The Epistle of St. Paul's

A Publication of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Summer Hill

December 2026 & January 2027

From the Pastor:

So, how are your New Year's resolutions coming? I have not made any as of yet, but I am considering a few. The problem is my New Years resolutions usually are too ambitious, like losing weight or joining a gym.

Sometimes we have so much going on in our lives that we forget to take stock and see if there is anything we need to change in our lives. I'm not talking about big changes, but the little things we need to give up or start thinking about doing to get closer to God. If anyone has had a meal where I have said grace you know that sometimes I end the grace with "Rub-a-dub-dub, thanks for the grub, Yay God!!"

It may seem silly, but this reminds me that I need to have more Joy in my life. I hope that when I add this to the grace, that the people I am about to share a meal with will also experience a little joy in this prayer too!

Happy New Year!

Wait, we were just in the Christmas season, and now we are jumping to January?? Yup this is a two-fisted newsletter, aren't you blessed!!

These two months have always been together in mind even with the change of the year number, we have two very important months here

December: Bowl games and the start of the College Football Playoff.

January: The College Football Playoff semifinals and the National Championship game.

That is how we lived in my house, I don't know about you but when I was little, I could only watch cartoons between games.

OK pastor why are you talking about football in a January church newsletter?

I think we can get distracted by both the Christmas festivities and New Year festivities to remember who we are and who it is we are created to be.

We are God's children called to love one another, gather in worship to remember how much God loves us and Jesus teaching to love one another.

Jesus calls us to love God and love one another as He loves us.

Pastor Marie

Pastoral Visits

Pastoral visits and home communions are available at any time. Please email the church office at stpaulsummerhill@gmail.com or call 570-754-7225.

Helping Harvest

Helping Harvest donations will take place on the **first weekend of every month.** This organization has put food trucks in areas to help the needy in place of the closed Pottsville Soup Kitchen.

Prayer Requests

Please email (stpaulsummerhill@gmail.com) or call (570-754-7225) the church office with your prayer requests. First names only will be used in our worship service that is livestreamed. You may also give names to the person leading service prior to the start of the worship service.

Hospital Visits

Reminder for hospital visits: The church is not informed by the hospital when someone is admitted. Please email (stpaulsummerhill@gmail.com) or call (570-754-7225) the church office to let us know if a pastoral visit is desired.



The Mitten Tree will be in the narthex during the Advent and Christmas seasons to accept donations of mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, socks, etc. After the Christmas season, these items will be donated to Schuylkill Women in Crisis and Servants to All.

Church Council Meeting

The Church Council will have their monthly meetings on **Wednesday, December 2, 2026 and Wednesday, January 6, 2027** beginning at 7:00pm in the church Annex.

I have held many things in my hands, and have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess.

—Martin Luther



Saturday Spoken Services

The upcoming scheduled Saturday Services will be held on **December 5, 2026 and January 2, 2027** beginning at 5:00pm.

Christmas Tree Decorating

Christmas trees will be decorated on Sunday, **December 6** following the 10:30am worship service. Please come and lend a hand– get in the holiday spirit too!!

Come Join Us!!! Let's Go!!!



On **Sunday, December 6th**, our Social Ministry Committee will sponsor Christmas Caroling to the shut-ins and elderly. We will be joining our sister congregation, St. Paul's U.C.C. for this event. Everyone is invited to join us. We will be carpooling and leaving from St. Paul's U.C.C. at 2:00 pm.

Property Meetings

There will be property meetings on **Wednesday, December 16, 2026 and Wednesday, January 20 beginning** at 6:00pm.

Congregational Meeting

Congratulations to those elected at November's Annual Congregational Meeting to serve on our Church Council. Harry Schwenk and Pegi Staller were elected to serve a 3-year term on Church Council. In addition, Jennie Raudenbush volunteered to serve on the Student Loan Committee. We thank each of them for their willingness to serve!

Our heartfelt thanks go to those who will be completing their terms on Church Council and the Student Loan Committee in December 2026.

The 2027 Budget was approved. The Council and Property Committee were given permission to review the AC proposals and choose the best course of action.

Join Us For Faithful Fellowship

A time of fun, fellowship and yummy treats will be held following the 10:30am worship service on **Sunday, December 13**. We would like our treats to be Christmas cookies. If anyone would like to donate two dozen cookies, it would be greatly appreciated. The date and theme for January's faithful Fellowship to be announced.

Cards Welcome!

The following members are homebound. Brighten their day and send them a card: Betty Freeman, Elizabeth Hand, Jerald & Eileen Heffleger, Betty Heinbaugh, Earl and Grace Paxson, Richard Paxson, Helen Runkle, Nancy Sweitzer and Harry Russell. Please contact the church office if you need addresses.

Christmas Eve Worship Service

Join us this Christmas Eve, December 24

There will be a 6:30pm musical prelude
followed by the 7pm worship service.
The service will feature candlelight and the
Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Check Out Our YouTube Channel

We're livestreaming our worship services on our very own YouTube channel: @summerHillLutheran!!!

We'll share the livestream link on Facebook every week. You can chat, comment, and worship together *live* just like always.

Our website features a direct link to our YouTube channel, where you can already find recorded services beginning in February, our past livestreams, and our scheduled upcoming livestreams. So head on over, click **Like**, hit **Subscribe**, and ring that little bell 🔔 to be notified when livestreaming begins!

👉 **Check us out here:**

https://www.youtube.com/@summerHillLutheran

Altar Flower and Bulletin Sponsorship

There are many openings available throughout the year to sponsor the fresh altar flowers and bulletins on a Sunday morning. You can celebrate a Birthday, Anniversary, Graduation, etc. Sponsorships can be in honor of, or in memory of someone. There are sign-up sheets for a few months at a time on the bulletin board in the hallway. You can also call the church office and speak to Kelly to be added at any time throughout the year. The cost of altar flowers is: $17.50 to sponsor one vase, or $35 to sponsor both vases. The bulletins are $10 per sponsored Sunday.

Thank you!!

-to the member for their deposit of Thrivent Choice Dollars® in the amount of $359.00

-The Social Ministry Committee would like to thank everyone who donated items to the schoolhouse, for our college students. Your generosity is appreciated, and the students are always happy to receive the packages from their church family.

The Revised Common Lectionary Readings:

December 6- Second Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

December 13- Third Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55
I Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 20- Fourth Sunday of Advent
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

December 24- Christmas Eve
Isaiah 62:6-12
Psalm 97
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20

Friday, December 25- Christmas Day
Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1-4, (5-12)
John 1:1-4

December 27- First Sunday after Christmas
Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

December 31, 2026 & January 1, 2027- New Year's Eve and New Year's Day
Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
Psalm 8
Revelations 21:1-6a
Matthew 25:31-46

Sunday, January 3, 2027- Second Sunday after Christmas Day
Jeremiah 31:7-14
Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1(1-9), 10-18

Wednesday, January 6, 2027- Epiphany
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalms 72:1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

January 10, 2027- The Baptism of Christ
Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

January 17, 2027- The Second Sunday after Epiphany
I Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
I Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

January 24, 2027- Third Sunday after Epiphany
Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12
I Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

January 31, 2027- Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalm 111
I Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28

February 7, 2026- Transfiguration Sunday
2 Kings 2:1-12
Psalm 50:1-6
2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Mark 9:2-9



December 2026 Birthdays

1 - Janet Pavlick
4 - Patti Freeman
5 - Allie Bright
6 - Rose Edwards
- Barrett Mullins
7 - Jeffrey Hummel
13 - Linda Fessler
14 - Glenn Miller
15 - Gereon Sholl
16 - Vanessa Andrew
- Courtney Schock
- Larry Sweigert
18 - Lilly Chappell
- Johnathon Felty, Jr.
19 - Matthew Platt
- David Reber, Sr.
21 - Ava Woll
- Nicholas Maldonado
23 - Ulysses Staller
24 - Betty Bailey
- Jeffrey Freeman
25 - Rhonda Krammes
26 - Nancy Benedict
- Abigail Ebling
27 - Cindy Freeman
29 - Joanne Reinert
30 - Janet Costenbader
31 - Debbie Hummel

January 2027 Birthdays

1 - Tyler Donatti, Jr.
- Cody Reber
2 - Trent Schantzenbach
3 - Karen Curtis
- Eva Waldman
5 - Sydney Hill
7 - Leslie Fessler
10 - Carol Boyer
11 - Delaney Hill
- Trevor Reber
13 - Leah Bowman
14 - Richard Paxson
19 - Earl Epting
- Donald Mairose
21 - Tyler Heist
- George Skripko, IV
24 - Donald Boyer
26 - Rebecca Reber
30 - Connie Harig
31 - Gary Brown
- Helen Miller

ELCA Website

Do you want to learn more about what is going on with our church? You can learn all about the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by visiting their informative website:

https://www.elca.org/

Our Staff:

The Rev. Marie Meeks, Pastor: 716-353-1610
Pastor email: preachymarie@gmail.com

Matthew Hayes, Director of Music: 484-794-7902
Director of Music email:
stpaulsummerhill.music@gmail.com

Kelly Palerino, Secretary	570-617-2972
Eva Waldman, Treasurer	570-754-7350
Cindy Brown, Pavilion Sexton	570-345-1279
Stacy Fidler, Church Sexton	570-754-7350

Student Loan Committee email:
stpaulsummerhill.studentloan@gmail.com

Making Room for What Matters

Julie Reynolds of Snohomish, Washington, tells of one Advent season when all her young children came down with chickenpox. Everything planned was put on hold or forgotten altogether. They missed many church and community activities, as well as gatherings with family and friends.

But Julie discovered something during that unexpected pause: she had time to enjoy being with her children. They were well enough to take part in family activities that the usual Christmas rush might have prevented.

She read Christmas stories to them. Using blankets, walking sticks, and other objects, the children reenacted the story of the Holy Family traveling to Bethlehem. Together, they discovered the joy of family fellowship and spent time reflecting on the meaning of Christmas.

Julie recalled other Christmases when she had been so busy shopping, decorating, cooking, and running about that she missed Jesus. She said, "I completely missed celebrating the joy of His birth in my own heart. And the emptiness I have felt at those times brought a sorrow and regret deep in my soul."

No more! Now she deliberately schedules "open days" on her calendar, especially during Advent. These are days for waiting upon God, praying, listening, and enjoying His peace. They are also days for truly being with her family, strengthening their bonds and nurturing their relationships. Today, she looks back with gratitude on the lesson she learned during that Advent years ago.

The Origin of the Christmas Tree

The Christmas tree has a rich history, woven with traditions and legends. Although its exact beginnings are difficult to trace, evergreen branches have long served as symbols of life and hope during the darkest days of winter.

The custom of decorating Christmas trees developed in German-speaking Europe centuries ago. Early trees were adorned with simple decorations such as apples, paper ornaments, and sweets. German immigrants later brought the tradition to America, where it took root in communities such as those in Pennsylvania.

For Christians, the evergreen can symbolize the eternal life we receive through Christ. The Christmas tree can also remind us of the "tree" on which Jesus gave His life for our salvation. As Peter wrote: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24, ESV).

The forbidden fruit of the tree in the Garden of Eden, when eaten, brought guilt and death. On the other hand, the "tree" on Calvary was the instrument by which God through Christ ushered in salvation, new life and hope. The Christmas tree can remind us of those wonderful gifts.

The Sound in His Heart

During an examination, a doctor thought a 4-year-old boy might enjoy hearing his own heartbeat. He placed the stethoscope in the boy's ears and held it over the boy's heart.

"What do you hear?" the doctor asked.

The little boy, who attended Sunday school regularly, listened carefully and replied, "Is that Jesus knocking?"



Special Dates for December 2026:

- Second Sunday of Advent, *December 6, 2026*
- Third Sunday of Advent, *December 13, 2026*
- Fourth Sunday of Advent, *December 20, 2026*
- First Day of Winter, *December 21, 2026*
- Christmas Eve, *December 24, 2026*
- Christmas Day, *December 25, 2026*
- New Year's Eve, *December 31, 2026*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 Council Meeting- 7pm	3 Bell Choir- 6:00pm	4 Summer Hill Youth Group Event (UCC) 6-8:30pm	5 Spoken Worship Service - 5pm
6 Angel Tree Deadline Sunday School- 9:15am Worship- 10:30am Christmas decorating following worship Christmas Caroling- 2pm Event hosted here-3pm **Second Sunday of Advent**	7	8	9	10 Bell Choir- 6:00pm	11	12
13 Sunday School- 9:15am Worship- 10:30am Faithful Fellowship following worship **Third Sunday of Advent**	14	15	16 Property Meeting- 6:00pm	17 Bell Choir- 6:00pm	18	19
20 Sunday School- 9:15am Worship- 10:30am **Fourth Sunday of Advent**	21	22	23	24 Church offices closed Musical prelude at 6:30pm, followed by worship at 7pm **Christmas Eve**	25 Church offices closed **Christmas Day**	26
27 Sunday School- 9:15am Worship- 10:30am **First Sunday after Christmas**	28	29	30	31 **New Year's Eve**		



Special Dates for January 2027:

- New Year's Day, *January 1, 2027*
- Epiphany, *January 6, 2027*
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day, *January 18, 2027*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 **New Year's Day**	**2** Spoken Worship Service -5pm
3 Sunday School- 9:15am Worship- 10:30am **Second Sunday after Christmas**	**4**	**5**	**6** Council Meeting- 7pm **Epiphany of the Lord**	**7** Bell Choir- 6:00pm	**8**	**9**
10 Sunday School- 9:15am Worship- 10:30am **Baptism of Christ**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14** Bell Choir- 6:00pm	**15** Newsletter article deadline	**16**
17 Sunday School- 9:15am Worship- 10:30am **Second Sunday after Epiphany**	**18** Church Offices Closed **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**	**19**	**20** Property Meeting- 6:00pm	**21** Bell Choir- 6:00pm	**22**	**23**
24 Sunday School- 9:15am Worship- 10:30am **Third Sunday after Epiphany**	**25**	**26**	**27**	**28** Bell Choir- 6:00pm	**29**	**30**
31 Sunday School- 9:15am Worship- 10:30am **Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**						

A Brief Look at
Some Summer Hill History

by Harry Schwenk

For this month's history article, I have decided to speak to a couple who have been members of our church for most of their lives. As far as I know, John and Betty Strauch have to be the longest married couple in our church membership. They are married for 71 years, having been married on June 18, 1955 in our old church by Pastor Steigerwalt.

John, who is our second oldest member, at age 95, was born to Alfred and Helen (Roeder) Strauch in the family home on Columbia Street in Schuylkill Haven. They later moved to Penn Street with Grandpa Roeder and then to the Schuylkill Mountain for a few years. In 1942, his parents bought the farm near Brommerstown, which still remains in the family. John and his sister Elma attended the one room school in Deiberts' Valley. John said that over the years he had several teachers, but Miss May was one of his favorites. He recalled memories of one day at recess, when he fell through the ice on the creek and got soaked.

John's parents joined St. Paul's Lutheran Church in 1943, and his sister Elma was confirmed there in that year also. John was confirmed at St. Paul's in 1947. When John attended church at that time, he sat in the balcony of the old church, usually with one of his friends, Carl Wildermuth. John was an usher, and one year he had perfect attendance for taking the offering every single Sunday in that year. He received a certificate for it. Betty recalled that Mrs. Steigerwalt remembered it, and years later told Betty how proud she was of John. As a young man, John attended our annual Sunday School picnic. In 1949, John graduated from Sch. Haven High School and entered the Air Force. He spent his time in San Antonio, Texas as a drill instructor. He has always been an avid hunter and still enjoys doing that.

Betty was born and raised in North Manheim Township, just east of Sch. Haven. Her parents were Wilbert and Cora (Geiger) Reber, who were members of St. John's Lutheran Church in Friedensburg. Betty was baptized by Pastor Steigerwalt. Betty attended the Pike one room school, near present day McDonald's and Sch. Haven High School. Since it wasn't far from their house, instead of going to Friedensburg, Betty and her siblings attended Sunday School at the Old White Church, present day First U.C.C. near Penn State Schuylkill. Betty was also confirmed there. Betty met John at a hoedown at the Crossroads Hotel in Adamsdale. John's band, the Stumpjumpers, was playing there, with him on the banjo. After their marriage in 1955, Betty joined our church in 1956.

Betty and John are the parents of 5 children, Donna, Sharon, Brenda, Marie and John Jr, who were all baptized and confirmed at St. Paul's. They were active in our Luther League and sang in the Junior Choir, and Betty was a choir mother. The Strauchs also had 9 grandchildren and have 17 great grandchildren. Betty was a Sunday School teacher with the younger children at church. Betty, along with her mother-in-law Helen, joined the Lutheran Church Women, and she was in charge of the group for many years. Betty also became very active with our church's quilting and knitting groups. Thanks to their daughter Donna, who now resides with them, they are also able to attend church services, the 75 and over birthday party, and other church events.

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL'S
December 2026
and January 2027

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
1185 Summer Hill Road,
Auburn, PA, 17922

Church Phone: 570-754-7350

Address Service Requested

St. Paul's Lutheran Church email:
stpaulsummerhill@gmail.com

Website: www.SummerHillLutheran.org

Facebook:
St Paul Lutheran Church, Summer Hill

YouTube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/@summerHillLutheran

Communion service every Sunday: 10:30am
First Saturday
Holy Communion Service: 5pm

Office Hours:
Monday – Thursday,
9am - 2pm (closed Friday)

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