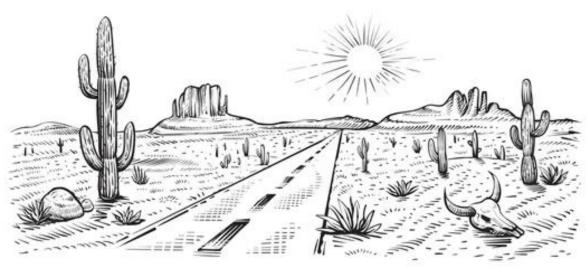
THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

8:15 a.m.



A Highway shall be there and it shall be called the Holy Way.

Isaiah 35:8

December 14, 2025

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Welcome to ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

We are happy you have joined us for worship today. Wherever you are on your journey with or toward God, you are welcome here—you are a blessing to this assembly. We welcome all who are seeking God's love and grace. We welcome all because God welcomes all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or relationship status.

We welcome all without regard to addictions, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances, or anything that too often divides us. Our unity is in Christ.

Lutherans believe, teach, and confess that in, with, and under the bread and wine in Holy Communion we receive the true Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation. All who are drawn in faith are welcome to join in this confession and receive the Sacrament.

We invite and encourage your full participation in our worship this morning. With this service bulletin you can follow and participate in this morning's liturgy.

New to St. Paul? If you have questions or want more information, please fill out a newcomer form with the QR code at the right. Questions about transferring membership from another Lutheran church, or for beginning the process for baptism, confirmation, membership, or transferring from one of the other Christian traditions, may be directed to the Church Office at 781-646-7773 or parishadmin@stpaularlington.org.





SUNDAY SERVICE

8:15am | Service with Holy Communion in Nave

9:00am | Choir Practice

9:30am | Education Hour with Sunday School, Adult

Forum, Confirmation

10:30am | Lessons & Carols Concert

and online

11:30am | Coffee Hour

LIVESTREAMING

Worship is streamed on the St. Paul Lutheran Arlington Facebook page. A Facebook account is not necessary to stream, however, without a Facebook account the stream works on a computer browser only and not on a phone.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY TODAY:

Marie Breitenback, Kelli Oliver & Kim Fectel, *Altar Guild* Jordan M.S. and Toby M., *Acolytes* Gretchen Stark, *Lector* Kerri Frick, *Deacon* Andy Airasian and Dan Ries, *Ushers* Hollie Schmidt & Mat Carter, *Livestream Broadcast Team* Peter & Hollie Schmidt & Lisa Chiulli Lay, *Coffee Guild*

Today's altar flowers are given in loving memory of Bishop Ehme Rankin Osterbur, beloved father, father-in-law and grandfather and life-long servant in the ELCA.

When the instruction for standing * appears, please stand as you are able and as seems comfortable.

At the +, you may make the sign of the cross, which reminds us of our baptism.

The congregational responses are printed in **bold**.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

Joy of Every Longing Heart

Arranged by Lloyd Larson

Mark Olson, trumpet

WELCOME

* CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

The assembly faces one another across the aisle and keeps silence for self-examination. The pastor begins, those on the **Right Side** of the sanctuary joining him.

I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven, and to you, my siblings in Christ, that I have sinned by my own fault in thought, word, and deed. I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life.

Those on the **Left Side** of the sanctuary speak this assurance of forgiveness.

Almighty and merciful God grants you healing, pardon, and forgiveness of all your sins for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Those on the Left Side of the sanctuary then confess their sin.

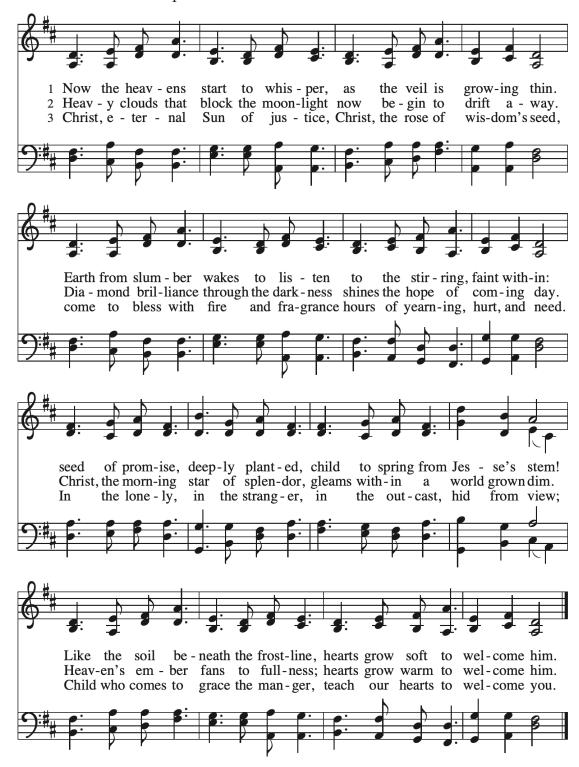
I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven, and to you, my siblings in Christ, that I have sinned by my own fault in thought, word, and deed. I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life.

Almighty and merciful God grants you healing, pardon, and forgiveness of all your sins for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

* GATHERING HYMN

Now The Heavens Start to Whisper

ACS 901



Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953

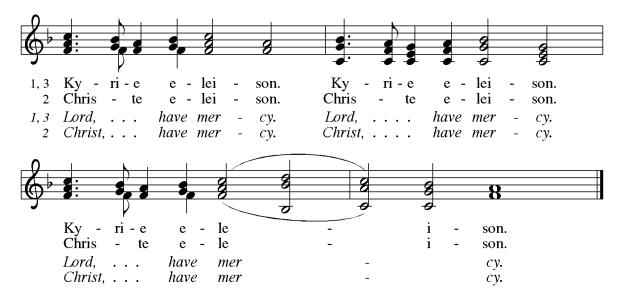
Music: SUO GÂN, Welsh melody; arr. hymnal version

* GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

* KYRIE

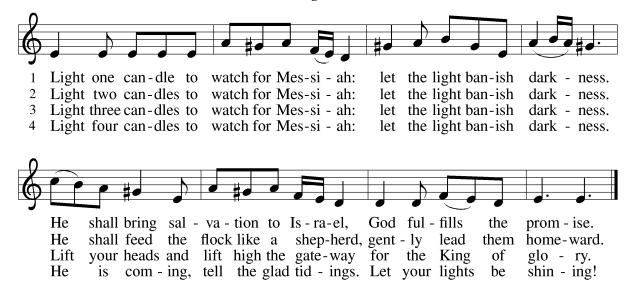


* PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE ELW 240 Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah As three candles on the Advent wreath are lit, we sing **stanzas 1, 2& 3**.



WORD

FIRST READING Isaiah 35:1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALMODY *The Song of Mary* – Magnificat anima mea

Luke 1:46b-55

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed:

you, the Almighty, have done great things for me and holy is your name.

You have mercy on those who fear you, from generation to generation.

You have shown strength with your arm and scattered the proud in their conceit,

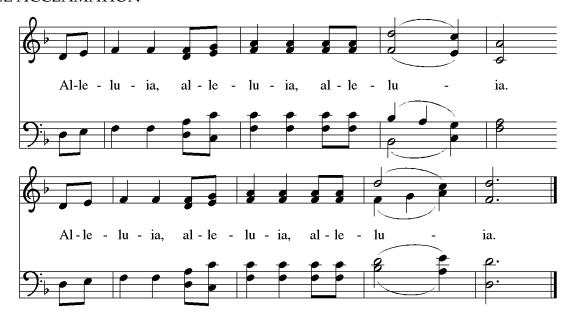
casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly.

You have filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

You have come to the aid of your servant Israel, to remember the promise of mercy,

the promise made to our forebears, to Abraham and his children forever.

* GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



* GOSPEL Matthew 11:2-11

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,

who will prepare your way before you.'

"Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Pastor Don Larsen

SERMON

Pastor Don Larsen



Text: Roland F. Palmer, 1891–1985

Music: RAQUEL, Skinner Chávez-Melo, 1944-1992

*NICENE CREED

In trust and hope, we confess our faith.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures;

he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

* PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

A brief silence.

God of power and mercy, we praise you for Jesus and his acts of healing and liberation. Lead us to proclaim the good news from generation to generation, that all may place their hope in you. God of grace, **hear our prayer**.

When lands are parched and dry, bring rain and snow; where wilderness is barren, sow seeds of life. Fill the lands with trees that grow, plants that flower, and creatures that thrive, as nature proclaims the wonder of your works. God of grace, **hear our prayer**.

When there is injustice or corruption among nations and leaders, root it out. Turn their attention to inequity and the cries of the poor. Instill a deeper sense of compassion and care in all who govern. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When bodies weaken and hearts grow fearful, speak your blessing. We pray especially Bobby, Dan, Diane, George, Jim, Lynn, Meredith, Naomi, Paul, Roberta, and Susan. In uncertain times, remind us of the promise spoken to our ancestors in faith. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When people are imprisoned or held captive, break the chains and offer release. Strengthen the work of the church in restorative justice, breaking cycles of poverty, and welcoming the immigrant Especially we pray for Ascentria and Global Refuge. God of grace, **hear our prayer**.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

As we await your coming, we give thanks for the faithful who have lived and died in faith especially Lucy, martyr at Syracuse, and John of the Cross. May their boldness of faith inspire our witness and work. God of grace, **hear our prayer**.

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

Amen.

*PEACE

Keep your hands close together or make the peace sign if you'd rather not pass the peace with touch.

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

*OFFERING SONG



* OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

OFFERING

You may give an offering through the Givelify app by scanning this QR code. You may also make an offering by placing a gift in the offering plate, which is in the narthex.



* GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



We praise you, living and loving God, that you have sent your Son into this world. Christ is your Wisdom, sweetly ordering all creation, our Lawgiver, burning with justice, the Branch from Jesse's tree, sprouting flowers from old roots,

the Key of David, opening our prison doors.

And let the people cry, O come and save us:

O come and save us!

We praise you, serving and saving God, that you send your Son also to this table, who on the night before he died took bread, and gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

And let the people cry, O come and save us.

O come and save us!

We beg you, mighty and merciful God: send us the Spirit of your Son.

Dwell in this food and in all who share it, that the earth may rejoice in your presence.

In Christ, the Dawning Day, enlighten a darkened world, reign as Sovereign to unite all peoples, and live among us, Emmanuel, our deepest desire now and forever.

And let the people cry, O come and save us.

O come and save us!

Even so, come, Lord Jesus, with your Father and your Spirit, to the church, and receive our praises, now and forever. Amen:

Amen.

And let the people pray:

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed. Blest be God, who is our Bread; may all the world be clothed and fed. Amen. Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

COMMUNION

All are welcome to receive the bread and the wine. Gluten free wafers are available on request. Both wine and grape juice are available in each tray; the wine is red and the grape juice is white.

Come forward in the center aisle starting at the front of the church. The pastors will motion the first people forward.



*TABLE BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God for whom we wait, in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day when the hungry will be fed with good things. Send us forth to make known your deeds and to proclaim the greatness of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

*BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and + grant you peace. **Amen.**

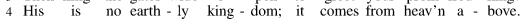
ANNOUNCEMENTS

* SENDING HYMN

Prepare the Royal Highway

ELW 24







Let ev - 'ry hill and val - lev a lev - el pear! road ap -Palm branch-es strew be - fore him! Spread gar-ments! Shout and sing! Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring. rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto ry: God's prom-ise will not you! fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing So your praise be sound-ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:



Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. Lutheran Book of Worship Music: BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.

*DISMISSAL

Life is short, and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel with us. So be swift to love, make haste to be kind, and go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Noel Festival

Arranged by Lloyd Larson

Mark Olson, trumpet

ANNOUNCEMENTS and UPCOMING HAPPENINGS

at **SAINT PAUL**



GENTLE REMINDER: PLEDGES FOR 2026

The coming year promises an exciting new chapter in St. Paul's story: the call and welcome of the next Pastor. The Transition Team and the Congregation Council have been hard at work behind the scenes preparing for the next steps in the call process, the adoption of a Ministry Site Profile and the formation of a Call Committee in late January or early February.

You can help prepare the way for this next exciting chapter by pledging financial support for St. Paul's ministry in 2026. Pledges are being received now. You are invited to prayerfully consider making a generous pledge that will help the congregation and its next Pastor move into the future on a solid financial footing. If you are new to the congregation or have not pledged in the past for other reasons, please consider a pledge for the coming year. You may fill out the pledge form and mail it back to St. Paul or put it in the offering plate during worship on Sunday mornings. Alternatively, you can <u>click here</u> to fill out a virtual pledge card.

COOKIES FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

Calling all cookie bakers! Help St. Paul host a festive and welcoming coffee hour after each of our Christmas Eve services. If you're willing to bring 1-2 dozen Christmas cookies to share, please RSVP to Lisa at lisachiullilay@gmail.com and note which service, the 4pm or 8pm, you will be attending. Fresh fruit, or cheese & crackers, are also welcome!

ADULT FORUM | Sunday, December 14, 9:30

This Sunday join us for a brainstorming/heart-searching conversation about the Adult Forum and its subjects for the coming months. We'll meet in the Goodman Fellowship Hall from 9:30-10:15am. All are invited to join the discussion!

PRAYER AROUND THE CROSS | Tuesdays in Advent (December 16) at 7PM

Advent, a season for contemplative reflection, coincides one of the busiest times of the secular year. We will offer Prayer Around the Cross this Tuesday (December 16) at 7:00 PM in the sanctuary. Silence, simple song, readings, and prayer. As a tactile form of prayer, participants can light candles and place them in bowls filled with sand, placed around the cross. Our time together each week will be about 30 to 45 minutes long. Come as often as you can. This is not an imposition. It is an opportunity for those who crave the space for silence and contemplation.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP | December 24 at 4pm & 8pm

We will gather for worship on Christmas Eve, Wednesday December 24, at 4pm and 8pm. The 4pm service will include a special children's message. 8pm will be a candlelight service.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT | December 21, 10:30 Service

St. Paul's annual Christmas Pageant will take place on Sunday, December 21 at the 10:30 service. We look forward to witnessing the story of Christ's birth told from the perspective of St. Paul's youngest disciples in word and song. If your child would like to participate, please contact Sarah Carter, Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministry, at stpaularlingtonfamily@gmail.com. Pageant rehearsal will take place during the education hour on December 14 and December 21.

ARLINGTON EATS DECEMBER NEEDS

At this time of year especially, we focus on baking at home. As you gather your own ingredients, please consider donating some to Arlington Eats. As always, thank you for being a part of our year-round food donors!

- Sugar
- · Baking soda
- Baking powder
- Spices Cinnamon, Ground ginger, Garlic powder
- Baking chips (chocolate, etc)
- Cereal (especially Cheerios!)
- Laundry detergent sheets
- Dish soap

ST. PAUL BIBLE STUDY | Thursday Evenings, 7-8pm by Zoom

All are invited to join our bible study! We will gather on Thursday evenings on Zoom from 7-8pm. Each week, we will study the upcoming Sunday's lectionary texts, which are the bible readings we hear in worship. To access the readings and Zoom link, please see St. Paul's Weekly Update email. If you are not a subscriber, you can sign up on our website or email Vicar Sam for the Bible Study Zoom link (stepsularlingtonvicar@gmail.com).

THEOLOGY ON TAP | December 21, 4PM

We will gather once more at 4PM at Mighty Squirrel (411 Waverley Oaks Road, Waltham). Vicar Sam will lead a relaxed conversation about a different theological topic each month. The brewery welcomes families and includes alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. All are invited!

SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES	
Advent 3	Sunday, December 14
8:15 AM	Holy Communion
9:30 AM	Pageant rehearsal, confirmation, adult forum, choir
10:30 AM	Lessons & Carols (No Communion)
Advent 4	Sunday, December 21
8:15 AM	Holy Communion
9:30 AM	Pageant rehearsal, confirmation, adult forum, choir
10:30 AM	Christmas Pageant with Holy Communion

Christmas Eve Wednesday, December 24 4:00 PM Festival Holy Communion 8:00 PM Festival Holy Communion

Coffee and Cookies after both services

Holy Innocents	Sunday, December 28
9:30 AM	Holy Communion with Farewell & Godspeed
10:30 AM	Celebration of Vicar Sam's Ministry
Epiphany	Sunday, January 4

8:15 AM Holy Communion

9:30 AM Potluck Breakfast with Carols

10:30 AM Holy Communion



SAINT PAUL

LUTHERAN CHURCH

ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

www.stpaularlington.org | 781-646-7773

Staff

The Reverend Don Larsen, *Transition Pastor*Samantha Menapace, *Vicar*Ana Zecic Jeffers, *Director of Music*Sarah Carter, *Children*, *Youth and Families Director*Jennifer White, *Parish Administrator*Paul Ricci, *Business Administrator*Dennis O'Brien, *Church Property Manager*

stpaularlington.interim.pastor@gmail.com stpaularlingtonvicar@gmail.com anazecicjeffers@gmail.com stpaularlingtonfamily@gmail.com parishadmin@stpaularlington.org

Church Council and Officers

Kerri Frick, President
Sandy Walker, Vice President
Eric Haugen, Treasurer
Elizabeth Heichler, Secretary
Mark Olson, Financial Secretary
Kristen Anderson
Eric Carlson
Dave Hering

Kevin Kreutter Pierson Oliver Taryn Walsh

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