



Senior Pastor's Letter

"Glass half empty or glass half full."

This is not just a matter of perspective. This is the theology of scarcity and abundance. These are the lenses through which we tend to measure our worth and our success.

Numbers are our preferred means of measurement. How much money we have, how many people are in the pews? And if the numbers don't add up the way we think they should, then we peer longingly through the lens of lack, remembering what used to be, or counting what is not.

The theology of scarcity focuses on what we believe God is not doing and what God is not providing. The theology of scarcity is based solely on what we can or cannot see.

But the theology of abundance offers a much different perspective. It is not the Pollyannaish mentality of looking at the world through rose colored glasses. The theology of abundance is not ignoring the realities or pretending everything is great.

The theology of abundance is the lens that looks beyond what is, to what could be. It is looking for what God may be doing that numbers cannot measure. It is looking for ways in which God is opening doors of opportunities that the numbers might mask. I believe that may be why scripture speaks of growth in terms of fruit rather than numbers.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

It seems that the worth of a crop is measured not just by how much is produced but the quality of the yield. You can have a large harvest of bitter fruit, or a smaller harvest with the best-tasting fruit ever. And if I can go out on an agricultural limb, it seems that a good harvest produces the seeds for the next crop.

The numbers do not always tell the whole story.

The success of a church has often been measured by the number of people in the pews and the amount of money pouring in. And while no one wants to worship in an empty sanctuary, or have to continually beg to keep the lights on, spiritual growth and maturity are not measured by how many people show up and how much they give.

We are not merely entering a season where we will receive a new pastor and follow new leadership. We have entered a season where we must begin to look beyond numbers for evidence of fruit. Where do we see joy, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, peace, and love? Where is the evidence of gentleness and patience? Where do you see fruit?

Indeed it would be irresponsible stewardship to ignore the numbers. But the numbers are not the whole story. We must decide if we will be statisticians of scarcity, or ambassadors of abundance. It makes a tremendous difference in the potential for harvest.

Peace,
Pastor Pat

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Online Worship Survey Responses



Those who worship with us online were invited to share their thoughts about the experience of using this worship platform. Each Sunday we average 35-40 viewers participating through the livestream during the 10:30 AM service, plus others who watch worship recordings afterward. We deeply appreciate those of you who took the time to share your thoughts with us.

The responses show us that you'd like for us to work on these areas:

- quality audio, with troubleshooting on those days when that feature does not function well.
- ensuring subtitles and slides match what is going on in that moment.
- a way to sign in, so that your attendance can be captured.
- continue to acknowledge your presence during the service.

Online worshippers: we love you! And we will keep working to make this experience better.

~Pastor Pat

Pastor Joey's Sabbath Renewal Leave

Currently, Rev. Joey Heath-Mason is out on Sabbath Renewal Leave. Pastor Joey will return to St. Paul's on Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024.

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.

Inclement Weather

We follow Montgomery County Public Schools students' schedule for weather delays, early dismissals, or closures. For example:

- If Montgomery County students are reporting on a 2-hour delay, St. Paul's will be on a 2-hour delay and offices will open at 12:00 noon (Mon-Thurs).
- When students do not report to school or activities are canceled, St. Paul's offices are closed. All events will be canceled, rescheduled, or moved to off-site/virtual platforms. Contact group leaders directly!
- For Sunday Worship: The pastors track potential weather events and will make a determination about worship by 5:00 PM on the day before. A worship experience will be available online at 10:30 AM each Sunday, even when we are not gathering in-person.

Always use your own best judgment before venturing out in any weather!

Contact Us

SENIOR PASTOR

Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen
pallen@stpaulsk.org
301-933-7933 ext. 101

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

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

MINISTER OF SPIRITUAL CARE &
FORMATION

Dr. Meg Baker
mbaker@stpaulsk.org
301-933-7933 ext. 104

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Mr. N. Thomas Pedersen
tpedersen@stpaulsk.org

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DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS &
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FACILITIES MANAGER

Ms. Tracey Furman
tfurman@stpaulsk.org
301-933-7933 ext. 106

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

Lectionary

March 3

John 2:13-22

Preaching: Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen

March 10

John 3:14-21

Preaching: Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen

March 17

John 12:20-33

Preaching: Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen

March 24 - Palm Sunday

Mark 11:1-11

Preaching: Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen

March 28 - Holy Thursday

Scripture selection TBA

March 29 - Good Friday

Scripture selection TBA

March 31 - Easter Sunday

Mark 16:1-8

Preaching: Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen

Worship Times

Sundays, March 3, 10, 17, 24 - Worship at 9:00 AM & 10:30 AM

Thursday, March 28 - Maundy Thursday worship at 7:30 PM

Friday, March 29 - Good Friday worship at 7:30 PM

Sunday, March 31 - Easter Sunday

First Service of Easter - 7:00 AM in *Clum-Kennedy Park*

Easter Worship in the Sanctuary - 9:00 AM & 10:30 AM

Livestreaming Sundays, 10:30 AM stpaulsk.org/worship/worship-at-home

Find more information about Holy Week and Easter on pages 6-7.

Prayer Requests

During Lent, all are invited to share Lenten Prayer needs by placing prayer requests in the wooden prayer bowl in the Sanctuary. You can also share prayer requests at stpaulsk.org/community/prayer-requests. In either case, you may specify whether you would like your prayer concern shared with the pastors only or with both the pastors and the PrayerWaves team.

PrayerWaves meets by telephone each week to lift up the needs of the church, community, and people around the world. On Wednesday, dial 425-436-6326 a few minutes before 10:00 AM so we are ready to begin on time. Then enter access code 774042 followed by the # sign. If you would like to receive the prayer list by email, please contact Dr. Meg Baker at mbaker@stpaulsk.org.

Lenten Worship Changes

A message from Pastor Pat

During Sundays in Lent, there will not be a postlude offered at the end of our worship service. This was the decision of our gifted organist Marvin Mills as his sacrificial act in this holy season. So, in lieu of the postlude, I would offer that as we conclude each Sunday during this season, that we spend these moments in sacred reflection, before we depart to take on the world.

You may also have noticed that we are not moving about the Sanctuary to share signs of peace and love amongst one another. Given the recent surge in all manner of communicable illnesses ranging from the common cold to COVID, for the time being we are offering holy hand waves and "air" high fives. We anticipate that on Easter Sunday we will once again embrace this moment in the fullness of its purpose.

Special Sunday: UMCOR

Every year, the world experiences devastating hurricanes, storms, wars, and other crises. The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is there to help as events unfold. UMCOR works in the U.S. and more than 80 countries worldwide, providing survivors with immediate aid and long-term rebuilding and support. UMCOR spends 100% of designated aid gifts on relief projects. None of these designated relief gifts go to administration. How then are UMCOR's operating costs covered? Every year, during Lent, churches across the UMC celebrate UMCOR with a "Special Sunday" offering. These offerings support UMCOR's administrative operations to ensure the organization stays strong behind the scenes, to serve people in their moments of greatest need. Use special offering envelopes on **March 10**, or go to stpaulsk.org/giving.





Dear St. Paul's,

I have received weekly notes and prayer cards during my time of illness. I am hopeful to be on the road to recovery. I thank all of you for sending wisdom, prayers, and support.

Sincerely,
Kristen Moe

Dear St. Paul's Family,

I am so thankful and grateful for the love and support that my St. Paul's family has shown me after my dad's passing. Your talks, hugs, cards, calls and texts have been overwhelming and so comforting. Special thanks to Pastor Pat for checking in to see how I was doing, and for a big hug that I needed that first Sunday I was back in church.

Thank you again,
Laura Tribble

Dear St. Paul's,

I want to pass along a big thank you to everyone at St. Paul's. My wife and I loved our time there and the loving and friendly community. Both our sons were baptized there, as well as my wife Kelly. We found our faith as a family at St. Paul's and are so thankful and blessed for that. We were reluctant to leave and move to a new church, but due to our move it was necessary. We will miss our time and the people at St. Paul's.

Thank you for everything.
John Petch and Family

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. Mabel Baker

3618 Littledale Rd
Apt. 218B
Kensington MD 20895

Ms. Susie Propes

3301 S. Leisure World Blvd.
Apt. #2E
Silver Spring, MD 20906

Dr. Jo Campa

301 Russell Ave
Wilson Building, #219
Gaithersburg MD 20877

Mr. & Mrs. Clarence & Marybelle Waldroff

9901 Capitol View Ave
Silver Spring MD 20910

Mrs. Dorothea Depenbrock

6602 Greyswood Road
Larmax Home
North Bethesda MD 20817

Mr. Bob Neidecker

415 Russell Ave, Apt. 613
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Sharing Joys and Burdens

When a friend of St. Paul's is facing a health issue, grief, or a joyful event like a wedding or new baby, they can let our community know they welcome notes from friends. This information is shared in the Congregational Care list, available each Sunday at the Welcome Table. Our Card Ministry also uses this list to pre-address cards. Please pick up a card to send, or pick up a list – or both! Questions? Contact Meg Baker (mbaker@stpaulsk.org).



Few things better demonstrate our hospitality than making sure all of our members and friends receive a warm welcome upon arrival at our church, and that new Sunday morning visitors are greeted and 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 welcome to volunteer together! Contact Meg Baker at mbaker@stpaulsk.org or 301-933-7933 ext. 104.

Taste & Sing

Tuesday, March 19, 2024
12:00-1:00 PM, Octagon

With Meg Baker on piano and Erin Steele as song leader, we'll sing some hymns suggested by the group. Feel free to request your favorites! Then we enjoy a short program on a featured composer, lyricist, or theme, offering a deeper dive into the stories behind our worship songs. No musical experience needed! Afterward we enjoy a tasty lunch prepared by Ginny Hagberg (\$5). Contact Meg Baker with questions at mbaker@stpaulsk.org, 301-933-7933 ext. 104.



December 2023: Guest leader Jon Melegrito teaches three Hawaiian and Filipino holiday tunes.

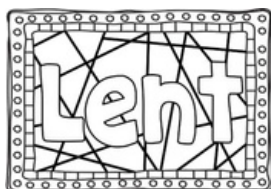
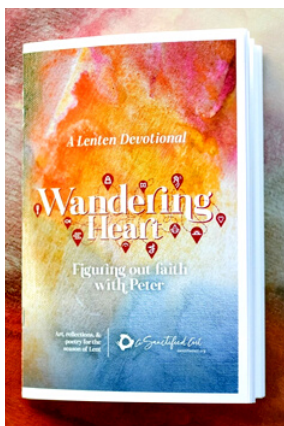
Wednesday Zoom Study



Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00 PM by Zoom

This weekly come-when-you-can Bible study continues on Wednesdays with a journey through the six-week Lent study, *The Third Day: Living the Resurrection*, by Tom Berlin. (This study uses the same material as the in-person Lenten study on Tuesday nights led by Mike McCurry.) For more information on the Wednesday gathering, or to receive the Zoom link, contact Meg Baker at mbaker@stpaulsk.org.

Resources for Lenten Devotions



Lent is an annual time of repentance, fasting, self-examination, and reflection in preparation for the coming of Easter. St. Paul's has several resources for your devotional time during this season. Please find these available for pick-up in the Narthex, or contact Dr. Meg Baker at 301-933-7933 ext 104 or mbaker@stpaulsk.org to receive copies by mail.

- *Wandering Heart: Figuring out Faith with Peter* is a weekly devotional from A Sanctified Art, offering Scriptures, poems, art, reflections, and songs to help us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God.
- *The Sanctuary for Lent 2024* contains daily readings of Scriptures, devotions, and prayers to help readers faithfully journey through Lent and prepare for the joy of the Resurrection.
- *What Is Lent?* is a booklet with activities that show children how to better understand – and participate in – the Lenten season.
- *Lent 2024* is a calendar offering children ways to engage in the Lenten season on a daily basis.
- *Lent 101* offers a brief guide for all ages regarding the meaning, history, and traditional practices of the Lenten church season.

The Sanctuary Choir Presents: At His Name

By Tom Pedersen, Director of Music

"At His Name" by Joel Raney

Thursday, March 28, 2024

7:30 PM

In-person in the Sanctuary

Join Music Director N. Thomas Pedersen, our Sanctuary Choir, and a 13-piece chamber orchestra for our Maundy Thursday worship service. The musical feature this year reflects on Jesus's ministry and life on earth, and looks at the monumental effect his many names had throughout history: Messiah, Emmanuel, Prince of Peace, King of Kings, and Lamb of God.

Starting with the early days where Jesus began preaching and performing miracles, then continuing up to those final momentous events of his passion, "At His Name" explores the profound significance of Jesus through a combination of powerful music, captivating narration, and heartfelt lyrics. This extraordinary work for choir and orchestra, with narration by the esteemed Dr. Rev. Patricia Allen, promises to deepen your Holy Week journey. In addition to experiencing this awe-inspiring service live, we encourage you to take some time beforehand to reflect on the names used for Jesus in scripture. Let these powerful words inspire and deepen your connection with Him this Lenten Season.

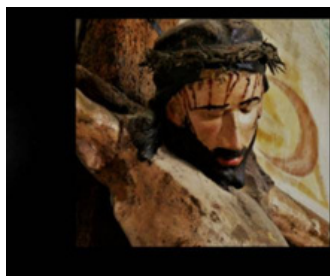


Good Friday

Friday, March 29, 2024

7:30 PM

Good Friday, also sometimes called Holy Friday or Black Friday, commemorates the crucifixion and death of Christ. The service will feature music selected by organist Marvin Mills and time for contemplation. Join this solemn service in-person in the the Sanctuary. Good Friday worship will also be livestreamed this year at stpaulsk.org/worship/worship-at-home.



Holy Week Stations of the Cross

Monday-Friday, March 25-29, 2024

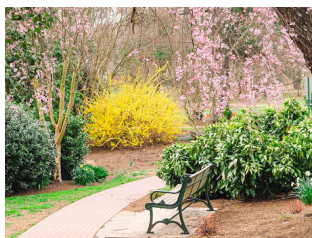
11:00 AM-1:00 PM & 5:00-7:00 PM

In-person in the Octagon

The Stations of the Cross are a series of Scriptures which tell the story of the crucifixion. Even though we know that death does not have the final word and resurrection is coming, this is a practice that gives us an opportunity to reflect and repent. This self-guided experience consists of six stations (abbreviated from the traditional fourteen). St. Paul's Stations of the Cross event this year invites us to walk "the way of sorrows" to the cross through the eyes of one of Jesus' closest disciples. The visitor experience highlights Peter's role in the crucifixion narrative as told in the Gospel of John, helping us to follow Jesus to his death with Peter as our companion. Each of the six stations provides multisensory ways to imagine, engage, confess, and lament. By focusing on Peter, we can consider how we might have acted and behaved as one of Jesus' followers and friends.

- **Station 1: Peter resists then receives the foot washing - JOHN 13:1-20**
- **Station 2: Jesus foretells Peter's denials - JOHN 13:31-38**
- **Station 3: Peter draws his sword - JOHN 18:1-11**
- **Station 4: Jesus is arrested and Peter denies Christ - JOHN 18:12-18**
- **Station 5: Peter denies Christ again and again - JOHN 18:19-27**
- **Station 6: Jesus is Crucified - JOHN 19:1-30**

Easter Sunday Worship



March 31, 2024

7:00 AM - in-person, outdoors in Clum-Kennedy Park, Kensington MD

The First Service of Easter will be held outdoors in the garden-like setting of Clum-Kennedy Park. (Parking is available in the lot between Johnson's flowers and Old Town Market on Kensington Parkway.) As with our outdoor services in the past year, please bring your own chairs and dress for whatever the weather might bring.



March 31, 2024

9:00 AM - in-person in the Sanctuary at St. Paul's

10:30 AM - in-person in the Sanctuary at St. Paul's and livestreaming

Celebrate the message of hope made alive in the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Both the 9:00 & 10:30 services will be held in the Sanctuary of St. Paul's UMC and will include the Sanctuary Choir and brass. The 10:30 service will be livestreamed for those who prefer to worship at home. You will be able to find the video and a downloadable *pdf of the worship bulletin at stpaulsk.org/worship/worship-at-home

Easter Lily Orders



St. Paul's Sanctuary will have Easter lilies this year. Lily sponsors may make a dedication, in memory or honor of loved ones, which will be shared in our commemorative Lily Bulletin. Online ordering using a credit card will be open March 7-24 at stpaulsk.org/worship/lent-and-easter. In-person orders using cash or check and paper forms will be received by our Lily Volunteers in the Narthex on March 10, 17, and 24. Sponsors may take home their plants following the 10:30 AM worship service on Easter, March 31. (The church office is closed on Easter Monday, April 1.) Plants can also be picked up in the Narthex during office hours starting April 2.

Children's Easter Egg Hunt



Sunday, March 31, following 10:30 AM Worship

All friends of St. Paul's are welcome at this year's Easter Egg Hunt immediately following the 10:30 AM worship on Easter Sunday, March 31. Bring your own basket or bag! Children in Grade 5 and younger will be grouped by age and have an opportunity to participate in an Easter Egg Hunt and coloring activities. Please bring your own basket or bag. While there is no cost for this event, registration is encouraged for planning purposes; please sign-up in the Narthex or online at stpaulsk.org/community/children.

Help Wanted! – We are in need of volunteers – both adults and youth – to help with logistics, child safety, and peripheral activities. Contact Dr. Meg Baker at mbaker@stpaulsk.org. Donations of Easter Eggs, filled with candy (no nuts or chocolate, please!), would be most welcome! Place filled plastic eggs or candy donations in the bin in the main office beginning March 10.

Easter Offering

As is our tradition, 100% of the Easter Special Offering will be dedicated to projects that make the world better for those in need beyond the walls of St. Paul's. Leadership in the SAM will determine which organizations will benefit this year.

Egg My Yard and Support Shelter Meals

Do you live in the Kensington, Rockville, or Silver Spring area? Would you like to wake up to a yard filled with candy-stuffed eggs from the Easter Bunny? We can make it happen! Your Easter eggs will be delivered either Friday or Saturday night before Easter (based on your preference). We have limited capacity, so sign up soon! Feel free to share with friends and neighbors!

30 eggs = \$25. 50 eggs = \$45. 70 eggs = \$75.

In order to participate, fill out this Google survey:
<https://forms.gle/dmm3UhNLxjb1FBj6>



Why? St. Paul's has a several decades-long commitment to the Interfaith Works Taft Court shelter off Gude Drive (formerly the Wilkins Avenue facility). During COVID (2020-2022), a group at St. Paul's formed to purchase, prepare, and deliver breakfast supplies and hot meals, rotating between Taft Court, a short-term shelter in Silver Spring, and a new shelter at Crabb's Branch Way. The church is seeking funds to help support this ongoing effort. In the past, St. Paul's undertook to provide meals for one week each spring, with various church groups preparing and serving 35-40 dinner meals each day and providing sandwiches for the week. Historically, groups included the Methodist Men, women's circles, confirmation class, adult classes, choir, and Justice & Compassion, with each group covering their own expenses.

Who are the 2x4s? The 2x4s tend to be church attendees in their 20s to 40s, though we don't card folks - your age doesn't prohibit you from being a part of this group! Typically, we have functioned as a social group but this will be our first fundraising effort toward specific St. Paul's ministries.

Would you like to volunteer to help with this effort? Email Rachel Stalcup at rachelstalcup@gmail.com. We need folks to stuff eggs and of course, sneaky folks to help hide eggs!

Feeding Hungry Neighbors: Our Signature Ministry

Responses in our "This Is Us" survey confirm members and friends agree: the Hunger Ministry is an important way St. Paul's works to make life better in the 20895 ZIP code. On the second Monday of each month, families receive pantry staples, a dinner meal in "to go" boxes, and donated baked goods. We also provide a grocery store card. Recipients can use it to buy perishables like produce, meat, dairy, or frozen foods that we can't stock, navigate unique dietary restrictions or preferences, or select hygiene items! This is one feature that makes our program different from other food programs.



What We Use Each Month

- Donations needed! Cold cereal, instant oatmeal, soup, rice, beans, pasta, pasta sauce, mac & cheese, canned tuna, canned chicken, canned vegetables, canned fruit/applesauce, cooking oil, boxed milk.
- *Please, no glass, and no items beyond their "best by" or "sell by" dates!*
- Financial support lets us order bulk groceries and grocery store gift cards. Mark donations for "Hunger Ministry."

Community Engagement: Oxon Hill Elementary Library

Help support students at Oxon Hill Elementary School! The school's library is struggling to purchase new books and many of the shelves are bare. The librarians are seeking some specific titles to help fill the shelves with books. You can help by purchasing some books from the library's Amazon wish list:
https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1F0Z0QRWC9FJK?ref_=wl_share



United Methodist Men's Group Dinner

Wednesday, March 20
6:15-8:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall

It's back! For the first time since Covid, the United Methodist Men are having a supper and general meeting. The UMM will have a Chili Cook-off Dinner on Wednesday, March 20 at 6:15 PM, to be followed by a short meeting to discuss our efforts to re-boot the UMM, and then a PowerPoint presentation on "Wintertime and Dogsledding in Alaska." Women and others interested in attending the presentation and should plan to join us at about 7:15.

A sign-up sheet for this event can be found in the church office. Several of the men who are good cooks have volunteered to make and bring the chili. The UMM will provide a delicious dessert. The cost for dinner is \$7.00, payable at the door. We would like a few other men to bring some salad or bread. If you can bring salad or bread, please indicate that on the sign-up sheet. (Bringing a salad or bread is NOT a prerequisite.)



Yarn Ministry

The Yarn Ministry invites all crafters to bring knitting, crochet, or other projects to the Library at St. Paul's, and craft alongside friends twice a month. March gatherings are currently scheduled for March 11 and 25. Contact Karen Codner at KDC811@gmail.com to stay on top of Yarn Ministry activities.

Community Pancake Breakfast



Saturday, March 2, 2024
Serving hours: 8:00-10:30 AM
Fellowship Hall

Bring a friend and join us for the monthly community all-you-can-eat Pancake Breakfast at St. Paul's. Please use the entrance near the corner of Mitchell & Fawcett Streets. Come enjoy scrambled eggs, pancakes, fresh sage sausage, grits, fruit and beverages. In addition to our regular pancakes, we will also be serving either French toast or French toast muffins for a treat this month.

Rather than a fixed price, we ask that guests, upon arriving, make a generous donation. As a guide, the suggested amount is \$8 for adults and \$2 for children under 12, or \$20 for a family of 4.

Looking ahead: The next pancake breakfast will be **Saturday, April 6, 2024**. Come out and join us for a delicious meal as we continue our pancake breakfast tradition which began in 1970.

Lydia Circle Sisters

The Lydia Circle sisters are meeting the first Wednesday of each month at 2:30 PM, usually in the Octagon Room at St. Paul's. This time of women's fellowship is open to all ladies. Please contact leader Susan Schwarz at susan10748@aol.com or 301-339-8242 for up-to-date meeting information.



"This Is Us" Meeting Recap

by Rachel Stalcup, SAM Chairperson

On Sunday, February 11, members of St. Paul's lay leadership (also known as SAM) gathered in the Sanctuary for a church-wide meeting to discuss the "This Is Us" document and the related survey. The meeting was also live-streamed and can be viewed by going to the stpaulsk.org/worship/worship-at-home recording for Feb. 11.

Rachel Stalcup, Chairperson of the SAM, explained the origins of SAM (formerly known as Church Council). SAM stands for Simplified Accountability Model and the idea is to streamline the business functions and decisions of the church in order to better align with the church's ministry goals - and to ensure St. Paul's can be the hands and feet of Christ in the community, as was expressed during the visioning retreat in early 2023. SAM works alongside the pastors in servant leadership. The SAM meets several times a year and the meetings are open and announced in Weekly News and the Epistle. (The next SAM meeting will take place on Zoom on March 18, 6:30-8:00 PM). The individuals who have volunteered to serve on SAM give their time, talent, and treasure - and they are always available to hear your questions and comments. All the SAM members are listed at the bottom of this message.

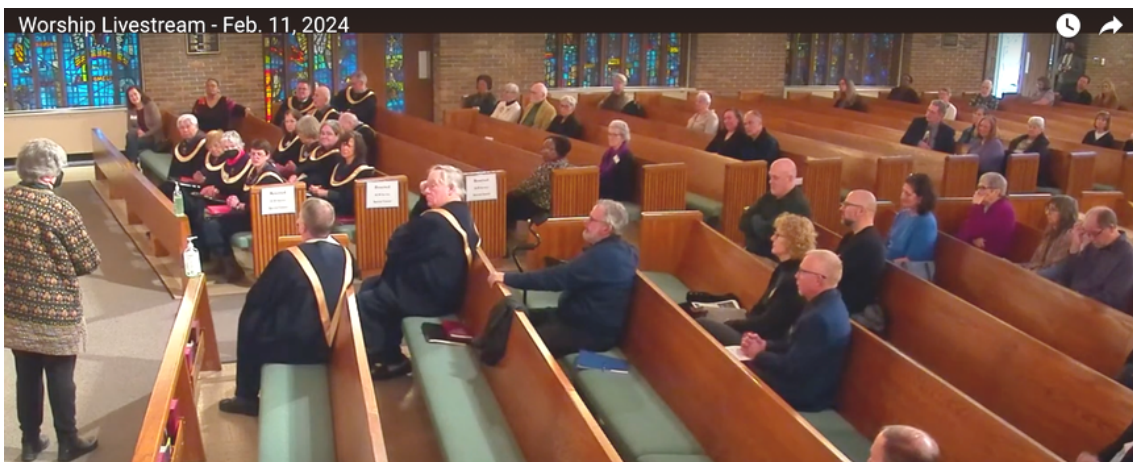
Grace Graham described her role as the Ministry Table Chair. As a subset of SAM, the Ministry Table concentrates on ministries of the church and advocates to SAM for support and resources to better serve the community. Last year, the Ministry Table focused on identifying efforts within the church and needs of the community. In 2024, the group is making connections across our internal groups and programs sponsored by outside organizations and other faith groups. All ideas, suggestions, operational support, and resources from the congregation are welcome!

Rich Higgins, who oversees the church finances in his role on SAM, announced that while 2023 was a challenging year for church finances (operating at a deficit for most of the year), we were blessed to end the year with a surplus. 2024 is a year of opportunity, and SAM hopes to stabilize our finances and continue the important work of re-building and growing our ministries through a greater commitment to Stewardship and serving our local and worldwide community.

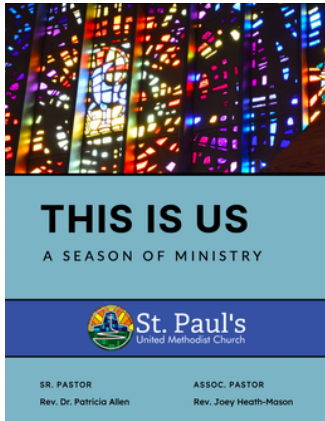
Finally, our new Lay Leader Anne Dean, talked about the survey connected to the "This Is Us" document. The survey is a great example of how the leadership asks and listens to congregational input. There were 52 respondents to the "This Is Us" survey, which had three components - internal logistics, internal spiritual formation and ministry, and external ministry and mission. The SAM learned that congregants place a high value on St. Paul's electronic and print communications, and that the Hunger Ministry remains a central part of our church's ministries. Congregants also emphasized the importance of Sunday School as a way to engage youth and families. The information gathered in the survey will be used to guide the leadership's decision-making over the next year.

If you have any questions, please contact Rachel Stalcup at rachelstalcup@gmail.com.

SAM Chairperson: Rachel Stalcup; SAM Members: Rich Higgins (Finance), Jenny Lipford (Staff-Parish Relations), Anne Dean (Lay Leader), Bill Stephens, Tracey Furman, Alison Clark, Ari Brooks, Marge Higgins (pictured standing, left), Gregg Molander (Stewardship), Jonathan Smith (Recording Secretary), Mike Barnes (Trustee), Grace Graham (Chair, Ministry Table), Sandie Chen, Dawn Ely, Alice Graham, Jay McNer, Lesley Maloney.



"This Is Us" - A Report on the State of the Church



Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen and Rev. Joey Heath-Mason, the pastors of St. Paul's, composed a report on the current state of the church, titled "This Is Us: A Season of Ministry." In just 18 easy-to-read pages, broken down into seven sections, the pastors offer a clear look at the life of St. Paul's today. This report addresses membership, worship attendance, mission and outreach efforts, church leadership, staffing, building use, budget concerns, and the daily ins-and-outs of operating St. Paul's, with a special focus on the state of the church since 2020.

You can download and read the "This Is Us" *pdf any time by going to stpaulsk.org/we-are-all-about/the-pastors-page and clicking the button. Printed copies of "This Is Us" are available upon request; contact Erin Steele in the church office at stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org or 301-933-7933 ext 100 to request a copy.

"This Is Us" Follow-Up Questions: Membership

By Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen, Senior Pastor

During our church wide meeting on Sunday February 11, 2024 a question regarding our membership was posed which I tentatively addressed. I promised to research the question and provide a response. The question was "Since COVID, how many members have we lost and how many have we gained?"

Each January, we prepare a required statistical report for the Baltimore-Washington Conference which captures information about our membership, as well as other church data. That report is the source from which the following response is prepared.

Since 2020, a total of 155 persons have been removed from the membership rolls of St. Paul's UMC Kensington, for one of the following reasons:

- withdrew from the denomination
- transferred to another UMC church
- transferred to a non-UMC church
- removed by church conference action
- passed away

Of these 155 persons, the largest group (53) were removed by church conference action. These are persons who have not in any way participated in the life of the church, joined in worship, or contributed to the ministries of the church over a three-year period AND have not responded to any attempts of the church to contact them by mail, phone, or email.

The Book of Discipline lays out rules for an annual "care of members review," resulting in the removal of such inactive members from the membership roll every year at church conference. So, there will most likely be more persons removed by church conference action in the fall of this year, for the same reasons.

Since 2020, 45 persons have been received into membership at St. Paul's UMC Kensington through confirmation, transfer from another UMC church, or reaffirmation of faith (received from another denomination).

Our current membership is 687. At the beginning of 2020, our membership roll carried 803 names.

However, since our vitality and vibrancy are measured by our ministry and living out our mission, I would offer that St. Paul's is succeeding in feeding the hearts, minds, and souls of the people God sends our way, in ways that are not solely defined by membership numbers.

-- Pastor Pat

A Message from the Stewardship Chair



Dear fellow members and friends of St. Paul's,

Thank you to all who attended the church meeting on Feb 11. As I listened to the updates from our leaders and, more poignantly, to the questions and comments from our congregation, I was reminded that we are truly blessed. We are blessed to have people among us who have served St. Paul's so faithfully for so long. We are blessed to have new faces stepping up to lead for the months and years to come. We are blessed to have people who have returned to church after being away, and we are blessed to have people who never left.

We are blessed with dreamers – people with a vision for what our church can be. A vision of renewed missions abroad and strengthened missions within our own community. A vision to host more study groups and congregational events. And a vision to create more opportunities for the young people at St. Paul's.

At our church meeting, it felt like we were looking at a future marked by abundance rather than scarcity. We are focused on what can be more than what we've lost or what we once were.

Achieving this vision and bringing St. Paul's to the place we dream it can be will take time and resources. Your gifts of time, talent, and treasure are crucial. As the year progresses, you'll hear more about our stewardship campaign. If you haven't yet made a 2024 pledge, it's not too late. Purple paper pledge forms can be found at the Welcome Desk on Sundays, and the online pledge form remains available at <https://stpaulsk.org/giving>.

For those who have already pledged and for those who feel moved to increase your commitment, your generosity is sincerely appreciated.

With gratitude,
Gregg Molander (greggmolander@gmail.com)

Still Wednesday Leaders Welcome All

"Be still and know that I am God."

Still Wednesday continues to meet on Wednesday evenings, 7:00-8:00 PM, for a time of contemplative communal prayer. Please join us if you would like to deepen your relationship with God while building community.

All are welcome. Enter the Sanctuary in silence, light a candle, and listen for the facilitator to introduce a form of contemplative prayer. We have seven rotating leaders and the prayer form varies every week but may include music, art, poetry, chant, or scripture. We then move into 20 minutes of silent communal prayer, followed by journaling and optional sharing.

Come any time you are in need of some quiet and stillness in your life. Questions? Contact Kenzie Raulin, kenzier@rcn.com.

**We can make our minds
so like still water
that beings gather about us
that they may see,
it may be, their own images,
and live for a moment with a
clearer,
perhaps even with a fiercer life
because of our quiet,
our silence.**

~ William Butler Yeats

Lay Leader's Reflections

by Anne Dean, Lay Leader



St. Paul's Leadership Retreat
Back row: Alison Clark,
Jonathan Smith,
Mike Barnes.
Middle Row: Ari Woldeab,
Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen,
Sandie Chen, Marge Higgins,
Dawn Ely,
Rod Miller (facilitator),
Alice Graham.
Front Row: Gregg Molander,
Rich Higgins, Anne Dean,
Jenny Lipford,
Grace Graham.

*Not pictured: Lesley Maloney,
Jay McNer, Travis Stalcup,
Bill Stephens*

On Saturday, January 27, St. Paul's leadership (SAM) gathered for a retreat. Using the "Active Hope" structure from Joanna Macy (www.activehope.info and www.joannamacy.net/) as the focus for the retreat, Rev. Rod Miller led us through our day. Many of you know Rod, as he also guided St. Paul's through a church-wide visioning retreat in January 2023.

There were several contemplation questions/prompts where we worked on individually then shared with the group. It was a God-filled day of spirit-focused work, and I wanted to share those questions with you as they impacted me deeply.

*Who am I in the eyes of God?
How do I see me?
When I think about the future we are heading into, what troubles me is...
What inspires me is...
Looking at the future we are heading into, what I deeply hope for is...
A part I would like to play in support of this hope is...
A step I will take toward this hope in the next 7 days is...*

To me, these are perfect questions for contemplation and reflection during the Lenten season. I encourage you to spend time with them and, if you feel called, share your reflections with someone.

Want a listening ear? I'm here? Email me at annepdean@gmail.com and we'll set up a time for a chat.

Stephen Ministers Invite Your Call

St. Paul's has had a Stephen Ministry program for more than 25 years. We are a group of trained members who listen, confidentially, when life presents challenges. Often just having someone to listen can help along the way. The Stephen Ministers invite you to make use of us. Call Virginia Bickford at 301-598-5496 or email Meg Baker at mbaker@stpaulsk.org.

Sunday School Updates

From Dr. Meg Baker, Minister of Spiritual Care and Formation:

Sunday School classes are holding steady this year, thanks to the wonderful team of adult volunteers teaching and helping during chapel time and in the classroom! We are so grateful for their commitment and dedication to the youngest among us. Children in Grades K-5 begin the Sunday School hour in the Chapel for worship and song before heading off to classes grouped by age. We will continue our Lenten journey this month, learning some of Jesus' teachings in the Gospel accounts, and, of course, leaning into the highs and lows of Holy Week.



Above: Dottie Patch and Lisa Babb leading a combined one-room Sunday School class for all students. Below: Ellen Goleb teaching the Kindergarten-Grade 2 class.



Important Dates

Children in Grades K-5 will attend 10:30 worship services with their families in the Sanctuary on Children's Sunday, **March 3**, and Easter Sunday, **March 31**. There will be no Sunday School on these days. Busy bags for children's use during worship may be found at the Welcome Desk. Childcare for infants and toddlers is available in the 2nd floor Nursery at 10:30.

For children's programming questions or to be added to the Sunday School email list, contact Dr. Meg Baker (mbaker@stpaulsk.org).

St. Paul's Nursery



Our paid nursery staff provide Nursery Care for infants and preschoolers during the 10:30 worship service each week. (Pictured above: Dee Dee Murphy and Sandi Wilson.) For more information, please contact Dr. Meg Baker at mbaker@stpaulsk.org or 301-933-7933 ext. 104.

Children's Choir

All young people in grades K-6 are welcome at choir for singing, snacks, and fellowship. Rehearsal is typically held during the school year in the MultiPurpose Room on Sundays at 11:45 AM (following the 10:30 worship service). To get involved, contact Children's Choir director, Ms. Christina Griffin, at clgriff18@gmail.com.



Vacation Bible School

St. Paul's will be partnering with Bethesda UMC & Chevy Chase UMC to bring Vacation Bible School to kids in our community! All activities will take place at Bethesda UMC, at 8300 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda MD. VBS meets June 17-21, 2024, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM. Go to <https://vbspro.events/p/events/d42030> to register.



Fun kid-friendly news, trivia, puzzles, and Bible verses prepared by our Director of Christian Education, Dr. Meg Baker.

Holy Week and Eastertide

Make It! Easter Eggs in a Nest

- 1/3 cup butter
- 4 cups mini marshmallows
- 6 cups cornflakes cereal
- Cadbury mini eggs,
or Whoppers mini robin eggs,
or large jelly beans
(between 12 and 36 candies)
- 1 muffin pan



1. Grease the cups of the muffin pan or line with paper liners.
2. Put the cornflakes in a large mixing bowl.
3. With a grown-up's help, melt the butter in a pot over low heat on the stove. Add the marshmallows and keep stirring until they melt completely.
4. Pour the marshmallow-butter mix over the cornflakes. Stir gently until cornflakes are coated.
5. Using a spoon (because the mix may still be hot!), press the cornflakes into the muffin cups, making a "nest" shape.
6. Place one, two, or three candy eggs in the center of each nest.
7. Let cool! You can put them in the refrigerator for about 1 hour.
8. Note: You can also make the nests using your favorite Rice Krispie Treats recipe.

Match It! Holy Week Puzzle

Holy Week days are tied to Bible stories about Jesus. Draw a line to match the Holy Week day listed on the left with the best description.

**PALM
SUNDAY**

A celebration of Jesus rising from the dead and the promise of eternal life. (Luke 24)

**MAUNDY
THURSDAY**

The start of Holy Week marks Jesus's happy but humble arrival into Jerusalem. (John 12:12-16)

**GOOD
(also "Holy"
or "Black")
FRIDAY**

A solemn day marking the death of Jesus on the cross, with serious worship. (Mark 15:33-47)

**EASTER
SUNDAY**

From the Latin word "mandatum" or commandment, it focuses on events in the last days of Jesus's life, including the Last Supper. (Matthew 26)

Easter is a whole season in the church! It starts on Easter Sunday and lasts 50 days, until we reach Pentecost in May.

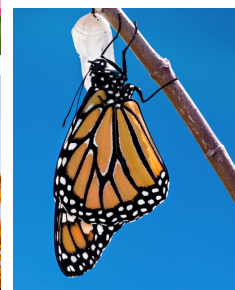
Did You Ever Wonder About... Easter Symbols?

Lilies - Lilies and other flowers that come from bulbs (like daffodils and tulips) lay in the ground during the cold months and seem to be dead. Each spring, they grow and show they are alive! And the beautiful flowers remind us to have hope.

Eggs & Chicks - Jesus's death and resurrection brought new life to all people. The chick that hatches from the egg is a new life. In breaking free of the egg, we are reminded Jesus broke free from the tomb. If you go to an "Easter Egg Roll," you may be reminded of the stone that was rolled away from the tomb!

Butterflies - The caterpillar transforms into a colorful butterfly. In one sense, the caterpillar "dies" and the butterfly is "born," like Jesus dying on the cross and rising in glory, or us being transformed by the love of Jesus.

Easter Bunny - This one is tricky! Baby bunnies born in the spring are another sign of new life and hope. But a bunny who brings colorful eggs? According to the Center for Children's Literature and Culture at the University of Florida, it started with a very old German folktale about a little girl who prayed over an injured bird. According to legend, the bird was magically transformed into a rabbit. It hopped away but returned each year, and laid rainbow-colored eggs! About 300 years ago, German settlers in America shared the legend of this egg-laying rabbit, symbolizing transformation and new life like that offered by Jesus. The night before Easter, children would put out hand-made nests. In the morning they'd find brightly colored eggs inside. Nowadays we put out baskets lined with paper or plastic grass instead, and many of our surprises on Easter morning are made of chocolate! That's sweet. The resurrection of Jesus is also one sweet story!





St. Paul's

United Methodist Church

10401 Armory Avenue
Kensington, MD 20895

stpaulsk.org | 301-933-7933

Worship with St. Paul's

Worship In-Person:

In the Sanctuary

Sundays March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 at 9:00 AM & 10:30 AM

Maundy Thursday & Good Friday, March 28 & 29, 7:30 PM

Worship in Clum-Kennedy Park

Easter Sunday morning, March 31 at 7:00 AM

Worship Online:

Worship-at-Home Livestreaming every Sunday at 10:30 AM

stpaulsk.org/worship/worship-at-home

March 2024

Epistle Options

Email (color)

Send an email to

stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org

to be added to the email list.

Download (color)

stpaulsk.org/community/epistle-weekly-news

Mail (black & white)

Contact the church office at

stpaulsunited@stpaulsk.org

to be added to the mailing list.

