



# ST. PAUL NEWS

Monona, IA 52159

FEBRUARY 2026

Office 563-539-2230

Kitchen/School 563-539-2050

*Pastor:  
Erika Lentz*

*Parish Bookkeeper:  
Ashley Blietz-Camp*

*President:  
Kevin Brainard*

## Inside this issue:

Pastor Erika	1
Annual Meeting Announcements	2
WELCA	3
Council Minutes	4
Committees	5
Shepherd of the Hills	6
Birthdays & Anniversaries	7
Financial Report	8
Calendar	9
Schedules	10

## From Pastor Erika

<sup>20</sup> Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Isaiah 5:20

I find this verse appropriate for the times we are currently in. What has happened in the Twin Cities in the past couple weeks has been weighing on my heart. I don't know what to do about it but I do know that as baptized Christians we promise to "proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace." These are times when our baptismal calling is asking us to work for justice and peace. Some people peacefully protest, some give money, some raise awareness to the darkness by writing and sharing with others and some pray. Not all of these ways of pointing to darkness and evil in the world work for everyone but what does is that we "proclaim Christ through word and deed." We work to make sure there is light in the world- the light no darkness can overcome-Jesus Christ. As Christians, we share the hope, love and forgiveness of Christ with our neighbor. We feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help the poor and oppressed. We call out injustice. Sometimes we don't know what to do and we leave it in God's hands-"<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27). We are still in the time after Epiphany which is a season all about light, the one light, the true light Jesus Christ who is the light of the world for all people. This month we will enter the season of Lent which is a season of contemplation, lament which is where we seem to be already. May Christ's light shine in you and bring you comfort. In times when words fail me I like to have a prayer written down- God our comforter, you are a refuge and a strength for us, a helper close at hand in times of distress. Enable us so to hear the words of faith that our fear is dispelled, our loneliness eased, our anxiety calmed and our hope reawakened. May you Holy Spirit lift us above our sorrow to the peace and light of your constant love; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

In Christ's Peace,  
Pastor Erika

## ANNUAL MEETING

St. Paul's Annual Meeting was held Sunday, January 18th following our 9:00 Worship service. There were 54 people in attendance.

Congratulations to our new Council members:

Celia Brown, Lloyd Johanningmeir, Stephanie Larson, Nicole Palas and Mike Rood.

**Committee members:** Penny Brainard, Heidi Landt, Brady Henkes, Crystal Thurn, Ashley Blietz-Camp, Rachel Thurn, and Lois Garms.

**Nominating Committee:** Steve Johnson and Heidi Meyer

**Thank you to our out-going council members:** Ashley Blietz-Camp, Lois Garms, Tiffany Torkelson Steve Johnson and Crystal Thurn

**Our officers for 2026 are:** President Kevin Brainard, Vice President Justin Birdnow and Secretary Beth Foels

The Installation service for the 2026 Council will be held on Sunday, February 1st at the Worship service.

## ASH WEDNESDAY

February 18th

10:30 am Worship & Eucharist 6:30 pm Worship & Eucharist

## MIDWEEK LENTEN SCHEDULE

10:30 am Worship

5:30 pm Lenten Supper

5:45 pm Vocal Choir

6:30 pm Worship

7:00 pm Bell Choir

Wednesday Lenten Services:

February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25



## Fat Tuesday Taco Supper

Tuesday, Feb. 17th, 2026

5-6:45pm

St Paul Lutheran Church

Serving: Soft & Hard Shell Tacos with all the fixings, Spanish rice, refried beans, chips, bars, and beverage

Free will donation



**FEBRUARY**

**Mission Action:**

Toothbrush-adult size in original wrapper

**Bible Study:**

Now Let Us Pray  
Session Two: Praying with the body of the earth



**FEBRUARY CALENDAR**

**Wed. Feb. 4th**

9:15 am Bible Study

**Feb. 26th & 27th**

Doing Days

**March 6th**

World Day of Prayer @  
St. John, Luana



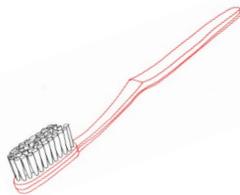
All are Welcome to come to  
any Bible Study  
Studies are held the 1st  
Wednesday of the month  
at 9:15 a.m.  
in the church library.

**Monthly Mission Action Program**

The Monthly Mission Action Emphasis is a program St. Paul WELCA has been active with. Each month a different item is specified and that is the item collected that month. All items will be used in our Lutheran World Relief kits or given to Shepherd of the Hills.

**Everyone is invited and encouraged to participate!**

\*Place your gifts in the basket on the table in the entryway by the church office. Watch the St. Paul News each month for the item.  
Thank you!



**The item for February is Adult Size Toothbrush in original wrapper**



Mary and Martha fun for all  
Friday, Feb 20, and Sat., Feb. 21, 2026

*Celebrating and learning and doing.*

**YOU and your friends are invited to a retreat to celebrate all the Marys and Marthas! This is a Celebration of YOU!**

Who is welcome? Any woman who belongs to the ELCA and their friends.  
*A Woman, a Christian, a helper, a doer, a listener, a learner.*

Activities: Bible board games, mixer game, puzzle, **bring your own crafting projects** (everything is welcome including: quilting, bandage rolling, knitting & crochet, etc.)



**Friday, Feb. 20th**  
Arrive any time after 4 p.m.  
Join us for a soup supper, hymn sing, games, puzzle, and crafting time.  
The overnight stay and meals for the two days are \$45. Beds, bedding, and towels included (You may have to share a room.)  
**What to bring:** comfortable clothes, craft projects are optional, and yourself with a joyful heart.  
**Saturday, Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>**  
Come for the day.  
Breakfast and coffee at 8 a.m.; noon meal, Bible study, hymn sing, crafting time and lots of fellowship  
Afternoon speakers: Family Resource center, Guttenburg  
Welcome is at 9 a.m., Day ends at 3 p.m.  
Day only rate for meals and building usage is \$20

**Registration deadline: Monday, Feb. 16th**

Location: Ewalu Stone Center, 35124 Hwy 13, Strawberry Point, IA which is 2.5 miles north of Strawberry Point. Handicap accessible facility.

hosted by Your Northeastern Iowa Synodical Women's Organization Board

Questions? Contact: Christine Schmitt, [candcschmitt@gmail.com](mailto:candcschmitt@gmail.com) or call 641-397-2572 or cell 641-220-5361

**ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES**  
**St. Paul Lutheran Church**  
**Council Meeting January 18, 2026**

*(The Annual 2025 Minutes are printed but pending approval at the 2026 Annual Meeting )*

Meeting called to order by Council President, Crystal Thurn, at 10:09 a.m.. All members present were asked to sign their names for attendance. 54 voting members were present.

Rein Kregel led devotions.

Minutes of the January 19, 2025 Annual Meeting were reviewed. Jim Langhus motioned, Diane Fisk seconded, to approve the minutes from the previous annual meeting as printed in the annual report. Motion carried.

**Reports:**

Pastoral Report- Pastor Erika shared that 2025 was a really great year both in our church finances and in ministry. She thanked outgoing council members and Crystal for all her hard work as President for the last two years. She also thanked Kevin for completing the parsonage deck. She shared that she presided at 16 baptisms, 6 funerals/burials, one wedding, 4 confirmands, 10 first communions, and took 4 students to confirmation camp. She attended the Churchwide assembly in Phoenix in September and shared the next assembly will be in Des Moines.

Auditing Committee- Kevin Brainard represented the auditing committee and stated that the committee has reviewed the 2025 financial records of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church and found the records to be in order to the best of their ability. Rande Koenig motioned, Danny Torkelson seconded, to approve the auditing committee report. Motion carried.

Congregational Annual Report Question & Discussion- Penny Brainard motioned, Aaron Friedlien seconded, to accept the annual report as printed. Motion carried.

**New Business:**

The presentation of the 2026 ballot and election was held. The following volunteers offered their service on the following committees:

One year church council term- Celia Brown

Three-year church council terms- Llyod Johanningmeier, Stephanie Larson, Nicole Palas, and Michael Rood

Nominating committee- Heidi Meyer, Steve Johnson

Finance/Stewardship- Crystal Thurn

Property/Grounds- Brady Henkes

Worship/Music- Heidi Landt

Education/Youth- Rachel Thurn

Fellowship/Evangelism- Penny Brainard

Social Ministry/Mission- Ashley Blietz-Camp

Interchurch Council- None needed

Mission Endowment- Lois Garms

Kerry Melcher made a motion to accept the 2026 ballot, while also accepting the vote of all council and committee members and the 2026 ministry plan. Rande Koenig seconded. Motion carried

**Other Business:**

Question was asked regarding the progress of the chapel stained glass windows. Jim Langhus shared that the third window is almost ready to go back in, as the bottom third was crushed. All remaining windows need new outside metal.

Michael Rood made a motion to adjourn the annual meeting at 10:34, Penny Brainard seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by Ashley Blietz-Camp, Council Secretary

# 2026 Committee Members

*\* New Committee members*

## EDUCATION/YOUTH

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Penny Brainard  
 Katie Kregel  
 Rachel Thurn\*  
 Rein Kregel **Council**  
 Celia Brown **Council**  
 Heidi Meyer **Superintendent**

## FELLOWSHIP/EVANGELISM

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Danny Torkelson  
 Kristen Zabel  
 Penny Brainard\*  
 Andy Meyer **Council**  
 Nicole Palas **Council**

## MISSION/SOCIAL MINISTRY

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Rein Kregel  
 Randee Koenig  
 Ashley Blietz-Camp\*  
 Stephanie Larson **Council**  
 Beth Foels **Council**

## PROPERTY/GROUNDS

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Travis Torkelson  
 Danny Torkelson  
 Brady Henkes\*  
 Kevin Brainard **Council**  
 Justin Birdnow **Council**  
 Shawn Thurn **Maintenance**  
 Erin Schultz **Custodian**  
 Kevin Brainard **Cemetery**

## STEWARDSHIP/FINANCE

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Kevin Brainard  
 Tracy Decker\*  
 Crystal Thurn\* **Treasurer**  
 Craig Watson **Council**  
 Michael Rood **Council**

## WORSHIP/MUSIC

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Mary Ann Koehn  
 Pam Malanaphy\*  
 Heidi Landt\*  
 Lloyd Johanningmeir **Council**  
 Barbara Horns **Council**  
 Judy Walter **Organist**  
 Diane Fisk **Director**  
 Teresa Sass **Altar Guild**

## COUNCIL

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Kevin Brainard **President**  
 Justin Birdnow **Vice-President**  
 Andy Meyer  
 Justin Birdnow  
 Beth Foels **Secretary**  
 Rein Kregel  
 Craig Watson  
 Barbara Horns  
 Celia Brown\*  
 Lloyd Johanningmeir\*  
 Stephanie Larson\*  
 Nicole Palas\*  
 Michael Rood\*

## MISSION ENDOWMENT

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Lois Garms  
 Kristi Donlon  
 Kevin Brainard  
 Tracy Decker  
 Celia Brown  
 Andy Meyer **Non Voting Council**

## INTERCHURCH COUNCIL

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Mary Jo Sexton **Crystal Thurn**  
 Barb Kalkwarf

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

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Steve Johnson **At large**  
 Heidi Meyer **At large**  
 retiring council 2026 **Justin Birdnow**  
 retiring council 2026 **Celia Brown**  
 retiring council 2026 **Kevin Brainard**  
 retiring council 2026 **Andy Meyer**

# Shepherd of the Hills Ministries

## NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2026



It is that time of year again, when we focus on our annual Conference Assembly.

This year it is February 15 th @ 2:00 PM. Zion Lutheran Church in Oelwein will be hosting.

This is your opportunity to have representation from your church and learn all the great things that happened in 2025 at SOTH. A few things to think about on my upcoming schedule: Ascension Day service

May 14th @ 5:30pm. Back to School August 12th . Annual Hog Roast October 4th .

Christmas for Kids: TBA

All events are tentative. More details will be made available in future newsletters.

Thank you for your continued support. We could not do what we do...without YOU!

### **Clothing Center Updates:**

*We had an amazing ½ off sale in January. It was a busy place both Friday and Saturday. We will be collecting winter items until the beginning of March. Please make sure you are scheduling your day for your donations to be dropped off. The thrift store is looking for boys and girls clothing in all sizes. Sleepers, pants, shirts, shorts, dresses etc. Those areas were hit pretty hard during our sale. We will be doing a bit of re-arranging, so have patience us as we try to utilize every inch of our space! Thank you for visiting the store. If you have not been here lately, please come and check it out. We are the thrift store where most everything is only \$1.00!*

### **Shepherd Conference News:**

*We would like to recognize Pastor Micheal Erickson on the anniversary of his ordination on February 3, 2024. He is the pastor at West Clermont Lutheran Church in Clermont. Pastor Erickson is also serving on our SOTH Board as Synod Chair. Blessings to you!*

The **Operating Fund** pays the utilities, insurance on the building, supplies, salaries and Lawn/Snow Care.

The **Crisis Fund** is used to help families with emergency rent or utilities and our sponsored events throughout the year

Please utilize the **MEMO LINE** on your check to specify **Crisis** or **Operating Fund**!

**Please indicate what church you are from as well to provide better bookkeeping.**

### **IMPORTANT EVENTS/DATES:**

*Conference Assembly February 15, 2026 (In case of bad weather, we will advertise on our website, Facebook and the radio station if we need to cancel) Make-up date will be February 22, 2026. Same location and time. \*Any event may be subject to change*

### **Shepherd of the Hills:**

Heather Hageman  
100 W. Hill Street, PO Box 36,  
St. Olaf, IA 52072

**Telephone: 563-783-2409**

Fax: 563-783-2428

E-mail: [shephill@neitel.net](mailto:shephill@neitel.net)

**Business Hours: Monday-Friday  
9am-12pm and 1pm-4 pm**

## FEBRUARY BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARIES

Feb. 5	Brayton Schutte	Feb. 11	Evelyn Lenth	Feb. 24	Kaleb Nuehring
Feb. 7	Lennox Palas	Feb. 13	Nora Rasmussen	Feb. 27	Ethan Hendricks
Feb. 8	Gage Paulus	Feb. 16	Aiden Henderson	Feb. 28	Kenedy Schulte
Feb. 9	Sullivan Welsh	Feb. 16	Kamery Schulte	Feb. 28	Maddyn Brainard
	Briggs Ferguson	Feb. 20	Elsie Lenth		
Feb. 10	Carter Lightfoot	Feb. 22	Jaxon Lamborn		



## OFFICIAL ACTS IN JANUARY

**Burial: January 2, 2026**  
*Karen Havlicek, Age 87*

**Funeral: January 3, 2026**  
*Betty Breitsprecher, Age 80*

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Feb. 8 Darlene Miller  
 Feb. 22 Jan Vangen  
 Wayne Garms  
 Feb 24 Stan Klotzbach  
 Feb 26 Harry Schutte

### Contribution Statements

Contribution statements for the 2025 tax year are available to be picked up in the back of the sanctuary. Statements will only be mailed upon request. If you need your statement mailed to you, please contact the office.

### 2026 Offering Envelopes

2026 Offering Envelopes are also available to be picked up in the back of the sanctuary. If you use envelopes for your offering, please pick up and start using your new 2025 envelopes, as some people's envelope numbers have changed this year.

## SCHOLARSHIP AT ST. PAUL

*St. Paul Endowment Scholarship*  
*First Established by Ploma Blaha*  
*Additional donors: Irene Wall and Ivanelle Garms*

This Scholarship is for High School Seniors who plan to attend a College or Vocational Technical School. This is a \$1,500 scholarship. It is to be divided between the two semesters of the first year of schooling  
**Deadline to apply is March 15**

### ST PAUL EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH DATA

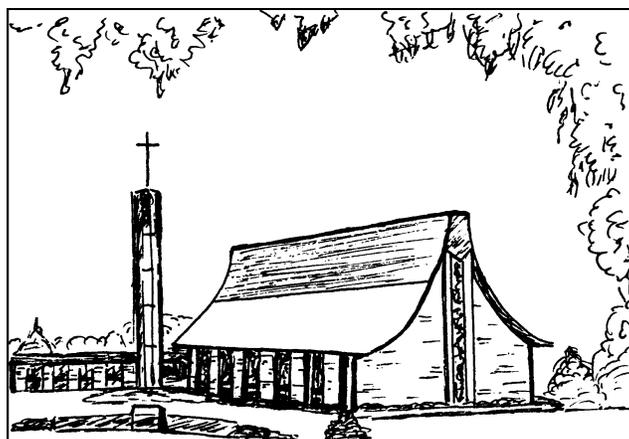
Total 420

Total Family Units 174

Average Sunday Attendance for 2024  
 105 (In Person) 40 (Virtual)

Average Sunday Attendance for 2025  
 104 (In Person) 50 (Virtual)

Average Attendance for 2026 through Jan. 25th  
 71 (In Person) 63 (Virtual)



# December Financials



***Giving	Cash/Check
December 7	\$2,235.90
December 14	\$4,604.25
December 21	\$5,885.39
December 24 & 25	\$17,220.40
December 28	\$3,622.00
<b>**Total Simply Giving for December 2025</b>	<b>\$3,714.00</b>

\*\*\* The chart above shows weekly income from the offering plate, money that has been sent in, Simply Giving, as well as fundraisers (Coffee Hour, Fall Dinner, etc.) which include: Current Fund Offering and Designated Funds (Mission Offering and Memorial Funds, such as the Boiler and Solar Funds).

\*\* Simply Giving Donations are reported once a month due to posting issues at the beginning/end of month.

\* The receipts below reflect money that is available for the operating budget AFTER deducting designated giving.

General Fund	December 2025 Actual	December 2025 Budget	December YTD Actual	December YTD Budget
*Receipts	\$36,062.11		\$216,343.89	
Disbursements	\$13,738.85	\$18,171.87	\$195,261.27	\$218,062.47

### Can't make it to church in person?

Find our services on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulmononaia>

**Also, check out our Facebook Page & web page to find out what's going on at St. Paul!**

[www.stpaulmonona.org](http://www.stpaulmonona.org)

**Items to be included in the February St. Paul News need to be turned into the office by February 17th.**

### St. Paul Parish Office Hours

**Monday** 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
**Tuesday** 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. & 2-3:30 p.m.  
**Wednesday** 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
**Thursday** 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.  
**Friday** Closed

Outside of Office Hours, please feel free to leave a voicemail at the church phone number (539-2230) or leave a note in Pastor Erika or Ashley's mailbox located next to the library door.

*Would you like to receive the St. Paul News via email? Please let us know by emailing the church office. [stpalth@neitel.net](mailto:stpalth@neitel.net)*

# FEBRUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> 8:00 Choir 9:00 Worship/ Eucharist 10:00 Fellowship (EPIC) 10:15 Sunday School 6:30 Troop 38	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 9:15 WELCA Bible Study 6:30 Confirmation	<b>5</b> 6:00 Ed & Youth @ Center Street	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> “ <i>Souper Bowl</i> ” Sunday 9:00 Worship/ Eucharist <i>5th-8th Grade Sings</i> 10:00 Fellowship 10:15 Sunday School 5:00 Giard EH 4H	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 6:00 pm Council	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> <i>Valentine’s Day</i>
<b>15</b> 8:40 Men’s Choir 9:00 Worship/ Eucharist 10:00 Fellowship (LL) 10:15 Sunday School 2:00 Conf. Assem. Oelwein 6:30 Troop 38	<b>16</b> <i>President’s Day</i>	<b>17</b> Taco Supper 5-6:45 pm	<b>18</b> 10:30 Ash Wednesday Worship 6:30 Ash Wednesday Worship	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> <i>Noisy Can</i> 8:00 Bell Choir 9:00 Worship/ Eucharist <i>Hundt.baptism</i> 10:00 Fellowship 10:15 Sunday School	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> 10:30 Lent Worship 5:30 Lent Supper 6:30 Lent Worship	<b>26</b> Doing Days	<b>27</b> Doing Days	<b>28</b>

**St. Paul Evangelical  
Lutheran Church**

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Email: stpaluth@neitel.net

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**COUNCIL**

**FEBRUARY SCHEDULES**

**ALTAR GUILD**

February 1 Sunday 9:00 am	Beth Foels Rein Kregel
February 8 Sunday 9:00 am	Justin Birdnow Niki Palas
February 15 Sunday 9:00 am	Andy Meyer Stephanie Larson
February 18 Ash Wed 10:30 am	
February 18 Ash Wed. 6:30pm	Rein Kregel
February 22 Sunday 9:00 am	Andy Meyer Rein Kregel Beth Foels
February 25 Wed. 6:30 pm	

**LECTORS**

Feb 1:	Lukas Friedlein
Feb 8:	Randee Koenig
Feb 15:	Mary Ann Koehn
Feb. 18:	Mary Ann Koehn/Heidi Meyer
Feb 22:	Sara Wagner

Feb 1:	Linette Langhus
Feb 8:	Heidi Meyer
Feb 15:	Teresa Sass
Feb 18:	Mary Ann Koehn am Teresa Sass pm
Feb. 22	Crystal Thurn-check robes

**ACOLYTES**

Feb 1:	Kyler Nuehring Veda Torkelson Kashton Decker
Feb 8:	Evelyn Birdnow Kyler Nuehring Briella Schutte
Feb 15:	Clayton Henkes Blake Schutte Nora Rasmussen

**FLOWER ASSISTANTS**

Feb 1	Teresa Sass
Feb 8	Dyane Schutte
Feb 15	Beth Henkes
Feb 22	Lois Garms

**FELLOWSHIP**

Feb 1	Kristen Zabel/Nicole Palas
EPIC	
Feb 8	Emily/Arleta Henkes Rachel Wagner/Molly Moose
Feb 15	Luther League
Feb 22	Lorna Jones Mary Ann Koehn

Feb. 18	Grace Palas
Ash	Gage Paulus
Wed	Brodyn Blietz
Feb 22:	Jaxon Lamborn Veda Torkelson Taylor Rasmussen
Feb. 25	Gage Paulus

**USHERS**

Sun. Feb. 1	Celia Brown Marsha Gerleman
Sun. Feb. 8	Amber Hendricks Deb Moose
Sun. Feb. 15	Lorna Jones Mary Ann Koehn
Ash Wed. 18	Tim & Diane Fisk
Sun. Feb. 22	Bob Tayek Rich Sass