



THIS IS US

A SEASON OF MINISTRY



St. Paul's
United Methodist Church

SR. PASTOR

Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen

ASSOC. PASTOR

Rev. Joey Heath-Mason

St. Paul's United Methodist Church

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1885 St. Paul's United Methodist Church Kensington has served the community and town of Kensington through ministries that feed the body, mind, and spirit.

As we approach the threshold of a new year, a new season of ministry and opportunity, we thought it would be beneficial to share an overview of St. Paul from January 2020 to its current reality.

COVID 19 wreaked havoc in ways that can never fully be realized; and it also provided opportunities that may not have been otherwise explored.

We have faced the reality that our congregation has changed. New friends join familiar faces in worship. And while it may seem we are still trying to find our footing after COVID there is more than sufficient evidence to the contrary. We are “marching to Zion”, determined to continue our call as a place of welcome, inclusion and hope within this community.

It is our hope that as you peruse the information provided that you not only find abundant evidence of a vibrant and vital spiritual community, but also ways in which you may help us grow in ministry and faith.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR PASTOR

As I prepare to conclude this season of ministry with you, I think it fitting to share with you some of the many things that have occurred during our time together as pastor and congregation.

So often life demands we focus on what is immediately before us. When this happens we may miss all of what is occurring around us.

While St. Paul's in many ways does not represent what it once was, it in far more ways models what it has always been.

Our journey together has not been without challenges. Our membership is not what it once was. There are those who have moved out of state and moved to other faith communities. There are those who felt called to become a part of other faith communities. And unfortunately there are those who have been unresponsive to our efforts to reconnect with them.

Our finances, which are majorly dependent upon the giving of our members and supplemented through various fundraising events, have had to be reimagined as our staff and our ministry needs have evolved; and as those who coordinated so many of those fundraising activities have had to step back.

COVID imposed unexpected demands that caused us to continue to pivot, retool, and reimagine all that we do.

We found ourselves bidding farewell to many who traded life on this side for life in eternity. Bidding farewell to staff to whom God offered opportunities they had only dreamed of.

These past three years we have shifted, pivoted, reimagined, redesigned and regrouped.

And yet, here we are, still standing, but more importantly thriving.

We've completed the second phase of our renovation project, invited new voices to the table of leadership, and grew our church family with new members and faces. St. Paul's has stepped up to help sister churches, continued to feed the hungry, provide school supplies, and provided staples for immigrants resettling in our area.

We've been the face of justice in the wake of the George Floyd protests, and the atrocities committed against our Trans and queer siblings. We marched in parades, and been angels of protection at our local libraries during Drag Queen hour. We have spoken out against atrocities of war abroad, and the continued violence that plagues our immediate and surrounding communities.

We've shown up in the park to celebrate Juneteenth and consecrate spaces desecrated by racist messages. We have not sat by idly watching others step up, we have stepped up, shown up and spoken up in the name of the Creator, who loves all of us.

As I write these words I am evermore aware that I will not see all that God has prepared for us this year and in the years to come. Yet as I prepare to pass the baton to the servant God has chosen as your next senior pastor, I am honored to have been able to travel this leg of your journey with you. So as you read of the many things we have done, may you be inspired to dream of the many things God cannot wait for you to do...

In the words of Walt Whitman and the Soul Children of Chicago,
"I might as well think big, why should any thought be small? I might as well think
big if I'm going to think at all."

Think and Dream Big St. Paul...

Rev. Dr. Patricia "Pastor Pat" Allen

LETTER FROM THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR

It was about 18 months ago that I first walked through the doors of St. Paul's as one of your pastors. I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I had been through six years of campus ministry and you were just emerging from COVID. Even as we were all changing, I saw a congregation committed to the community and to one another. In that emergence there was a vibrancy, even if just under the surface.

Since then I have seen who you really are, a community that cares and not just about ourselves but the world around us. You are committed to serving others. To providing food for those who are hungry, every month. Committed to making sure that families have Christmas presents. Committed to our young people at every stage of their development. Committed to serving others at every age on the spectrum. Committed to those who are grieving and struggling. You do so much and it really makes a difference in others lives each and every time you are the hands, feet, and heart of Jesus.

In that same 18 months, change and right sizing have also been a central part of who we are. The world has changed and so have we and that has brought some growing pains and yet you remain committed to everything I just listed and so much more.

The reality is that our changes are not over just yet, but then that is the essence of the Christian life. To grow and change. To adjust and adapt. For 2000 years we have been changing and each God meets and the Holy Spirit inspires us and from that comes something new, something beautiful. So what does God have in store for us?

Blessings,

Rev. Joey Heath-Mason

ST. PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN ACTION

The ministries of St. Paul have been long standing and fruitful. We have a rich history of ministries that feed the body, mind and spirit. Ministries such as the Community Pancake Breakfast, Yard, Christmas Tree, and Apple Sales, Craft Fair, Holiday Giving Project and Hunger Ministry.

However, the onset of COVID required us to embrace new ways of continuing our service to our community.

The pandemic forced a shutdown of all in person activities, but the ministry continued. Until the time it was safe to do so, all in person activities were suspended.

Clergy and staff created one online service, which in the early days of the pandemic was recorded off site. Eventually we were able to record and then move to livestreaming with staff, until we were fully able to return to in person worship.

We gathered for a single in person worship November 2020 with our All Saints Service. Our complete return to in person worship was with Easter 2021, where with COVID protocols we returned to the sanctuary.

We created the Daily Breath, which initially began as a daily online spiritual engagement each morning at 9:00am. As the constraints of the pandemic loosened, the Daily Breath schedule was pared down to a midweek engagement.

Still Wednesday met online, as did all of the administrative committees of the church.

Unable to collect and distribute nonperishable food items, Hunger Ministry mailed grocery gift cards each month to the families we served in the 20895 zip code.

During this time, the work of the building committee and building campaign was reignited. An assessment of building campaign funds created a clear picture of how the second phase of the building project would need to be revised so that it could continue.

Meetings with the respective parties, architect, county agencies, and conference committees all took place during COVID and in the early spring of 2022, the long awaited second phase of the building renovation plan began.

Staff primarily worked from home as the narthex coatroom, small bathrooms, tiny kitchenette and pastor's office were deconstructed and demolished. The end result was a widened narthex, larger kitchenette, a smaller pastor's office, and brand new gender specific bathrooms off the administrative corridor.

Additionally necessary ADA renovations were made in the parking lot and off Armory Street so that access from the street to the narthex was now possible for wheelchair access.

The lifting of COVID restrictions sparked the return of the UMM apple sale as of the fall of 2022 and the community pancake breakfasts as of January 2023. The Yarn Ministry resumed their annual craft fair in the fall of 2022, as did our first Holiday Giving Project effort. Hunger Ministry returned to in person distributions as well.

Taste and Sing resumed on the third Tuesday of each month and the UMW (now United Women of Faith) circles began to meet in person.

The pandemic shifted how some of our community groups utilized our building. Many self-help groups opted to remain in online meetings rather than return to meetings within our building.

During this time our church was engaged in the work of social justice as we gathered with the Kensington Racial Justice Committee (KJC) to discern the ways we were called to the work of undoing systemic racism.

We participated not only in discussions, but engaged in awareness efforts with the Jewish Anti-Defamation League, provided gift cards for the community back to school initiative sponsored by the KJC and participated in the first and second annual Kensington Juneteenth Celebrations.

We cannot forget that members of St. Paul's provide meals for the Women's Shelter, pack smart sacks for the middle school, and serve at Bethesda Help. just to name a few of the ways we are present in the community.

Currently, our Hunger Ministry continues to distribute food and meals to those in need within the 20895 zip code. The second Monday of each month nonperishable food items as well as fresh produce(when available), nonfood items(i.e. dish detergent,) grocery gift cards and meals from Campus Kitchens are shared with the approximately 40 - 50 families who come to the onsite distribution and the 30 - 40 families at Rebecca House to whom food is delivered.

We continue to partner with the Kensington Racial Justice Committee, Bethesda Help, feeding the women and preparing smart sacks, as we seek even more ways we are called to live out our mission within the community.

I encourage you to watch for information shared by the coordinator of our Ministry Table, Grace Graham that will list all of the many ministries within St. Paul's.

ST. PAUL'S IN LEADERSHIP

COVID revealed the overlap of meeting functions, as well as the presence of the same faces at the tables of decision. Decisions were disconnected from the mission and ministry of the church.

In late 2020 the conversation began concerning our leadership structure. We looked at the responsibilities of each committee, the number and outcome of meetings and who was actually attending. It was decided by clergy to begin the journey to discern if there was a way to connect our decisions with our mission, to engage in work that modeled discipleship, and work that yielded different outcomes.

Those in leadership positions engaged in designated book studies, focus group conversations and other trainings as we discerned whether to move toward a unified board structure.

The historical church administrative structure was the church council. The church council was composed of those committees mandated by the Book of Discipline, any age level ministries and the UMM and UMW. Meetings consisted of committee reporting and fiscal decisions, which meant that individual committees also had to meet prior to the Church Council meeting.

Attendance indicated that people were tired and any energy expended was focused on expense related decisions.

After much discussion and discernment, the leadership of the church(not the clergy) decided to present at the 2022 church conference an alternate model of church administration known as the SALT(now known as SAM) and the Ministry Table. SALT stands for Simplified Accountability Leadership Table Our current acronym SAM stands for SALT And Ministry.

This leadership model officially began in January 2023 and has spent this year learning how to work as a team, identifying the ministries of the church, and functioning as an “executive board” without the individual committee meetings of our previous administrative structure.

Each meeting is held on ZOOM and is open to the entire congregation. The minutes of each meeting are available on the church website as well.

As the SAM leans into its new identity, we look forward to the work of the incoming year, where SAM will create a budget which is mission oriented first, and fiscally sound and sustainable.

The members of SAM are:
Rachel Stalcup, Chairperson
Jenny Lipford, SPRC Chairperson
Rich Higgins, Finance
Mike Barnes, Trustee Rep

Alison Clark Anne Dean

Jonathan Smith *Dawn Ely

Bill Stephens Jay McNer

*Alice Graham *Gregg Molander

Travis Stalcup Marge Higgins

* Grace Graham *Sandie Chen

**Rev. Dr. Pat Allen **Rev. Joey Heath-Mason

* Ministry Table Members

** Non-voting members of SAM

SAM's Purpose is to:

- Synchronize and align the church's ministries with mission, vision, and goals, ultimately helping St. Paul's make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world
- Reduce the number of people engaged in administration in order to promote hands-on ministry and increased engagement in the mission field
- Maximize efficiency by empowering small groups and committees

SAM Leadership Covenant:

- SAM members are encouraged to invest in conversations and decisions with vigor and passion. However, once the members have come to a decision, each board member will openly and publicly support the decision of the board whether or not the individual member personally agrees with the decision. We are a board with a unified voice.
- SAM members are expected to be present and fully engaged at all SAM meetings whenever possible.
- SAM members will complete pre-work and action items and review the agenda prior to the meeting.
- SAM members are role models for the congregation and will faithfully participate in St. Paul's ministries through their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their witness.
- SAM members will encourage and support our pastors, staff, congregation, and fellow SAM members.
- SAM members will approach matters of disagreement with transparency and maintain our missional focus as a board.

To date the SAM has convened a leadership breakfast facilitated by Rev. Dr. Rod Miller. The purpose was to help SAM members get to know each other better and understand how to work even more effectively.

The SAM will meet in January for an offsite one day retreat again facilitated by Rev. Dr. Rod Miller. The focus of the retreat will be to determining the priorities and next steps for the SAM.

SAM meetings are open to the congregation at large, with the exception being any Staff Parish Relations items of discussion. For those portions of the meetings, in accordance with the Book of Discipline 2016, the meeting is closed to the congregation at large. Any member/constituent/friend of St. Paul's may request the ZOOM link for SAM meetings by contacting Rachel Stalcup chairperson at rachelstalcup@gmail.com



ST. PAUL'S RESOURCES

Webster's definition of a resource is "something that lies ready for use or that can be drawn upon for aid or to take care of a need; available money or property, wealth or assets." [1]

We are blessed with many resources.

[1] Webster's New World College Dictionary Fourth Edition. Wiley Publishing, Inc. Cleveland, OH. 2004. p1220

Physical Plant

St. Paul's partners with the Brookewood School for Girls in a long term leasing agreement. Monday through Friday with the exception of the Administrative and Music offices, the remaining spaces of the church are utilized as learning spaces. The parsonage is utilized by the school as Brookewood Staff Office Space. The leasing agreement for these spaces is reviewed annually and negotiated by the Facility Manager of St. Paul's, Tracey Furman.

During the summer and between semesters the music department of Morgan State University utilizes the Octagon as a classroom space, for a donation.

The Fellowship Hall and Multi- Purpose Room are generally available for congregation and community use when not used by the Brookewood School or otherwise reserved (e.g. Hunger Ministry, private events).

The sanctuary is not included in areas available for use apart from worship or gatherings approved by the pastor(s).

Post COVID, many groups that had previously rented or used space at St. Paul elected to either remain online or change locations.

Hands and Feet/Human Power

As of the 2022 Statistical Report, which captures year end data, the membership of St. Paul's United Methodist Church Kensington holds 763 names. Our average weekly worship attendance is 167(the total of both services, any special seasonal services and online). The weekly worship attendance represents 21.8% of the total of names on the membership roll.

Membership is defined as our presence, service, gifts, time, and money. Those who have not returned to St. Paul's post COVID and have not contributed financially, expressed an intent to remain connected but are unable to participate at this time, or have otherwise been present compose the remaining 79% of the congregation.

This supports research findings that 20% of the people do 80% of the work. The ministries highlighted in previous pages continue to serve due to the faithfulness of the 21% who in a variety of ways make things happen.

Our staff makeup was designed for a pre COVID era and a more robust programmatic focus which primarily staff led and executed. In previous years the staff has been composed of:

Office Manager

*Director of Christian Education

*Youth Pastor

Treasurer

Facility Manager

Custodian

*Note: these two positions were previously one position assigned to an ordained UMC deacon.

We have lost the services of a Full-time youth pastor and custodian; and the part time services of a treasurer.

Clergy are not included in staff composition as clergy appointments are within the realm of responsibility of the Bishop and Cabinet and not the local congregation.

A decline in staff and without an increase in member participation means the congregation will have to prioritize ministry efforts and decide how they will offset any imbalance.

One of the unseen consequences of COVID is the increased interactions with those who are aging without palliative care or end of life plans; those unable to live independently; and those suffering with mental illnesses and disorders. We are not equipped to address these increasing needs. Therefore we submitted a grant application that if awarded would allow us to hire a community engagement specialist who would facilitate the connection of needs to available services and agencies. We still await news of this application.

Finances

The church budget is composed of income and expenses. We do have several special fund/endowments that are pre-designated and therefore only available to be used for predetermined purposes (e.g. music, clergy housing).

In 2023, there were approximately 100 units (persons/households) who pledged to give a total of \$414,202.00. Unpledged offerings and loose plate offerings were anticipated to total \$200,000.00. Other Income (Brookewood, reimbursements and building use) were anticipated to be \$233,628.22 which would bring the total of anticipated income to \$700, 636.16.

However the anticipated expenses for 2023 were expected to total \$860,615.34. Of this total amount of expenses, approximately \$512,524.18 is due to staff and clergy salaries.

This means that approximately 59% of the church budget is committed to salaries and benefits.

The onset of COVID impacted giving to the degree that cost containment measures were enacted in 2020 and continue to be implemented. The leadership is preparing the 2024 budget which may include adjustments to staff salaries and responsibilities

This is the first point to remember.

Secondly, in 2020 our annual apportionment amount we were committed to pay to the Baltimore Washington Conference was \$136,000. Each church pays apportionments based on a formula determined by the Conference Council of Finance and Administration. Apportionments contribute to the provision of training and other staff and congregational equipping. The objective is for the local church to retain the majority of the funds given at the local church level for the purpose of mission and ministry. This can only happen if the expenses of the local church are reduced and the money given is used primarily for mission and ministry.

Since 2020, by ensuring that our budget was more mission and ministry focused we have reduced our apportionment amount from \$136,000 in 2020, to \$103,945 in 2024.

Unfortunately given our ever fluctuating financial situation we were unable to pay the full amount of our apportionment commitment since 2020. Our most recent apportionment repayment agreement states St. Paul's commitment to the following:

2022 pay 50% of our apportioned amount
2023 pay 50% of our apportioned amount
2024 pay 75% of our apportioned amount
2025 pay 100% of our apportioned amount.

Please note that the apportioned amount is determined by the information submitted on our statistical report the previous year. We must prepare to pay 100% of our apportioned amount for 2025 which necessitates prudent action now.

We applied for and received a security grant from Montgomery County which allowed us to purchase security cameras which have been installed interiorly at the majority of our entrance points, monitors (installed in the main church office) and a recording system.

Additionally we have applied for a second security grant that if awarded will allow us to purchase additional cameras to be installed on the building exterior.

NEXT STEPS AND OPPORTUNITIES:

As we prepare to experience a pastoral transition, we must embrace our responsibility as wise stewards and lay the foundation for our next season as a congregation. There are some things we know to be true as of this moment to be considered.

- We will not return to a pre-COVID existence. The consequences of COVID involve unprecedented variables that do not provide a basis for comparison.
- Our consistent current worship attendance indicates we are a congregation of 167 actively engaged members and not a church with 763 actively engaged members
- Normal cost containment measures have been exhausted.
- Decrease in staff invites increased leadership in ministry areas from the congregation

We are inviting you to engage in reflection and response in the following ways.

- 1.The prioritization of ministries and services.(see the next page)
- 2.Commitment to lead/support lay leadership in the accomplishing of ministry efforts.
3. Attend a church wide meeting immediately following the 10:30am service on Sunday January 21, 2024 to discuss

Beloved this is your opportunity to be heard, to share with us how you see God using the gifts you share with us for the future of God's church known as St. Paul's UMC Kensington.

Please follow the link below to respond to a brief survey and share your opinions or the link can be found at www.stpaulsk.org

<https://forms.gle/CPXoYfG7hz3943GA9>

