A Holy Celebration of 150 Years

According to the Book of St. Paul

Chapter XIV

And God said, "Let the St. Paul Lutheran congregation provide many programs and opportunities for the Beloit community."

To start the new millennium 2000, the 125th Anniversary projects of the parking lot, handicapped access and new elevator were completed. Dick Bridge was the main organizer and overseer of the projects. During the year, our loyal custodians for several years, Laverne and Ruth Doll retired.

St. Paul's Interim Pastor for most of the year 2000 was Pastor Andrew Rogness. Then he received a call and our Interim Pastor was Herm Lahman.



Pastor Roger Elliott began his ministry at St. Paul on October 22, 2001 with a special installation on November 4. Pastor Roger had served 3 congregations in northeastern Illinois during his 18 years in the ministry. During 2002, Pastor Roger created a praise service at 11:00 am, a new and contemporary style of worship called "Higher Grounds" with some dedicated musicians for a praise band. They initially worshiped in Fellowship Hall (lower level of church).



During the mid-2000's Max Yount was St. Paul's organist and choir director. There was a full adult choir as well as a Chime Choir and a kids Faith Singers led by Robin Hoefer.







As we review some programs that have been successful and ongoing for several years, we find that back in 1990, Karen Saudargus started a preschool at St. Paul, called Rainbow Station. This was a high quality education program for 3- and 4-year olds. The program enrolled 60 to 70 children for over 24 years. They closed in August 2014 as the last pre-school in the Beloit-Janesville area, due to not having the required number of students.

In 1992, Sheri Hughes began a group called the Golden Agers. This group of retired people met once a month for lunch and a program.



About 2005, the group changed its name to Older Wiser Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) which still stands today. They meet the 4th Thursday of each month at noon for a potluck and program. They also arrange trips to the Fireside in Fort Atkinson for plays or Christian concerts as well as other outings. Besides the OWLS reports in the Church Annual Reports, Roger Neitzel has kept a booklet with photos of all Owls meetings since 2012.

Also in the early 1990's a Banner Committee was formed to make banners to enhance worship services. The group consisted of (l to r) Jean Neitzel, Betty Katterhenry, Billie Kenitzer, Vi Guetchow, and (missing) Mary Lou Kostrezwa. About 1998, the group changed their name to "The St. Paul Piecemakers." Besides all the banners hanging in the front of the church during each church season, they made the beautiful "125th Anniversary Banner" that hangs in the entryway to the church. The current group consists of Billie, Jean and Karen Neas.





Beginning in 2003 and completed in 2004, a major renovation of the fellowship hall and lounge was accomplished. The project cost over $11,000, with the major expense being the tile and carpet for the fellowship hall. People were able to purchase squares which are still visable just inside the entryway in the basement. Pastor Roger did most of the electrical work.





St. Paul has sponsored Boys Scouts of America troops since organizing Troop 5 in 1916. That Troop disbanded in the 1920's. The current Troop, 615, started as Troop 15 at West Side Presbyterian church. That troop moved to St. Paul in



1949. In 1999, they celebrated their 50th year under the sponsorship of St. Paul. Dick Bridge was St. Paul's committee chairman for many years. In 2007, St. Paul member Mitchell Fillbach received the Eagle Scout Court of Honor on June 23.

On August 25, 2007, the Rev. Kristin Neitzel was ordained as a minister in the ELCA at her home church at St. Paul. Presiding at the ordination were the Rev. Dr. Gerald Mansholt, left, Bishop of the Central States Synod in Kansas and Missouri and the Rev. Bruce Burnside, Bishop of the South Central Synod of Wisconsin. The Rev. Mary Froiland of Luther Valley delivered the sermon. Rev. Neitzel will begin serving as associate pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church in Wichita, Kansas, with the Rev. Tom Holstrom, pictured at right.


CALLED TO SERVE IN KANSAS

It was in October, 2008, when St. Paul began serving FREE SOUP LUNCHES to the community, featuring homemade soup and good conversation. A group of individuals, (Jan Knutson, Chet Organ, Jerry Fields, Joann Rosenow, Jackie Ueland and Joyce Buske) were at a coffee hour table discussing the many programs within the walls of St. Paul and the lack of outreach to the community. And so a Soup Lunch Program was initiated and developed into a wonderful outreach program. For example, in 2011




Judelle and Ray Murphy are the lunch coordinators at St. Paul Lutheran Church. Ray prepares the tasty soups.

Soup lunch offers tasty hot meals and also camaraderie at St. Paul's

they served 4,856 guests during the year. The program has been coordinated by Ray and Judelle Murphy for many years. During the Covid-19 years they continued to provide takeout meals. What a success story.

In conjunction with the Wednesday Soup Lunch, in August 2010, Sharyn Pann opened Lydia's Closet selling lightly used clothing for 25 cents to a dollar per item. Proceeds are given to soup lunch. Fifteen years later, Sharyn continues the Closet, now selling everything for 25 cents. The Closet is normally open once a month.

During 2011 the R & R (Restroom Renovation) committee was formed, more commonly known as The Throne Committee. The project involved taking one of the upstairs education rooms and creating a handicapped bathroom and a Gathering Room including a small kitchenette. The cost was slightly over $20,000. Funds from the Foundation, fundraisers, and memorials were used to complete the project.

For many years the weekly contributions were collected and dropped in the night depository box at the bank. Then Monday morning a group of Money Counters would gather at the bank to count and record the details. Many mornings that group would then have breakfast together. Shown here is the group from 2012. Left front and around the table: Russ Liptow, Leo Upward, Richard Hauri, Ivan Eckholm, Bill Rodermel, Ron Josh, and Dave Markee. Current counters are Chuck Hughes, Bob Heck and Roger Neitzel.



On November 2, 2014, St. Paul began a new partnership with the Spanish-speaking Parroquia San José congregation by sharing the St. Paul building. Members of St. Paul walked from their building down to 717 Bluff St., San José's previous building, and both congregations walked back to 617 St. Lawrence St. to worship together. Each group will worship and retain their own identity under the same roof. San José Pastor Neddy Astudillo and St. Paul Pastor Roger Elliott led the two congregations to St. Paul.



Photo by Adam Spaulding
Congregants of Parroquia San Jose at 717 Bluff St., walk alongside those of St. Paul Lutheran Church on Sunday.

During 2014 it became apparent that the recurring financial sitution had come to a head. So, for the 2015 fiscal year Pastor Roger agreed to go to a 3/4 time pastor to balance the budget.

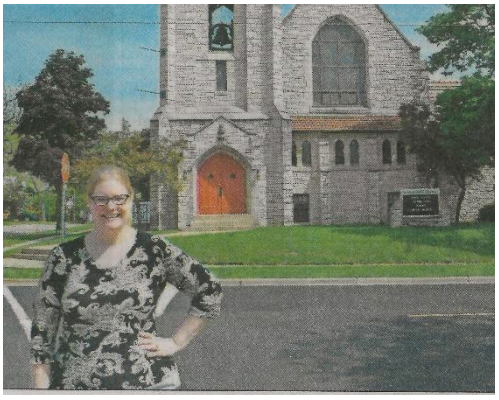
In the fall of 2016 Pastor Roger informed the congregation he will be retiring in early 2017 after 15+ years at St. Paul and 33 years of ordained ministry. His farewell service was February 12, 2017. In March the Rev. Viviane Thomas-Brietfeld began as our Interim Pastor as we began the search for a new pastor.

In addition, 2017 was a transition for the music ministry. Tyler Pimm, Music Director, resigned and David Frank, who had previously been organist and choir director, was hired as Director of Music Ministries including the Choir, Praise Team, and children's music.

The Wednesday Soup Lunch celebrated its 9th year in 2017 after serving over 4,000 guests each year. An average of 18 volunteers each week provide this weekly lunch. Lydia's Closet has now donated over $2,000 to



this ministry. In addition, thanks to Ray and Judelle Murphy, St. Paul continues to stock the shelves at Caritas.



On May 20, 2018, the Rev. Lucy Wynard was installed as the next Pastor at St. Paul. She previously served churches in Illinois, and prior to seminary in 2008, she worked as a missionary in Belarus, in north Central Europe. Her husband, Dan, was also a pastor in Rockford, and they are foster parents.

In the fall of 2018, St. Paul began renting three rooms in the educational unit to S & T Opportunities, a group that cares for handicapped individuals. In 2019 they changed their name to Adaptive Alliance.



On May 26, 2019, Billie Kenitzer was recognized and honored for being a Sunday School Teacher for 50 years. A celebration with a special cake was held at coffee hour.

In reviewing long running programs at St. Paul, the St. Paul Softball Team came to a close in 2019 after a 28-year history. In 1992, Neil Ellis organized the first softball team. The next 3 years Art Gurholt managed the team and then Roger Neitzel coached the team for the next 24 years. Over 100 players have played for St. Paul over the years. The many trophies won by the team are exhibited on the top shelf in the

St. Paul Softball - 2017



Front (l to r): Sean Behm, Courtney Behm, Mike Rydberg, Roger Neitzel, Jim Neitzel
Back (l to r): Brad Thompson, Dan Fiese, Allen McKillips, Andy Petersen, Marty Scott, Eric Steuer, Sam Behm

Michael Chapel. The team sponsored the Easter Breakfast for many years. Pictured here is the team photo from 2017.

In 2019 many improvements were made to the church building. The carpet and tile in the sanctuary and hallway were replaced. The hallway was painted and the wood was stained. The Women's bathroom downstairs was remodeled, thanks to donations and volunteers. A committee was established to address the roof problems.

And God saw that it was good.