### The Senior Pastor's Letter

Every year, before our Thanksgiving dishes are cleared, the airwaves are already filled with familiar carols: "Silent Night," "Joy to the World," "O Come, All Ye Faithful." Stores play them on repeat, radio stations and streaming apps dedicate entire channels to them, and we find ourselves humming along.

Yet when we gather in worship during the weeks leading up to December 25th, many congregations notice something different. Instead of Christmas carols, we sing Advent hymns like "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" or "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus." Why is that? I'm glad you asked!

Spoiler alert: Advent is not Christmas. It is a distinct liturgical season, beginning four Sundays before December 25. The word "Advent" means "coming" or "arrival," and the season is marked by anticipation, longing, and preparation.

In worship, Advent invites us to slow down and wait for Christ's coming — both the celebration of His birth in Bethlehem and His promised return at the end of time. Singing Christmas carols too early can blur this distinction, rushing us past the waiting and into celebration before the time is right.

Our culture resists waiting. We want instant gratification, immediate answers, and quick celebrations. Advent pushes against that impulse. Holding back Christmas songs teaches us the discipline of waiting. Just as Israel waited centuries for the Messiah, we practice patience and longing. Hymns like "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" give voice to that yearning, reminding us that we are still a people in need of God's presence and peace.

Christmas carols are joyful, triumphant, and celebratory. Advent hymns, by contrast, are often minor key, reflective, and filled with longing. They speak of hope in the midst of darkness, of yearning for God's light to break in. This tonal difference matters. It allows us to acknowledge the brokenness of the world and our own need for redemption before we burst into the joy of Christmas. Without Advent's honesty, Christmas can feel shallow, like cheer pasted over pain.

Scripture itself models this rhythm. The prophets cry out for God's deliverance. John the Baptist calls people to prepare the way of the Lord. Mary sings her Magnificat, acknowledging God's promise even before the child is born. These texts are not yet Christmas — they are Advent. By aligning our worship with this biblical rhythm, we enter more deeply into the story of salvation.

Continued on next page....

## Inside

- Contact Us
- 2 Office Hours
- 2 Welcoming Statement
- 2 Scam Season!
- 3 Thoughts from Pastor Joey "Do One Small Thing"
- 3 Still Wednesday
- 4 Worship Schedule
- 4 Music in Advent
- 4 Blue Christmas
- 5 Joy
- 5 Send a Card or Note
- Thank You, Thank You
- 5 Sanctuary Flowers
- 6 Advent Devotionals
- 6 Poinsettia Dedications
- 6 Christmas Eve Worship
- 7 Thanksgiving Thank You
- 7 Holiday Giving for Christmas
  - Bible & Brews Special Time
  - Town of Kensington Events
- 8 Lydia Circle Luncheon
- 8 Craft Fair Beneficiaries 9 Pancake Breakfast
- 9 Taste & Sing
- Sermon Safari
- 9 Yarn Ministry
- 10 Our Hunger Ministry
  Volunteers
- 10 Stamps for the Wounded
- 11 Stronger Together
- 11 Lay Leader Reflections
- 12 SPY Schedule
- 12 IGNITE Youth Conference
- 13 Sunday School News
- 13 Children's Choir
- 14 Prayerwaves
- **14 Sipping Ministry**
- 14 Stephen Ministers
- 14 Welcome Team
- 14 Cards & Care
- 14 SAM Leadership
- 15 Scattered for Service

Order Form

16-19 Scattered for Service Catalog of Charities

#### The Senior Pastor's Letter

...Continued from front page.

When we finally arrive at Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the carols explode with meaning. Singing "Joy to the World" after weeks of waiting feels different than singing it in early December. The restraint of Advent makes the celebration of Christmas more powerful. Just as fasting makes a feast more joyful, holding back Christmas songs until the season itself makes them sweeter.

In a world that commercializes Christmas months in advance, the church's practice of waiting is a countercultural witness. It says: we are not driven by consumer schedules but by God's time. We resist the rush and choose to live by the sacred calendar. This witness reminds us — and the world — that Christmas is not about shopping or sentimentality, but about the incarnation of Christ.

So why don't we sing Christmas songs in Advent? Because Advent is about waiting, longing, and preparing. It teaches us patience, honesty, and hope. It aligns us with Scripture's rhythm and makes the joy of Christmas all the more profound. When we finally lift our voices in carols on Christmas Eve, we do so with hearts that have truly prepared Him room.

Waiting, Longing, and Preparing, Pastor Sheridan



## Welcoming Statement

We, the community of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Kensington, welcome you in love. Jesus Christ accepts all, excluding none. So we welcome and affirm you who are gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer. We welcome you without regard to your sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, culture, race, ethnicity, ability, education, or age. We welcome you no matter your immigration, marital, or economic status. Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, we welcome and affirm you as one of God's children into our community of God's unbounded love. All are celebrated here and all are safe.





Scammers will use public information (like the pastor's name) to create fake email addresses and pose as church leaders, asking for money or gift cards. This is an especially popular scam at Christmas time!

Contributions should only be made through stpaulsk.org/giving or sent to the church's physical address at 10401 Armory Avenue, Kensington MD 20895.

### Contact Us

SENIOR PASTOR Rev. Sheridan Allmond sallmond@stpaulsk.org 301-933-7933 ext. 101

ASSOCIATE PASTOR Rev. Joey Heath-Mason joeyhm@stpaulsk.org 301-933-7933 ext. 103

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC Mr. N. Thomas Pedersen tpedersen@stpaulsk.org

ORGANIST Mr. Marvin Mills mmills@stpaulsk.org

DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS &
ADMINISTRATION
Dr. Erin Bone Steele
stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org
301-933-7933 ext. 100

FACILITIES MANAGER & BOOKKEEPER Ms. Tracey Furman tfurman@stpaulsk.org 301-933-7933 ext. 106

Visit us online at stpaulsk.org/community/ meet-the-staff

### Office Hours

Drop-in and Telephone Hours Monday - Thursday 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

To meet with specific clergy or staff, or for access to the building outside these hours, please make an appointment. Individual availability varies!

St. Paul's is closed on federal holidays and the week between Christmas & New Year's.



# Notes from St. Paul's Leaders

## Thoughts from Pastor Joey



We believe that Advent is a season of waiting and anticipating. A season of hope, peace, joy, and love. In a year that has been challenging for many, and as we continue to witness real evil and deep suffering in the world, it feels like we could all use a little more hope and joy.

What if I told you there were small ways you could help bring that hope and joy back into the world?

What if each day of Advent, each day between now and Christmas, you did one small thing to bring hope or joy into the world?

And what if you did it "Secret-Santa style" quietly, without recognition, perhaps in a way that only you and God will ever know?

And what if you invited a friend or neighbor to join you in this holy experiment?

You might be thinking, though, that it feels overwhelming. You may wonder what difference we can possibly make. Yet imagine the ripple effect if each of us committed to one small act of goodness every day.

Imagine how those acts might soften hearts, lift spirits, and shine God's light in places that feel dim. And imagine how preparing our hearts in this way might make our celebration of Christ's birth all the more meaningful.

Well, I want to find out, so I'm inviting you to join our "Do One Small Thing" Campaign this Advent.

As I mentioned in a recent sermon, Isaiah 65 paints a vision of God's promise: a new heaven and a new earth, a world renewed by God's justice and peace, a world where "they shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain." In God's grace, we are invited to participate in that creative work — not through grand gestures, but through faithful, everyday acts that embody Christ's love.

So this Advent, let's do one small thing.

And then another.

And another.

May these small acts become seeds of hope in a weary world and signs of the Kingdom that is already breaking in. Blessings on the journey and may the light of Christ shine in you this Advent.

- Pastor Joey

## Still Wednesday

During the season of Advent, "Still Wednesday" will continue to gather from 7–8pm in the Sanctuary or Octagon, for a peaceful hour of quiet and connection each Wednesday. All are welcome to come, light a candle, and connect. The exact format varies but may include poetry, music, visual artwork, journaling, and silent prayer.

As the winter holiday season can be challenging and emotional for some, we especially invite you to our "Blue Christmas" themed hour for reflection and comfort on Wednesday, December 17, from 7-8pm in the Octagon.

Please note that Still Wednesday will not meet on Christmas Eve, December 24, or New Year's Eve, December 31.

Any questions? Please text or call, Marty Bartley, 301-873-6630.

Artwork: Winter by Kenzie Raulin



# Advent & Christmas Worship Schedule

### Sunday, December 7 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent Music Sunday

9:00 AM Worship with Communion 10:30 AM Worship with Communion & Sanctuary Choir with Chamber Orchestra Scripture - Luke 1:47-55 Rev. Sheridan Allmond, preaching

### Sunday, December 14 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

9:00 AM Worship with Communion 10:30 AM Worship with Sanctuary Choir Scripture - Isaiah 35:1-10 Rev. Joey Heath-Mason, preaching

#### Wednesday, December 17 - Blue Christmas

7:00 PM Contemplative Prayer service in the Octagon led by the Still Wednesday worship team

### Sunday, December 21 - 4th Sunday of Advent

9:00 AM Worship with Communion 10:30 AM Worship with Sanctuary Choir, Children's Choir, and Joyful Ringers bell ensemble Scripture - Matthew 1:18-25 Rev. Joey Heath-Mason, preaching

### Wednesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve

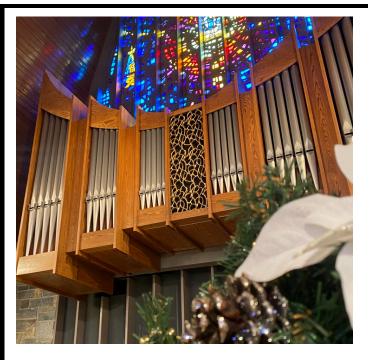
7:30 PM Organ Prelude 8:00 PM Worship with Candlelight and Sanctuary Choir Scripture - Isaiah 9:2-7 Rev. Sheridan Allmond, preaching

#### Sunday, December 28 - First Sunday of Christmastide

9:00 AM Worship with Communion 10:30 AM Worship Scripture - Matthew 2:13:23 Rev. Sheridan Allmond, preaching

Worship Livestream each Sundays at 10:30 AM stpaulsk.org/worship/worship-at-home





### Worship Music for the Season

A Note from Tom Pedersen

Advent is a time of preparation and hope, celebrating the extraordinary gift of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man.

Mary's Song, known as the Magnificat, begins with the famous phrase: "My Soul Magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Mary goes on to speak of the Spirit and the Power of God. She speaks of how God elevates the poor, the hungry, and the homeless, while displacing the powerful and comfortable – a revolutionary declaration.

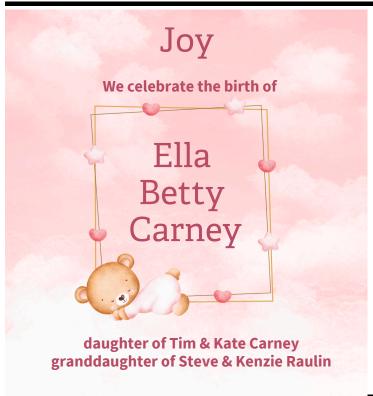
We will celebrate this message from the mother of Jesus on Music Sunday, December 7 with a 12-piece chamber orchestra featuring strings, winds, harp, and percussion in an exciting new *Magnificat* setting by Taylor Scott Davis. Invite friends to join you for this very special Advent Music Sunday!

Then, on the Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 21, worship will feature our Joyful Ringers and Children's Choir in a service that will prepare you for Christmas Eve. Children's Choir conductor Christina Griffith and all the ringers in the Joyful Ringers bell ensemble can't wait to share their contributions.

Come share the hope of the Shepherds, the voice of Mary, and the good news that Jesus will be among us once again this Christmas morning. We look forward to seeing, singing, ringing, and worshiping with you!



# Congregational Care



## Flowers for the Sanctuary, Flowers for our Friends

The flowers that brighten our Sanctuary on Sundays are sponsored by members and friends of St. Paul's. Flowers may be dedicated in honor or memory of a loved one, or in celebration of an anniversary, graduation, or other experience.

To reserve a date and make a dedication, find the Flower Chart on the main office bulletin board and write your name by your chosen Sunday. There are many dates for 2026 available! Then, fill out a yellow form with the dedication info. The cost is \$45 and can be paid by check made out to St. Paul's UMC with "flowers" in the memo line, or pay by credit card using the Miscellaneous option at stpaulsk.org/giving

You may take the flowers with you following the 10:30 worship service. Sometimes a family decides it makes more sense to share the flowers with others instead! It's one special way to spread the love of St. Paul's. It could be someone recovering from an ailment or experiencing mobility challenges. It could be your own friend or neighbor going through a difficult time. If you could volunteer to make occasional flower deliveries after church, talk to Ginny Hagberg directly or contact Erin in the church office at stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org.

### Send a Card or Note

The following St. Paul's members are currently limited in their abilities to participate in the life of the church in-person, and appreciate your thoughts and expressions of care.

#### Mrs. Angela Barr

8207 Meadowbrook Lane Chevy Chase MD 20815

#### Mr. & Mrs. John & Lyda Brookbank

Friends House 17141 Friends House Rd. Sandy Spring MD 20860

### Mrs. Alicia Dandridge

9701 Veirs Dr. Rockville MD 20850

#### Mrs. Edie Kirk

3616 Littledale Rd, #109 Kensington MD20895

#### Mrs. Helen Lidie

14809 Pennfield Circle #415 Silver Spring MD 20906

#### Mrs. Erma McWilliams

Brookdale Olney Senior Living 2611 Olney Sandy Spring Rd. #319 Olney MD20832

#### Mr.Bob Neidecker

415 Russell Ave Apt. 418 Gaithersburg MD 20877



### Thank You, Thank You

Dear St. Paul's,

As I approach the anniversaries of my knee replacement surgeries, I want to express my appreciation for all of the thoughts and prayers from the St. Paul's Community. I am very grateful for all of the support throughout this long journey.

Thank you!
Rich Higgins

Dear St. Paul's friends,

Thank you so much for your kind thoughts, your patient understanding, and the many, many cards you sent after my father Tom Bone III passed away unexpectedly in late October. Your expressions of care moved me deeply. My Dad, the great-grandson of a circuit-riding Methodist preacher from the Appalachian frontier days, was the lay leader of our church back home in West Virginia and would have been so heartened to see how his family has been cared for by our extended faith family.

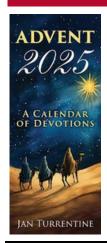
Sincerely,

Erin Bone Steele



# **Advent & Christmas Features**

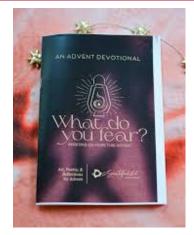
## **Advent Devotionals**



Journey meaningfully toward Christmas using one of the free Advent resources now available in the Narthex.

Advent 2025: A Calendar of Devotions, published annually by Abingdon Press, provides devotions, prayers, and reflections for each day of the season.

The Advent Devotional from Sanctified Art this year explores the theme "What Do You Fear?: Insisting on Hope this Advent" and offers original artwork, poetry, and opportunities for creative reflection.



## Poinsettia Dedications

Our Sanctuary will glow with the warm colors of poinsettias at Christmas this year. Sponsor a poinsettia, in memory or in honor of someone special, for \$20 per plant. Dedications will appear in a special Poinsettia Bulletin at Christmas.

To pay by cash or check, please see Betsy Sanford in the Narthex following worship on December 7 & 14. To pay by credit card, visit stpaulsk.org/worship/advent-christmas and scroll down for the Poinsettia online order form.

You may take your plants home following the 8:00 PM Christmas Eve worship service on December 24, or after 10:30 AM worship on Sunday December 28. Plants left after that time may be delivered to those needing a little extra cheer this holiday season.



## Christmas Eve Worship

Wednesday, December 24 7:30 PM - Organ Prelude 8:00 PM - Worship with Communion and Candlelight

Celebrate the arrival of Christmas with a service that is both joyful and peaceful. The Christmas Eve experience begins with an Organ Prelude at 7:30 PM in the Sanctuary, offered by St. Paul's Organist, Mr. Marvin Mills. The pastors will lead the worship service with communion starting at 8:00 PM. The Sanctuary Choir under the direction of our Director of Music, Mr. Tom Pedersen, will provide Christmas anthems including See Him Born the Divine Christ, Sleeps Judea Fair, and Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella.

This is also a family-friendly service with all generations worshiping together. There will be no Nursery care this night, but restless little ones with an adult may use the Octagon room or Library for a break. Members and friends will have the choice of candles or flame-free glow-sticks to light the final moments of the service as the whole congregation sings traditional carols.



# Advent & Christmas Features



The winter holidays are a special time to celebrate how much we can do together when the Spirit moves among us during the holiday season. St. Paul's is proud to be a partner for the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services and their Holiday Giving Project initiatives.

## Thanksgiving Thank You's

Because of the generosity of St. Paul's members and friends, our Holiday Giving program was able to provide a special \$50 Thanksgiving grocery card for every household in our Hunger Ministry, plus about 30 local referrals we received through Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services and their Holiday Giving Project. This grocery card enabled recipients to build a Thanksgiving meal that honored their traditions and accommodated dietary restrictions and food allergies. (Plus, it freed our volunteers from handling perishables like turkeys or pies...!) **Thank you to all our generous donors and volunteers who made this possible!** 





## The Giving Tree

The Giving Tree in the Narthex is a reminder of our commitment to making the holidays brighter for those in need. This year we will be providing for all the households on our Hunger Ministry list plus 40 additional local households referred to us by the Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services Holiday Giving Project. For 2025, St. Paul's will be providing \$25 Target gift cards to households. Providing Target gift cards gives the recipient families the ability to select and purchase meaningful, age-appropriate presents that will be treasured by their children and loved ones.

Here are three ways to participate:

- Purchase a physical \$25 Target gift card. You can take a tag off the Giving Tree as a reminder! Deliver it to the church office by December 14. Weekday office hours are Mon.-Thurs., 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM.
- Make a financial contribution in any amount! You can give online at stpaulsk.org/service/holiday-giving or by cash or check made out to St. Paul's with "Giving Tree" in the memo. These funds will be collected together and church staff will order cards in the \$25 amount, directly from Target.
- Sign a customized St. Paul's Christmas card at the Sipping Ministry coffee hour on Sunday, December 14. You may add a short note of blessing, encouragement, or neighborly love. These personalized greeting cards will be sent to all of our recipient households.

St. Paul's is NOT accepting toys this year, but if you prefer to donate toys, there is a toy collection bin at Strosnider's Hardware Store (10504 Connecticut Ave, Kensington, MD 20895) for the 27th Annual Angels for Children Holiday Toy Drive serving low-income children in the Wheaton area. Toys and games must be new and un-wrapped. Read more at https://mhpartners.org/holiday-toy-drive/



# **Events & Opportunities**



# Bible & Brews: Special Time!

Sunday, Dec. 14 Special Time! 4:30-5:30 PM

All are welcome at this gathering for interfaith conversations with Pastor Joey, Rabbi Adam, and friends from Temple Emanuel. Family-friendly meetings take place at a local Kensington watering hole – this month we will have a table at Knowles Station Wine & Co. (10414 Detrick Ave, Kensington, MD). Contact joeyhm@stpaulsk.org with any questions!

Then, please join our Jewish neighbors at 6:00 PM for the Town of Kensington's Menorah Lighting ceremony and celebration at Town Hall on Mitchell Street, immediately across from St. Paul's office doors.

# Town of Kensington Holiday Events

The Town of Kensington will host many holiday activities throughout the month, including Holiday Markets at Compass Art studios (Dec. 6), The British Players comedic pantomime of Robin Hood, with a special visit from Mrs. Claus (Dec. 6), the Town Christmas Tree Lighting with an appearance by Santa (Dec. 7), Christmas Caroling around the fountain at Flinn Park (Dec. 22), and many other activities. For the full list, visit stpaulsk.org/community/calendar-events and click the link for the town newsletter and town calendar. (Some events may impact traffic and parking around Kensington! Please be patient.)





# Lydia Circle Holiday Luncheon

Lydia Circle sisters will enjoy a holiday luncheon at the home of Arceli Suley after the 10:30 AM worship service on Sunday, December 14. If you are not already a member of Lydia Circle and you would like to attend, please contact Susan Schwarz at susan10748@aol.com or 301-339-8242. Lydia Circle typically meets at St. Paul's monthly for fellowship, service projects, and refreshments, usually on the first Wednesday of the month, 2:30-4:00 PM. All women interested are welcome!

### Craft Fair Beneficiaries

Many thanks to the crafters and the shoppers who supported the annual St. Paul's crafts fair in November with their handmade products and purchases.

The Yarn Ministry guides this initiative and has selected three projects to receive equal amounts from the \$2,700 total proceeds from our sales:

- 1) Covenant House serving homeless youth
- 2) St. Paul's shelter meals program feeding 2 local homeless shelters
- 3) Asylee Women Enterprise assisting victims of human trafficking

To learn more about Yarn Ministry, contact Karen Codner at Kdc811@gmail.com.







# Community Pancake Breakfast



Saturday, December 6, 2025 and January 3, 2026

Enjoy breakfast at the all-you-care-to-eat Pancake Breakfast! From September through June, the United Methodist Men and volunteers serve delicious pancakes, scrambled eggs, sage sausage, grits, fruit, and beverages, plus seasonal specialities. The December specialty will be Gingerbread Pancakes! Breakfast is held on the first Saturday of the month! Invite your friends and neighbors to join us in the Fellowship Hall. Serving hours are 8:00 to 10:30 AM. Diners are asked to make a generous donation at the door. Proceeds benefit local charities and causes at St. Paul's.

On December 6, the Pancake Breakfast will also host a special Children's Advent & Christmas Crafts activity! Craft stations will be available 9:00-10:00 AM for children (along with their trusted adult helper) to make winter-themed crafts. (Free, but donations welcome!) We are thankful for David Codner's leadership organizing the crafting event this year!

## Taste & Sing

Tuesday, December 16 12:00-1:30 PM in the Octagon Room

Come enjoy a casual time of food and song! For December, we will have a Christmas Caroling theme! We'll sing through some songs from the UM Hymnal - feel free to request your favorites. Tom Pedersen, director of music, will be at the piano. Then Erin Steele will guide us through a short program about a composer, lyricist, or theme, offering a deeper dive into the stories behind some of our worship songs. Our time together culminates with fellowship over a tasty lunch prepared by Ginny Hagberg. (\$5 donation)



### Sermon Safari

Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00 PM by Zoom
December 10 & 17, 2025. We resume on January 7, 2026.
In this come-when-you-can, drop-in Zoom-based study, participants watch a video of a sermon and then discuss it together. Some of our sessions have featured sermons from such notable speakers as Diana Butler Bass, Senator Rev. Raphael Warnock, and Mariann Budde, Bishop of the National Cathedral. For more information or to receive the Zoom link, contact Dr. Meg Baker at megbaker@verizon.net.





Mondays, December 8 & 22, 7:00-8:30 PM

Bring your crochet, knit, or other project and craft alongside friends. St. Paul's Yarn Ministry sponsors the annual craft fair, with all proceeds going to great charitable causes. Yarn Ministry members are also regularly involved in ministries providing warm knitted or crafted hats, scarves, or mittens for shelters or other disadvantaged people in the winter months. Consider joining us!



# **Justice & Compassion**

# The People Behind Everything We Do: Hunger Ministry

St. Paul's signature ministry feeds over 150 households in the 20895 ZIP code every month. We are so grateful for our volunteers who work on Hunger Ministry efforts every month and our coordinators who keep each area operating smoothly! At the risk of leaving off any names, here are some people who can really tell you about how the Hunger Ministry works from the inside-out. We couldn't do this without our volunteers!

- **Angela Harvey:** arranges bulk food orders and deliveries with our partners at Bethesda Help
- **Pat Maloney:** leads sorting and bagging activities and maintains the volunteer sign-up
- Kathleen Stephens: manages the recipient enrollment list and organizes delivery drivers taking food to house-bound recipients
- **Sandie Chen:** runs the on-site welcome/registration table for distribution night and places bulk orders of grocery store gift cards every month
- **Debra McCurry:** works with Campus Kitchens to provide families at distribution night with takeaway meals and breads and sweets from LeVain bakery
- St. Paul's Staff and Weekday Office Volunteers Deane K. Hill, Marsha Green, Frank Walker, Ginny **Hagberg:** mail merge and print monthly letters and resources, serve weekday walk-ins, and distribute food from the church office throughout the month
- Gail Broadhurst: organizes a special Christmas treat from St. Paul's bakers and crafters, providing each recipient household with homemade banana-bread or coffee cake and a custom Christmas ornament created by the Codner family.
- **Grace Graham:** serves as our main contact with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services for holiday-season referrals. See the Holiday Giving section on page 7 for more information!
- All our distribution night volunteers! These people sort and bag food, greet and register new recipients, drive to make deliveries, hand out letters, serve lemonade and treats to offer recipients a welcome opportunity to rest and socialize, and allow the Hunger Ministry to continue serving our community!

### **Donations Needed Every Month**

- peanut butter
- canned tuna or salmon
- canned chicken
- canned vegetables
- canned fruit or applesauce
- cooking oil
- boxed milk or oat milk
- cold cereal
- instant oatmeal
- soup
- rice
- beans

- pasta sauce (plastic jars)

#### The "NO THANK YOU" Guide

- NO dirty or damaged containers
- NO items beyond their "best by" or "sell by" dates.
- NO glass. Glass breaks and creates a hazard (and a mess!) for volunteers and recipients.

#### Want to get involved?

- We need one or two able-bodied adult volunteers to load and unload bulk food orders during the workday hours, 1-2 days per month. Contact the church office or Angela Harvey directly for details.
- Reach out to Mr. Pat Maloney at hunger@stpaulsk.org to receive the sign-up list of monthly volunteer tasks! Spanish-speakers for distribution night are particularly wanted. SSL hours are available.
- Donate pantry staples from the list above any time! (We do accept other shelf-stable items in good condition as well.) Place items in or beside the bins in the Narthex.
- Make a financial contribution toward bulk food orders and grocery cards. Visit stpaulsk.org/giving or make checks payable to St. Paul's UMC with "Hunger Ministry" on the memo line.

## Stamps for the Wounded



St. Paul's invites your donations of stamps and stamp-collecting materials! Ginny Hagberg and the Maryland Family & Community Education/Homemakers Association will take stamps to Stamps for the Wounded, a program serving disabled veterans. Stamp collecting offers therapeutic benefits for veterans recovering in hospitals or at home. Please donate: used stamps (do not remove from the envelope paper), mint stamps & sheets, stamp albums or other philatelic supplies. Please find the donation box in the church office.



# Notes from St. Paul's Leaders

### Stronger Together

From Gregg Molander, Stewardship Chair

As we enter this Advent season — a time of hope, joy, and anticipation — we give thanks for all who have shared their generosity through this year's stewardship campaign. Your pledges and gifts make possible everything we do together at St. Paul's: from worship and youth programs to our hunger ministry, music, and care for one another.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who has already made a pledge for the coming year. Your support helps us plan faithfully and sustain the ministries that make St. Paul's a place of growth, compassion, and community. If you have not yet had a chance to return your pledge, we hope you will consider doing so soon. Every pledge — large or small — makes a difference and helps us continue to live out our mission of feeding bodies, minds, and spirits.

We've received many wonderful reflections throughout our Stronger Together campaign — stories of how St. Paul's has shaped faith, built friendships, and provided a foundation of strength over the years. One member shared this reflection:



"I have been a St. Paul's member since 1974 but, other than regular worship on Sundays and helping at the UMM Christmas tree sales, didn't become involved in many of the other opportunities. When I retired in 1994, I was asked to become president of the UMM and reluctantly agreed to do it. That opened up many things, including many friendships that continue to this day. Those friendships and the faith journeys that have been shared have strengthened my own faith and deepened my commitment to helping serve others when opportunities present themselves. To sum up, my connection to St. Paul's has made me a better person, and I am grateful for that."

Stories like this remind us that our church is not only a place of worship, but a community that shapes and strengthens lives across generations May this Advent season be a time of reflection and renewal for all of us. Thank you for the many ways you share your gifts, your presence, and your love. At St. Paul's, we truly are Stronger Together.

## Lay Leader Reflections

From Anne Dean, Lay Leader

In the wee small hours, in the quiet moments, the creepies and crawlies of Halloween transition to the gratitude and humility of Thanksgiving and then to the expectation and hope of Advent. Jesus waits with us and for us while we wait for him. His guiding wisdom is always present, hoping we will hear him - especially after we've asked him a question.

I have had the pleasure and privilege of joining both the Yarn Ministry and Still Wednesday at St. Paul's this fall. In every quiet breath, in every journal entry, in every reflection, in every knit and purl, in every stitch, in every discussion of who will benefit from this bounty being created, Jesus is there. Reminding us when two or more are gathered, he is among us (Matthew 18:20).

Do we need to bring/see/hear Jesus outside the walls of St. Paul's? You bet. The phrase "the world needs Jesus now more than ever" is both true and begs the response, "Show me a time where we humans were doing great without Jesus." There isn't one. Promise. Those times where things were up, life was good, everything was cutting our way, Jesus was definitely there for those. So as we put on our Jesus armor for the world, one spot where I guarantee your "Jesus batteries" will be charged up is within our church and with each other. There are many opportunities to lean into ministry. Jesus will be right there encouraging our hands and feet.



### SPYs in Winter

### Upcoming SPY Meeting Schedule subject to change

- Dec. 7: regular meeting
- Dec. 14: Winter Garden of Lights at Brookside Gardens (photo from 2024 at right!)
- Dec. 21: NO SPY (Winter Break)
- Dec. 28: NO SPY (Winter Break)
- Jan. 4: NO SPY (Winter Break)
- Jan. 11: regular meeting
- Jan. 18: regular meeting
- Jan 25: regular meeting



SPY (St. Paul's Youth) is for middle and high schoolers (grades 6-12) to grow in faith, build lasting friendships, and feel at home. We meet most Sunday evenings, 7:00-8:30 PM in the Multipurpose Room. High schoolers meet with Pastor Sheridan or Pastor Joey and Middle Schoolers are guided by a rotating group of parent leaders.

#### **SPY Special Events!**

- **Regular SPY Meeting** *Dec. 7.* Our usual Sunday evening meeting with pizza dinner and Bible study in the MPR at St. Paul's will include a Christmas gift-making session.
- **SPYs in the Garden!** *RSVP by Dec. 8!* We must buy tickets in advance! On Dec. 14. St. Paul's Youth will meet directly at Brookside Gardens to enjoy the spectacular displays in the Winter Garden of Lights. Parent should drop off at 7:00 PM and pick up at 8:15 PM at the gardens. St. Paul's will provide Garden of Lights tickets, warm drinks, and desserts. (Please eat dinner before you come.) We must buy tickets in advance! If you plan to go, contact Megan Montgomery at megan.w.montgomery@gmail.com.
- Christmas Break SPY will not meet on Dec. 21, Dec. 28, or Jan. 4.
- **IGNITE Conference** March 2026! We already have a small group committed to attending. See more info below! Interested youth should contact Megan Montgomery: megan.w.montgomery@gmail.com.





## **IGNITE Youth Conference**

March 20-22, 2026

The combined Baltimore-Washington Conference and Peninsula-Delaware Conference will welcome youth from around the region for IGNITE 2026. IGNITE offers an exciting mix of worship, concerts, dynamic speakers, and youth-focused activities. The conference takes place in Ocean City MD.

St. Paul's will have a group of students and chaperones attending this year! Interested youth should contact Megan Montgomery (megan.w.montgomery@gmail.com) to register. Regular-priced registration ends on January 15. Late registration for IGNITE will be available through February, but please don't delay as we also have to work out hotel accommodations!

Part of the cost for youth to attend will be covered by St. Paul's UMC and our Youth fundraisers. We never want a young person to miss out due to financial worries; scholarships are available to cover remaining expenses! Please see one of the pastors for a confidential financial aid discussion.

Photos at left of SPYs at last year's IGNITE 2025



# Children's Faith Formation

# Sunday School News

Usually we offer a robust schedule of Sunday School programming. This month, however, children will attend 10:30 worship with their families most Sundays in Advent and Christmas!

Sunday School classes will only meet this month on December 14 at 10:30 AM. Parents and guardians should drop off at the classroom and pick up at the classroom immediately after worship. Students in Grades K-2 meet in Room 200. Students in Grades 3-5 meet in the Parlor.

Sunday School classes will take a break over Christmas and New Year's and will resume January 11, 2026. For more information, please visit stpaulsk.org/community/children





- Top left: Dottie Patch teaching a paper craft with grades 3-5.
- Top right: Megan Montgomery guides Bible stories and snacks for grades K-2.
- Bottom right: Pat Maloney teaches the K-2 lesson with youth helpers.

Nursery care is available at 10:30 every Sunday for children ages Pre-K and younger.

Parents of children in grades K-5 are encouraged to help with Sunday School programming in Spring of 2026! Sunday School is only possible because of our volunteers. For more information, please contact Meg Baker, volunteer coordinator, at sundayschool@stpaulsk.org.





## Children's Choir

The Children's Choir, under the direction of Ms. Christina Griffin, will share their music as a featured part of the 10:30 AM worship service on Sunday, December 21.

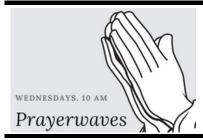
Typically Children's Choir rehearses on Sundays following worship, 11:45 AM – 12:30 PM in the Multi-Purpose Room. We will take a winter break following our December presentation in worship! Email Christina at childrenschoir@stpaulsk.org for more info.



# Continuing Opportunities

## More Ways to Be Involved

Many groups meet regularly during the year, and there are many ways to get involved with ministries, outreach, and hospitality at St. Paul's. Here are some of the groups inviting you to join in ministry and fellowship.



Wednesdays at 10:00 AM

Prayerwaves meets each week by phone. We take turns lifting up the needs of the church, community, and the world. On Wednesday, dial 425-436-6326 a few minutes before 10:00 AM. Enter access code 774042 followed by the # sign. If you would like to receive the prayer list by email, please contact Erin Steele in the church office at stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org.



This time for fellowship with drinks and snacks after worship occurs whenever a family, class, or groups offers to host. You might serve the ever-popular coffee and cookies... or it might be lemonade and cheese crackers, tea and tarts, cider and donuts, cocoa and candy canes... you decide! To host, simply add your name or group to the chart on the office bulletin board and take an instructions sheet (also available for download at *stpaulsk.org/community/calendar-events*).



Would life feel better right now if you had someone to listen to your worries and cares? Stephen Ministers are there for you! Stephen Ministers have received special training to provide one-on-one Christian care to those who are experiencing challenging life events. To learn how you or someone you know can receive care – or how to become a Stephen Minister – contact Martha Lipscomb, Stephen Leader, at mmlipscomb@verizon.net or 301-518-1642.

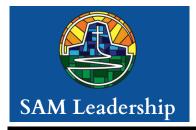


Few things better demonstrate our hospitality than making sure all of our members and friends receive a warm welcome upon arrival at church, and that new Sunday morning visitors can get some simple questions answered! Please consider participating in St. Paul's Welcome Ministry. We are always looking for volunteers to cover the welcome table by the Sanctuary doors and guide people as they enter for worship. Families are invited to volunteer together!



St. Paul's makes every effort to reach out to those who are experiencing times of sickness, grief, change, or celebration by providing greeting cards each week. On typical Sundays, anyone can stop by the Welcome Desk to pick up a pre-addressed, pre-stamped card. You can write a personal note or simply sign the card and drop it in the mail. We know card recipients are truly thankful for the notes that come their way.

Want to send your own card later, or spend some time in prayer for our members and friends? Pick up a Congregational Care list at the welcome desk on Sunday mornings. Please note that the Congregational Care list is not exhaustive. For privacy reasons, St. Paul's only shares information if given permission to do so by the person(s) involved or an immediate family member. If you have information to share please contact Erin Steele in the church office at stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org.



Church leaders at St. Paul's serve in a unified board known as the Simplified Accountability Model, or SAM. The SAM umbrella covers Ministry, Strategy, Accountability, and Leadership to guide such things as the church mission and ministry focus, finances, and personnel. SAM meets by Zoom and all meetings are open to the public. Contact chairperson Rachel Stalcup (rachelstalcup@gmail.com) for the meeting schedule and the Zoom link, or if you have questions.



## St. Paul's Alternative Giving Program

Our "alternative gifting" program calls us to "Gather for Worship and Scatter for Service." We are happy to offer the 2025 version of Scattered for Service, accepting orders through December 21. Instead of giving friends and family more "stuff" this year, you can give a variety of gifts of help and hope in your loved one's honor.

With Scattered for Service, we do the paperwork for you and 100% of your donations go to the organization(s) you designate. Peruse the catalog on the following pages. Have fun matching each loved one with a charity. For example, you might donate to Heifer International in honor of your aunt who is a beekeeper, donate to the Oakleaf Club at Walter Reed in honor of your cousin who served in the Army, or donate to Imagination Library in honor of your favorite school librarian! Scattered for Service volunteers will provide personalized acknowledgement cards for each item, ready for you to send to your loved ones.

You can order by cash or check using the form here, or at <u>stpaulsk.org/service/scattered-for-service</u> using a credit card. After the order period closes, the Scattered for Service team will compile all of the receipts and send 100% of the donations we've collected to the organizations as directed.

Questions? Please contact Scattered for Service coordinator Lyn Walker at lwalker60@hotmail.com or 301-503-5415.

#### Scattered for Service Order Form Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_ Your Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_ Your Email: Your Phone: Next to your selection, please write the number of gifts you would like. You may choose as many as you wish. Each gift is \$30. We will provide the acknowledgement cards to you in one batch. **Number** of Gifts **Charitable Organization** \_\_\_\_\_ Asylee Women Enterprise \_\_\_\_\_ Bethesda Help \_\_\_\_\_ The Children's Inn at NIH \_\_\_\_\_ Christ House Make checks payable to: \_\_\_\_\_ Comfort Cases St. Paul's UMC \_\_\_\_\_ Covenant House with "Scattered for Service" \_\_\_\_\_ Greater DC Diaper Bank on the memo line. \_\_\_\_\_ Heifer International \_\_\_\_\_ Hunger Ministry Holiday Giving at St. Paul's Mail order forms and checks to: \_\_\_\_\_ Housing Up St. Paul's UMC \_\_\_\_\_ Imagination Library of Montgomery Co., MD Attn: Lyn Walker Manna Food Center & Smart Sacks 10401 Armory Ave. MoCo Pride Center **Kensington MD 20895** \_\_\_\_\_ Montgomery Hospice \_\_\_\_\_ National Federation of the Blind of Maryland \_\_\_\_\_ The Oakleaf Club of Greater Washington

**Total \$ Amount** 

West River Camping & Retreat Center

Each gift is \$30

**Total Number of Gifts** 

A Wider Circle



The following pages contain descriptions of the organizations you can support through Scattered for Service. Charities are listed in alphabetical order. To place an order, use the form on page 15 or go online to stpaulsk.org

## Scattered for Service Catalog



### Asylee Women Enterprise

www.asyleewomen.org

Asylee Women Enterprise (AWE) provides wrap-around services and support to asylum seekers as they build new lives in the Baltimore-area. While AWE endeavors to help all who seek assistance, priority is given to women and children.

#### \$30 can provide:

Counseling services for survivors of human trafficking.

Baltimore MD

- A full set of school supplies for students entering US schools. One full toiletries kit for adult personal hygiene.
- Funding for immigration legal services.



### Bethesda Help

https://www.bethesdahelp.org/

Bethesda Help offers emergency assistance to residents of southern Montgomery County Bethesda Help regardless of income through utility cut-off prevention, rent payments, essential prescription medications, referrals to county agencies, and grocery assistance.

### \$30 can provide:

• Three-day emergency supply of shelf-stable groceries.



### The Children's Inn at the National Institutes of Health

Bethesda MD

Since 1990, The Inn has served as a free "Place Like Home" for children & families participating in medical trials at the NIH institutes and centers. Children staying at the Inn are able to laugh and play through therapeutic and recreational programs.

#### \$30 can provide:

- Replacements for worn out toys and books.
- A new video game in the Game Room or Teen Lounge.
- A calling card for families to stay in touch with loved ones.

Washington DC



### Christ House

https://christhouse.org/about/

https://childrensinn.org/

Christ House opened in 1985 as the first 24-hour residential medical facility for homeless persons in the U.S. and is still the only facility of its kind in the DC area. Patients who are homeless and ill receive nursing care, meals, addictions counseling, and more.

#### \$30 can provide:

- A month's worth of medical supplies for a diabetic patient.
- Snacks and refreshments for patients during an activity.
- New sweatpants and sweatshirt for one patient.
- A meal for 8 patients.



### **Comfort Cases**

National headquarters in Rockville MD https://comfortcases.org/ Comfort cases provide age-appropriate backpacks and comfort items for children being removed from unsafe conditions and entering the foster care system.

#### \$30 can provide:

- A small stuffed animal, blanket, and coloring book.
- New pajamas and toothbrush.

• XL-size duffle bags for police and social workers to distribute, so no child has to put their belongings in a trash bag.



# Catalog (Charities in Alphabetical Order)



### Covenant House of Greater Washington

Washington DC & Prince George's County MD https://www.covenanthousegw.org/
These shelters serve homeless teenagers by providing emergency sanctuary, three meals a day, transitional housing, job training, and access to health care.

\$30 can provide:

- Blankets and bedding for shelter beds
- Training materials to help partner agencies identify and respond to human trafficking situations



### Greater DC Diaper Bank

Washington DC https://greaterdcdiaperbank.org/
By providing low-income families with a reliable and adequate source of basic needs not covered by other assistance programs (like diapers and wipes, and feminine personal hygiene products), we empower families to grow in healthy, strong, and productive ways.

\$30 can provide:

- A diaper bag packed with essential diapering supplies.
- A new, safe infant car seat.



#### Heifer International

Worldwide with headquarters in Little Rock AK & New York NY https://www.heifer.org/ Products such as milk from cows, eggs from chickens, or vegetables from gardens boost a family's diet and can be sold at market to create income. Every animal or plant gift includes training in sustainable farming and market practices that benefit entire communities.

\$30 can provide:

- A Flock of Chicks
- A Hive of Honeybees
- A share of a heifer cow
- Half of the Garden Seeds gift of fruit & vegetables



### Holiday Giving Project at St. Paul's

Kensington MD https://stpaulsk.org/service/holiday-giving We are the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services partner making holidays bright for families in the 20895 ZIP code. St. Paul's will be providing families with Target gift cards so they may select their own meaningful, age-appropriate gifts with dignity.

\$30 can provide:

• A greeting card with a Target store gift card.



### Housing Up

https://housingup.org/

Housing Up develops affordable housing and offers comprehensive support services to 600 homeless and low-income families in a range of housing programs across Washington DC.

\$30 can provide:

SmarTrip cards for families to use public transportation

Washington DC

- Books for twice-weekly youth tutoring sessions
- Half a "Welcome Home" kit for families transitioning from shelters to housing.



### **Imagination Library of Montgomery County**

Glen Echo MD https://www.imaginationlibrarymcmd.org/
This local affiliate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library mails free, age-appropriate books directly to about 800 area children from birth to age 5, every month, so they grow up loving to read. Titles range from classics like The Little Engine that Could to new stories like Hair Love.

\$30 can provide:

• A child's book every month for one year.



# Catalog (Charities in Alphabetical Order)



### Manna Food Center and Smart Sacks

Silver Spring & Gaithersburg MD www.mannafood.org/programs/smart-sacks/ Smart Sacks provide special weekend bags to elementary school children who receive free and reduced price school lunches, helping them eat healthy food at home. Manna also maintains permanent and mobile food pantries around the county.

#### \$30 can provide:

• 5 complete Smart Sacks bags of food.

• 2 cases of shelf-stable milk boxes to feed 50 children.



#### MoCo Pride Center

*www.mocopridecenter.org*MoCo Pride advocates for policies that support and protect members of the county's
LGBTQ+ population. Projects include programming artistic, cultural, and social events and engaging in youth outreach.

#### \$30 can provide:

- Support for youth events like Pride Prom or Open Mic Night.
- Community activities like the Summer of Love Fun Run in collaboration with Montgomery Parks.



### **Montgomery Hospice**

Rockville MD www.montgomeryhospice.org
Montgomery Hospice's teams of medical professionals provide end-of-life care to the

terminally ill regardless of ability to pay, as well as grief support for loved ones and education about high quality end-of-life care, death, dying, loss, and grief.

#### \$30 can provide:

- Art supplies & therapeutic toys for Montgomery Kids patients and siblings.
- A visit from a Board Certified Music Therapist.



### Mid-County United Ministries (MUM)

Wheaton MD https://mumhelp.org/MUM helps people in crisis in the Silver Spring, Wheaton, Kensington, Rockville, and Aspen Hill communities with food, medicine, eviction prevention, and utilities cut-off prevention.

### \$30 can provide:

- Emergency assistance to cover the cost of an essential prescription medication.
- Partial coverage of a utility bill to avoid a service cut-off.



### National Federation of the Blind, Maryland

Columbia MD www.nfbmd.org

Promoting the full participation and integration of blind people of all ages in our communities, helping blind persons gain independence, educate friends, and pursue academic excellence

#### \$30 can provide:

- Funding the McCraw Scholarship Program for post-secondary education.
- Transportation to the Braille Enrichment Literacy and Learning (BELL) 2-week training program for ages 4-12.



# Catalog (Charities in Alphabetical Order)



### Oakleaf Club of Greater Washington

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda MD www.oakleafdc.org

Oakleaf runs a Wish List Program for about 35 clinics and departments at Walter Reed to "fill the gaps." These simple, common items improve staff morale, patient comfort, and understanding.

#### \$30 can provide:

- Educational materials for patients in waiting rooms and treatment areas.
- Replacing small appliances like microwaves, mini-fridges, coffee makers.
- Movies for donors at the blood bank and toys to comfort children during visits.



### **UMCOR**

worldwide, headquarters in New York, NY www.umcor.org

The United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR) provides critical emergency relief and long-term services in the US and more than 100 countries by rebuilding following extreme weather events, assisting refugees, and confronting the challenges of hunger.

### \$30 can provide:

- Supply kits that provide essential personal hygiene items.
- Global Migration Refugee assistance for resettlement in new communities or safe re-entry to home countries.



### West River Camping & Retreat Center

West River MD

http://www.bwccampsandretreats.com/westriver/

West River serves over 1,000 campers each summer during normal operations for a week of swimming, sailing, rafting, archery, and vibrant worship.

#### \$30 can provide:

- Playground balls and balls for sports like volleyball or football.
- A portion of a "campership" scholarship to allow a young person with fewer means to attend camp.



### A Wider Circle

Silver Spring MD http://awidercircle.org/

A Wider Circle's five programs - Basic Needs, Workforce Development, Wraparound (long-term) Support, Restorative Health, and Neighborhood Partnerships - work in concert to help families reach a place of stability, then independence, rising from poverty permanently.

#### \$30 can provide:

- A day of instruction to a job seeker in Job Skills Bootcamp.
- Essential furniture items such as beds and dressers for families transitioning to stable housing.

If you prefer to pay by credit card, please visit stpaulsk.org/service/scattered-for-service for the online order form. If you have questions, please contact Lyn Walker at lwalker60@hotmail.com or 301-503-5415. Thank you for bringing hope and help to a hurting world this holiday season!



stpaulsk.org | 301-933-7933

### Worship with St. Paul's

Worship in the Sanctuary
Sundays, December 7, 14, 21, 28
9:00 AM • Worship with Weekly Communion
10:30 AM • Worship with Sanctuary Choir

December 24 • 7:30 PM Organ Prelude, 8:00 PM Christmas Eve Worship

Worship-at-Home
Livestreaming every Sunday at 10:30 AM
stpaulsk.org/worship/worship-at-home

