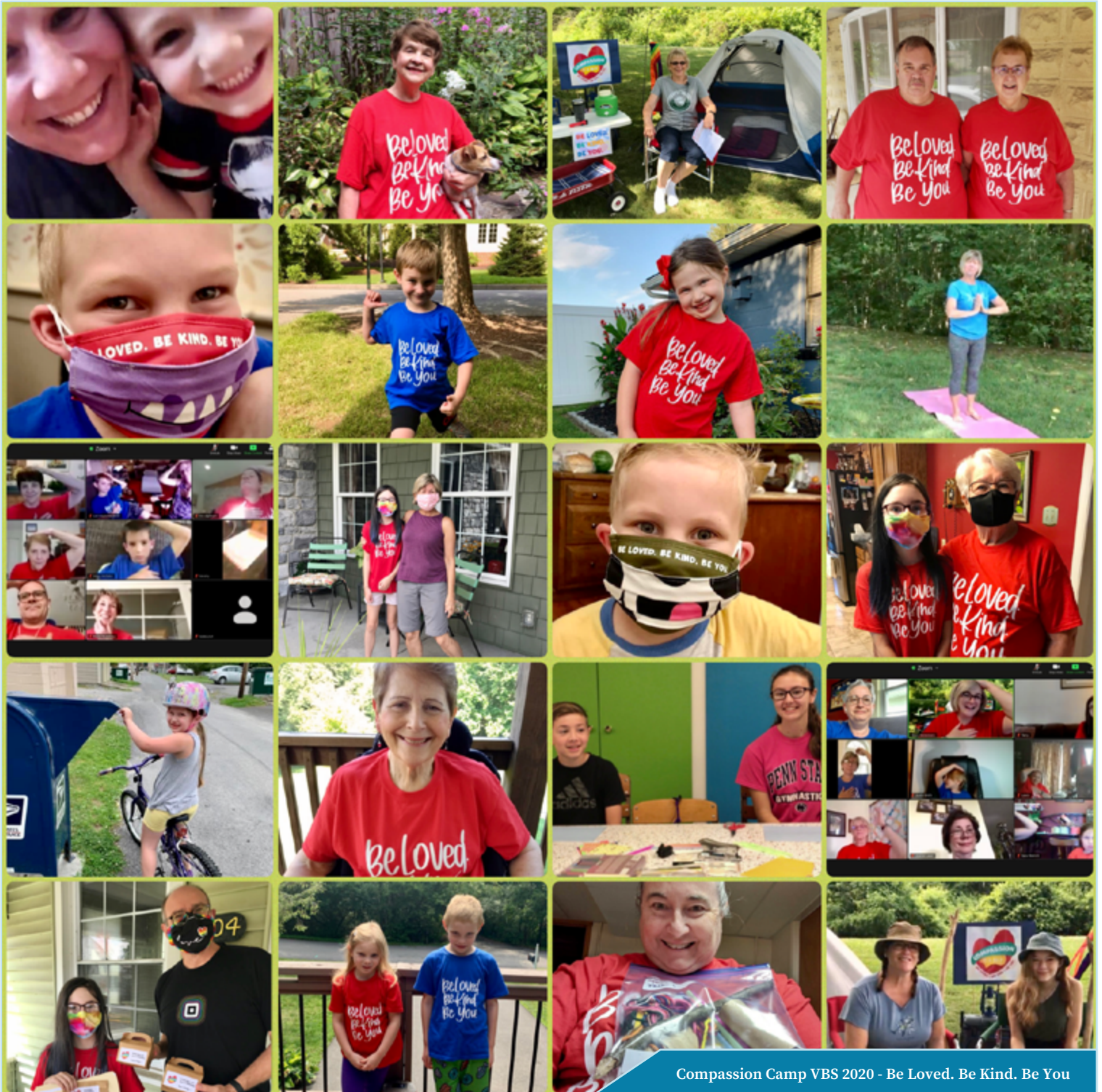




THE MESSENGER

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





THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY

I am tired and frustrated that the Covid-19 Pandemic infringes on our lives. So much of my energy goes into watching, caring, and being proactive in keeping all around me safe. Covid-19 takes a toll. Children, students, parents, teachers - how will they learn safely? Our friends and loved ones in nursing homes and care facilities - they are isolated. The healthcare workers and businesses that rely on in-person contact are tired and strained. It is sad, frustrating, and exhausting!

Covid-19 took a toll on our life as a

church family and our ministries, too. I miss seeing you in person and greeting you at the sanctuary door. I miss our wonderful Messy Church program. I miss our Sunday school groups and our in-person group studies and committee meetings. I miss being able to visit with you in person in your home, over coffee, or in a care facility.

Tired and frustrated, I'm looking for what sustains us. What gives us strength for another day and for another week? How do we become more resilient? What is at the heart of our faith? What are the essentials that carry us through trying times? I am digging deeper and am looking at the roots of our faith, at what sustains us through the crisis and its energy-draining effects.

I invite you to explore together with me "The Heart of the Matter," what is at the heart of our faith in worship and at home beginning with Sunday, September 13, what would usually be our Kick-off Sunday (the Sunday after Labor Day). We will focus on the essentials of our faith, what makes us who we are as people of God. If you ever wanted to return

to your roots, to understand the basics of our faith, this is your best chance! We will rediscover the core values of our faith.

Along with our worship series, you will also have the opportunity to share in conversation on the topics of the week electronically via Zoom, through our church Facebook page, or by phone. I invite you to take this fall season as an opportunity to dig deeper, to explore the roots and essentials of your faith and to rediscover what gives us strength, courage, and resilience through these trying times.

I hold you in my heart, wrap you in love and prayers, entrust you in God's care, and know you are with God in good hands!

In faith, hope, and love,

Pastor Dietmar

Pastor Dietmar is available to you. Call him at any time on his cell phone (570) 541-0121.

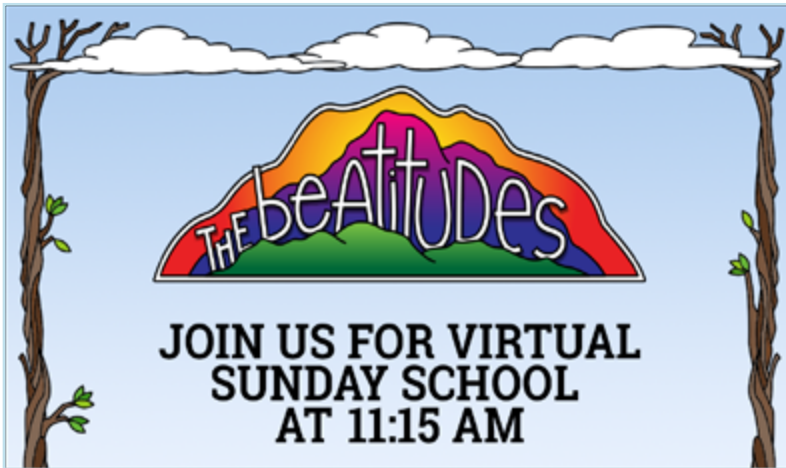
Creating St. Paul's virtual choirs over the last five months has been an educational, fun and worthwhile endeavor. Join us! You record yourself from the comfort of your home. All you need are two devices (PC, tablet, laptop, smartphone, etc.), one for listening and one for recording. I get you the music and provide several informational videos to assist you. For examples of our recent projects, check out St. Paul's Facebook page. Please contact me with any questions or to let me know you're interested in participating. We'd love to see more faces and include more voices!

Be well and stay safe,
Amy Caron,
Senior Choir Director

VIRTUAL CHOIR



SUNDAY SCHOOL AND PHONE LIVE STREAMING



Children's Sunday School is coming back! Starting Sunday, September 13th at 11:15 AM, Stacy Heinemann will be leading an online, twelve-session, verse-by-verse study of the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew.

Hosted through an interactive Zoom meeting for children only, this study will explore Jesus' timeless teaching through art, reflection, and discussion. This passage is full of wisdom that will enrich children and families, exploring Jesus' vision of God's inclusive

kingdom, how Jesus turned expectations and traditional beliefs about being blessed upside down, and how to live into the promises of Jesus' Beatitudes.

Offered to all St. Paul's children, youth and their friends, an invitation to attend will be sent out the Friday prior to Sunday School along with the coloring pages for that class.

Stacy Heinemann
Youth Leader



How to Grow in Faith - Group Opportunity

What does one need to grow in faith? A loving community and meaningful conversation around interesting topics. Lois Bruno and Raven Rudnitsky will offer that beginning with the week of September 13 when we begin our program year at St. Paul's. As we want to keep everyone safe from Covid-19, the group will meet online, via Zoom, most likely on Thursday evenings at 7 PM. If you were part of the Culture and Christianity Sunday school class or are just curious to explore matters of faith in meaningful ways, make sure to check out this group. You can participate in the group as often as you wish and can. More information and how to connect will be available through our weekly Friday eNews. You can also connect with Lois or Raven directly through the church office.

WORSHIP BY PHONE

Call 570-225-9545



How can members and friends participate in worship from the safety of their home if they do not have internet? Beginning immediately, you can call **570-225-9545** on Sunday morning at 10 AM to listen to the live worship service from your phone. The worship service will remain recorded for a week on this service. You can call this number at any time during the week and listen to the worship service. We are very grateful to our tech team and to Church Council who made this option available. We hope that those who do not have internet at home will be able to join us in worship via phone. Spread the word!

BE LOVED. BE KIND. BE YOU.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary for us to get creative with our VBS planning. We found just the right program that offered us the opportunity to provide a virtual experience. We chose Compassion Camp by Illustrated Ministries.



Week 1 - "At the Table" taught us that compassion helps us see and welcome. When we gather together at the table, we accept each other in the same way God accepts us. It was through the parable of the father and two brothers in Luke 15:11-32 that we learned how compassion empowers us to release anger and judgement we may hold toward others. In our arts and crafts section, we made empathy dolls to help us express our emotions and paper vases and flowers to decorate our tables and remind us that all are welcome to gather with us.



Week 2 - "To the Neighbor" taught us that compassion helps us to be brave. To be brave is letting God help us see and reach out to our neighbor. Through the story of the friends who brought their friend on a mat to Jesus in Mark 2:1-12, we learned that being brave means being a friend who shows up, helps carry burdens, and helps others get to where they need to be. Bravery requires us to be courageous, committed, cooperative and compassionate. During this week, we decorated and mailed out postcards to friends, notecards to residents of Penn Manor, and made goodie boxes for our delivery people.

Week 3 - "For Myself" taught us that compassion helps us to love ourselves. We learned that it is important to exercise self-love so that we can better love those around us. Through Mark 12:28-31 and Deuteronomy 6 we contemplated God's law of "love and care for others



This program was designed specifically for an at-home/virtual experience where we explored what it means to have compassion for others, ourselves, and the world. The content was geared toward our youth, but it was easily adaptable to include additional lessons and resources for the entire family. That is why we decided to open our registration to all ages. And what a wonderful group of participants we had! Not only did we serve 17 local children, but we had one child attend from Punxsutawney, PA and another from Sparks, Nevada! Our program also hosted 14 local "Young at Heart" participants and a friend from Mansfield, Ohio. It was a terrific group of individuals that came

together to be present, to learn, to discuss and have fun!

The five-week online program consisted of weekly Zoom meetings followed by online activities and videos. Each week had a specific Bible verse we discussed during our time together, a story read by volunteers that was recorded and posted for viewing, a song that captured the week's message, yoga lessons, arts and craft activities, and read along books that furthered the message. We also had weekly scavenger hunts, additional bible studies for the older group, coloring pages and weekly prayers.

This was a terrific experiment on how we can still gather as a group,

COMPASSION CAMP VBS

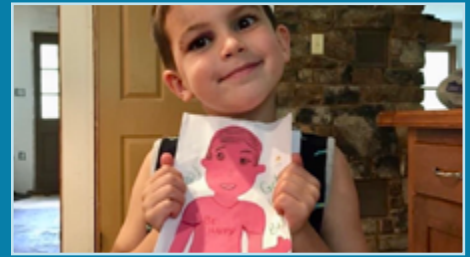


participate in a Vacation Bible School program, learn from each other and walk away having been enriched in some way. I could not have made any of this possible without the help of: Jean Beaver, Kim, Bruce and Bode Burkhart, Amy & Eve Caron, Terry Garbo, Fritz & Beverly Heinemann, Lisa Krex, Ellen Miller, Raven Rudnitsky, Randy Tanner, Aubryana & Michael Zettle-moyer and Sarah Garbo.

We really did learn how important

it is to welcome everyone to our tables and that we can be brave and trust each other. We can be honest with our hearts and be true to ourselves and others. We can give and receive care. And, we can do the work with God to care for all of creation. Thanks to everyone who participated and made it our most unique and enjoyable VBS ever!

Stacy Heinemann, Youth Leader



as yourself." We talked about what brings us happiness, what to do if we are in a bad mood, how to pray and meditate, and how to practice self-compassion. We made ourselves "Bad Day Kits" that had lots of goodies inside of them and a paper chain with messages of love written on each link as reminders of what makes us special.



Week 4 - "Along the Way" taught us how compassion helps us be present with each other. Through the story of Ruth, Orpah and Naomi in Ruth 1, we learned how compassion involves deep trust, an open mind, and a soft heart. We had an active listening activity this week and spread messages of hope and love with sidewalk chalk. We read along to "The Rabbit Listened" by Cori Doerrfeld, reached out to the Project Hope exchange and had several virtual excursions to explore.



Week 5 - "With the World" taught us how compassion gives us a fresh start. By creating fresh starts we work with God to care for all and that taking care of one another are important forms of compassion and justice. We learned about Jubilee in Leviticus 25 and the importance of rest, not just for us, but for the land and for others. We discussed justice and how it is deeply connected to compassion in all the ways that we had been discussing through the program.



COUNCIL MINUTES AUGUST 11, 2020

In Attendance: Joanne Lauer, Pastor Dietmar, Jack Lewis, Stacy Heinemann, Raven Rudnitsky, Bev Heinemann, Marty Blessing, Robert Engel, Lisa Krex, John Fischer, Sigrid Plajer, Susan Bolig, Richard Campbell, Peggy Peeler, Mary Dahlmann, Mike Proger, Bill Hockenbrock.

Excused: Ellen Miller, Ivana Lluveras, Carolyn Fairl.

Minutes - The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

Financial Report - Bill Hockenbrock gave the financial report. The financial report was approved.

Pastor's Report - We are doing wonderful work. It is doubly hard and challenging with Covid, but wonderful ministries are going on.

Unfinished Business:

1. Technology Upgrade for Live Streaming - Sigrid Plajer reported that the last two cameras probably won't be

in until the beginning of September. We will then have a permanent system in place. Other people can be trained to use it. Once the new cameras are in place the technology will be moved back to the booth. We need to find a way to serve those people who don't have access to the Internet. We would need to obtain a service that would allow for the church service to be accessed over the phone. There may be about ten people who might use a phone service, which would transmit the service. There would be a \$50 set up fee for the phone service. We would need to increase our internet speed at the church to incorporate the phone service. There is an initial \$115 setup fee and then \$65 a month for the phone service. It would cost \$35 a month to increase the Internet upload speed.

Church Growth and Membership will call people to see if they would use the phone service. A motion was made, seconded

and approved to look into the phone service for streaming the church services and to allow the purchase of the phone system if it looks like people will want this system.

2. Sigrid Plajer reported that the **Breeze** software system could keep track of the birthdays and anniversaries, which would entail cutting our current list, since it has everyone on it from the beginning of the collection of this information.

3. Safe Reopening - Worship in Person - Mary Dahlmann reported that things are going well. We have had between 20 and 25 people attend the services. Everyone is abiding by the rules for safe attendance. The people coming to church want to be there. Some are hesitant to come due to the pandemic. We will still have the live streaming available.

4. "Compassion Camp" VBS - Youth Leader, Stacy Heinemann reported that August 12 is the last session.

It has gone well. The hope is that people will walk away with something.

5. "Wednesdays with Wonder" – We welcome submissions.

6. Roof Repair - Mike Proger stated that we have not moved on getting the roof replaced yet. This was supposed to be done in the Spring, but now the roofers are backed up with work. We are considering solar panels. We have spoken with the insurance company. They are being flexible. We want to make sure we get the money from the insurance, since we are a year and a half out from making the claim. We are waiting to make some decisions on solar panels and how that will impact what we do. If people have strong opinions on what the roof should be, please let Mike know.

7. Solar panels – We met with Sun Directed from State College. He looked around the church, made notes, will go back and consult with their designers to see if we can do well with the solar and

compare using solar to our electric bills. They will get back to us. We can look into programs to help finance them. PPL has incentives for a green energy program. We will wait until we hear from them to make decisions on panels and then roofing.

8. Visitation Ministry Coordinator - Pastor Dietmar reported that the Lutheran minister is no longer interested. We will keep looking.

9. Joyful Noise Choir director search – This search is referred to the Music Committee.

New Business:

1. Update Position Description of Office Manager – There is a recommendation from Personnel Committee that we update the duties of the Office Manager, since they have changed. A motion was made, seconded and approved to approve the description as presented with the deletion of the necessity of a

probation period.

2. Letter to Wengers – A motion was made, seconded and approved to send a letter to Wenger's store to apprise them of the reasons St. Paul's will no longer shop there for Loaves and Fishes.

3. Need someone for Central Penn Conference – Stacy and Marty will be the attendees for the Central Penn Conference.

4. John Rothermel has been asking about working **extra hours** if the unemployment extension is not passed. A motion was made, seconded and approved to look into meaningful work for John that would be reasonable for him to do. Mike Proger will be asked to see what is reasonable for him to do and to adjust his hours as needed.

Next Council Meeting – September 8, 2020

Respectfully submitted,
Joanne Lauer, Recording Secretary

COUNCIL'S LETTER TO WENGER'S

In July the grocery outlet store, Wenger's, in Mifflinburg, posted a sign on their door that singled out LGBTQ+ people as persons who "spread deadly diseases and sickness." As an Open and Affirming congregation which celebrates God's inclusive love, Church Council decided to take action and to send Wenger's the following letter. The letter includes the issue of wearing masks as many store employees and clerks were seen not wearing them. With questions or comments, you can contact Pastor Dietmar or Council President, Raven Rudnitsky through the church office.

Dear Owners, Management and Staff of Wenger's Grocery Store,

St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Selinsgrove, PA has for many years been the distribution site for the community's Loaves and Fishes Ministry. This valuable program provides large amounts of food to hungry families in our area on the last Friday of each month. For quite some time, some of that food has been purchased at your store in Mifflinburg. That will no longer be the case. We can no longer shop in your store for two reasons. The first is your disrespectful and unsafe attitude that disregards the necessity for all people, owners, employees and shoppers alike, to wear masks at all times. This cannot be a choice. It is a necessity for the health and safety of all of us. Several statements in your "Attention Customers" notice are either untrue or misleading and, quite frankly, very dangerous.

The second and most important reason we can no longer patronize your store is #19. We are an Open and Affirming congregation who takes Jesus' mandate to love our neighbors as ourselves very seriously. We welcome with open arms all of God's children so your statement regarding our LGBTQ sisters and brothers is not only completely false, it is deeply offensive and antithetical to our faith in God's inclusive love.

We thought it only right to share with you why we will no longer be purchasing our own food or the food for the Loaves and Fishes distributions at your store. You all will be in our prayers as this deadly pandemic continues.

Peace and blessings, Pastor Dietmar Plajer and Council President Raven Rudnitsky

PASTOR'S REPORT

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

We worship in moving and meaningful ways on Sundays at 10 AM in person, via Facebook livestream and through our website. We follow The PA Governor's order to limit indoor in-person gatherings to 25 persons even though this order may not apply to religious organizations. We continue with our stringent protocol to keep everyone safe. I am deeply grateful to all who provide special music, children's messages, and scripture readings in person or electronically. Our Tech Team, Jevan Beaver and Sigrid Plajer, continue to do a phenomenal job in transmitting and in making the services and individual parts of it available electronically.

"Liturgy of the Ordinary. Sacred Practices in Everyday Life" is the title of the book by Tish Harrison Warren which is the basis of the study I am leading on Thursday evenings via Zoom with 10 persons participating. We focus on where and how our ordinary lives weave together with God's reality, how our worship services are linked to our daily lives and how our personal experiences of day-to-day living relate to God's realm. I experience the study as a deeply meaningful time where we engage questions, encourage each other, experience real community, and grow in faith.

"Wednesdays with Wonder" is a series of publications which presents messages created by church members and

friends every Wednesday on St. Paul's Facebook page. Several presentations have been outstanding, deeply moving and meaningful. It was and is still challenging to receive enough content to post every Wednesday a new message. Thank you to all who made this series possible, especially Shane Sanders who participated in the planning and coordination of the series.

The "Compassion Camp" Vacation Bible School is a great success. Youth Leader, Stacy Heinemann planned, prepared, and facilitates a VBS session every Wednesday evening beginning with July 15 for five weeks in a row. This VBS is designed for all ages and super fun as participants explore through Biblical stories, crafts, music, activities, movements, and conversation how to become more compassionate, more like Jesus. Each participant received a t-shirt with the VBS motto, "Be loved. Be kind. Be you" on it. Thank you, Stacy Heinemann and all the many helpers and volunteers who make this wonderful VBS possible!

The Media, Technology, Communications Coordinator (MTCC) created the first Newsletter in new design, which was well received. The MTCC continues to update St. Paul's website weekly with special music, sermons, Children's Messages, and whole worship services. She creates weekly announcement sheets for those who worship in person and cooperates closely with the Office Manager. The MTCC posts on St. Paul's Facebook page almost every day.

Our Loaves and Fishes food outreach

ministry continues as a key ministry providing vital groceries to local families in need. On July 31 we could have used more volunteers. Thank you to coordinator Randy Tanner and all helpers who make Loaves and Fishes possible.

I officiated the wedding of Janeen Brosius and Harry "Joe" Longer on July 22 at the Sunbury Marina. It became a deeply moving experience as four loudly honking geese awoke us to God's presence and to the presence of loved ones. Janeen and Joe moved to Lykens, PA, but will continue to connect with St. Paul's via live-stream services.

As good as I can I care for people from a safe distance. I am available via phone to those who are undergoing surgery and are facing challenges in their lives. I continue to regularly write pastoral notes, prepare the Card and Care Ministry list on a weekly basis and contribute to the weekly Friday eNews.

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

Days worked 23
Days off 07
Continuing Education 00
Vacation days 00
Holidays 01
Total Days 31

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Dietmar Plajer



Pick up your "Upper Room" Devotional - We have the September-October devotionals available for you in regular and large print versions. You can pick them up at the church, Tuesday to Thursday, 9-2, right inside the Mill St. door on the umbrella rack. If you cannot pick up your copy, please call the church office at 570-374-8749 and we will deliver or mail it to you. If you know of someone else who could benefit from this devotional, please let the church office know.

ANNIVERSARIES



- 09/02 Cheryl & Wilbur Reddinger
Randy & Tracey Wolfe
- 09/03 Morgan Lewis & Sara Adams
- 09/04 Mary & Thomas Dahlmann
- 09/05 Melissa & Randy Laniewski
- 09/06 Nancy Mercer & Lyle Mercer
- 09/10 Beth & Harry Derr
- 09/12 Benjamin & Jenelle Moyer
Charles & Jane Ruhl
- 09/14 Brian & Laurie Derr
Matthew & Melisa Kelly
- 09/16 Christine & Jevan Beaver
Amy & Brian Caron
Dan & Pat Namet
- 09/18 Betsy & Justin Womer
- 09/20 Carey & Jeremy Napp
- 09/22 Ann & Michael Aurand
- 09/24 Jennifer & Scott Bernstein
Rev. Jack & Pat Snook
- 09/25 Max & Pam Gemberling
- 09/27 Keith & Suzanne Minier

BIRTHDAYS



- | | |
|---|---|
| 9/01 Tom Dahlmann
Jason Taylor | 9/19 Daniel Brouse
Theo Feiler |
| 9/02 Matt Burd | Stella Gentile |
| 9/03 Dolores Bressler
Mary Dahlmann | 9/20 Hailey Bingaman
Eve Caron |
| 9/04 John Fischer | Olivia Lybarger
Shane Spriggle |
| 9/06 Melissa Laniewski | 9/21 Barry Siegfried
Joshua Wenrich |
| 9/07 Jamie Gentile | 9/22 Roger S. Haddon, Jr. |
| 9/09 Joe Cabe | 9/23 Derek Wolfe |
| 9/11 Wyatt Smith
Daisy Thomas | 9/24 Tami Long
Anthony Martello |
| 9/13 Beth Derr
Kathleen Gunning
Jack Stark | 9/26 Ashley Minier
Steven Sees
Bruce Witkop |
| 9/14 Page Lybarger | 9/27 Rick Hawk
William Hockenbrock |
| 9/15 Jodi Cope | 9/28 Jevan Beaver |
| 9/16 James Cope
Beth Deckard
Dick Marshall
Sophia Namminga | 9/29 Bill Mull |
| 9/17 Abigail Wolfe | |
| 9/18 Brian Witkop | |

PRAYER LIST

Members:

- Judi & Jerry Anselmo
- Al & Dot Deans
- Helen Hannah
- Jimmy Kauffman
- Myrletta Kline
- Sally Lauer
- Jack Lewis
- Carolyn Patton
- Jim Taylor
- Nancy Wagner
- Dr. William "Bill" Weader

Friends:

- Mary Anne Britton
- Kathie Doerr
- Dr. Jeanne Engel
- Joyce Lindenmuth
- Joe Longer and family
- Rachel

Children, Parents, Teachers who are struggling about if, when, and how to return to school and in which way to continue learning and teaching

All who lost their jobs

Parents and children affected by Covid-19

All who keep working in critical situations, especially the health care workers

Those who live in abusive relationships

All who are grieving

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.

LOAVES AND FISHES



On every last Friday of the month, we distribute food to local families in need. On July 31, we served:

- Total families 75
- Total children 27
- Total adults 67
- Total seniors 74
- Total persons served 168

A big thanks goes out to all helpers!



St. Paul's United Church of Christ
an Open and Affirming congregation

400 North Market Street
Selinsgrove, PA 17870
Tel 570-374-8749
office@saintpauls-ucc.org
www.saintpauls-ucc.org

Worship Sunday at 10:00 AM
either on Facebook or our website

“God is Still Speaking”

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

We thank God for...



Ten persons participated in the book study on “Liturgy of the Ordinary - Sacred Practices in Everyday Life” on Thursday nights for six weeks from July 16 to August 20. Along with the inspiration and encouragement of the author, the Episcopal pastor Tish Harrison Warren, the group focused on how regular daily activities like making your bed, brushing your teeth, losing your keys, eating leftovers, calling a friend and the like can connect us, when we are open to it and pay attention, to God's presence. The participants explored how our regular daily lives connected with our Sunday morning worship. Below are some statements from participants of the study which Pastor Dietmar facilitated.

“I am so enjoying our Thursday evening discussion group about the book “Liturgy of the Ordinary”. We have had some meaningful conversations about how we recognize God at work in our common, everyday lives. It is so nourishing to my soul to have a chance for social connections in this turbulent summer.” - Mary Dahlmann

“Being part of the Zoom book group discussing “Liturgy of the Ordinary” was a meaningful experience for me, especially during these challenging times. I looked forward to Thursday evenings when we came together in an atmosphere of trust and caring. I felt comfortable sharing my thoughts and feelings and very much appreciated hearing how others experienced sacred practices in every day life. I hope we can continue this type of “gathering” in the fall.” - Raven Rudnitsky

“The book group not only connected me with a wonderful book and author that I would not have read otherwise, it has allowed me to explore the ideas in the book more deeply by hearing the insights of the other members of the

book group, and has provided a chance to get to know better other members of St Paul's in a fun and relaxed setting. In this time where we are limited in our ability to socialize, the book group has been a great way to feel connected to the church community.” - Peggy Peeler

“I am so thankful I joined the Zoom book study group. With so many activities and events being canceled this year, it meant so much to be able to connect with church family. Even though we couldn't meet face-to-face, just seeing familiar, smiling faces each week was very special. Discussions on the book were extremely interesting and thought-provoking, and we had some great laughs along the way. So blessed to be part of such a great church!” - Linda Turner

“The book study has been meaningful and thought-provoking. For me, the idea that I want to remember is that actions we consider routine and maybe even boring and that occur when we are waiting for a “grand” event to happen can have a significant impact in the world”. - Barb Lewis