



THE MESSENGER

OUR MISSION IS TO GROW IN FAITH, TO WORSHIP GOD, TO SERVE OTHERS, AND TO WELCOME ALL.

MESSY CHURCH

February 6 at 4 pm



03

MESSY CHURCH
FEBRUARY 6 AT 4 PM

Come for an afternoon of family fun as we learn about the parable of the lost coin.



01

NEW WORSHIP SERIES
ON CREATIVITY

Join us in worship as we explore how we can grow in faith by living creatively.



03

THURSDAY ZOOM
DISCUSSION GROUP

Every Thursday at 7 PM we discuss matters of racial justice.



01

LOAVES AND FISHES
FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Come and help at Loaves and Fishes on February 25 at 9 AM or 12:30 PM.



WHAT MAKES YOU COME ALIVE? HOW DO YOU NURTURE YOUR SOUL?

Why church? What are we all about?

To me, it has to do with our souls and how we connect to the living God. The purpose of religion is to help us live more fully and in tune with God, with ourselves, and with one another. The church is a vessel for the Spirit of God to nurture, challenge, encourage, and lift our spirits.

Howard Thurman, the mentor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., is quoted to have said, "Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and do that, because the world needs people who are fully alive!"

What makes you come alive? What energizes you? What draws you in and inspires you? What is worthy of your time and energy to invest in? We are exploring just that in our "Drawn In: Living Creatively" worship series. We open up to the spark, the dream, and the energy that flows into us and makes us come alive. Think of it as God's seed that is planted in our hearts and takes root.

Faith is the attitude in which we explore our relationship with God, with ourselves, and with one another. Faith is the trust that there is more to explore

than just ourselves. There is a treasure to explore beyond the status quo. That's why one of our UCC mottos is, "God is still speaking," as the wisdom and insight, that we are never done. God is not yet done with us. One of my dear mentors, Sam Varner, used to say, "God loves us too much to leaves us as we are; we are always under construction."

The first tenet of our St. Paul's Mission Statement is, "Grow in faith." How do we grow in faith? By opening up to God. By paying attention to the Spirit's nudging. By nurturing our souls, the part in us that connects with the living God.

Just like our body and brain, our soul needs care, nurturing, attention, and love. To keep healthy, you eat well and move/exercise. To keep your mind fresh and alive, you exercise your brain. What do you do to keep your soul healthy, the part in you that connects with God?

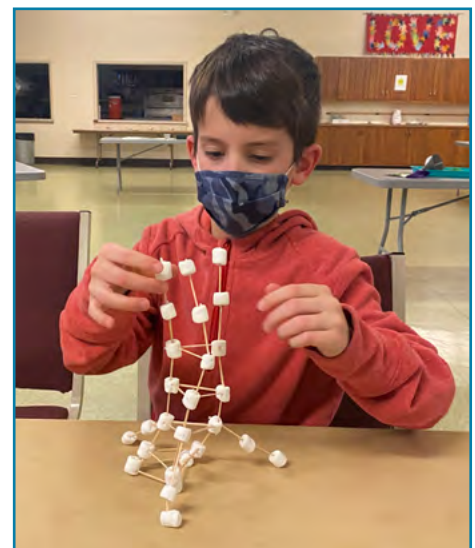
This is where spiritual practices come in. They help us grow in faith, develop our spirit, and nurture our soul. Worshiping, taking time for devotion, meditation, prayer, taking a walk, serving hands-on, participating in a group study, writing a card, making a phone call, smiling, being kind, paying it forward, and the like.

What makes you come alive? How do you nurture your soul?

"The glory of God is a human being fully alive," says the early church father, Irenaeus. I hope and pray that you pay attention to your soul, nurture your spirit, and invest in your relationship with God. It's the best thing you can do. I trust you make growing in faith a priority.

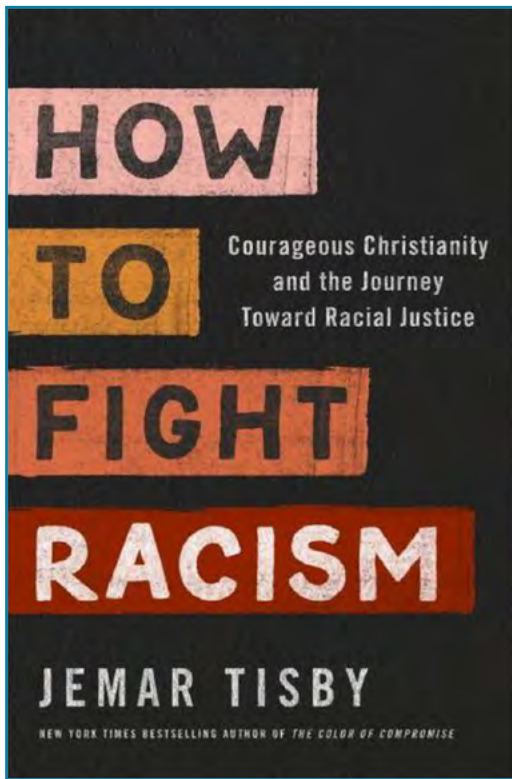
I hold you in my heart! In faith, hope, and love,

Pastor Dietmar



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

One of the best ways to grow in faith is to participate in a study group.



On Thursday evenings at 7 PM a study group meets via Zoom to explore “How to Fight Racism” based on a DVD curriculum by Jemar Tisby. Raven Rudnitsky facilitates this study group that is taking place via Zoom. Each week the group watches a video segment and discusses the subject that was presented. Jesus’s ministry to the marginalized and outsiders is motivation for us to explore how we can build bridges, become more inclusive and work toward social and racial justice and reconciliation. You can check the group out once, participate once in a while or on a regular basis and join the people who are intentional in wrestling with some of the challenging questions that face us as followers of Jesus. Here’s the Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89959048290> Thank you to

Raven for facilitating this group and to all who make it meaningful and worthwhile through their contributions.

On Sunday mornings at 9:15 a study group meets at St. Paul’s and via Zoom to explore the book “Holy Troublemakers and Unconventional Saints”. You can participate regularly or check in once in a while and grow in faith together with these wonderful people in person or via Zoom. This is a hybrid event. You can join via Zoom by following this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81943172062>. The facilitators of the group are Lois Bruno and Marty Blessing. They welcome you with all your thoughts and questions. One of the best ways to grow in faith is to participate in a study group like this one. Thanks to Lois and Marty for facilitating this group and to all who contribute by participating.



KIDS GROUP

Kids Group is back and we are learning valuable faith lessons through parables Jesus told. We made marshmallow & toothpick structures for the “House on the Rock” parable, and dirt desserts for “The Sower” parable. If you have a child in grades K-5 who enjoys crafts and building faith with friends, they are welcome to join us!



KIDS SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School has resumed with lessons on Jesus’ life and teachings. The focus thus far has been on baptism, repenting, and being disciples. We welcome all children grades K-5 and parents/grandparents, too!



MESSY CHURCH

We invite you to our February Messy Church, where we will learn about the parable of the lost coin. The woman who lost the coin searched everywhere for it and when she found it, she celebrated. When someone who’s lost their way finds their way back, there is much joy. Please [sign up](#).

FEBRUARY

BIRTHDAYS

- 2/03 Nancy Mercer
Tara Spriggle
Laura Strawser
Norah Witkop
- 2/04 Barbara Reed
- 2/05 Nathan Bingaman
- 2/06 James Radel, Jr.
- 2/07 Christopher Feiler
Lamar Henise
Ruthann Troup
- 2/08 Natalie Imhoof
Sophia Lybarger
- 2/10 Susan Henise
- 2/12 Robert Rice
- 2/14 Tracey Wolfe
- 2/15 Michael Aurand
Cheryl Gibson-Doyne
- 2/16 Lucille Cope
Ann Rising
- 2/17 Fritz Heinemann
Tom Peeler
- 2/19 Heidi Beaver
- 2/21 Matthew Bingaman
- 2/22 Jeanette Dressler
Ronan McCabe
Raven Rudnitsky
- 2/24 Michele DeMary
- 2/25 Judi Anselmo
Carol Dickinson
Gene Houck
- 2/26 Stephanie Burd
Pam Gemberling
Blake Haddon
- 2/28 Shelly Myers
Jamie Shambach



ANNIVERSARIES

- 2/01 Penny Dollar &
Archie Passmore
- Courtney & Joshua Hanes
- 2/13 Rick & Susan Krex
- Derick & Jamie Shambach
- 2/14 Kathy & Fred Ulrich
- 2/22 Kim & Steve Campbell

PRAYER LIST

Members:

Judi Anselmo
Ann & Don Groner
David & Helen Hannah
Kim Haizlett
Kathy Ulrich
Allen Wetzel

Friends:

Ian Danner
The family of Al and Dot Deans
Mona Gillespie
The family of Pat Gordon
Kathie & Doug Mehlenbacher
Tunde & Anna Ogunnaike

Linda Sluck
All affected by Covid-19
All who lost their jobs
All who keep working in critical situations, especially the health care workers
All who are grieving
Those in leadership positions
Our country - for peace, respect, understanding

Special prayers for all those who are serving in the military, leaders of the world, those who are working for peace and understanding, and all the children of the world.

THANK YOU NOTES

Pastor Dietmar & the Congregation at St. Paul's,
Thank you for your prayers and love for our daughter, Edythe Sonder. In November, she underwent her third and last hip operation with a skilled hip preservationist in Philadelphia. We discovered after six excruciating weeks of rehabilitation that one of her bones had become unpinned, necessitating a fourth operation in December. Amy Caron, a friend of ours, was contacted and asked for prayers for Edythe. When we returned home, we received your card and were moved by the reception from St. Paul's.
Thank you so much for loving and caring for Edythe. Your concern has touched us.
Sincerely,
Edythe, Angela, Chris and Summer

Thank you for your thoughts.
Mona Gillespie

Dear Friends at St. Paul's,
Thank you for the love and support you've given me during the passing of my wife Dot and her illness. May God bless each of you and your families.
With Christian love,
Al Deans & family

To My Church Family,

Thank you for the shawl from the Prayer Shawl Ministry. During my first chemo, I was wishing I had brought something warm. That shawl will be perfect. And thank you for all of the texts and cards of encouragement. The kind concern is priceless.
Kim Haizlett

Dear members and friends,
Thank you for your generosity, care, and support that you expressed so lovingly through your Christmas gift (bonus) for the Pastor and his family. Sigrid and I are very grateful for your love and support in ministry. Your gifts touched our hearts. We receive them as an affirmation of our common ministries. We are blessed to be partners in service. God bless you richly as we have been blessed through you.
In deep gratitude,
Pastor Dietmar and Sigrid Plajer

ST. PAUL'S COUNCIL MEETING - JANUARY 11, 2022

Because of the timing of the newsletter publication, these newsletter minutes are not the official, approved minutes. After the minutes have been approved at the next meeting, the final minutes are available upon request.

In Attendance: Sara Adams, Susan Bolig, Kimmie Burkhardt, Amy Caron, Bob Engel, Beverly Heinemann, Ivana Lluveras, Peggy Peeler, Pastor Dietmar Plajer, Sigrid Plajer, Shane Sanders, Craig Stark, Randy Tanner, Linda Turner, Josh Wenrich, Allen Wetzel, Michael Zettlemoyer.

Excused: Kathy Ulrich.

2022 Council Elections: Nominations were taken. Linda Turner nominated Peggy Peeler for president, Beverly Heinemann seconded; Peggy Peeler nominated Linda Turner for vice-president, Randy Tanner seconded; Kimmie Burkhardt nominated Randy Tanner for secretary, Linda Turner seconded. For each position, a vote was submitted through anonymous polling on Zoom. The following are the newly elected Executive Council: President Peggy Peeler, Vice-President Linda Turner, and Secretary Randy Tanner.

Minutes from December Council Meeting: A motion was made by Sara Adams and seconded by Bob Engel to approve the minutes from December. The motion was approved.

Financial Report: Linda Turner reported, presenting the financial reports from December, which were sent to the Council ahead of time. Randy Tanner made the motion to accept the financial report as read, Bob Engel seconded it, and the motion was passed.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Dietmar sent the report to the Council members ahead of time and reflected on the challenging 2 pandemic years that we've had. Finding the balance and being sensitive to volunteers, and staff, in the decision making can be challenging. Looking back on how far how we've come from last year, we have made a lot of strides over the year. His great concern remains with those home-bound members of the church. Without physically or electronically being able to connect with the church, it is a concern as they are isolated. We have been looking for a visitation ministry coordinator, but the COVID risk poses challenges. Much isn't able to get done, which weighs on him. Pastor Dietmar also elaborated on the Christmas Season – which is detailed later in these minutes.

Unfinished Business & New Business:

Committee Liaison Persons (the purpose is to have every committee linked to Council via a council member - review the Council and Committee List):

Committee Support Team (Kimmie Burkhardt), Growth & Membership (Randy Tanner), Personnel (Bob Engel, Linda Turner, and Bev Heinemann), Property & Grounds (Allen Wetzel), Green Team/Living into Right Relationships (Peggy Peeler).

Staying on: Archives (Bob Engel), Christian Education (Sara Adams), Ministry (Bev Heinemann), Music (Michael Zettlemoyer), Stewardship & Finance (Linda Turner), Worship (Bev Heinemann).

Pastor Parish Relations: Need one new person to join Lois Bruno and Raven Rudnitsky.

Leadership Zoom Orientation: Will be held on January 30th at 3:00pm via Zoom.

Christmas Services: Pastor Dietmar reported. We had 78 at the early service, and 72 at the 7pm service, which made it very manageable and relatively safe. Blue Christmas had no attendants, which is a mixed blessing – it meant that no one felt that they “needed” the Blue Christmas service. St. Paul's decided to use the Christmas Eve Offering as a donation to three non-profits: What a great gift to be able to give to others in need! We received almost \$5,000! The church also funded a Christmas Dinner at Sun Com, using monies from the Kitchen Cupboard funds.

Messy Church Update: Messy Church was postponed in January due to weather and COVID concerns. February's Messy Church was moved by one week because of the Super Bowl, so will be held on Feb. 6th.

Worship Service: We will continue to follow CDC guidelines.

Worship in Person, via Internet and by Phone - How Can we Improve? How is Tech Team with Volunteers Going? Sigrid reported. Things are continuing as planned. We have some very dedicated volunteers, and that helps a lot. Things are going well. As a reminder, we are now streaming to YouTube as well, so people can subscribe to the YouTube page and receive an email when we go live. We had 9 people call in to a service in the last month using Phonelivestreaming.

What is St. Paul's Vision? How can we re-commit to our vision and purpose: to grow in faith, hope and love. Can we move forward out of our survival/Pandemic mode? How can we be bold and energized to join God's vision for us? We will talk more about this at the Leadership Orientation, and we will move forward slowly – it is difficult to hone in on this during the pandemic.

January - February 2022 Worship Series - "Drawn In: Living Creatively:" Carolyn Fairl is our "Artist in Residence" – what is the energy, what is the pull that draws us in? As we are growing personally, how does that creativity and tuning in to God's creative energy help move us forward? A communal art piece will grow week to week as we move through this series.

Adult Sunday School Classes: Sunday morning class: Marty and Lois were able to host it on Zoom this last Sunday because of the weather. Thursday evening: Raven's ability to facilitate the group is remarkable. Starting this new session is about fighting racism.

Kids Group & Children's Sunday School: Torri is a great blessing for this ministry and the children of St. Paul's.

Green Team/Living into Right Relationships Committee: The LRR committee is in the process of being created and launched. We are meeting on Jan. 13th as our first session. We will be talking about logistics and what we want things to look like moving forward.

Committee Reports: Minutes from their December meetings

are available upon request.

Personnel Committee: Linda Turner shared.

Treasurer – we are currently updating the description, and it will be advertised in the Daily Item.

Nursery attendant – This position will also be advertised in the Daily Item.

Joyful Noise Choir Director – The committee is requesting authorization to hire on behalf of the Council in order to move forward and not wait so long that we lose the opportunity (following the guidelines). Randy Tanner made the motion to give authorization to the Personnel Committee, Bob Engel seconded, and the motion was approved.

Search for a visitation ministry coordinator is ongoing.

Next Council Meeting: Tuesday, February 8th, 2022 @ 7pm.

Linda Turner will provide devotions.

Respectfully submitted,

Shane Sanders, Council Secretary



ST PAUL'S NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

We welcomed and installed our newest Church Council members in worship on January 16. Standing from the left are Kim Burkhart who grew up at St. Paul's. She is excited about the Children and Youth Ministries and serves on our Christian Education Team. Her son Bode participates in Kids Group. Craig Stark is a newer member who joined St. Paul's with his family two years ago. Craig teaches in the Communications department at Susquehanna University. He has helped with Loaves and Fishes and with the audio-video team. Randy Tanner is our Loaves and Fishes Coordinator and is deeply grateful for all the help volunteers provide for this vital ministry. Randy serves on the Church Growth and Membership Team and is also the Council's new secretary. Joshua Wenrich got married at St. Paul's and joined the church some 10+ years ago. His daughter Lucy is regularly in Kids Group and together with all of his family they participate in Messy Church. Allen Wetzel served before on Church Council and has been very faithful in his support of the Property and Grounds Team and the Stewardship and Finance Committee. Not pictured are our new Council President, Peggy Peeler, who joined St. Paul's in recent years. Peggy is grateful that St. Paul's is an Open and Affirming congregation, and she regular helps with Messy Church. Also not pictured is the Council Vice President, Linda Turner, who serves on the Personnel and Finance Committees. She supports our Youth Leader Torri Stark wholeheartedly by taking her place at Kids Group until she comes from her day job to lead the group. Welcome to these wonderful new congregational leaders!

PASTOR'S REPORT - DECEMBER 2021

Our St. Paul's Mission is to grow in faith, to worship God, to serve others, and to welcome all.

"Longing for Light, We Walk in Darkness..." This hymn expresses much of what we experience together these days, stretching and expecting the light of Christ to shine into our darkness. The prayer song continues with the refrain, "Christ, be our light, shine in our hearts..."

"The Inn: Housing the Holy" has been our worship theme during Advent and Christmas. Based on the main characters of the Christmas stories we explored how we can open our hearts to Jesus and how we can welcome and share him and his light with others. I am very grateful to all who made this season meaningful and moving. Our sanctuary was glorious with Christmas decorations. The musicians inspired, and the families who lit the candles on the Advent Wreath were wonderful.

We presented a Christmas Pageant in worship on December 19 and for Messy Church on December 12, thanks to Joanne Lauer and Youth Leader, Torri Stark. It was heartwarming. It's always inspiring to experience the message embodied in the participants!

At our Annual Meeting on December 12 we elected five new council members: Kim Burkhart, Craig Stark, Randy Tanner, Allen Wetzel, and Joshua Wenrich, and adopted the Mission Plan (Budget) for 2022. I am grateful for these new leaders!

Christmas was also the focus of the Messy Church program on December 12. It is inspiring to explore hands-on the Christmas Message through crafts, games, and activities. One highlight of the evening was the "Journey to Bethlehem" obstacle course. Every family received goodies to take home. Thanks to a great team led by Sigrid Plajer and the

volunteers which make Messy Church possible!

Our food outreach ministries continue to be vital for our community. Loaves and Fishes served 74 families, which included 174 individual persons. Randy Tanner does a wonderful job in planning, coordinating, and guiding a team of great volunteers. This year, every family received a handcrafted Christmas tree ornament that the Messy Church participants decorated. The SACC (Sellingrove Area Christian Council) provided this year 110+ food baskets to local families in need, loaded banana boxes with hams and all the trimmings for a wonderful Christmas Dinner. Rachael Rice through her connection with Toys for Tots provided gifts for all the children from the families we sponsor as a congregation. The families also received \$40 gift certificates for Boscov's to buy shoes or clothes as needed.

The Confirmation Class participants crafted and assembled lovely Christmas pyramids with tea lights, Christmas candy, and a message of faith, hope, and love for the season for our homebound members.

The Children's Ministry of our congregation is vital, instilling faith and Christian values in the lives of our youngest ones. Our Youth Leader, Torri Stark is wonderful in how she is teaching, leading, and coordinating a team of helpers. Volunteers for the Wednesday afternoon Kids Group and the Sunday morning Sunday School are always welcome.

As a congregation we sponsored an amazing Christmas Dinner for the clients and staff of SUNCOM in Northumberland on December 10. It was heartwarming to see all from SUNCOM celebrate and express their gratefulness to St. Paul's.

Our Candlelight Services on December 24 were the highlight of our Christ-

mas season. We celebrated with two services, a family oriented service at 4 PM and a traditional service at 7 PM, both with wonderful music. Each of the services had some 70+ participants in person.

You, the members and friends of St. Paul's UCC, have been very generous! The entire Christmas Eve offering of almost \$5,000 will benefit three local organizations that do God's work in our community/area: Haven Ministries (the Sunbury homeless shelter), By Grace Transitional Housing (supporting women and children through housing, education and job search, in Middleburg) and Transitions (providing shelter, safety and support for persons in abusive relationships). I am deeply grateful for your generosity and kindness which make a huge difference in the lives of those who need it most in our community.

I am grateful to Rev. Darin Namminga for filling in for me in leading the worship service on December 26. Together with our amazing pianist Jaime Namminga (his wife) he inspired us to focus on the heart of Christmas.

Thank you for your prayers, your witness, your giving, your service, and your faithfulness to God and to God's work through St. Paul's. You are the hands and heart of Jesus in action!

December 1-31, 2021

Days worked	18
Days off	06
Continuing Education	06
Vacation days	00
Holidays	01
Total Days	31

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Dietmar Plajer



St. Paul's United Church of Christ

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www.saintpauls-ucc.org

Worship Sunday at 10:30 AM
in person, on Facebook, YouTube, our website,
or by phone (570-225-9545)

“God is Still Speaking”

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

We thank God for...

