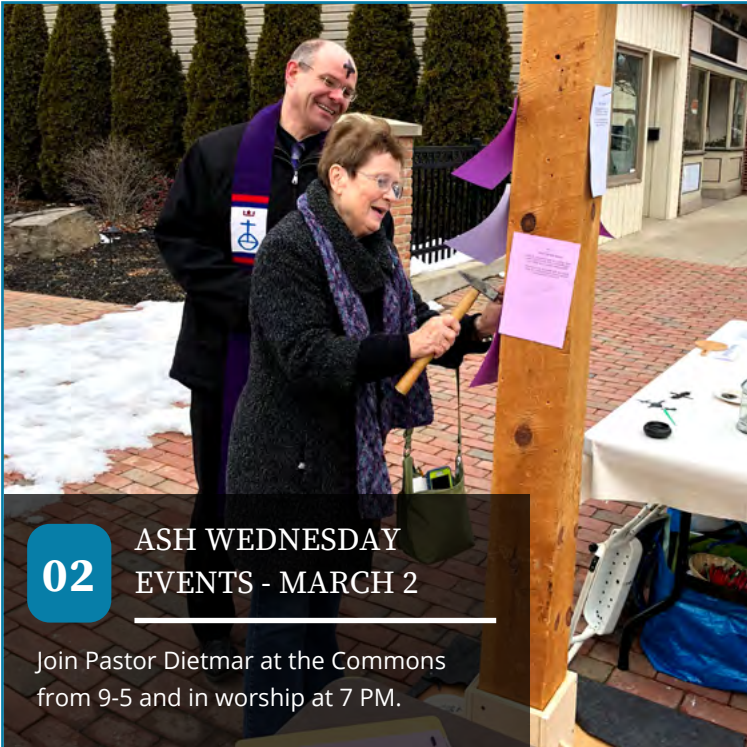




# THE MESSENGER

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



02

ASH WEDNESDAY  
EVENTS - MARCH 2

Join Pastor Dietmar at the Commons  
from 9-5 and in worship at 7 PM.



**CELEBRATING SMALL**  
the parable of the mustard seed

MARCH 13 AT 4 PM



## Gifts of the Dark

BLESSINGS FOR THE SOUL

07

NEW WORSHIP SERIES  
STARTING MARCH 6

Lent invites us to explore how God  
guides in challenging times.



# TREE NEW



THE GREEN VBS™

Grow in Faith. Have Fun. Change the World.

June 6 - 10 at 5:30 to 7:30 PM

# WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ASH WEDNESDAY?

## Why Do We Observe Lent?

My uncle George, a Lutheran Pastor, used to have a skull on his desk. I remember as a little boy looking at that skull with big eyes. When I asked my uncle George, "Why do you have a skull on your desk," he said something about us being mortal, about knowing that we will die. That did not make any sense whatsoever for me as an eight-year-old boy.

Today, I understand a little more. The skull appears in various classical paintings. It is a visible expression of the Latin adage, "Memento mori, carpe diem!" In English this means, if you become aware that your life is limited, that you are mortal, you can live more intentionally and meaningfully. Wrestling with your mortality can help you become more aware of what truly matters, what makes life worthwhile, and how to live meaningfully.

The traditional words for Ash Wednesday are, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return." These are the words that, according to the Bible, God spoke over Adam and Eve who, after their transgression in the Garden of Eden, became aware of good and evil and of their own mortality.

When I officiated funerals in Germany, it was part of the service at the gravesite, to take a small shovel with dirt and throw some soil from it on the wooden casket which was lowered into the ground, speaking the words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust!" Hearing the deep sound of the dirt resonating on the wooden casket, made death viscerally clear. Just like lowering the casket six feet under into the dark, moist, ground made

it palpable to the family that there is no escaping from death.

King Solomon was highly regarded for his wisdom throughout the ancient world. Psalm 90 expresses how one comes about that wisdom. "Teach me to count my days, that I may gain a wise heart." Embracing our limitations, helps us discern what truly matters.

What things are you putting off, because they make you feel uncomfortable, because you don't like facing them? Ash Wednesday and the Lenten Season are an invitation to grapple with such challenging experiences.

I remember a trusted church deacon telling me in a previous church I served, "Pastor, the growing happens in the valley, not on the mountain top!" That rings true as I reflect on my life's experiences. It's not the blissful life experiences that helped me grow most in faith. It's the uneasy, uncomfortable, dreadful, frustrating experiences that got me wrestling, that challenged me, that made me aware of my limitations, that got me growing. Being overcome, feeling defeated are some of the most important experiences of our faith journey.

Rather than running from such experiences, we will face them during this Lenten Season. The worship series is called, "Gifts of the Dark: Blessings for the Soul." What are some of the uncomfortable, dreadful experiences that are part of our human condition? Getting lost, feeling like a failure, not fitting in, feeling empty,



uncertain, being shaken, thunderstruck, or tempted... All these unpleasant emotions are an invitation to dig deeper and to discover the invitation they pose for us.

The most treasured characters from the Bible face their own darkness. We can follow their footsteps toward transformation. I love about Jesus that he is so real, down to earth, wrestling with the same challenges we do. He was betrayed, falsely accused, felt abandoned, abused, and faced the darkness and loneliness of death. Facing our own darkness together with Jesus can become healing and transformative.

I invite you to take Ash Wednesday and this Lenten Season as an opportunity to walk with Jesus, to lean on him, and to open up to God who can change your life. We gather for worship on Ash Wednesday, March 2nd, at 7 PM and on every Sunday in Lent at 10:30 AM. Please invite someone in your field of influence to join us for this meaningful Lenten Season.

In faith, hope, and love,

*Pastor Dietmar*






**RENEW**  
THE GREEN VBS™  
June 6 - 10  
5:30 to 7:30 PM  
Grow in Faith. Have Fun. Change the World.

Let's work together to care for creation! It's time to register for **ReNew: The Green VBS!**  
**Place:** St. Paul's UCC  
**Dates:** June 6-10  
**Time:** 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm  
 ReNew Vacation Bible School invites kids to learn about Jesus, help build our community, and grow as they become

stewards of God's creation. Calling all kids in grades K-5 who want to ReNew! Let's grow in faith, have fun, and change the world!  
 Registration is going on now. For more information or to register for VBS, visit the [website](http://www.saintpauls-ucc.org) or email Torri Stark at [youth@saintpauls-ucc.org](mailto:youth@saintpauls-ucc.org).



**Messy Church**  
**CELEBRATING SMALL**  
 the parable of the mustard seed  
**MARCH 13 AT 4 PM**

[Sign up](#) now for our next Messy Church on March 13 at 4 PM. We will explore the Parable of the Mustard Seed and how this tiny seed holds the secret of the kingdom of God, which will eventually offer the world a safe home - perches for anyone and everyone who lands on the branches of the tree. That tree,

though, would take many years to mature, and so another truth hidden in this parable relates to God's timing in contrast to our 'quick growth' strategies for mission. Join us as we weave a nest, make a Messy family tree, make seedscapes, test our seed knowledge, and more fun! We hope to see you soon!




**YOUTH GROUP**  
 Fill out the survey emailed to you

## YOUTH GROUP

Calling all teens and their families! We are trying to get a teen youth group active again and need your help! A short interest survey was emailed in February to determine interest and possible activities we can plan this spring. If you didn't receive the link for the survey, please contact Torri Stark at [youth@saintpauls-ucc.org](mailto:youth@saintpauls-ucc.org).

# MARCH

## BIRTHDAYS

- 3/02 Luke Lybarger  
Kara Taylor
- 3/03 Gabrielle Kelly
- 3/04 Linda Adams  
Bill Bowen  
Jim Campbell
- 3/05 Casara Beaver  
Maria Kline  
Dan Namet
- 3/06 Mary Bartlett
- 3/07 Sigrid Plajer
- 3/08 Courtney Hanes  
Max Plajer
- 3/09 Craig Myers
- 3/10 Cassidy Alvieri
- 3/11 Karen Athey  
Rachael Rice
- 3/12 Scott Bernstein  
Alexander Siegel
- 3/13 Lucas Beaver  
Kelly Feiler
- 3/16 Jennifer Bernstein  
Marty Rhoads
- 3/19 Leslie Imhoof  
Eric Witkop
- 3/21 Joanne Lauer
- 3/22 Amy Caron  
Karen Teisher Morton
- 3/23 Kathy Ulrich
- 3/24 Craig Stark
- 3/25 Parker Derr  
Quinn Hoot Kranzel  
Katelynn Sola
- 3/26 Erin Reed  
Molly Snyder  
Jeffrey Taylor
- 3/28 Bode Burkhart  
Laurie Derr
- 3/29 Joan Wagner
- 3/30 Justin Smith  
William Weader, IV
- 3/31 Debra Smith  
Margaret Weirick

## ANNIVERSARIES

- 3/10 Max & Ann Leitzel
- 3/12 David & Leslie Imhoof
- 3/16 Bill & Chris Burd
- 3/17 Jim & Linda Forster
- 3/25 Bill & Linda Bowers
- 3/26 Bob & Rachael Rice

# PRAYER LIST

### Members:

- Judi Anselmo
- Pat Cline
- Gayle Dively
- Edna Gingrich
- Ann & Don Groner
- Kim Haizlett
- David & Helen Hannah
- Jack & Janet Riegel
- Kathy Ulrich

### Friends:

- Rev. Janet Berchner
- Ian Danner
- Susan McFall and family
- Mona Gillespie
- Candice Hinckley
- The family of Rev. John Hoover

Kathie & Doug Mehlenbacher  
The family of Tunde Ogunnaike  
Dee, Drew, and Dennis R.  
Linda Sluck  
The family of Bill Young  
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 NOTE

Dear Congregation Members of St. Paul's United Church of Christ,

Your donation of \$666.00 to the Regional Engagement Center means the world to me, and it surely does to the children that benefit from your generosity and thoughtfulness! I get to see their faces and it makes my day, so I hope you all can feel that, too - thank you so much.

Many new things are coming in 2022, but nothing will replace our signature programs of Drop-In for Free, Supervised Summer Camp, Mentoring, Teen Leadership Club and Business Innovation Zone (Kids' Café), and Tutoring. Your gifts help keep these programs moving forward and growing stronger. More youth are interviewing for the café, joining Teen Leadership, improving in school through

tutoring, and getting through some tough times with the help of their Mentors.

We hired two additional staff members this year to help us fulfill our mission, a Director and Assistant Director. The four of us and all our volunteers will work toward our VISION for the new year, which includes intergenerational programming, MakerSpace Modules and Labs, and sustainable gardening options.

Compassion and commitment to the community are values you continue to teach our youth through your engagement in their lives! Again, thank you so very much!

Sincerely,  
Kelly Feiler



# NURSERY HELPER

Will you please consider helping us in the nursery for ONE Sunday in March, April, or May? All it takes for you is to show up at 10:15 AM, check in with Tara Gardner, and stay until around 11:45. You will be the second person in the nursery, supporting the attendant, Tara, who will be in charge. Please indicate your interest to help by emailing Sigrid Plajer at [tech@saintpauls-ucc.org](mailto:tech@saintpauls-ucc.org) or by texting or calling her at [570-850-6737](tel:570-850-6737). When you do that, we will give you options on which Sunday you can help. Thank you, thank you for considering to help!

Your Christian Education Team



## Nursery Help Needed



## Life After Loss

Hospice of Evangelical and Community Health and Wellness are offering a six-week bereavement class called "Life After Loss."

Learn coping techniques to deal with grief and loss through the following sessions:

- Introduction and loss history
- The normal grief process
- Depression and anger
- Guilt and forgiveness
- Letting go and saying goodbye
- Self-care and new beginnings

Anyone age 18 or older who has experienced the death of a loved one is invited to attend. It is recommended that your loss be longer than six months. Classes will be held on Thursdays, Apr. 21-May 26, 2022 from 2-3:30 pm at Hospice of Evangelical, 235 Hospital Drive, Lewisburg.

Fee: \$20 - non-refundable (scholarships available upon request)

Program Facilitator: Andrea Runkle, MSW

Pre-registration is required by April 14. Registration is limited to a total of eight participants but needs at least six participants to be held. Register by calling 570-522-2157.



I was able to go along with Pastor Dietmar and Sigrid to deliver the Christmas Eve offering checks to the three non-profit agencies: Haven Ministries, the homeless shelter in Sunbury; By Grace, the women's homeless shelter in Middleburg; and Transitions, the shelter for abused women and men in Lewisburg.

I found it very interesting to learn about the agencies and what they have to offer people. Not only do they provide shelter but they provide support to become employed, help with getting their GED and finding their own place to live. All of the agencies provide assistance with setting up their own place to live with furniture and supplies like bathroom necessities, cleaning items and laundry detergent.

I was amazed at how many volunteers and donations they need to provide help to families. The people running the organizations showed so much love and compassion for the families with no judgement about their lives before coming to the shelters. One young lady I met was working as a home health aide while getting her nursing degree. What a great opportunity to have people helping her to strive for a better future.

The agencies were so grateful for our donations. I was proud to tell them that our church wanted to use our Christmas Eve offering to give back to our local community.

St Paul's is so blessed to have such a giving congregation. Thank you everyone for your donations!

Susan Bolig, 2021 Council President

# ST. PAUL'S COUNCIL MEETING - FEBRUARY 8, 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, Kim Burkhart, Amy Caron, Bob Engel, Bev Heinemann, Peggy Peeler, Pastor Dietmar Plajer, Sigrid Plajer, Craig Stark, Randy Tanner, Linda Turner, Kathy Ulrich, Josh Wenrich, Allen Wetzel, Mike Zettlemoyer.

**Excused:** Ivana Lluveras, Shane Sanders.

**Minutes from January Council Meeting:** A motion was made by Bev Heinemann and seconded by Linda Turner to approve the minutes from January. The motion was approved.

**Financial Report:** Linda Turner presented the report. All Council members received the report ahead of the meeting. Kim Burkhart made a motion to accept the financial report as read and it was seconded by Kathy Ulrich. The motion was approved.

**Pastor's Report:** Pastor Dietmar sent the report to Council members ahead of time. Pastor Dietmar reflected on our ongoing challenges of Covid, working through current issues, and the passing of longtime members. January posed several critical situations/concerns. While placing priority on these issues, they weigh on him as he continues to balance time for his daily schedule. He feels very blessed to serve all our church needs, but is looking forward to his upcoming sabbatical.

## **Unfinished Business & New Business:**

**Report on Christmas Offering:** Pastor Dietmar, Sigrid, and Susan Bolig visited Haven Ministries, By Grace, and Transitions to present our monetary gifts from our Christmas Eve Services. All three organizations expressed much appreciation for the generosity of our church and in our selecting them to be recipients. Our official church photographer, Sigrid, took photos. Having shared them with Council, they are now on our Facebook page.

**Pastor-Parish Relations:** Marty Blessing has joined Lois Bruno and Raven Rudnitsky on the committee.

**Leadership Zoom Orientation:** It was held on January 30th with many participants. Pastor Dietmar spoke about many points he felt we, as leaders, should prioritize, such as:

- going outside of your comfort zone
- keeping in mind what makes a good leader
- considering where St. Paul's can connect with the community beyond our church walls
- seeing our mission as a frontier of opportunities instead of a fortress ministering only to ourselves

We are also encouraged to provide feedback from our members as well as ourselves to address concerns and ideas for forward growth.

**Worship Service Improvements:** We have received positive feedback on the improved online format that includes a box-in-box view that allows users to see the hymns while seeing our hymn leader. Liking us on Facebook posts allows even more people to view our church services and events. We continue to better utilize technology and social media to reach more people. Our goals include internet and phone link updates to continue to worship in person while following safety guidelines.

**SV Youth Chorale Request:** The Susquehanna Valley Youth Chorale has requested to use our sanctuary on April 23 & 24 to hold their youth chorale event. A motion was made by Sara Adams to approve the request. It was seconded by Kathy Ulrich. The motion was approved.

**What Is St. Paul's Vision?** Discussion of ideas were heard of how we can re-commit to our vision and purpose while moving forward out of our survival/pandemic mode. Can we be bold and energized to join God's vision for us?

**January-February 2022 Worship Series:** The Drawn In: Living Creatively series has received positive input from members appreciating the thought-provoking/inward draw it has inspired. Appreciation was voiced for the creative art rose provided for us by Carolyn Fairl. Many love seeing the weekly additions to the rose as it 'blooms' before us and the children's messages paralleling the worship series.

**Personnel Committee Report:** Sarah Fluke is now on board as our Joyful Noise Choir Director for spring. We discussed the updates made to the Treasurer's job description. Mike Zettlemoyer made a motion to accept the changes made and Craig Stark seconded the motion. The motion was approved. The Finance Committee previously approved the new job description for the Kids Group Helper position to assist our Youth Leader. A motion was made to approve the new job description by Allen Wetzel and seconded by Josh Wenrich. The motion was approved. Both of these positions are set to be advertised.

**Ministry Evaluation Update:** Pastor Dietmar, Pastor-Parish Relations Team, Personnel Committee and Peggy Peeler have met to discuss what works good/what needs improvement. A need to prioritize jobs that require a Doctorate (Pastor Dietmar's) and all others that can be carried out without Pastor Dietmar being the default person following up on work needing done.

**Messy Church Update:** The families that participate in this enjoy the variety of activities and the fun the kids have. There continues to be a need for more helpers to assist with the craft projects.

**Adult Sunday School & Thursday Evening Group:** Positive comments flow from participants in both groups. The option to

connect on Zoom provides more opportunities to participate for members living a distance away. Lively, thought-provoking subjects allow us to grow in knowledge.

**Kids Group & Children's Sunday School:** Kudos to Torri Stark for her great job in connecting with the kids – her love of her job constantly shows in all her work with the kids.

**Confirmation Group Update:** The students will 'graduate' on Sunday, June 5th. Pastor Dietmar has sent an email to all the students' families for their participation in a retreat.

**Visitation Ministry:** The search continues for a new coordinator. Pastor Dietmar has talked with Council members to consider visiting with our 'shut-ins' while we search. Concern was noted about access to those in nursing facilities due to safety protocol.

**Fellowship Committee:** With Covid restrictions, they haven't been able to plan events. A need for new leaders was brought up and the possible inclusion of this committee with another committee.

**Request for Sanctuary Use:** Pastor Dietmar has spoken with a couple who would like to have a small wedding at St. Paul's. Pastor Dietmar suggested we consider suspending our usual

charge of \$300 to a donation from the couple. A motion was made by Linda Turner and seconded by Bob Engel. The motion was joyfully approved.

**Committee Reports:**

- **Property & Grounds** – Getting prices for replacing the Mill St. door electronic entry system; replacement of stained ceiling tile in narthex; cracking masonry in exterior stairwells; placing numbers on exterior doors for First Responders; a changing table was installed in restroom.
- **Green Team/Living Into Right Relations Team** – Discussions continue with PFLAG Danville to navigate initial steps/requirements to create a Selinsgrove group.
- **Archives** – Bob Engel discussed utilizing 'Cloud' storage for uploading older paper archives prior to our current livestreams which are already stored on 'Cloud'.
- **No other** committee reports were received.

Next Council Meeting: March 8, 2022 at 7 pm. Amy Caron will provide devotions.

Respectfully submitted,  
Randy Tanner, Council Secretary



## GIFTS OF THE DARK: BLESSINGS FOR THE SOUL NEW LENTEN WORSHIP SERIES STARTING MARCH 6.

Lent is an invitation to face the dark places in our lives, when we feel disillusioned, afraid, or lost. Lent invites us to explore how God guides us through the darkness, providing us opportunities for growth and transformation. This new worship series is based on the book, "Gifts of the Dark Woods" by Eric Elnes. The series invites us to see life through new eyes, recognizing that experiences of failure, emptiness and uncertainty are unavoidable. Actually, it is in the dark places, that we discover our calling, who we are and why we are here. We will explore how our struggles can become the seedbed of spiritual growth into the fullness of life as Lent will lead us toward Easter.







St. Paul's United Church of Christ invites you to become part of our Prayer Garden Brick Campaign. Your engraved brick will become a permanent part of a paved meditation area on the front lawn of St. Paul's.

**4" x 8" Brick**                      **\$50**  
 Up to 3 lines of inscription  
 14 letters or spaces on each line

JOHN & MARY SMITH & THEIR FAMILY
--

**8" x 8" Brick**                      **\$100**  
 Up to 4 lines of inscription  
 14 letters or spaces on each line

JOHN & MARY SMITH IN MEMORY OF SUSAN BROWN
---

**Ordered by:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Payment must be received with your order. Please make your check payable to St. Paul's UCC and note BRICKS in the memo. Please fill out one order form for EACH brick.*

**INSCRIPTION: PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS**

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# PASTOR'S REPORT - JANUARY 2022

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

Five new members joined the Church Council: Kim Burkhart, Craig Stark, Randy Tanner, Joshua Wenrich, and Allen Wetzel. Together with the new Council Leadership, Peggy Peeler as President, Linda Turner as Vice President, and Randy Tanner as Secretary, we have a terrific team in place. We installed the new Council members in worship on January 16. Council members, staff, and committee members participated in the Leadership Orientation on January 30.

"Drawn In: Living Creatively" is our new worship series for 2022. We explore how growing in faith includes creative dimensions and how we are guided by creative processes in our spiritual development: inspiration, rumination, courage, listening, integrating, resting, and celebrating. The worship team with chair Carolyn Fairl make the theme beautifully visible in our sanctuary decorations and we participate in creating a communal work of art.

The new Living into Right Relationships Team (LRR) met on January 13 to explore how we can integrate our

commitment to sustainability, diversity, equality, LGBTQ+ inclusion and advocacy. It is a vital part for us as followers of Jesus to learn from our past and become more Christ-like in the future. As William Faulkner said, "The past is not dead. It is not even past."

I am deeply grateful to Marty Blessing and Lois Bruno for facilitating the Sunday morning class (in person and via Zoom) on "Holy Troublemakers and Unconventional Saints." We can learn much from people who spoke up and stood in for equality, compassion, justice, and respect for all people, especially for those who are marginalized and hurting. On Thursdays at 7 PM a Zoom study group meets over "How to Fight Racism" from a Christian perspective, based on a DVD curriculum and book by Jemar Tisby. Raven Rudnitsky skillfully leads the group.

Susan Bolig, the outgoing Council President, and I delivered the extravagantly generous Christmas Eve Offering checks to the three local organizations who do God's work in our area: Haven Ministries, the Sunbury Homeless shelter; By Grace Transitions in Middleburg; and Transitions in Lewisburg. I am deeply grateful to all of you for contributing so generously to the offering in a total

of almost \$5,000. Through your giving, you become the hands and the heart of Jesus in action for those from our midst who need it most.


In January I faced an increased need for pastoral care as several of our church members faced life-altering challenges in their lives. Dorothy Deans died on January 11 and I officiated at her funeral on January 15. I also officiated the funeral service for John Kline on January 14. Alvah Deans died on January 27, and we celebrated his life and legacy with a service on February 1.

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!

January 1-31, 2021

Days worked	21
Days off	09
Continuing Education	00
Vacation days	00
Holidays	01
Total Days	31

Respectfully submitted,  
Pastor Dietmar Plajer



**UPPER ROOM**

You can pick up the Upper Room Devotional at the church, Tuesday to Thursday, 9-2, right inside the Mill St. door. If you cannot pick up your copy, please call the church office at 570-374-8749.





## St. Paul's United Church of Christ

400 North Market Street, Selinsgrove, PA 17870

Tel 570-374-8749

[office@saintpauls-ucc.org](mailto:office@saintpauls-ucc.org)

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

