

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

By Mark Ryman

Ideas From Churches, November 2025

St. Paul's Lutheran Church



St. Paul's Lutheran Church – Salisbury, North Carolina

By the time you read this, I will know who next year's missions and ministry partners are at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Salisbury, NC. I am excited to find out our 2026 missionaries. Each year, our lay delegate to the annual gathering is tasked with choosing four missions or ministries for St. Paul's to support in the coming year.

"God loves a cheerful giver."

— 2 Corinthians 9:7

Over the course of those few days at the gathering, our delegate spends time meeting folks at all the displays, asking questions and discerning which ones would be a good fit for our mission program. Our delegates have taken their assignment seriously and can always explain to me why a particular mission was chosen.

Children's Offerings

For nearly three years of Sundays, our children have collected almost \$20,000 for those missions. On the way up for the children's message, they grab a tin mug from a windowsill and collect spare change from the congregation.



A few of the mugs our children use each Lord's Day

We have a large, tin cannister that the kids dump their change into as loudly as possible. Monday morning, a team of adults counts and rolls the change. The rolls are then placed in a larger container next to the tin can. At the end of the quarter, the large container is taken to the bank, deposited, and a check is sent to the mission or ministry that week.



The Collection Canisters

On average, the St. Paul's children collect \$2,000 per quarter for these missions and ministries. This has increased our benevolence giving by more than 15%. The congregation loves this interaction with our children, and the kids learn the importance of mission support. The value of missions is highlighted when a representative from each organization comes to preach at St. Paul's during the year, sharing about their mission or ministry and thanking the congregation for their offering. That representative also has a chat with the children on the chancel steps after they have taken up the mission offering. Typically, we will have some kind of meal the evening before that raises additional money to support the mission.

A running tally of offerings to all missions and ministries is kept updated on our website where each mission or ministry website is also linked. Occasionally, a mission sends us a video which is also shared on that web page, along with links and videos to our other monthly benevolence recipients.

Additionally, our secretary puts these tallies in the newsletter each month, and makes sure any thank-yous received from missionaries are reprinted in those newsletters. (Each week, our secretary also sends an email blast that may include photos, videos, and links to mission sites, along with other news of the congregation.)



The strategy has been to get the congregation doing more than writing checks. Having the kids lead the charge seemed an ideal way to get everyone's involvement. Recently we had a show of hands to see if the congregation wanted to do a fourth year of our children collecting mission offerings – everyone raised their hands! That means our lay delegate will be busy at the annual gathering, deciding who gets the St. Paul's kiddos collecting for them in 2026.

Another key component to our mission program is getting representatives of those groups for whom we collect to be here with us one Sunday in the year. It puts a name with the mission and helps us know what our offerings are doing in places far away from Salisbury, NC. So far, our children have collected for Naomi's Heart, SON, Lutheran Military Veterans and Families (LMVFM), St. Paul Lutheran Seminary (SELMC), Lutheran Studies at Gordon Conwell Seminary, The Table Ministry, Friends of Madagascar Mission (FOMM), and Lutherans for Life.

Who knows who our children will collect for in 2026? Whoever it is, the gifts will be given cheerfully because of the ones taking up the collection and because of the cause of the Gospel of Christ for which it is given.

Our little mission supporters





Rev. Dr. Mark E. Ryman has served as Pastor for St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Salisbury, NC, since 2021. Previously, Pastor Ryman served congregations in North Carolina and Ohio, as well as a call to specialized ministry with Sola Publishing. He is pictured here with his dog, Wyclif.

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Links:

St. Paul's: <https://stpaulslutheran.church/>

Tally: <https://stpaulslutheran.church/missionaries>

Newsletters: <https://stpaulslutheran.church/newsletters>

Naomi's Heart: <https://www.naomisheartmission.org/>

SON: <https://sonetwork.org/>

LMVFM: <https://lmvfm.org/>

SELMC: <https://semlc.org/>

Gordon Conwell: <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/>

The Table Ministry: <https://thetableministry.org/>

FOMM: <https://madagascarmission.org/>

Lutherans for Life: <https://lutheransforlife.org/>

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