The EPISTLE February 2026

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Church Office Hours:

Monday – Friday

8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sunday Schedule:

Sunday School: 8:30 am

Worship: 9:30 am

Pastor Neil Wonnacott

Office Hours: M, W, TH & F

8:30 – 11:30 am

From Pastor Wonnacott's Keyboard:

Our Midweek Lenten Series

Some hymns tell a story, others teach, and still others create pictures in our minds of the great works of God. Some hymns do all three, weaving together a tapestry that is beautiful yet simple, wondrous yet easy to understand. **"O Love, How Deep" (LSB 544)** is that kind of hymn. It was written in the fifteenth century by an unknown follower of the Devotio moderna, or "Modern Devotion." This movement started in the Netherlands in the fourteenth century. The clearest expression of this movement was a monastic order for both laity and clergy called the Brethren of the Common Life.

Martin Luther himself was influenced by this movement, so it is a part of our history as Christians of the Lutheran Confessions. During the Middle Ages, many Christians followed the life of Christ, who was the focal point for their piety and prayers. Beginning with our Lord's birth, Jesus' life is traced all the way to the cross and the resurrection.

Sometimes emphasis is on the penitence of the Christians, but the very best of this kind of poetry points us to Jesus as the one who serves, saves, and continues to give us His salutary gifts.

The series hymn "O Love, How Deep" was originally a twenty-three-stanza poem. In the nineteenth century, an Anglican cleric named Benjamin Webb translated the hymn into English and then chose six stanzas for use in English hymnody. The doxological stanza was added later. Although it does not appear in the first stanza, the most pointed and beautiful language in the hymn is expressed in the phrase "for us." The phrase is reminiscent of the language of the Nicene Creed: "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven." "For us" is not simply a pithy line to use because it is easy to repeat. It is a confession of who God is and what He brings in giving us His Son. It helps us understand why God would send His Son to die for us. The phrase "for us" also captures much of the Reformation's theological emphasis—and Luther's understanding of Scripture in particular. Luther went from searching for a righteous God and finding only stern rebuke to seeing God in the form of a little baby and as the one who became one of us for us so that we might become like Him. Take a look at the hymn itself to see where it goes and what we will be meditating upon this Lent before we start the series om Wednesday, February 18th!

THE DEADLINE FOR MARCH EPISTLE IS FEBRUARY 2OTH!!! Epistle articles, comments, ideas may be deposited in the epistle box in the Narthex mail slots or e-mailed to Eric Thornton at firemanet@yahoo.com. I appreciate all of your articles, ideas and comments!

Church Office Hours

The new hours for the church office are Monday through Friday from

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Ushers: It is very important that you find your own replacement if you are not going to be able to usher during your assigned time. Please take the time to do this so that we always

have ushers available to assist our members and visitors. Thank you.

Worship Anew can be viewed on Sunday mornings at 11:30 am on: the local CW station-channel WCWW-TV 25 out of South Bend, Dish Channel 266 or Direct TV channel 377. For you travelers, you can view anytime at <worshipanew.org>

OUR OFFERINGS TO THE LORD FROM HIS BLESSINGS TO US

Offerings remind us of the blessings God has given us and are an opportunity to thank Him for what He has done in our lives. Please place your offerings in our Offering Box located in front of the water fountains in the narthex of the church. You may also choose "e-tithing" by having a weekly deposit to St Paul's from your bank account. If you have questions on e-tithing, please contact the Church Office.

Preschool Postings

Our preschoolers enjoyed all the special activities last month and are looking forward to Valentine's Day fun this month. I'm sure the teachers can't wait for warmer weather to arrive! During February we'll learn about Jesus' healings and parables in our Bible stories, and we'll see baby animals and tractors at Ag Day at the public school. Thank you for your prayers and support!

Pastor's Adult Confirmation Class

Do you know a friend, co-worker, neighbor, or relative who you want to see in heaven?

They may not know about Jesus, or they might know the Lord but avoid coming to church. Now is the time to talk to them; tomorrow may be too late.

Pastor is having a class on what Lutherans believe (Confirmation class). Enroll in class by calling Pastor Wonnacott at 574-301-9291.

Class members will determine the day and time that work best for the majority.
Deadline for enrolling is February 28th.

Our Midweek Lenten

Feb. 18th Ash Wednesday - Dinner at 6:00 pm and Worship at 7:00 pm

Feb. 25th Midweek Lent 2 - Dinner at 6:00 pm and Worship at 7:00 pm

Mar. 4th Midweek Lent 3 - Dinner at 6:00 pm and Worship at 7:00 pm

Mar. 11th Midweek Lent 4 - Dinner at 6:00 pm and Worship at 7:00 pm

Mar. 18th Midweek Lent 5 - Dinner at 6:00 pm and Worship at 7:00 pm

Mar. 25th Midweek Lent 6 - Dinner at 6:00 pm and Worship at 7:00 pm

Holy Week

April 2nd Maundy Thursday Service at 7:00 pm

April 3rd Good Friday Service at 7:00 pm

Easter Sunday

April 5th Easter Sunrise at 7:00 am

Easter Breakfast at 8:00 am

Easter Festival at 9:30 am

ST. PAUL'S TREASURER RESPONSIBILITIES

As part of the Constitution and By-Laws Committee's efforts to develop a simpler church administration organization, the treasurer position is being redefined. The proposed revised duties of the treasurer would be as listed below, in addition, the position would no longer be a church executive board position, so it could be carried out by male or female members of the congregation.

1. Maintain income and expenses ledgers (offerings, gifts, donations, choice scholarship funds from state, expenses against budgets, expenses / reimbursements for individual members where appropriate)

2. Banking : Maintain day to day transactions within the General Fund bank account and account for all transactions between specific other bank accounts overseen by Treasurer (with Lori Haug's assistance)

- Youth account
- Reserve Funds account
- Facilities Expansion account (minimal transactions in recent years)
- Missions account

3. Payroll : Maintain all employee employment/pay records in the computer file system. Interface with external firm that handles payroll function, including related W-2 and payroll tax filings

4. Periodic summary financial reporting for voters meetings, parish planning meetings, and weekly cash position reporting to parish planning council

5. Payments: issue checks against expenses as appropriate and record in ledger

6. Communication: answer questions from boards and staff regarding ledgers/funds/procedures.

7. Prepare any year-end tax/financial compliance reporting such as corporation reports; personal property tax return; assist where needed with IRS required information on donations > $250 reporting.

We are asking that any member of the congregation willing to serve in any or all of these duties please advise a member of the Constitution and By-Laws Committee (Nathan Miller, Kevin Furman, Ken Eichinger, Dave Burcham). Mark Matejka, who has served as treasurer for St. Paul's congregation for several years, desires to be relieved of his position. The transition of duties from Mark to whomever replaces him would be a gradual one and dependent on the experience and schedules of the individual(s) willing to fulfill the above duties. A specific timeline for transition would be established after volunteers to serve are determined.

If there are no congregation members willing to serve in fulfilling these duties of a treasurer, we will need to use an external accounting firm. This would result in additional budget expense.

Please prayerfully consider serving to fulfill the treasurer's duties outlined above and contact one of the committee members to advise your willingness.

Evangelism Board

Evangelism Board will be sharing excerpts from the tract "What Lutherans Teach". Refresh your Biblical knowledge to better share your faith with others! This month we look at "Sin" and "The Gospel".

Sin - Lutherans teach that every thought, word, and deed contrary to God's Law is sin; that every human being is a sinner by birth; that all evil in the world is the consequence of man's sinning; and that sin is wholly damnable. References - 1 John 3:4; John 3:6; Genesis 8:21; Romans 5:12; Psalm 5:4.

The Gospel - Lutherans teach that the Gospel is not a new or higher law,

but the special revelation of that which a loving and merciful God has done through Christ, and still does, for the salvation of mankind; that it freely offers to all sinners the righteousness which is in Christ Jesus; and that it will save forever those who trustingly accept its promises. Reverences - Ezekiel 33:11; 1 Timothy 2:4; Luke 4:18,19; John 3:16; Romans 3:21-24.



Altar Guild

Any member of communicant age, who is willing to learn the work of the guild May express that desire to any attendant. Director Mel Schutz will see that you are paired with a "veteran" attendant for training. Afterward, if you determine it is not your gift, may you be blessed for giving it a try.
Anyone wishing to embroider baptismal napkins, can do this at their own pace. Contact Mel for specifics!

The Flower Chart for 2026 is hanging outside the Altar Guild room in the Narthex. To donate altar flowers just sign on any open date (please give the occasion). If you wish any help in finding a florist, ordering or picking up please contact the attendant whose name is listed on the Epistle calendar. They will also explain how to get your flowers after services have concluded.

This month we will begin looking at our church windows. The Rose window above the altar plus the first 5 windows on each side are the original windows from the old church. These windows were dedicated to the glory of God on December 14, 1958. They were made and

installed by the Colonial Stained Glass Company ofSt. Joseph, Michigan. We will start with the Rose window (The Gifts of the Spirit window).

The Descending Dove is a Biblical symbol for the Holy Spirit. The Cuciform Halo and Equilateral Triangle identifies Him as God, the Third Person of the Trinity. The Flame, also a Biblical symbol, radiating from the center represents the outpouring of the Spirit, and His gifts to the Church. Also seen is the 8-pointed Star of Jacob. This is a Messianic symbol. Eight, the number of regeneration, shows the Spirit's work through faith in Jesus and in our baptism; bringing spiritual regeneration. The Star, frame petals, small circles, and sets of flames all number eight. The Field of Blue represents heaven.

School Corner

Thank you for the donations to the SGO at the end of the year! That will help provide scholarships to our families, keeping an education here low- to no- cost! We appreciate your generosity!

We are currently in our 3rd Term. We celebrated National Lutheran Schools Week January 26th – February 1st. Thank you for your continued support of our students, families, and staff. St. Paul's Lutheran School was instituted in 1846, with the founding of the church. **Our goal is to provide a solid education with a Biblical foundation, in keeping with our Lutheran heritage and history.** That is truly something to celebrate and be thankful for!

Check out the Teacher Wish List tree in the narthex! Each tag has items "wished for" by the staff such as classroom resources, supplies, games and movies for Extended Care, books for the library, etc., along with where to buy the item. Please take a tag and return it with the donated item either under the tree or to the school office. The tree will be up until Feb. 15th.

We are anticipating our Preschool and Kindergarten Round-Up on March 12th, 5:00-7:00pm. *Please encourage family and friends to learn more about St. Paul's!* We offer a Christian alternative to education for Preschool through 8th Grade, not only focusing on core curriculum, but also providing a Biblical, Christ-centered focus. **With our comprehensive scholarship program, a Christian education can cost little or nothing**. *Scholarships are even available for Pre-K!* Word of mouth is the best form of advertisement, so please

encourage your family/friends to check us out! Families can contact the school office, 574-546-2790, for registration information and a tour. Information can also be found at www.stpaulsbremen.church/school.

Please see the article about the Playground Committee in the bulletin. If you are interested in joining the committee, please contact Beth Miller, 260-519-2884.

Every month Star Students are displayed on the narthex bulletin board! These students, nominated by the staff, have exemplified one or all of the three "Rs"- Respect, Responsibility, and Righteousness. Please check them out and encourage them in their hard work and behavior!

SGO Announcement

The giving does not need to stop at the end of the year! Donations for 2026 have started! Please see the benefits below and encourage others to donate.

A new federal tax credit is coming!

- **Taxpayers can begin making donations on January 1, 2027.**
- **This is a 100% Federal Tax Credit, up to $1,700 per taxpayer.**

Taxpayers would receive the Federal Tax Credit when completing taxes in the **spring of 2028 (individuals, not businesses). Further details are available on the bulletin board.**

Other benefits to donors-

- **LSGO is MATCHING donations from new donors up to $1000 per donor ($5000 per school)!**
- **Universal Charitable Deduction has been restored! Taxpayers can receive a $1000 Federal Charitable Donation, even if they can't itemize, beginning January 1, 2026.**
- **Taxpayers still receive a 50% state tax credit!**

We use the SGO both for elementary school scholarships and Pre-K scholarships, and it has been a great benefit to our families. **(The Choice Scholarship for Kindergarten through 8th Grade only provides 75% of tuition; SGO funds the remainder.)** Please continue to give, and receive the tax credit and deduction for your donations! **Now, there is a link to donate to the LSGO on the church's website under the School drop-down menu.**

You can also find several (easy) ways to donate at www.lutheranSGO.org/Donate. Donations can be given through a check, IRA, stocks, Donor Advised Funds, PayPal, credit card, and **NOW electronic giving!** Benefits to you are a 50% state tax credit for your donation and eligibility for a tax deduction, and a 100% federal tax credit for individuals up to $1700 (starting in 2027). These scholarships make a big difference for our families. Please contact Jennifer Harman, in the school office, if you have questions.

We also continue to take donations to St. Paul's tuition assistance fund. Checks for tuition assistance can be made out to the church.

YOUTH NEWS

It was an exciting Ice Skating get together on the 18th of January with a total of 15 youth attending and four chaperones. Youth not able to skate used a blue plastic sea lion with handles and rails to assist them around the ice rink.

Our youth will help put together the welcome bags on Feburary 1st after church. These bags not only welcome new people to our town but give us the opportunity to share the word.

Youth will be focused on our Super Bowl Sub Sandwich fund raiser for our next big endeavor. We will have sign up sheets in the Narthex and the youth will also be in the Narthex to assist in signing you up for sandwiches. Super Bowl is Sunday the 8th of February and sandwiches can be picked up after church.

Each sub sandwich ordered needs a separate ticket so that we can have the youth install the ticket in with the sandwich.

Weather and snow permitting we are planning a tubing day at Wilson park in Mishawaka on March 1st. We will leave immediately after church and return to the church by 2pm. Park admission, tube rental and lunch will be provided.

$10 per child. 4th grade through high school.

Sign up sheets will be on the youth bulletin board.

Our Sunday School continues to send $75.00 each month to a mission.

February Mission of the Month: Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM)

Lutheran Hour Ministries is a global mission organization that shares Christ's love in more than 60 countries, often bringing His message of hope to places where no other Christian organizations are present.

"When people experience the Gospel message through our programs, we then encourage them to respond by contacting our staff or volunteers. LHM then cultivates relationships with those who respond, ultimately facilitating a connection between them and a Christian community, thereby helping to grow the kingdom of God."

For more information go to: www.lhm.org



Parenting Corner

Most Christian parents would probably agree that the spiritual training of their children is important, but they don't feel as if they have the time, energy, or qualifications to provide it. How can the church help with the spiritual development of your children? Is there more that we can do as a church body to help parents and children? We would like your feedback as we explore ways that we can offer the support and encouragement you need. The date for this meeting is February 15th following the worship service. Letters were sent to families with additional details.

Spiritual training involves more than just sending your children to church. It involves implementing Biblical truths in your everyday life. Kids need to see active faith demonstrated

in their parents' lives. Family nights could be something you could consider which could accomplish the same goals as family devotions. It could be something like games or watching and discussing a movie. Did you know that Focus on the Family can help families in evaluating types of media including movies at www.pluggedin.com?

Regular prayer times are also important. When prayers have been answered, bring it to your children's attention and thank God for what He has done. In addition to laying the foundation at home, it's important for your kids to spend time with other believers in worship services, Sunday School, and other activities which can reinforce spiritual truths which are taught at home. Participation will also provide opportunities for developing friendships with peers who share your family's values and beliefs.

LCMS LIFE MINISTRIES

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Christians may think of the birth of Christ as his incarnation – His moment of "taking on flesh." But rather than on Christmas Day, His birthday, Christ's incarnation took place at the moment of his conception. That which the angel Garbiel announced to the Virgin Mary – "and behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" (Luke 1:31) – is a pronunciation of Christ's first coming. The One who is the eternal Word (John 1:1) clothed Himself with flesh and inhabited life in the womb for the first nine months of His life. This month, we celebrate Christ's birth and the redemption that He won for all flesh, even those who are yet unborn (Psalm 22:23).

Lutheran Women in Mission

Women of St. Paul's: you are cordially invited to our February 2nd meeting at **6:30 pm** in the Bethany Room. Todd Zeltwanger of "Cultivate Food Rescue" will speak to us about this program that recovers (cultivates) excess quality food from restaurants and caterers. This food is then redistributed to school children, food pantries, shelters and more.

After the program, join us in packing "Cheer Boxes" for our college students, as well as refreshments and fellowship. Bring a friend!

Major Capital Improvement Project coming in 2026

As many of you are already aware, our Church parking lot is deteriorating rapidly and is in need of a total rebuild. The Board of Church Properties is planning this project for 2026. This project is estimated to cost between $ 150,000 and $ 200,000, although final bids have not yet been obtained. We have already received several special donations for this project, but we will need additional dollars in order to avoid borrowing money for this project. Please prayerfully consider if you are in a position to contribute "above and beyond" your regular tithe to St. Paul's. If you are doing your charitable gift planning for 2025 and 2026, those checks may be placed in the offering plate and marked to be designated for the "Parking Lot Project". May God bless this project as we look to improve God's house and property for His Glory!

Boards of Stewardship and Church Properties

1 John 3:16 "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us."

Sometimes an adult tells a child, "God does not love you when you are bad." That is really not true. God always loves us. God loves us when things are going well and when things are going wrong. He loves us when in hurt and anger we ask why. God hates our sins but loves us sinners.

God could have remained in heaven cursing His creatures for spoiling His beautiful creation. Instead He laid aside His divine might and majesty for a while. In the person of His Son He took our human form and experienced our problems and

pains. Finally, He let the forces of evil take His life. But He came back to life. By trusting in Him through the power of the Holy Spirit we can be sure of living with God forever.

We may be battered and shattered by life's blows. Some of our troubles may never go away. Many things puzzle us. We may think nobody cares. But God cares for us right now. Love gives, and God gave all. Through the cross — God's positive, permanent proof of His amazing love — He tells each of us clearly: "You mean a lot to Me. I really love you."



Save the date for VBS for 2026

June 22nd-June 26th

Sunday School -- Winter Quarter Offerings

Feel the warmth of God's love as you study His word with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ! Join us for Bible Class today!

Pre-K – Grade 2 (Nazareth Room)

Bring your little ones to hear the Good News of our loving Savior, Jesus! Children learn God's word, sing Bible songs, make crafts, participate in activities, and have a snack! This month we will learn about Jesus' ministry here on earth. Bible stories include "Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law," "Jesus Calms a Storm," "Four Friends Help a Paralyzed Man," and



"Jesus Heals the Blind Man." . . . . . taught by Wendy Coxey . . . . . 8:30-9:15 a.m.

Grades 3-5 (Mrs. Roger's Classroom)

Students will learn that God has a definite plan for their lives as they study the life and faith of **Joseph**. God also places specific people in our lives to carry out His plans. The month will conclude with a study of **Job**. No matter what we face in life, we should always trust in God and remain faithful to Him. . . . taught by Jeanette Rettinger . . . 8:30-9:15 a.m.

Middle School Grades 6-8 (Mr. Miller's Classroom)

The class will continue their study of the book of **Ephesians**.
. . . . taught by Barbara Middaugh . . . . 8:30-9:15 a.m.

High School (Emmaus Room)

What is your perception of prayer -- in your life and in today's society? Bring along a friend and join Mark Wildauer as he leads a study on the book, **A Simple Explanation of Prayer**, by Dr. Paavola. **. . . .** Adults are welcome to attend. . . . . 8:30-9:15 a.m.

Adult Bible Class (Bethany Room)

Dave Burcham and Terry Miller will continue to lead a study on the **Book of James**.

** Adults are also invited to participate in the study on **PRAYER**, led by Mark Wildauer in the Emmaus Room. . . . . 8:30-9:15 a.m.

More Opportunities for Bible Study:

Men's Wednesday Morning Bible Study

Join in on lively discussions every other Wednesday morning at the Bremen Hospital cafeteria! . . . . . 6:30-7:30 a.m. (February 4 and February 18)

Thursday Morning Ladies' Bible Study (Emmaus Room)

Join the ladies in their current Bible study entitled, **Measured by Grace**. See how God defines success in your life! Barb Middaugh leads the class every week, 9:30-10:45 a.m. All ladies are welcome to attend!

Birthdays & Anniversaries

2026

ANNIVERSARIES

3 Arick & Noelle Cannon
6 Bill & Sharon Latzke
14 Tim & Jennifer Harman

BIRTHDAYS

1 Matthew Harman
Julia Miller

2 Kurt Guse

3 Garrett Fox
Ellen Haug

7 Anders Brurok
Beck Brurok
Hannah Goze
Dakota Schmeltz

8 Brandon Cope
Rick Napper

10 Barbara Stillson

11 Elizabeth Bowen
Lori Cope

12 Kellan Guse
Cathy Chrisman
Maddison Sherk

14 Hunter Cannon
Joseph Hughes
Bradin Schmitt

15 Marilyn Gumz

17 Heaven Hicks
Matthew Podlin
Wayne Spicher

18 Bentley Levendoski
Gavin Stanifer

19 Shirley Lakins

22 Kila Foster
Jamie (Hicks) Reed

24 Janet Anglemeyer
Jason Heuberger
Violet Levendoski

26 Terry Miller

27 Claire Bickel
Carol Lynch

28 Larry Miller

29 Bruce Schmidt

