street
Oconomowoc, WI 53066-3050
262-567-5001

WORSHIP & STUDY

Saturday Worship	5:00 pm
Sunday Worship	8:00 am & 10:30 am
Bible Class	9:15 am

Pastor Lance Armstrong O'Donnell 262.567.5001 x217

Pastor Jason Schockman 262.567.5001 x216

Director of Parish Music, Allison Mackie 262.567.5001 x214

Principal - Jill George 262.567.5001 x213

Website: www.splco.org

LIVE BROADCASTS:

8:00 am Sunday Worship
Live on WTKM 104.9 FM/1540 AM
& www.wtkm.com
Live-streamed at www.splco.org

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER (ECC)

Christian Pre-School & Day Care

Director Christine Flores 262.567.4881

Epistle Editor-Heather Scheuer

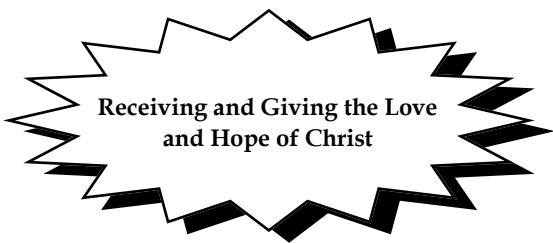
Newsletter deadline for articles,
announcements and features is the
2nd Wednesday of the month

PLEASE ADVISE THE CHURCH OFFICE OF
ANY ADDRESS CHANGES

St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, School & ECC
210 E. Pleasant St.
Oconomowoc, WI 53066-3050

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Reformation Tap Society talks are casual and thoughtful adult conversations about important things. *Under the theme, "Lead Me to Christ, the Rock," the 2025-2026 Reformation Tap Society season explores the various ways in which Christ is the foundation of a holy and purposeful life.* Though we welcome adults of any age, topics and language are aimed at those 18-35. Our speakers understand that RTS is a public event, so the conversation won't be raw, but our speakers are encouraged to practice candor geared towards younger adults. Parents of children under high school age should collaborate on a babysitter, then come and enjoy the beverages, food, and conversation. RTS is an opportunity to hear perspectives not regularly heard in popular culture. All are welcome.

RTS is held on the 3rd Sundays, September through May. We gather at 5pm, have a "beer talk" from the brewmaster at about 5:25, and at about 5:30 our speaker takes the mic. The speaker will present on a topic of interest, then take questions until 6:15 or so. (BTW, you're welcome even if you're not a beer fan. Other beverages are available.)

January 18, 2026

Don't Let the Rocks Cry Out

Presenter: Jason Schockman

5-7p.m.

BrewFinity Brewery
N58W38900 Industrial Rd.
Suite D
Oconomowoc, WI 53066
www.brewfinitybrewing.com

**First time guests
get a free
beer or soda on us!**

