



THE MESSENGER

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





My mother had a figurine displayed in her living room. It was a little girl relaxing into an open hand. Rest for the weary. Peace for those who worry. Trusting that God is holding us in good hands. My dad had Parkinson's, and my mom cared for him for many exhausting years. She found strength in her faith that God was providing and that she and my dad were in good hands with God.

I imagine Mary and Joseph feeling overwhelmed with caring for their precious baby Jesus in the troubling circumstances they were facing. They had no home or safe place. They had to run for their lives from the tyrannical ire of King Herod. They migrated as refugees to Egypt to find a safe place for their baby boy and for themselves. I wonder what gave Mary and Joseph strength for the journey. What carried them through it?

The Book of Psalms in our Bible was Mary and Joseph's prayer book and hymnal. Just as we return to our most meaningful Bible passages and favorite songs, Mary and Joseph found strength in the faith and prayers of the Psalms. Since they did not have literal books, Mary and Joseph would have the Psalms inscribed on their heart. They would return to them and sing them just as we do with our good old hymns.

When I visit people in the hospital and in nursing homes, I often sing "In the Garden" with them. Most often they join me

in singing the refrain "And he walks with me, and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own..." They remember the refrain even when their memory starts to fail. They relax and rest in the assurance that Jesus walks with them, that Jesus holds them, that they belong to God, and that they are in the best possible hands.

I remember having nightmares as a boy. In one of them I was falling, falling, and falling, and just before hitting the ground, I woke up scared with a racing heartbeat. I ran to my parents' bedroom and slipped in their bed. My mother held me and comforted me. I calmed down, relaxed, and fell asleep close to her. The next morning, I woke up in my own bed. My mom had carried me back to my own bed while I was asleep and had tucked me in safely.

What holds when the bottom falls out? What carries us through challenges and hardships? I return to our faith, trusting that God is holding my life, that I am in good hands with God. Our Psalms, hymns, and favorite songs help me do that. But that is not enough.

As people of faith, we are called to become the hands of God for others. Who "held you" growing up? The holding needs not to be literal and physical holding. It finds expression in listening. In understanding. In caring. Who has been with you in and through challenges? Was it a friend? A mentor? A coach? A Sunday

school teacher? A youth leader? Your grandma? Who made you feel safe and cared for? With whom did you feel comfortable, relaxed, at peace?

Our visitation ministry volunteers are the hands and the heart of God for those who are homebound or residing in nursing homes. They are "holding" the people they visit. They listen, care, and assure people that they are not forgotten, that God cares, and that they are held by the members of St. Paul's, their community of faith. By "holding" someone else, the visitation ministers often experience being held themselves.

When I write notes to people who are facing hardships and challenges, I often include, "I am holding you in my heart" and "we entrust you in God's care." By holding people in our hearts we hope and pray that God holds them too. By praying for them, we open a channel for God's love and care to meet them in their need.

When Sigrid or I feel down and tired, we cozy up to each other on our sofa. We hold each other. We listen. We hug. By holding each other, we feel that God is holding us.

Who held you growing up? Who holds you now? Whom can you hold, care for, and assure that God is holding their lives?

We will explore how God is holding our lives and how we can hold each other in our new worship series for 2024. I hope you will join us on Sundays at 10:30 and invite someone to come with you. I pray that in this New Year you trust in faith and know in your bones, that God is holding your life.

Blessings,

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!



NURSERY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We're seeking wonderful volunteers to help out in our nursery as needed and help create a fun, nurturing environment for our precious children and a welcoming St. Paul's for young families.

What you'll do:

- Play and engage with young children
- Create a safe and comforting atmosphere for the little ones

Please contact Mary Dahmann through the church office, and she'll be happy to answer any questions you have and get you started as a nursery volunteer.

Thank you!



ALL ABOARD! MESSY CHURCH JANUARY 14 AT 4 PM

Messy Church in January is all about growing in faith. Let's climb into the DiscipleSHIP and set sail on our journey with Christ. We can ask tough questions and it's okay to have questions and doubts. God can speak to us in infinite ways. Come join the fun and fellowSHIP. See you on January 14 at 4. As always, children must be accompanied by an adult, and EVERYBODY is welcome! Please sign up [here!](#)



"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age." *Matthew 28:19-20*

JANUARY



BIRTHDAYS

- 1/01 Jaime Namminga
- 1/02 Hailey Beaver
- 1/05 Ryan Bolig
Peggy Doak
Allen Wetzel
- 1/06 Jim Forster
Kay Moffatt
- 1/07 Shelly Wolfe
- 1/09 Barry Hayhurst
- 1/10 Charles Dahlmann
- 1/11 Derrick Mercer
- 1/12 Raymond Adams
Andrew (Andy) Snyder
- 1/13 Rachael Kelly
Herbert Vankirk
- 1/14 Nancy Litzel
- 1/15 Charles Ruhl
- 1/16 Isabel Proger
- 1/17 Felix Plajer
Rylee Giomboni
Brian Heckman
- 1/18 Kaley Long, Judith Lyon
- 1/19 Cerene Dubaskas
- 1/20 Debra Martello
William Proger
- 1/21 Theodore (Teddy) Derk
Michelle Siegel
- 1/22 David Hannah
Zachary Stark
- 1/23 Victoria Stark
- 1/24 Melissa Bingaman
Leon Fetterolf
- 1/25 June Straub
- 1/26 Maddison Burd
Morgan Lewis, Jr.
Nancy Wagner
- 1/27 Sue Minier
Jenelle Moyer
- 1/28 Marley Showers
- 1/29 Lon Deitrick
Cheryl Reddinger
- 1/30 Christine Beaver
David Imhoof
Caroline Kissinger
- 1/31 Terry Beaver
Dakota Brosius
Ella Hanes
Jan Riegel

PRAYER LIST

- Daelyn
- Sam Edmiston
- Patty Erdly
- Don Groner
- The Family of Ruby Koch
- Lillian McManus
- Steve Mull
- Evelyn Namet
- Brigitte Schwarz
- Kim Snodgrass
- June Straub
- Luis Tanner
- 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

From Bethany Children's Home

Thank you for your generous gift of \$400 to Bethany's Brighter Future Fund. When a youth is placed at Bethany, they are scared, angry, and without hope. Your special gift to the Brighter Future Fund will provide our youth with a new foundation to become empowered

young adults with positive goals. Thank you for thinking of our youth during this time of year. Your ongoing support will help them to continue to heal and take back their lives.

Jennifer M. Koch, Development Co-ordinator & Archivist

Thank you to Rachael Rice

Again this year, Rachael Rice has provided toys for the children of the local families in need whom we "adopted" as a congregation. Rachel Rice is connected to Toys for Tots, and has provided wonderful gifts for all the children for whom it would not become Christmas without our help and support. Thank you, Rachael!

Your St. Paul's friends and Pastor Dietmar



JANUARY



ANNIVERSARIES

- 1/01 Michele DeMary & Lee Fortier
Michael & Jeanette Dressler
- 1/07 Carol & Bob Drumheiser
- 1/08 Susan & Michael Bolig
- 1/11 Michael & Melissa Bingaman
- 1/12 Ellen & Nick Berger
- 1/15 Craig & Shelly Myers
- 1/25 Norm & Jean Golden

THANK YOU NOTES

A Great Thank You to Donnell Kelly

For many years, Donnell Kelly has been spearheading the Christmas and Easter Ministry of St. Paul's. It's been a wonderful tradition for us to serve those in our community for whom it would not become Christmas without our support. In addition to the banana-box size food baskets that local families received through our SACC (Selinsgrove Area Christian Council) ministry food outreach program, our congregation has been providing shoe certificates and toys for the children of families in need. We, as St. Paul's, "adopted" local families for Easter and Christ-

mas, providing them with a holiday meal, shoes (clothes), and toys for their children. Donnell has been working diligently in the background by doing the organizational work, buying gift certificates, contacting the families, and coordinating with the church office and with SACC to make all of this possible. On behalf of all of us at St. Paul's, the many families we have helped through the years, and personally, I extend to Donnell our heartfelt gratitude. You are the best!

Your St. Paul's friends and Pastor Dietmar



A Great Thank You to Raven and Marv Rudnitsky

On behalf of all of us at St. Paul's UCC, Church Council, and personally, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to Raven and Marv Rudnitsky for their leadership gift of \$100,000 to St. Paul's towards an Associate Pastor for our congregation. Through their extravagantly generous gift, Raven and Marv express their support of our vision, mission and ministries of God's unconditional love for all and our practice of extravagant welcome. To live into God's vision for us as St. Paul's, we need an Associate Pastor

who embraces diversity, supports our mission and ministries, and helps us build a bright future for our beloved congregation. Raven and Marv's gift will help us toward accomplishing that. Also, Raven and Marv intend their lead gift to inspire and invite others in joining them in contributing towards our Associate Pastor. Again, I express our heartfelt gratitude for their love, care, and gift in support of our vision and mission toward a better and brighter future for St. Paul's.

Your St. Paul's friends and Pastor Dietmar



WE WELCOME OUR NEWEST MEMBERS



Caroline and Brandon Antes have found St. Paul's as the open, welcoming and caring congregation we are. They find peace and serenity when they join us in worship on Sundays with their precious son, Ellis. Caroline and Brandon got married at St. Paul's in December 2022. Caroline wants to help with Messy Church and Brandon with the Audio Video Team. They are expecting their second child. Linda Turner "adopted" the Antes family and delights in Ellis like in her own grandchildren.



Kay Cramer has been worshipping on-line with a congregation in Bloomsburg during the pandemic. As she was searching to connect in person with a community of faith, she found St. Paul's to be extravagantly welcoming and inclusive. Kay sings in the Senior Choir, participates in the Visitation Team, helps with Messy Church and is willing to function as greeter and lector. Kay is passionate about living sustainably and would like to see us install solar panels. She connected wonderfully with Marty Blessing.



Caroline and Dennis Frantz moved to town to live closer to their son, Daniel Frantz. The Frantzs are lifelong UCC members from Center Valley, PA in the UCC Penn North East Conference. Caroline is singing in our Senior Choir together with her son, Daniel. She has a great passion for missions. Both Dennis and Caroline are very grateful to have found a place to belong, a spiritual home where we grow together in faith, hope, and love. Jack and Barb Lewis are St. Paul's mentors and friends for Caroline and Dennis.



Erin Yatsko moved to town in the summer of 2023 together with her son, Jacob who attends Selinsgrove High School. Erin has found St. Paul's to be a warmly welcoming and caring congregation where she can grow in faith and serve our community. Erin has helped, togeth-

er with Jacob, with our Vacation Bible School in the summer and with the Block Party. She wants to help with Loaves and Fishes and Messy Church. Kimmie Burkhart is Erin's mentor and available for any and all questions.




Linda Gruenberg has been coming to Messy Church for years with her grandchildren. Linda participates wholeheartedly in our Visitation Ministry Team which cares for persons who are homebound or residing in nursing homes. Linda is passionate about our Loaves and Fishes food outreach ministry and regularly helps there. She also provides moving and meaningful Children's Messages. Our Visitation Team Coordinator, Susan Bolig, is the go-to person for Linda with any and all questions.



Jean LeGros has found St. Paul's to be a warm, caring, and uplifting community of faith. She enjoys, and is inspired by, our worship services in which she participates in person together with her husband, David Wilson, whenever they are in town. Jean LeGros came to us from the First Presbyterian Church in Gettysburg where she served in many leadership roles. She helps with Loaves and Fishes, will function as lector and serve on the Capital Campaign Team to raise funds for our big renovation.

David Wilson returned to St. Paul's after many years. In 2017 Dave's first wife, Joanne, passed away. On a hiking trip in Italy, Jean and David met each other, fell in love, and got married in 2021. Dave has a great passion for gun safety and started the area non-profit organization, Citizens for Gun Safety. Dave is singing in the Senior Choir and is helping with our Habitat for Humanity team. Lois and Pat Bruno are friends and mentors for Jean LeGros and Dave Wilson.



**Giving Statements
for 2023**
will be sent out by email

Giving statements for 2023 will be sent out by email this year (towards the end of January). If we don't know your email address, you will automatically receive a paper statement mailed to you. If you prefer to receive a printed statement mailed to you, we are very happy to do that; just let us know by emailing our financial secretary, Cindy Martin, at giving@saintpauls-ucc.org or by contacting the church office. Thank you for your generous giving in 2023!



**YOU
ARE
LOVED**

**BECOME A PRAYER
PARTNER IN 2024**

BECOME A PRAYER PARTNER IN 2024

Become a Prayer Partner! Everyone is invited to participate in this thoughtful exercise of faith and love. Here's how it works:

Fill out the form [online](#) or in the foyer at church by Sunday, January 21, 2024. Each person who submits a form will be assigned a Prayer Partner for 2024.

It only requires a card or note every now and then and on special occasions (especially the person's birthday) to let your prayer partner know they are being thought of in prayer. You simply sign your card or note with the words "Your Prayer Partner" and St. Paul's return address. Then, next Christmastime make known your identity to your prayer partner with a small gift.

ST. PAUL'S COUNCIL MEETING - DECEMBER 12, 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, Sigrid Plajer as guest, Allen Wetzel, Randy Tanner, Linda Turner, Mary Dahlmann, Shane Sanders, Sara Adams, John Fischer, Amy Caron, Michael Zettlemoyer, Kim Burkhart. New members observing: Torri Stark, Jon Stante.

Excused: Josh Wenrich, Malcolm Derk.

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

Pastor's Report: Pastor Dietmar sent his report out in advance of the meeting. He recognized Mike Proger for all his hard work with the boiler replacement, welcomed the new members and recognized the Worship Committee and everyone involved with Hanging of the Greens.

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

New Council Members: We have 5 new Council members (four 3yr - Jacob Koch, Torri Stark, Carol Miller, Jon Stante; one 2yr - Joanne Lauer). We still need 4 additional members.

Strategic Planning: The second half of 2024, we plan on having small group ministries that meet once a month during the regular program year.

Associate Pastor: Shane Sanders reported that the Search Committee is almost finished with the church profile and will have copies for review at the next Council meeting.

Property & Grounds: Allen Wetzel reported the boiler replacement is complete, awaiting final inspection on December 13th. We have received bids on the major renovation project and Property & Grounds and Stewardship & Finance (S&F) are recommending HP as the contractor and S&F is recommending a budget of \$300,000, to include contingencies. They are recommending \$160,000 come from NNB Investments (\$100,000 from Diane Sheaffer bequest and \$60,000 from Major Repairs). S&F is recommending a fundraising campaign for the additional \$140,000 and that a committee of five be formed for the campaign. Chanin Wendling, Jean LeGros, Randy Tanner, and John Fischer have, thus far, agreed to be on the committee. Other names were put forth to complete the committee. Shane Sanders suggested the committee should look at any grants available for the project, especially since the elevator is ADA compliant. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the recommendations of Property & Grounds and Stewardship & Finance

were approved.

Children and Youth Ministries: Mary Dahlmann has had no candidates for the Youth Leader position and will renew the search after the holidays. Both Sunday School and the Nursery are covered through December.

Room Swap: The Prayer Shawl group has grown and needs more space. They are requesting they be moved from the Parlor to the Meeting Room across from the coat room. In addition, office space will be needed for the Associate Pastor and the Music Room was suggested for that office. Council agreed on these changes.

Committee Reports - Finance: Linda Turner reported that John Rothermel will be having surgery on January 17th and will be out for at least three weeks. Stewardship & Finance is recommending a cleaning service be used while he is out and Council approved the recommendation. Linda also reported that Stewardship & Finance approved the purchase of a remote monitor for the walk-in freezer that had been requested by Randy Tanner.

Communion Christmas Eve: Five servers will be needed at each service. 4pm Service - Torri Stark, Linda Turner, Sara Adams, Allen Wetzel, and 1 additional - Linda and Torri will prepare. 7pm Service - Randy Tanner, John Fischer, Amy Caron, Mary Dahlmann, Kim Burkhart - Randy and Mary will prepare. John Fischer will buy bread and grape juice for both services.

Communion January 7, 2024: Class of '24 - Kim Burkhart, Randy Tanner, Allen Wetzel (Captain). John Fischer volunteered to be the 4th server.

Next Council Meeting: January 9, 2024, 7 p.m.

Devotions for January 9th Meeting: Randy Tanner

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Turner

Council Secretary





PASTOR'S REPORT - NOVEMBER 2023

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

"What Makes a Saint a Saint: Who Are Your Saints?" was the focus of our All Saints worship service on November 5, during which we celebrated the lives and legacy of our loved ones who passed away during the last year. We continue to expand the circle of those we include in our service to friends and family members of St. Paul's. Again, the Worship Team decorated the sanctuary to perfection.

"Embrace the Vision: The Joy of Generosity" was the focus of our Stewardship Sunday on November 12. I'm grateful to all on Church Council, the Stewardship and Finance Team, and Linda and Sigrid in the church office for supporting our "Embrace the Vision" stewardship program. My heartfelt gratitude goes to our stewardship speakers, Jared Roush, Chanin Wendling, Ben Williard, and Margaret Weirick for sharing about their love for St. Paul's and for inviting all of us to join them in making a giving commitment for 2024.

I supported the Finance Team and Treasurer, Linda Turner, in crafting the 2024 Mission Plan/Budget. It has been more challenging this year as the Personnel Committee re-evaluated three positions in February 2023, Communications Coordinator, Messy Church Coordinator, and Youth Leader; and salary adjustments had been made in February 2023 based on the average number of hours worked. These changes were not reflected, of course, in the 2023 budget and were new for the budget year 2024.

The Finance Team decided to include in the 2024 Mission Plan a 1% budget line item for Missions to reflect the importance of our church's mission and ministry beyond our local congregation. It is my hope that we can increase this 1% to 2% for 2025 and then further increase it each year to adapt to the changing giving patterns of our members. Fewer people are participating in the special offerings, and those offerings are so important for the wider church that we must think of new ways of funding missions beyond St. Paul's.

I'm grateful to the Property and Grounds Team and, especially to their chair, Mike Proger, for getting us heat again in the building after three Sundays and almost 4 weeks without. The new furnace is state-of-the-art and rated at 97.5% efficiency. It lowers our footprint and will save us cost for natural gas for years to come.

I'm facilitating New Member Orientation gatherings for nine persons who are interested in joining St. Paul's: Caroline and Brandon Antes, Kay Cramer, Caroline and Dennis Frantz, Linda Gruenberg, Jean LeGros and David Wilson, and Erin Yatsko. I'm very grateful to all who function as mentors, Linda Turner, Marty Blessing, Barb and Jack Lewis, Susan Bolig, Lois and Pat Bruno, and Kimmie Burkhart. We are a growing congregation!

Shane Sanders led an amazing Bible Study on the First Nations Version of the New Testament for ten weeks in our Council Room. It was engaging and enlightening as the participants from All Souls Bethlehem Church in NY, from DE and from St. Paul's explored the deeper

meaning of some of our most beloved scriptures from a Native American perspective. We also explored various land acknowledgements, including that of Susquehanna University Thank you, Shane!

I continue to support the work of the Search Committee for an Associate Pastor, the Visitation Team, Messy Church, meet with our area clergy ministerium groups, participate in the UCC Central Association Annual Meeting, and visit with people in the hospital.

I officiated the wedding of Katelynn Sola and Dillon Kline on Nov. 4. Katelynn is deeply connected with the Burd and Fischer families. Carol Dickinson passed away on Nov. 12 and I led the celebration of life service for her on Nov. 18. Wilbur Reddinger passed away on November 13 and a service for him is scheduled for Dec. 2 at St. Paul's.

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!

November 1-30, 2023

Days worked	16
Days off	05
Continuing Education	01
Vacation days	07
Sick Days	00
Holidays	01
Total Days	30

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Dietmar Plajer





St. Paul's United Church of Christ

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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...

