



The Epistle

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 117 East Arch Street, Fleetwood, PA

From the Pastor

June 2026

Where Have All the Pastors Gone?

The statistics are staggering. Some 30% of pastors have retired in the past 5 years. At the same time there has been, on average, one graduate for ordained ministry from each of the seven ELGA seminaries. Church membership is dwindling, as are church budgets, meaning fewer and fewer churches can pay a pastor.

It's not farfetched to say the church, that is, the Evangelical Church in America, is in crisis. This is also true of the "main line" churches, all those who trace their history to the Reformation era. We are the churches that are wed to our history, our traditions and our traditional way of worship.

Lutherans who immigrated to the United States were primarily German and early on produced large families. Repopulating the church came naturally. As German families shrunk in size there failed to be an accompanying effort to reach out to strangers and welcome new ideas and preferences for worship. Another factor is that younger generations are less likely to stick with the church of their youth and more likely to "shop around" for a church that meets their needs.

So here we are. But that's not all. We only have to look to ourselves and our current situation to see where the potential pastors have gone. They have gone to the soccer fields and dance floors. Activities other than church take precedent on Sunday morning. Whereas children once did what their parents did on Sundays, now it's the other way around. Parents follow the children in all of the activities

(Continued on page 3)

Up Coming Events

Confirmation

Sunday 6/7 - 8:30 a.m.

Mt. Laurel Brass - Patriotic Concert

Saturday, 6/27 - 7 p.m.

250th Anniversary Parade/

Tailgating

Sunday, 6/28 at 2 p.m.

Cookies at the Cross - 9:30 a.m.

Sundays through the summer

A Summer Blessing

May you walk with God this summer in whatever you do and wherever you go. May you talk to God this summer and everyday and in every situation. May you talk with God everyday!

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Heart Touching

that compete with the church.

We have to ask ourselves, "What would lead a young person to consider parish ministry?" Is it the example set by adults that church is as important as sports? Is it the welcome they feel not only in being present but their ideas, their music, the way they dress, their acceptance of others? Is it because they see pastors treated with respect, talked well of in their homes, prayed for, and paid a respectable salary? Do you, as parents and grandparents, Sunday school and confirmation teachers, ever suggest to and encourage a child to consider ministry as a career choice?

Most pastors are now second career people, those whose first career has not reaped the expected rewards. These people are looking for something more meaningful and satisfying. It's also possible their faith has grown through the years, and they are better equipped to speak openly of their faith.

Here at St. Paul's, I made as my mantra, "Do everything we can to help families and youth feel wanted and welcome." There have been some successful efforts but I often feel like a lone voice in the wilderness.

Where have all the pastors gone? This pastor is going to The Heritage of Green Hills, a retirement community on the outskirts of Shillington. I'm well past retirement age but a typical retirement life style has never appealed to me. I continue to find the deepest joy and satisfaction in ministry. I see no comparable vocation that allows for accompanying people of all ages through the most meaningful times of their lives and offers opportunities for reading, writing and public speaking; where one can boldly claim Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

What God has in store for me going forward is, as yet, unclear. But I do know churches cannot depend on retirees as pastors and lay leaders for the long run. So go the pastors so goes the church as we know and love.

Make no mistake.... God is alive and well, the Holy Spirit continues to blow through believers of all shapes, sizes, shades and languages. It may be time to recognize that the Holy Spirit is moving in directions other than our own.

A message from Paul to his protege the young Timothy:

2 Timothy 3-6

I thank God when I remember you in my prayers I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you. Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you..."

Might there be a Timothy in your life?

Gratefully yours, in Christ, Pastor Fox

Council Corner

Devotion

Autopsy of A Deceased Church: Chapters 9 & 10

Engage church members to be more prayerful daily, not just during church. Stop and say a prayer wherever you are at the same time every day. We believe that a clear purpose of our church is to try and do more outreach even though we all have busy lives.

Parish Administrator's Report

- The parking lot security camera is operational, "Rocky" our resident squirrel had chewed the wiring. Still trying to locate where he's getting in.
- Girl Scouts planted impatiens along the Laurel street side of the church as a way thank you for letting them meet here.

Treasurer's Report

For the month of April, we were ahead by \$1,663, and year to date income exceeded expenses by \$9,411.

Financial Secretary's Report

We were ahead for the month of April because of some large donations.

Pastor's Report

- Blessed that in the month of April we celebrated the baptism of Delaney Mayer and the First Holy Communion for Jack and Maxwell Brobst
- Continuing to help Gretchen and Donna Fick identify supply pastors and will be looking for possible supplies/interims at the synod assemble.

Church Council Report

- **250th Celebration:** Carol Cox volunteered to set up tent at tailgate event.
- Holly Wolf attended the East Berks Mission District Spring Assembly.

Preschool

- Preschool Sunday – 14 students graduated.
- Jenn Davies and Donna Fick met with Bronson Wyland and his mentor to discuss his Eagle Scout project ■ His plan is to paint the two stairwells that lead into the preschool classrooms. He will also be painting a mural and possibly a wood burnt sign to replace old vinyl banner.
- Summer camps are filling up; June 1 – June 4 and June 15-June 18.

Learning:

- VBS will be held Sunday August 2 – August 6 at Maier's Grove with St. Paul's UCC and the Maiden creek Church. Carol Cox and Katie Riley are our representatives and are in charge of the Wednesday night meal and games.

New Chapter in Ministry

New Chapter in Ministry: Thank You, St. Paul's!

I want to share some exciting news and offer a heartfelt thank you to my St. Paul's family. As I've transitioned into semi-retirement, I have felt a growing call to serve the Lutheran Church more deeply. With your encouragement, I have officially begun the journey to become a Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) within our North-eastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA.

What is a Licensed Lay Minister?

While not ordained pastors, LLMs are laypeople who undergo specialized theological and practical training to support the ministry of a congregation. Once licensed by the Bishop, LLMs serve as a vital extension of the ministry team by:

- **Leading Worship:** Preaching and leading services to support the congregation's liturgical life.
- **Providing Pastoral Care:** Visiting the homebound or those in the hospital to offer prayer and companionship.
- **Strengthening Education:** Facilitating Bible studies and small groups to help the community grow in faith and prepare for the future.

The Journey Ahead

The road to becoming an LLM is a dedicated two-year commitment. The program consists of **four foundational theology** courses covering the Old and New Testaments, Church History, and Lutheran Beliefs. There are also **four practical retreats** focused on developing skills in preaching, worship leadership, and caregiving. It is a rigorous but rewarding process that prepares lay leaders to serve their own congregation or wherever they are needed.

Grateful for Your Support

I am deeply moved by the support of church council and our congregation. **A special thank you to St. Paul's for your generous financial support of my journey through the LLM program.** Your investment in my education is truly an investment in the future of our shared ministry.

I feel incredibly blessed to have the time and the resources to pursue this calling. I look forward to sharing what I learn in the classroom with all of you here in the pews!

In Christ, Holly Wolf



Food Collections are ongoing!

Now more than ever, food insecurity is a problem throughout our nation and world and in our community. Kindly remember the many families and individuals who are struggling to afford food. Simply drop your non-perishable donations in the food bin in the lobby.



Parish Nurse

Congratulations to Ernest Fink who was recognized as a member of Virginville Grange for 70 years.

Thought as Father's Day approaches: Many a man has kept straight because his Mother bent her knees in prayer. "The earnest prayer of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results. (James 5:16)

BE FAST....signs of a stroke.

Balance: loss of balance

Eyes: vision impairment

Face: drooping face

Arms: loss of strength in arm or arms

Speech: difficulty speaking

Time: call 911



TICKS. Tick bites usually spike in May, so now is time to take action. Ticks are small, blood-sucking parasites that feed on animals and sometimes people. Ticks like warm, humid weather, and having more deer and mice available for them to feed on may also be a factor. Ticks that are infected with germs can cause serious diseases, with Lyme disease being the most common. Prevention: Ticks tend to perch on ankle-level vegetation, so try to walk in the middle of paths. Wear light colored clothing treated with the insecticide permethrin. If you find an attached tick, remove it immediately. See a doctor if the tick has been on you for a length of time or if you develop a rash or other symptoms. A bull's eye rash is not always present. Wear long pants with tight cuffs as a precaution.

Medicare covers a health screening for anyone over the age of 65

Screenings include: depression screening, cognitive tests, colonoscopy, a CT screen for a previous smoker, abdominal aortic aneurysm screening may be added for anyone with a smoking history, bone density screening and mammogram. These tests might differ with one's history or family history.

Do you know where an urgent care is located?

That is the place to visit for sprains, muscle strains or joint pain, minor cuts and bruises, respiratory illnesses, urinary tract infections, eye redness, general feelings of illness.



Do NOT go to urgent care with chest pain, stroke - like symptoms, internal bleeding/shock symptoms, a fall with a head injury. Go directly to the emergency room. Urgent care is not equipped for these problems.

Colon cancer rates have risen, especially among younger adults. Have you had a colonoscopy? Have you had a mammogram? With a family history of either, these tests should be given at a younger age.

Caring changes relationships!

A prayer line never gets a "busy" signal. Prayer does not decrease in power no matter how long or frequently it is used.

Words of wisdom from Corrie Ten Boom, a Jewish WWII survivor: "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a KNOWN God."

Prayer List

Prayer List

The prayer list is an instrument to remind us of our responsibility to intercessory prayer for our community, world, and church. To add a name to the prayer list, call the church office. Names will be removed after four weeks, unless otherwise advised. Prayer makes a difference!

Pray for those serving in the military: Connor Geer, Rob Geer, Daniel Keller, Brayden Kiebach, Travis Meck, Lauren Moyer, Sydney Plucker, Matt Roberts.

Pray for those in need of ongoing, long-term prayer:

Kathy Boalton, Marion Boyer, Gene Delp, Essie Dietrich, Lynnwood Fegley, Chase Fenwick & his parents (Crystal & Bob), Joanne Fink, Frank Vroman, Nancy Heffner, Maya Hein, Juanita Heist, Jane Hill, Gino Hinnershitz, Rexine Krause, Martin Keller, Don Kirby, Sharon Kirkhoff, Betty Kurzweg, Ben Messick and Family, Steve Miller, The Neff Family, Ruth Oxenreider, Charles Pinter, Bruce Rimmel, Ken Schlegel, Lori Spatz, Jane Sprecher, Mabel Stopp, Dan Troxel, Daisy Wahl, Russell Wendt, Marie Wessner.



A Note about Pastoral Care



Please contact us if you or another member of your family enters the hospital or experiences a significant illness, trauma, or need. Pr. Susan Fox can be reached through the church or at home at (610) 743-3554 or by email to: pastor@spelcfleetwood.com

A reminder to please call the church office with any hospital admission, as only Tower Health Hospital notifies our church office and only if St. Paul's Lutheran Church is listed at time of admission.

June Worship

June 7 – Second Sunday after Pentecost/Confirmation

Though Jesus was a devout Jew who practiced his faith, he was criticized for eating with tax collectors and sinners—the religiously nonobservant. Jesus criticizes the self-righteous and reminds us that mercy is to be at the heart of our religious practices. God continues to be made known in those on the margins of society, like Matthew the tax collector and the hemorrhaging woman. As we gather each Lord's day we receive the healing that makes us well and sends us forth to be signs of God's mercy for the world.

June 14 – Third Sunday after Pentecost

Moses tells the Israelites that they are called to be a priestly kingdom and a holy people. Jesus sends out the disciples as laborers into the harvest. In baptism we too are anointed for ministry, sharing God's compassion with our needy world. From the Lord's table we go forth to proclaim the good news, to heal the sick, and to share our bread with the hungry.

June 21 – Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

God does not promise that the path of the disciple will be easy. Jeremiah feels the pain of rejection from those who do not want to hear what he has to say. Jesus declares that his words may bring stark division. Even so, we need not be afraid for God accounts for each hair on our heads. Though we may experience rejection, frustration, division, and death, God's grace and love make us a new creation each day. Marked with the cross and filled with holy food, we are sent from worship to witness to Christ in the world.

June 28 – Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

The welcome of baptism is for all God's children. This baptismal gift sets us free from the power of sin and death. In today's gospel, Christ promises that the disciple who gives a cup of cold water to the little ones serves Christ himself. From worship we are sent on our baptismal mission: to serve the little ones of this world and to be a sign of God's merciful welcome.

Special Monthly Offering Lutheran Disaster Response



Lutheran
Disaster Response

Lutheran Disaster Response shares God's hope, healing, and renewal with people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need.

Mystery Members

Submitted by Meliss!Neff

Please note that there will not be a mystery member this month. We are taking a short break!

Happenings!

Relay For Life - Music in the Park

St Paul's Relay For Life Team will be operating the Concession Stand at the Fleetwood Concert in the Park on Sunday, June 21st, featuring Cody Tyler. We need baked goods, and are also looking for volunteers to help us in the stand that evening. If you can donate some baked goods, or are available to help in the Concession Stand the day of the concert, please see Cindy Tobias.

Mount Laurel Brass - A Patriotic Concert



The Mount Laurel Brass will present a patriotic concert on Saturday, June 27 at 7:00 p.m. It's the perfect, lively prelude to the community's tailgating and parade festivities happening in Fleetwood on Sunday.

AMERICA 250 FLEETWOOD COMMUNITY PARADE & TAILGATE CELEBRATION

We are looking for people to walk in America 250 parade in Fleetwood on Sunday, June 28th. Parade starts and ends at Fleetwood High School and is very similar to the homecoming route. Walkers should meet our group at 1:00pm. The parade starts at 2:00pm. Please call the church office to sign up to walk and/or help with the tailgating!



VBS 2026



Join us for the Snowball Mountain Challenge! God's children ages 3 (potty-trained) through grade 6 are invited to attend as we explore how we can do all things with God. Kids will become Challengers, gearing up for frosty games, snowy surprises, and hands-on lessons about resilience and faith.

This year's VBS will be combined with Maidencreek Church, St. Paul's UCC, St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Frieden's UCC, Oley. VBS will take place August 2–6 from 6:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. at Maier's Grove. A meal will be served each night beginning at 5:15 p.m.

Use the QR code to register. Register by July 1 to guarantee a T-shirt.

For questions, contact Carol Cox at carolc314@gmail.com.

Meals Served at 5:15pm

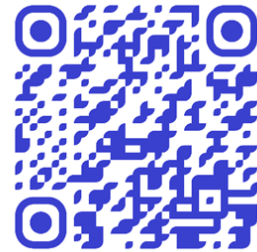
Sunday: Nacho Bar

Monday: Breakfast for Dinner

Tuesday: Hot Dogs

Wednesday: Grilled Cheese or PBJ

Thursday: Pizza



VBS Volunteers Needed

It takes many people to make VBS a success. VBS will be held August 2–6 from 6:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. at Maier's Grove, as we team up with Maidencreek Church, St. Paul's UCC, and Frieden's UCC. A meal will be served each evening beginning at 5:15 p.m.. Our church is responsible for providing food servers for Wednesday night's meal (food helpers should arrive by 4:00 p.m.). If you are interested in volunteering to serve the meal on Wednesday or help during VBS each evening, please email Carol Cox at carolc314@gmail.com by July 1 to guarantee yourself a T-shirt. We are looking for several youth helpers to lead a group of children each evening.

Thank You

Dear St. Paul's Lutheran Church,

Thank you so much for your generous donation to our FAHS Class of 2026 seniors! Your \$600 donation will help them have a safe and fun celebration the night of their graduation on June 5, 2026.

Thank you again,

FAHS Class of 2026 Safe Grad Committee

Finances at St. Paul's



Did you know that you can now manage your giving to St. Paul's online? Simply Giving is an easy, secure, and convenient way to have your weekly, monthly, or yearly offering transferred directly to St. Paul's from your checking or savings account. No more writing checks and searching for that offering envelope. It just takes a few minutes to enroll and you are on your way to Simply Giving! Enrollment forms are available in the church office or visit www.spelcfleetwood.com\give-online

	<u>Apr-26</u>	<u>YTD</u>
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Actual</u>
APRIL 2026		
Income		
Non-Preschool M&M	\$ 23,059	\$ 81,913
Preschool M&M	\$ 9,335	\$ 43,680
Total	\$ 32,394	\$ 125,593
Expense		
Non-Preschool	\$ 20,133	\$ 75,556
Preschool	\$ 10,597	\$ 40,626
Total	\$ 30,730	\$ 116,182
Income Less Expenses - Non-Preschool	\$ 2,925	\$ 6,357
Income Less Expenses - Preschool	\$ (1,262)	\$ 3,054
Total Income Less Expenses	\$ 1,663	\$ 9,411

Making a Difference with Your RMD Supporting St. Paul's Ministry

Members have asked how they can be intentional in their financial stewardship—especially when it comes to Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs). We're pleased to share that **you can now set up your RMDs electronically** to support St. Paul's Lutheran Church with ease and consistency.

Whether you choose **monthly, quarterly, or annual withdrawals**, your RMD can be directed straight from your retirement account to St. Paul's. This method not only fulfills your IRS requirement but also helps sustain the vital work we do—sharing Christ's love through worship, outreach, education, and service.

Your faithful giving ensures we can continue to nurture disciples, care for our community, and grow ministries that reflect God's grace and justice.

📞 To get started or learn more, please contact Linda Coutts. She is happy to help you set up an arrangement that works best for you.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church



117 East Arch Street
Fleetwood, PA 19522
(610) 944-8388

Office Hours:

Monday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Wednesday & Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



Romans 12:12

Purpose

Filled with the Holy Spirit

*We inspire Spiritual Growth in the Community of Christ
by striving to ...*

Guiding Principles

- ◆ *Welcome All People*
- ◆ *Pray Daily*
- ◆ *Worship Weekly*
- ◆ *Read, Listen, Reflect and Share the Word of God*
- ◆ *Serve at and beyond St. Paul's*
- ◆ *Encourage Spiritual Friendships*
- ◆ *Share God's Blessings Generously through the Giving of Our Time, Talents and Resources*

Contact Us

Gretchen Mertz

Parish Administrator 610-944-8388

Email: office@spelcfleetwood.com

Pr. Susan Fox

Pastor 610-944-8388

Email: Pastor@spelcfleetwood.com

Linda Coutts

Treasurer 610-944-8488

Sue Rimmel

Financial Secretary 610-944-8388

Donna Ahrens

Organist, Interim Choir Director

Director of Handbells 610-944-8388

Carol Cox

Sunday School Director 610-944-8388

Gretchen Mertz

Epistle Editor 610-944-6492

Email: gkm321@ptd.net

Jenn Davies, Director

Preschool 610-944-0922

Phone:

610-944-8388

Fax:

610-944-3011

Email:

office@spelcfleetwood.com

Website:

www.spelcfleetwood.com

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/spelcfleetwood

Church Office Hours:

Please check the weekly bulletin and the sign on the parking lot door.

You are welcome to call with questions or concerns or to stop in to discuss your needs in person. Please ring the doorbell and Gretchen will meet you at the door for admittance into the building.

Editor's Note:

All articles, announcements etc. should be emailed to Gretchen Mertz (Editor) at gkm321@ptd.net or office@spelcfleetwood.com or hard copies put in her mailbox in the choir room/library
Thank you, Gretchen Mertz

June 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
9:30 am COOKIES AT THE CROSS Every Sunday during the summer						
	1 Preschool Summer Camp	2	3 10:30 am GWBU	4	5	6
7 8:30 am Confirmation 9:30 Short Women's Choir Rehearsal 10 am Worship & Music Mtg	8	9	10 10:30 am GWBU	11 7:15 Cultural Series Mtg	12	13
14 8:30 am Wyomissing Band	15 Preschool Summer Camp Epistle Deadline	16 6:30 pm Council Mtg	17 10:30 am GWBU	18 Office Closed	19	20
21	22	23	24 10:30 am GWBU	25	26	27 7 pm Mount-Laurel Brass Patriotic Concert
28 2 pm 250 Anniversary Parade Food on the 4th	29	30				

NOTE: AA/AI-non Meet every Sunday at 7 PM