



THE MESSENGER

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



Meet & Eat

FELLOWSHIP HALL AFTER CHURCH
FEBRUARY 18



**ASH WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 14**

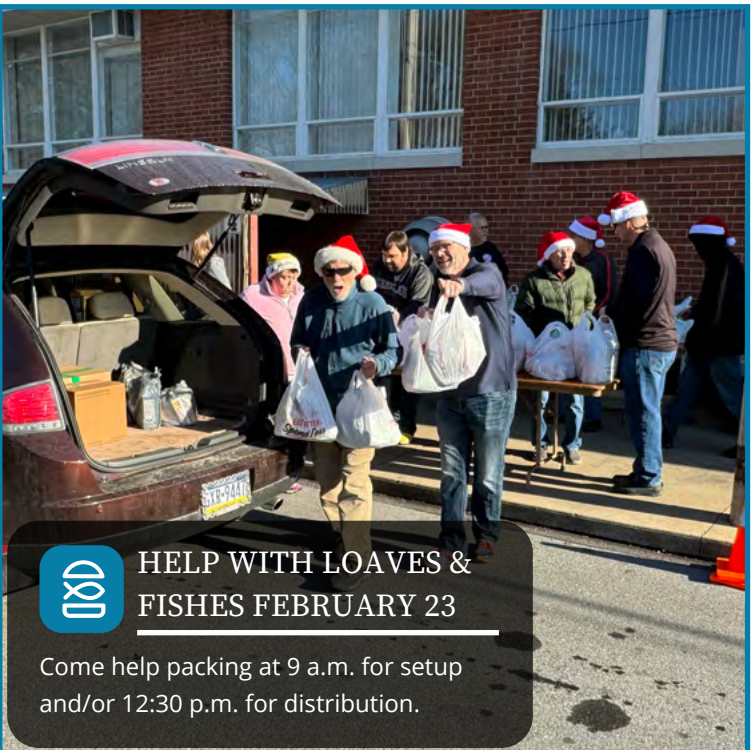
Ashes to Go

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



2 **WHY DO WE OBSERVE LENT?**

We hope and pray that this season becomes meaningful for you.



HELP WITH LOAVES & FISHES FEBRUARY 23

Come help packing at 9 a.m. for setup and/or 12:30 p.m. for distribution.



WHY DO WE OBSERVE LENT?

I dream of the good life, a life that runs smoothly and is easy going. I am longing for a perfect vacation, the awesome kitchen, the joy of creating. I dream big and hope for the life as I see it in advertisements and on Facebook. But you and I know that's not what life is like. Life is not all sunshine. We are in denial when we hope for and work toward the perfect, easygoing life. We live in a dream world that is not all that real.

Lent is an invitation for us to explore the dark parts of life, the obstacles, the challenges, the suffering we are facing.

I love the Gospel stories about Jesus and his passion. I love them because they are so real. Jesus is down to earth, suffering like we are. Jesus is facing the

dark night of the soul. Jesus is feeling lost and abandoned. Jesus is being betrayed and crucified.

Lent is an opportunity for us to immerse ourselves in Jesus' passion stories and explore how they can become our own stories. Where in the passion stories of Jesus do you find yourselves? How do the stories of Jesus' suffering resonate with us? How can they become experiences of growth, healing, and redemption?

I invite you to join us as we experience life how it really is, with all its ups and downs, with its frustrations and temptations, its darkness and suffering starting with Ash Wednesday, February 14, through our Lenten Season that leads us

toward Palm Sunday, March 24 and Easter, March 31.

Every Sunday during Lent we will focus on one specific passion story, how it speaks to us, and how it can guide us in how we face our own challenges. Invite a friend and join us on Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

I hope and pray that this season becomes meaningful for you.

In faith, hope, and love,

Pastor Dietmar



SUNDAY SCHOOL HELPERS WANTED!

We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to join our Sunday school team and help us create a warm and welcoming environment for children of all ages.

What you'll do:

- Assist teachers with classroom activities
- Help supervise children

- Build relationships with children and help them feel comfortable and loved

No experience necessary. We will provide you with the support necessary to succeed in this role. Contact Sigrid through the church office if you are willing to help. Thank 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 Micah Earl
- 2/14 Tracey Wolfe
- 2/15 Michael Aurand
Cheryl Gibson-Doyne
Caroline Antes
- 2/16 Ann Rising
Emerson Voss
- 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
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

The Caron Family
Bill Dell
Kathy DeMar
Sam Edmiston
Patty Erdly
The Gordon Family
Don Groner
Bill Hockenbrock
Fred Kelly
Lillian McManus
Sigrid Plajer and Family
John Rothermel
The Family of Brigitte Schwarz
Kim Snodgrass
June Straub
Allen Wetzel

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
The people of Israel and Gaza
We pray for peace

THANK YOU NOTES

To my dear church family & friends,

I cannot begin to express my thanks and gratitude for all your cards, phone calls, prayers, and visits to Wil during this last year. Both of us were so very comforted by your expression of friendship, kindness, and sympathy. To Pastor Dietmar, your cards, texts, prayers, and visits to Wil meant so much to him. Your calls to check on me were my life lines during the most difficult days. Wil's memorial service was simply beautiful! With all my heart, I thank each and every one of you!

God Bless! Cheryl Reddinger

Pastor Dietmar, St. Paul's staff & parishioners,

Thank you for your support of SACC ministries! We are grateful to serve on behalf of the Ministerium and could not do it without the support of St. Paul's UCC. Truly, it is a gift to work together to be the hands and feet of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Marcia & Jerry LaBant and Lori & Dan Weir

I am moved by the outpouring of love and support from you, the friends and members of St. Paul's following the death of my mother. Thank you for your many expressions of sympathy, love, and care. Your cards touched my heart and your prayers lifted my spirit. I'm grateful for you, for your prayers, and your loving support.

Yours, Sigrid

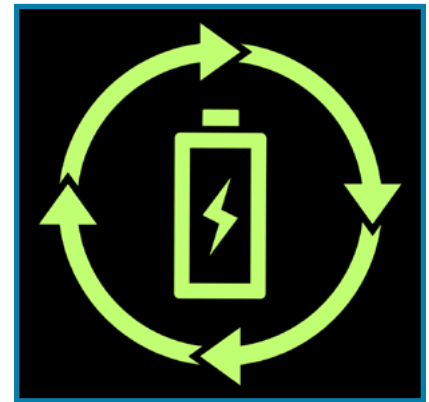
You are so kind, caring, and generous! Thank you for your Christmas gifts for the Plajer family, which Council President, John Fischer, handed to us in worship on January 14. We receive your gifts as an expression of your great love of God and your support and partnership in ministry. We are very blessed to be part of such a caring and supportive community of faith.

In deep gratitude, Dietmar and Sigrid Plajer



The first Meet and Eat of 2024 will be Sunday, February 18, immediately following the worship service. Sign up [online](#) or call the office to let us know you're coming so we can plan the food.

If you want, you can bring a dessert item. Please join us for some delicious food and fellowship!



DISCONTINUING USED BATTERY COLLECTION

We have officially sent off the last box of used batteries and will no longer be accepting them. Unfortunately, it is no longer feasible for us to cover the cost of battery removal. Our recommendation is to switch to rechargeable batteries whenever possible. We appreciate your dedication to creating a more sustainable world. Thank you.



Q From the Search Committee

The search committee is finalizing the Local Church Profile which, with the help of the feedback we received from the congregation, contains a description of St. Paul's to share with candidates as well as a detailed job description for the Associate Pastor position. We plan to have the final version submitted and posted through the Penn Central Conference office within the next few weeks. Once it is posted,

we will be ready to receive and review applications. Although that part of the process must remain confidential, we will keep you posted as best we can on the general progress of the review. Please direct any questions you have to any members of the search committee- Peggy Peeler (Chair), Marty Blessing, Jack Lewis, Pastor Dietmar, Jared Roush, Raven Rudnitsky, Shane Sanders, and Chanin Wendling.

CELEBRATING FOUR YEARS OF MESSY CHURCH



The Messy Church Team: Sigrid Plajer, Linda Turner, Lois Bruno, Alice Justice, Deb Martello, Jack Lewis, Chyrl Gemberling, Carol Miller. Not pictured are Deb and Terry Burns.

It's hard to believe that Messy Church is already four years old! Since January 2019, it has been my pleasure and honor to lead St. Paul's Messy Church. I want to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to the Messy Church Team and the many volunteers who make this event a success each month. Without their tireless efforts and dedication, Messy Church would not be possible.

For those unfamiliar with Messy

Church, it is an all-ages creative worship experience where attendees come together to learn about and celebrate Jesus through a variety of activities, conversations over meals, music, celebration, and hospitality.

Unfortunately, we must cancel our February 4 Messy Church due to Sigrid and Dietmar's travel to Germany for Sigrid's mother's funeral. However, we will be back in full swing on March 10 with an

exciting event centered around Easter.

Take a look back at some photos from Messy Church events over the past four years. It's incredible to see how much the children have grown!

Thank you again to everyone who has contributed to the success of Messy Church.

Sigrid Plajer
Messy Church Coordinator





ST. PAUL'S COUNCIL MEETING - JANUARY 9, 2024

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, Sigrid Plajer as guest, Torri Stark, John Fischer, Lisa Krex, Joanne Lauer, Jacob Koch, Carol Miller, Malcolm Derk, Randy Tanner, Jon Stante, Mary Dahlmann, Linda Turner.

Excused: Allen Wetzel, Kim Burkhart.

Welcome New Council Members: John Fischer welcomed new Council members Jacob Koch, Lisa Krex, Joanne Lauer, Carol Miller, Jon Stante, and Torri Stark.

Election of Council Leadership: Linda Turner (outgoing Council Secretary) was asked to record the minutes for the January meeting. Randy Tanner was nominated for President, Malcolm Derk for Vice President, and Torri Stark volunteered for Secretary. All three accepted and, upon motion made and seconded, all three were elected as Council leadership for 2024.

Council Liaisons: Several committees need Council liaisons and the following agreed to serve: Mary Dahlmann-Archives, Randy Tanner-Green Team/Living into Right Relationships; Joanne Lauer-Music; Jacob Koch-Property & Grounds; Malcolm Derk-Worship. Christian Ed and Stewardship & Finance are yet to be decided. Pastor Dietmar announced that 2023 was Donnell & Fred Kelly's last year on the Ministry Committee, and we are in need of two people to fill those vacancies.

Minutes of December Meeting: The December meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Dietmar sent his report out in advance of the meeting. He recognized Sigrid Plajer for her work with our website, streaming services, the newsletter, etc. He pointed

out some of the articles in the newsletter including new members, pastor's report, and the many great pictures taken over the holiday season.

Financial Report: The December Financial Reports were sent out in advance of the meeting and were approved as submitted with no concerns.

New Council Members: We have 6 new Council members (four 3yr - Jacob Koch, Torri Stark, Carol Miller, Jon Stante; one 2yr - Joanne Lauer, one 1yr - Lisa Krex). Joanne Lauer said she would serve the remainder of the two-year term and then an additional year.

Strategic Planning: Pastor Dietmar will give an update at next month's meeting.

Associate Pastor: The Search Committee's church profile was sent out for review prior to the meeting. With one minor change, Council approved the document. Any new hire will be subject to all required background checks.

Property & Grounds: Jacob Koch reported that Rocky Baer is working on pulling necessary permits for the renovation and that H&B Construction should provide us with a schedule for the work in March. Pastor Dietmar emphasized that we did not want the work to begin until after Easter and we would want it completed prior to Kick-Off Sunday in the fall. Jacob also reported that on January 22nd Property & Grounds members would be doing a walk through of our building and putting together a prioritized list of what needs to be repaired.

Safety Plan: Currently on hold. A second AED unit was budgeted for 2024 for the fellowship hall.

Children and Youth Ministries: Mary Dahlmann reported that Sunday School is being covered by Christian Ed and volunteers and that she or a volunteer covers in the Nursery when the Nursery Attendants are not available.

Meet our new Council members and leadership

We installed our newest six council members (Jacob Koch, Lisa Krex, Joanne Lauer, Carol Miller, Jon Stante, and Torri Stark) and our new Council leadership (Randy Tanner - President, Malcolm Derk - Vice President, and Torri Stark - Secretary) into their respective offices and roles. We are grateful for a terrific leadership team!



Personnel: Mary Dahlmann reported that she has a person who is willing to fill in for John Rothermel while he is out on medical leave. She and John met with the candidate to go over the required tasks. Mary did not have a firm rate on what the person would charge. She will provide that information to the Treasurer later this week. Mary also will provide proper work authorization documentation.

Capital Campaign Committee: Pastor Dietmar reported that a committee has been formed to raise \$140,000 toward the renovation project. Serving on the Committee are Jean LeGros, John Fischer, Lois Bruno, Randy Tanner, Marty Blessing, and Chanin Wendling. Pastor Dietmar will also serve and Marv Rudnitsky and Fritz Heinemann have agreed to serve as resource persons. The first committee meeting is scheduled for January 19th.

Committee Reports - Finance: John Fischer reported that Stewardship & Finance is recommending we move our excess income from 2023 (\$29,362) to our investment account at Nor-

thumberland Bank and Council approved moving the amount.
Communion February 4, 2024: Class of '25 - Mary Dahlmann, Malcolm Derk (Captain), John Fischer, Joanne Lauer. Carol Miller will serve as Captain for the Class of '26.

Compassionate Leave: Upon recommendation by Stewardship & Finance, and approved by Council, Sigrid Plajer was granted one week of paid Compassionate (Family) Leave to go to Germany when her mother passes to spend time with the family, make arrangements, and participate in the funeral service. This is a one-time exception and does not set precedent nor require a change in policy or in Sigrid's employment agreement.

Next Council Meeting: February 13, 2024, 7pm.

Devotions for February 13th: Lisa Krex

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Turner, Outgoing Council Secretary

THANK YOU, JOHN FISCHER

On behalf of all of us, and personally, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to John Fischer for serving as our Council President during 2023. John has been amazing. He has been dedicated, committed, and invested much time and energy in the smooth operation of St. Paul's. I really appreciate John's positive attitude, sense of humor, and his "drive" to get things done and taken care of. With John we had

focused and short Council meetings because he took care of so much before and after the meetings. John will continue to serve on Council, on Stewardship and Finance, and as Co-chair of our Major Renovation Capital Campaign. Thank you, John for your dedicated service!

With sincere gratitude,
Pastor Dietmar



PASTOR'S REPORT - DECEMBER 2023

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

Nine New Members joined St. Paul's in worship on Sunday, December 10: Caroline and Brandon Antes, Kay Cramer, Caroline and Dennis Frantz, Linda Gruenberg, Jean LeGros, David Wilson, and Erin Yatsko. I am grateful to them and how they will share themselves in ministry, and to all the mentors! We are a growing congregation! During the same Sunday service we elected as newest council members Jacob Koch, Carol Miller, Jon Stante, Torri Stark (for a 3-year terms) and Joanne Lauer for a 2-year term. I am grateful to all outgoing council members for their faithful service!

Our Advent and Christmas Worship Series focused on "The Gift of Being Present" and how God provides hope, peace, joy, love, and light when we are open, receptive, and present with those who need us most. The material gifts are not as important as the love and care with which we give them. One of the greatest gifts we can give is our very selves by listening, caring, and being available for those who are lonely, homebound, grieving. The sanctuary looked stunning with the decorations. Families with children participated in the Lighting of the Advent Candles. The music was sublime, moving, and inspiring. And the Christmas ABC's with Sunday school children and their families and Sunday school helpers was heartwarming. Thank you to Torri Stark for leading the children, to our musicians, and the Worship Team! Our Christmas Eve 4 p.m. Family Service and 7 p.m. Classic Candlelight Service

were the highlights of the season.

The "Christmas Around the World" Messy Church on December 10 with about 65 people participating (families and volunteers) was moving and meaningful. It's inspiring to explore how Christians around the world celebrate Christmas. A great thank you goes to all who serve on the Messy Church Team, the Coordinator Sigrid Plajer, and all volunteers.

The Search Committee for an Associate Pastor has our church profile almost complete. I'm grateful to all who are serving on this team for their dedication, vision, and commitment. After completion, the church profile will go to our UCC Penn Central Conference and will be published for a nationwide search. It is challenging to find well-qualified and passionate candidates as few persons are currently going to seminary to become first-career pastors. We hope and pray that we will find the right candidate for our congregation.

The Visitation Ministry Team under the leadership of Susan Bolig and Pastor Mary Peterhaensel reaches many who are residing in nursing homes and those who are homebound. I am deeply grateful to all who share God's love in this unique way. They become the hands, the heart, and the soul of Jesus in action. Because of them, those who are lonely, suffering, and grieving know that God is real and that God cares. A group from St. Paul's went caroling on December 17, and we shared the joy of Christmas with a wonderful group of St. Paul's folks ages 5 to 81.

Again this Christmas, we provided banana boxes full of food, including a ham, to those families from our community whom we "adopted." It would not become Christmas for these families if it were not for the meal, gift certificates for shoes and clothes, and toys for their children. Donnell Kelly has organized the SACC ministry for many years. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to her and to Rachael Rice who provided, through Toys for Tots, gifts for the younger ones.

I've been visiting people in the hospital and accompanied the families of loved ones after their passing. Wilbur Reddinger passed away on November 13. We celebrated his life with a service at St. Paul's on December 2. Elisabeth Mastry (the mother of Becky Wilson) passed away on December 8. We gave thanks for her life and legacy with a service in St. Paul's sanctuary on Dec. 13.

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, 2023

Days worked	24
Days off	06
Continuing Education	01
Vacation days	00
Sick Days	00
Holidays	00
Total Days	31

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Dietmar Plajer





MAJOR RENOVATION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

We are excited to announce that we at St. Paul's are starting a major repair project this spring and summer to ensure St. Paul's continues to have a functional space where many exciting programs can be delivered. The repairs include addressing external building infrastructure and installing an elevator to facilitate Loaves and Fishes deliveries.

Much of the concrete on the alley side staircases down into the fellowship hall and in the back of the sanctuary is busted. Many concrete slabs are tilting toward the building. Rainwater has been seeping in, creating damage to the building. And the stairs and brickwork on the back side of the office building and sanctuary are cracked and split, needing repair. This major repair work is overdue and very much needed so that St. Paul's continues to be an inviting space for potential new members and visitors, and is a strong facility capable of supporting our many important programs. In addition to the repairs, the Property and Grounds Committee and Church Council decided to add an elevator from the alley to the fellowship hall, that can be used for our Loaves and Fishes food outreach ministry and will also make the fellowship hall ADA accessible from the alley side.

The Property and Grounds Committee has been working with Strosser-Baer Architects from Sunbury to create drafts and put the renovation out for bid. We received five bids and decided to go with

the lowest bid from H&P Construction, Inc. in Kulpmont, a construction company which our architect, Rocky Baer, recommended. To the bid we added cost for construction permits and budgeted for contingency. Contingency covers unforeseen problems that are not covered by the bid and the agreed upon contract. Since our office building was built in 1958, we need to be prepared for contingencies. The total budget for this much needed renovation is \$300,000, a significant amount!

The good news is that we already have \$100,000 from a legacy gift from Dianne Sheaffer, money she left the church in her will, and \$60,000 from our Major Repair Fund, to which many people contributed through the years. We are very grateful that \$160,000 is already covered. We just need \$140,000 to complete this major renovation. We are launching a major renovation capital campaign to raise the rest of the funds. We have a great group of faithful and committed church members who have agreed to serve on the campaign team: Marty Blessing, Lois Bruno, John Fischer, Jean LeGros, Randy Tanner, Chanin Wendling, and Pastor Dietmar.

John Fischer and Chanin Wendling will function as Co-Chairs and Marty Blessing as Secretary. Please stay tuned as you will receive more information on the planning and progress of our campaign. You will receive more information about how you can help. If you are excited to get started with a donation, you can designate a contribution to the major repair fund.

Thanks for your support!

Mike Proger
Property and Grounds Chair

John Fischer and Chanin Wendling
Campaign Co-Chairs



MAJOR RENOVATION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

MAJOR RENOVATION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

We already have \$160,000 of the needed \$300,000 and will need \$140,000 to complete this major renovation.

WHAT ARE WE WORKING ON?

External building infrastructure (concrete, stairs and brickwork that needs to be fixed and replaced) and installation of an elevator for Loaves & Fishes deliveries and ADA access to the fellowship hall.

IF YOU WANT TO GET STARTED TODAY

Pray for a successful campaign. You can designate a contribution to the major repair fund today.



St. Paul's United Church of Christ

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Tel. (570) 374-8749

office@saintpauls-ucc.org

saintpauls-ucc.org

Worship on Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

also on Facebook, YouTube, and our website

"God is Still Speaking"

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

We thank God for...

