



# THE MESSENGER

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

**Messy Church**

*It's a party!*

Messy Church February 19 at 4 p.m.

What will you nail to the cross?

Susquehanna

Ashes to Go

**10** ASH WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 22

Get your Ashes to Go at the Selinsgrove Commons and/or in worship at 7 p.m.

**VISIT US**

**05** WE NEED YOUR HELP VISITING

Please contact the church office if you can help visit our homebound members.

**FOR OUR FUTURE**

VISIONING FOR ST. PAUL'S  
FEBRUARY 23 AT 7 PM



# MAKE THE BEST OF FEBRUARY



The Winter Sunrise painting by Carolyn Fairl represents the “in between” in which we live every day.

The Winter Sunrise painting up front in our sanctuary is stunning. It reflects the “in between” in which we live - the tension of opposites we feel every day. During this cold and dark season, they are especially stark. The Mid-Winter Blues, or Seasonal Affective Disorder, is heavy and real for many of us who are struggling with feeling down, depressed, and anxiously worried. We are grieving and still feeling the heavy weight of the pandemic. How can we face this season of lows and downs?

Our “Arise and Shine: How to Face the Winter Blues” worship series gives us hands-on things to do that can help us: going for a walk, listening and participating in music, opening up to humor, making someone’s day, and becoming aware of God’s presence. Our Sunday worship services are an amazing opportunity to “tune in” and experience the presence of the living God. If you are not able to come in person, you can always join us electronically via Facebook, YouTube or via phone by calling (570) 225-9545. The services are always available to you through the week and beyond.

On Ash Wednesday, February 22, we become aware of our mortality in order to live more fully and meaningfully. What makes life worth living? How do we connect more deeply to Jesus? Join us during the day at the Selinsgrove Commons and for worship at 7 p.m.

On Thursday, February 23, at 7 p.m. we will kick off a visioning process for our beloved St. Paul’s. Our Conference Minister will help us plan for the next 5 years. I hope you make this a priority and join us. We want and need you!

I’m delighted and deeply grateful that a wonderful team of faithful members are visiting with homebound persons. They visit once per month with people who are not able to join us in person. We still need more help for this vital ministry. If you are willing and able to visit one person one time per month, please let our church office know. We will introduce you to a person and will make sure you feel comfortable.

I am deeply grateful for you and for all you do to make St. Paul’s a vital and vibrant church that touches and changes

lives.

Please let me know if you have questions, ideas, or suggestions about how we can grow, improve, and further develop our ministries. You can always reach me via my cell phone at (570) 541-0121 or email at dietmar@saintpauls-ucc.org.

Blessings,

*Pastor Dietmar*



We are grieving and still feeling the heavy weight of the pandemic. How can we face this season of lows and downs? Our “Arise and

Shine: How to Face the Winter Blues” worship series give us hands-on things to do that can help us.





# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS



## KIDS NIGHT OUT

The January Kids Night Out was a great success - many thanks to Linda Turner & Wendy Mull for helping! The February KNO will be on Saturday, February 4 from 5:30 - 7:30, and our focus will be on discipleship. Please sign up [here](#) by Friday, February 3. Hope to see you there!



## SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School meets every week after the Children's Message even on Communion Sundays. Anyone in grades K-6 is invited to attend, and parents/guardians are always welcome to join us!



## TEEN GROUP

Teen Group meets on the fourth Sunday of every month from 5:30 - 7:30 pm. It is open to all teens in grades 6 - 12 and friends are welcome to join us! In February, we will tackle the tough question: Why does God let bad things happen? Hope to see you on the 26th!



# MESSY CHURCH FEBRUARY 19 AT 4 PM



We invite you to Messy Church on February 19 at 4 p.m. Our focus is the story of the great banquet from Luke 14. Everyone is welcome at this party. How can we become more inclusive in our Messy Church? We will do activities together, sing and play and craft, and at the end we will share a family meal. Come join us! Sign up [here](#) so we know you're coming and can be well prepared for you!

# 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  
Joseph Dubaskas Jr.
- 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 Courtney & Joshua Hanes
- 2/12 Herbert & Valerie Vankirk
- 2/13 Rick & Susan Krex  
Derick & Jamie Shambach
- 2/14 Kathy & Fred Ulrich
- 2/22 Kim & Steve Campbell

# PRAYER LIST

Vivian and Terry Beaver  
Terry Burns  
Kent and Stacy Clelland and Family  
Sam Edmiston  
Bob Engel  
Rev. Steve Engelhardt  
Hilda Hahn and Family  
Charity Ney  
The Family of Richard Radel  
Allen Shirk  
Buddy Strawser

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  
Those who are dear and close to our hearts and those not named above  
The people of Ukraine and all those suffering from the raging war



# THANK YOU NOTES

A big thanks to everyone at Prayer Shawl for your caring and thoughtfulness. Love the knitted hat, especially the color purple and the wonderful shawl with its earthy colors. Both will give me much warmth and comfort the rest of the winter. Your act of kindness also gave me a real pick-me up with my recovery from thumb surgery.

Sincerely,  
Terry

Pastor Dietmar, the angel greets me every morning as I start my day in the kitchen. I appreciate your taking the time to stop by and I'm sorry I didn't get to visit with you. Please thank the person who delivered the poinsettia on Sunday. They were already in their vehicle before I could thank them personally. I am hampered by slow mobility these days! I do appreciate the thoughtfulness of the church members and yourself.

Sincerely,  
Ellen Bucher

Thank you, dear friends and members of St. Paul's for your kindness and generous Christmas Gift of \$420 for the Plajers. Your gift touched our hearts! We receive it as an expression of your love and support in ministry. We are very blessed to serve together with people like you, who care, share, and shine.

Gratefully,  
Sigrid and Pastor Dietmar



## Visiting Homebound Persons

I'm delighted that twelve 12(!) people agreed to connect with and visit with one of our homebound or semi-homebound persons. Visiting one person one time per month is easy and makes a world of difference. Those who visit are a vital link to St. Paul's, assuring those they visit that God cares. At any time, we have over 20 persons who are homebound or receiving nursing care. We need your help. If you are willing to give it a try, please let Linda in the church office know via email at [office@saintpauls-ucc.org](mailto:office@saintpauls-ucc.org) or by calling (570) 374-8749. We have some guidelines of how to best visit and Pastor Dietmar will gladly coach you for the visit to become meaningful for both you and the person you visit. Thank you for participating in this vital ministry!



# FOR OUR FUTURE VISIONING FOR ST. PAUL'S FEBRUARY 23 AT 7 PM



What do we as St. Paul's want to accomplish in the next 5 years? With the help of our Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Carrie Call, we will engage in a process of discernment, prayer, and strategic planning beginning with Thursday, February 23 at 7 PM. What is God calling us to do? How can we be faithful to God's call in our mission and ministries? How should we best "invest" our limited time, energy, and finances to be

most effective and efficient in ministry? This process is vital for all of us. We need you and your help and ask you to participate in our visioning kick-off event on Thursday, Feb. 23 at 7 PM in our fellowships hall. It is important that as many people as possible, members and friends of St. Paul's, participate in this event and process. Thank you for making it a priority!

## A Prayer Station for You

Our lives are a mixture of hard and heavy, light and joy. The worship team set up a prayer station at the entrance to the sanctuary. We invite you to take a minute before, during, or after the worship service to reflect, meditate, pray. You can hold a rock in your hand and reflect on what is hard and weighs on you. Then, place it on the table, let it go. You can light a candle reflecting on your hope and longing for light. Where do you notice light in the messiness of life? Candles have been symbols for prayers since ancient times. God bless you as you open up and explore.



# ST. PAUL'S COUNCIL MEETING

## JANUARY 10, 2023

*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:** Pastor Dietmar Plajer, Peggy Peeler, Sara Adams, Sigrid Plajer as guest, Allen Wetzel, Josh Wenrich, Randy Tanner, Linda Turner, Kim Burkhart, Amy Caron, John Fischer (2023), Malcolm Derk (2023), Mary Dahlmann (2023).

**Excused:** Michael Zettlemoyer, Shane Sanders.

New Council members were welcomed by Peggy Peeler.

**Minutes of December Meeting:** A motion was made by Randy Tanner, seconded by John Fischer, and approved by Council to accept the minutes as submitted.

**Financial Report:** The December Financial Reports were reviewed by Linda Turner, noting that the balance sheet would not be final until all 2022 invoices were processed. Cash in the Bank includes anonymous donations of \$247,755.36 for Associate Pastor and Church Ministry and will be transferred to UC Funds where it will earn interest until needed. We had net income for December of \$4,151.96. A motion was made by John Fischer, seconded by Josh Wenrich, and approved by Council, to accept the Financial Report.

**Pastor's Report:** Pastor Dietmar reported a very busy month in which he was able to visit 27 homebound members. His complete report is included each month in the Newsletter.

**Nomination and Election of New Officers for 2023:** Peggy Peeler opened the floor for nominations for 2023 officers. John Fisher was nominated for President, Randy Tanner was nominated for Vice President, and Linda Turner was nominated for Secretary. There being no additional nominations, Council unanimously approved all three nominees. Peggy Peeler then left the meeting and John Fisher presided. John asked that if agenda items need to be added after the agenda is sent out each month that they be communicated to him prior to the meeting. It was recommended that we continue to search for one more Council member.

**Council Committees/Liaisons:** There was discussion regarding who will be liaison between the committees and Council. A complete list will be put together and distributed to Council members and Committee Chairs.

**Stewardship:** Linda Turner, when presenting financial reports, presented a form that showed the number of giving cards distributed, the number returned, and the amount pledged for the years 2017-2023. A recommendation was made to also include the dollar amount pledged vs. the dollar amount received.

**Video Upgrade:** Two of the three screens are installed. There was an issue with the third screen and a replacement has been ordered. Projectors are installed.

**Communion:** Teenagers/youth can help serve communion as long as they have been confirmed. Christian Ed, with the Youth Leader, is exploring ways to allow the Sunday School children to partake of communion.



**Pictured above (from left): John Fischer, Kelly Feiler, President of the REC, Peggy Peeler, and Pastor Dietmar Plajer**

Members of Saint Paul's United Church of Christ were pleased to visit with Kelly Feiler, President of the Regional Engagement Center (REC) on 8th and Mill Streets in Selinsgrove. The REC offers after school drop-in programs for students from third grade to Senior High School. It was staffed primarily with volunteers, many of whom were Susquehanna University students, when we visited. St. Paul's was pleased to present a \$ 1,000 check to Kelly Feiler which was donated, by St. Paul's members and friends, at our Christmas Eve services. Thank you for your generous contributions. They will be put to great use at the REC.



**Pictured are (from left), John Fischer, Christy Zeigler, Peggy Peeler, and Pastor Dietmar**

It was a privilege to get a tour of Haven Ministries, the homeless shelter in Sunbury, and to hear from the director, Kristy Ziegler, about the multiple ways they provide local people in need with safe housing and food and assist them in developing important life skills. I know the contribution from St. Paul's will be put to good use to help Haven Ministries continue God's work here in our local area. Thanks to all that made our contribution possible through our Christmas Eve offering.

# ST. PAUL'S COUNCIL MEETING JANUARY 10, 2023

**Messy Church:** Sigrid Plajer reported a very successful event for January with approximately 50 people in attendance. Sigrid mentioned that the oven is taking hours to heat up and suggested we begin to explore replacing it.

**PFLAG:** Randy Tanner reported that meetings are the third Thursday of each month and they continue to go well. People can participate in person or via Zoom. Randy explained that PLFAG allies to the LGBTQ+ community as both a support group and to train others.

**Kids Night Out:** KNO continues to be very successful and they have had up to 15 children participate.

**Church Safety Plan:** Linda Turner reported that two appendices have been added and the plan is a work in progress.

**Visitation Ministry Coordinator:** Position remains open. There are currently 27 homebound that require visitation. Pastor Dietmar will hold a training session for volunteers on Thursday, January 12th. More volunteers are needed.

**Associate Pastor:** Further discussion will take place during the February 23rd Visioning session with Rev. Dr. Carrie Call.

**Christmas Eve Service:** The Christmas Eve collection is being split between the REC and Haven Ministries. Stewardship & Finance recommended the amount be rounded up and that we donate \$1,000 to each organization. A motion was made, seconded, and Council approved donating \$1,000 to each organization.

**Finance Other:** S&F reported that Linda Turner was interested

in the Treasurer position. Randy Tanner made a motion, seconded by Sara Adams, and approved by Council that Personnel and S&F proceed with the interview process and, if Linda is a viable candidate, that we don't delay the hiring process. Possible accounting applications were also discussed - QuickBooks and Aplos.

**Property & Grounds, Other:** Allen Wetzel reported the Committee had not met, so had no update.

**Right Relations:** Shane Sanders was not in attendance so no formal report was given. Linda Turner reported that two battery recycling boxes had been filled and returned.

**Personnel Committee:** Linda Turner brought up carry-over leave for Pastor Dietmar and, prior to he and Sigrid Plajer leaving the meeting, Pastor Dietmar asked that, if approved, his paid carry-over vacation week be given to Sigrid as paid vacation to use in 2023. Pastor Dietmar and Sigrid then left the meeting. A motion was made by Linda Turner, seconded by Kim Burkhart, and approved by Council to allow Pastor Dietmar to carry over 6 Continuing Education days and 7 Flex days, and that his remaining 5 Vacation days be granted to Sigrid.

**Next Council Meeting:** February 14, 2023 - in person and Zoom.

Devotions for next Meeting: Mary Dahlmann.  
The meeting closed with The Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Turner  
Council Secretary

## Thank you to our Outgoing Council President, Peggy Peeler

On behalf of St. Pauls' and personally, we thank Peggy Peeler for her leadership as Council President during 2022. Peggy's positive attitude, her caring and commitment to St. Paul's vision and ministries and her team-spirit have been wonderful and inspiring to all on Church Council. Peggy shared how her leadership role gave her deeper insight and a greater appreciation for that which is not visible in the day-to-day functioning of our congregation. Thank you, Peggy!





# PASTOR'S REPORT - DECEMBER 2022

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

"Angels Among Us" was our theme for Advent and Christmas. We explored together, based on the Christmas Stories, how we can become "angels," messengers of God's hope, peace, joy and love for others. It is wonderful to experience how God can use us to reach others when we open up and offer ourselves and our gifts. The sanctuary radiated in Christmas glory with the decorations, and the angel wings in the foyer gave all of us the opportunity to be captured at our best. Highlights of the season were the Christmas Pageant and the Christmas Eve services. It was amazing to see how many people participated to make these services extra special. There are truly angels among us. Thanks to all of you for being angels in disguise for others.

The Advent and Christmas music was exhilarating. It was a special blessing to have the bells return to share the Christmas joy. Gail Fischer playing the organ on Christmas Eve made the day for me. I miss the organ music on our regular Sundays very much! St. Paul's offers the best music in town. My heartfelt gratitude goes to all musicians who share their gifts and talents so generously. We can always use more of them.

Leading up to Christmas, we encouraged everyone to invite family members, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, and colleagues to join us for our Christmas Eve services. The Media, Technology Communications Coordinator (MTCC), Sigrid, crafted and assembled some 300 angel pendants with truffles and business cards. You, the members and friends of St. Paul's, were messengers to share these Christmas invitations with persons in your sphere of influence. I wrote and sent 150 cards to people who do not regularly worship with us, inviting

them to join us for Christmas Eve. It was a great effort, investment of time and energy to accomplish this outreach. You remember that 75% of first-time guests come to church because someone they know invited them. You are those people. Whom will you invite to join us in worship?

Caroling: We shared the joy of Christmas with a wonderful group of singers with homebound persons on Sunday, December 18. Every one of the persons/families received a handcrafted angel sun catcher and a "sweet" angel pendant. It was deeply moving to see how much the homebound persons appreciated the singing and caring.

The Christmas Messy Church on December 11 had 65 persons, the highest number of participants since its inception in 2019. Sigrid Plajer does a wonderful job in planning, coordinating, and leading the Messy Church Team to create wonderful experiences for people of all ages (many young families participate) to explore biblical stories in fun ways through crafts, games, activities, singing, and a message. A meal is served family style at every Messy Church event, on the second Sunday of the month at 4 PM. I am deeply grateful to all who make Messy Church happen. It's an amazing group of people!

During the Annual Meeting on December 11, the congregation adopted the 2023 Mission Plan (budget) with one abstention, and elected unanimously three new members to serve on the Church Council: Malcolm Derk, Mary Dahlmann, and John Fischer. I'm deeply grateful to them and to those who completed their terms, serving for the last three years: Bob Engel, Beverly Heinemann, Peggy Peeler, and Kathy Ulrich. We have a great leadership team at St. Paul's and always welcome new people to join the various ministry teams.

I am grateful to all who volunteer at

Loaves and Fishes and for Randy Tanner who does an amazing job in planning, organizing, and making it run smoothly. This year, St. Paul's again served a Holiday Meal to SUNCOM clients and employees and helped assemble SACC food boxes for local families in need. Rachael Rice provided Christmas gifts for the families we serve through Toys for Tots. Through your kindness, service, and generosity, you make Christmas happen for many in our community!

Currently, we have 27 homebound and/or semi-homebound persons from our congregation. I pushed myself very hard - went above and beyond what's reasonable and healthy for me - to make sure every one of these people got a meaningful contact from me or the caroling group over Christmas. I realized again that, unfortunately, I cannot regularly visit all of our homebound persons. We desperately need a Visitation Pastor or Visitation Ministry Coordinator. We have been searching for over two years, since Pastor Penny left, to fill this position. Unfortunately, we did not yet find a person to lead this ministry. I'm working hard on re-organizing the Visitation Ministry in January. I am asking for your help in the search for a Visitation Minister/ Visitation Ministry Coordinator.

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. I see God at work in and through you!

December 1-31, 2022

Days worked	19
Days off	06
Continuing Education	01
Vacation days	05
Holidays	00
Total Days	31

Respectfully submitted,  
Pastor Dietmar Plajer



# MEET OUR NEW COUNCIL PRESIDENT, JOHN FISCHER

My late wife, Carolyn, sons John and Mike, moved to Selinsgrove from Delaware County in 1985. We had owned property in Beaver Springs for several years before that and just grew to like the area. In 1986 Raven invited our boys to her Sunday School Class which they seemed to be enjoying, so we decided to investigate St. Paul's, liked it, and became members until 1996 when we added on to our cabin and moved to Beaver Springs. We joined the UCC church there and remained members until Carolyn's sudden death in 2008.

Also in 2008 Gail lost her husband Bob. We had remained friends from our time in Selinsgrove; and Gail and I were blessed to find each other and marry in 2009, and I rejoined St Paul's shortly thereafter. At St. Paul's I have been

serving on the Stewardship and Finance committee, the Senior Choir, and served on Council for three years between 2017 and 2020.

Professionally, I was a Financial Representative for Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company for a little over 50 years. I have been a member of the Selinsgrove Rotary Club since we moved here and was a member of the Media Club before that. A year after we moved to Selinsgrove, we helped start AYSO. I was also instrumental in starting, through Rotary, the Selinsgrove Area Community Foundation which is now an affiliate of the Central Susquehanna Giving Foundation.

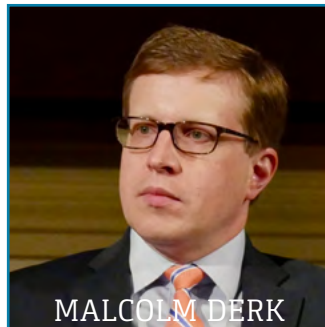
Gail and I both enjoy the Senior Choir at St. Paul's, grandchildren's sporting events, and travel. Gail is an avid Penn



State fan and I enjoy golf and working on our property in Beaver Springs. We think of St. Paul's as family and want to see it thrive any way we can. We feel blessed to have many good friends here and appreciate Pastor Dietmar's leadership.



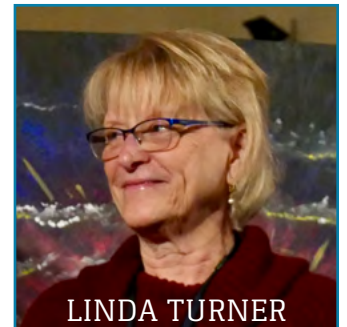
MARY DAHLMANN



MALCOLM DERK



RANDY TANNER



LINDA TURNER

## Meet our new Council members and leadership

We installed our newest three council members: Mary Dahlmann, Malcom Derk, and John Fischer (from left) and the new Council leadership: John Fischer (President), Randy Tanner (Vice President), and Linda Turner (Secretary) into their respective offices and roles. We are grateful for a terrific leadership team!



## Ash Wednesday February 22 - All Day at the Selinsgrove Commons and 7 p.m. Worship Service

Why do we observe Ash Wednesday? What is it about? We become aware of our mortality in order to live more meaningfully. People who had a brush with death live differently. They gain a new perspective and appreciation for life. Ash Wednesday is to help all of us do that. When we say, "You are dust and to dust you will return" or "Turn around and believe the Good News," we mean to turn to Jesus and live more fully like him. Join us at the Selinsgrove Commons (corner of Market and Pine Streets) between 9 AM and 6 PM where Pastor Dietmar, with Selinsgrove colleagues, will be available for reflections and "Ashes to Go" and/or at 7 PM for our Ash Wednesday worship service at St. Paul's where the Senior Choir will be singing.



## CHURCH VOCATION FUND SPECIAL OFFERING FEB. 26



Pastors don't just happen. It is a long and arduous process for future pastors to be educated and trained for congregational ministry. Future pastors often incur debt by going to seminary. Some future pastors are bi-vocational which means they work in a regular profession to make a living, and as part-time pastors in a congregation. These persons often get trained through weekend courses at Lancaster Theological Seminary or through the Pennsylvania Academy of Ministry. We ask you to join our 36 UCC partner congregations in supporting the education and training of future pastors. Your offering will help pastors in training buy books and pay for tuition. It will offer support for weekend courses and support current pastors to continue their education. Thank you for your support in helping us train and educate future pastors. You can give electronically for this cause or use an offering envelope from your box or from the pew. Thank you for your generous support!

Yours,  
Pastor Dietmar

## SPECIAL OFFERINGS IN FEBRUARY

There are two special offerings in February, Ash Wednesday and the Church Vocation Fund. If you do online giving through Breeze, you have three options to donate to these special offerings:

- Click on [this form](#) to donate by credit card.
- Go to <https://www.saintpauls-ucc.org/give> and pick Ash Wednesday or Church Vocation Fund from the dropdown menu to make a one-time gift.
- Write a check and mail it to 400 N Market Street Selinsgrove PA 17870, or place it in the offering plate at the back of the sanctuary.

Thank you!





# FUN IN JANUARY AT MESSY CHURCH AND KNO







## St. Paul's United Church of Christ

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[saintpauls-ucc.org](http://saintpauls-ucc.org)

**Worship Sunday at 10:30 AM**

also on Facebook, YouTube, and our website

*"God is Still Speaking"*

## CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

We thank God for...

