
St. Paul's United Methodist Church

Winter 2023-2024 Newsletter

*St. Paul's is a compassionate community,
led and transformed by the Spirit*



The Pastor's Epistle

I anticipate that when you read this letter, you may still be feeling the joy and exhaustion of your 2023 Thanksgiving celebrations! And now it's time to turn the seasonal page, entering into the season of Advent. During Advent, we prepare our hearts, our homes, and our identities for the long-anticipated birth of the Messiah. The prophets foretold the arrival of the Christ. Faithful ones clung to that promise for nearly six centuries. And we hear in the first chapter of the gospels of Luke and Matthew, angelic announcements through divine visitations, about God's plan to redeem the people. Each announcement reminds humans to "Fear Not" for God is handling this amazing situation which will usher into the human family the birth of a Savior.

Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and shepherds were all startled by divine visitors of the angelic kind. Some believed immediately the message shared with them. Others did not. But the truth of God's intention for the good ~ great joy ~ of all became clear. Those who were faithful would be rewarded. Those who were oppressed would be liberated. Those in exile would be welcomed home. In other words, the troubled would be blessed.

God desires for us to prepare for our troubles to be transformed by the Savior, and for us to experience blessing in the joy of our promised salvation. We have no reason to doubt that God will fulfill such a promise. God is faithful. Christ comes for all. Once again, we have the opportunity to share the "good news of great joy" with all those we encounter. How will others learn about that good news? Will they hear it in our words? Will they see it in our joy? Will they experience it in our actions? I pray they will.

Please join me in preparing for and welcoming the Christ child into our lives anew. For God is doing great things for us, too!



~ Rev. Beckie Sweet

2023 Advent Worship Series: "FEAR NOT!"

When God encounters us with a calling or a challenge, too often we respond with FEAR. We ask, "Am I too old?" "How will I fit this into my plans?" "Is this too hard for me?" "What do I get out of this?" "Won't this cause embarrassment?" "Who will help me?" God invites us to TRUST that we're already equipped for service in God's name. Certainly serving for God will be challenging, surprising, fulfilling, and joyful! So, what's holding us back? The angels remind God's chosen servants to "FEAR NOT!" As we prepare to receive the Prince of Peace Into our lives anew, may TRUST outweigh FEAR.

Advent/Christmas Worship Schedule

- **Sunday, December 3, 2023 @ 10:30 am ~ First Sunday of Advent**
Holy Communion ~ Advent Wreath HOPE ~ “Fear Not, Zechariah”
- **Sunday, December 10, 2023 @ 10:30 am ~ Second Sunday of Advent**
Advent Wreath PEACE ~ “Fear Not, Mary”
- **Sunday, December 17, 2023 @ 10:30 am ~ Third Sunday of Advent**
Advent Wreath JOY ~ “Fear Not, Joseph”
- **Thursday, December 21, 2023 @ 7:00 pm ~ Blue Christmas Service**
- **Sunday, December 24, 2023 @ 10:30 am ~ Fourth Sunday of Advent**
Advent Wreath LOVE ~ “Fear Not, Shepherds”
- **Sunday, December 24, 2023 @ 7:00 pm ~ Christmas Eve**
Advent Wreath CHRIST ~ “Fear Not, World”
- **Sunday, December 31, 2023 @ 10:30 am ~ First Sunday after Christmas**
- **Sunday, January 7, 2024 @ 10:30 am ~ EPIPHANY**
Holy Communion ~ “An Announcement of Stellar Proportions!”



2023 Advent Devotional Booklet: “The Gift of the Present”

Published by the Society of St. Andrew

During this season of waiting, anticipation, preparation, and celebration of Christ’s birth, so many important preparations lead up to Christmas Day. It’s easy to get lost in the frenzy, worrying about decorating, shopping lists, gift lists, Christmas Card lists...well-meaning Christians can wear

themselves out with worry! Perhaps this is a blue season that brings up unpleasant memories of past holidays or the loss of loved ones. Whether it’s anxiety about the future or sadness about the past, both cause Christians to lose sight of this present moment. We are not promised

tomorrow, only today. Right now is all we have. We must learn to stay in the present.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:34), Jesus reminds us not to worry about tomorrow. Rather, make the most of today: worshiping, praising, and serving Christ. These devotions remind us of the importance of being present spiritually, especially with those in need. Pick up your copy from a table in the church hallway. And if able, please make a donation, using the envelopes on the same table, to support the production of this devotional book and the feeding ministries of the Society of St. Andrew.



Planting Dottie's Garden

When Dottie Scott passed in September, her friends in both the Festival Chimes and the Chancel Choir decided the best way to honor her was to plant a Memorial Garden. Thank you to all who contributed in some way to the Memorial Garden for Dottie Scott. Eighteen coral bell plants (Heuchera) were planted on the Court Street side of the church along with a memorial stone. Some of the plants have interesting names such as "Black Sea," "Green Spice," "Plum Pudding," and "Lava Lamp." Please take a look when Spring 2024 rolls around and everything is once again in bloom!



UWIF Plans for 2024

St. Paul's United Women in Faith group will be offering a get-together in January: Ann Bohman has agreed to show and tell us about her trip to Alaska! Stay tuned for more information!

Celebrating St. Paul's Seniors From Afar

Many of St. Paul's members now live in senior living communities, assisted living facilities, or remain in their own home. Several watch the service via live stream faithfully since they don't drive or feel comfortable navigating parking. They feel blessed to be able to connect with the church, and love being able to see others worshipping as well. Ranging in age from 84 to 101, they appreciate your love and prayers and cherish the time that they have left on earth. They still feel passionate about life and love that St. Paul's is still their spiritual home. Please join us in celebrating: (Top row, left to right) Joan Reppert (Longview), Marge Cobb (Longview), Ruth Lovelace (McGraw House), BJ Goetz (Brookdale), Rachel Kaufmann (Bridges at Cornell), (Bottom row left to right) Milo and Bonnie Richmond (Longview), Kathleen Jacklin (home), Anthony Fratelli (Kendall), June Nafis (Kendall), and Dick Tabor (Brookdale).





Family Christmas Celebration

Now that Thanksgiving is done, the holiday season is officially here, and we all know what that means: preparing for Christmas! St. Paul's invites you to bring a favorite ornament or two to share on our tree in the Sanctuary. We're also looking for family pictures or pictures that symbolize family to you which will be placed on a small tree in the Welcome Room. Our hope is that as we reminisce and share past memories, we can also make new memories together as a church family. If you have any questions contact: Jami Breedlove-Crouch, lovingcare@stpaulsithaca.org.

Christmas Offerings

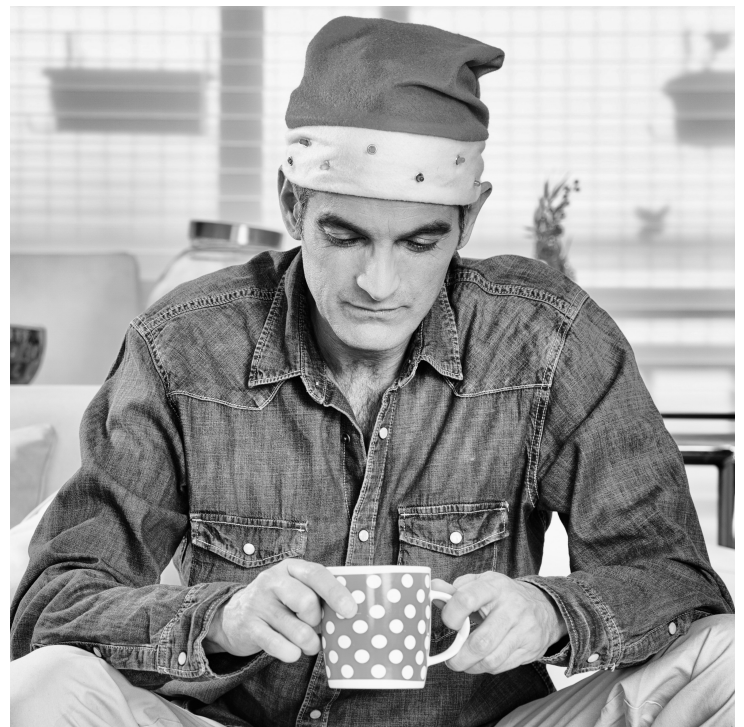
The Christmas collections will support the Protestant Cooperative Ministries of Cornell University and the Parsonage exterior restoration. Please make checks payable to "St Paul's UMC" and write "Christmas Offering" on the memo line.

Touching Base with the Chancel Choir

This past year, the Chancel Choir performed anthems from a wide variety of genres and cultures, and they'll be playing a large part in St. Paul's Christmas celebrations as they collaborate with the bell choir, and provide music for both the Blue Christmas and Christmas Eve services. The choir welcomes any new members who are interested in rehearsing every Thursday evening and performing in services twice a month. 2024 should prove to be another exciting year as this talented group of singers plans for an even more challenging repertoire!

Blue Christmas Service: Thursday, December 21, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

The Christmas season can be very challenging, even painful for some. Perhaps the loved one's chair now sits empty, one's income does not meet expenses, an important relationship has shattered, expectations go unmet, disease makes gathering with loved ones impossible, or it is just hard to be happy these days. The fact that we have less daylight doesn't help! So, on the darkest day of the year, you're invited to share worship within the beloved community of faith as we seek that peace that passes understanding, the hope for a new source of joy, and the God who abides with us always. Bring a friend and let's seek the Holy together.



Bloom Where Planted

by Jami Breedlove-Crouch, Loving Care Ministries Coordinator

In October, I attended a conference in Buffalo where I walked three blocks each day from my hotel to the conference center. One morning, I noticed a tomato plant growing in the crack between the sidewalk and the building. I was surprised: how had a seed managed to take root in a patch of dirt in downtown Buffalo?

I was reminded of a saying from the 1600s by Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva: “Bloom where you are planted.” If the quote sounds familiar, it’s because it was later made popular in the 20th century by the artist and illustrator Mary Engelbreit.

The meaning resonated with me. I realized that I can only “bloom where I am planted” as long as I’m doing everything to the best of my ability, and leaving the rest to God.

Even though some days I feel frustrated because I’m not seeing the results of my work happen as quickly as I’d like, I remember that the outcome is not my responsibility.

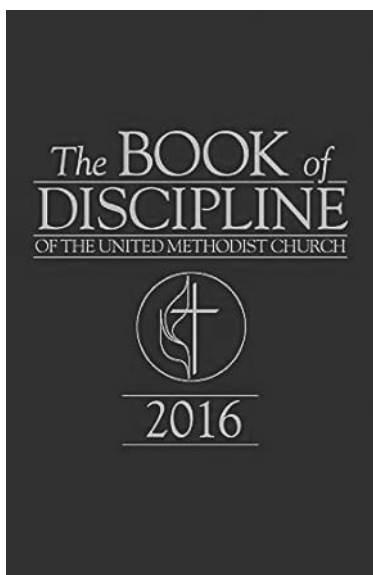
Philippians 4: 11-13 states that “wherever I am I am to be content, because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Lord, give me grace to rest in you and “bloom” for the Glory of God.



Prayers for General Conference

As you may be aware, the ***Postponed Session of the 2020 General Conference of the UMC*** will be held April 23-May 3, 2024 in Charlotte, North Carolina. This will be the next opportunity to remove discriminatory language from the *UM Book of Discipline*. Our LGBTQIA2S+ siblings have been harmed by that language since 1972! Beginning in January, you’re invited to pray daily for the delegates who will attend the General Conference, and have the opportunity and responsibility to vote on hundreds of pieces of legislation submitted to make changes in our denomination. Daily prayer prompts will be provided on the church’s website, on the Facebook page, and in printed form each week. As a Reconciling Congregation we have a calling to affect positive change on behalf of others. Please join in this prayerful quest!



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Volunteering at St. John's Mission

On Tuesday Oct.24th, members of the North Eastern Jurisdiction Volunteers in Mission board and Christina Clark, Director of Missional Engagement met Jami Breedlove-Crouch and Shelter manager Michael Boggan at the St. John's Community Center in Ithaca. They toured the facility, volunteered making sandwiches, worked in the food pantry, and visited with participants.



Local & World Mission Giving Tree

On Nov.26th the Local and World Mission "Giving Tree" will be adorned with tags for needed gifts to be distributed throughout our community. Gift tags for senior living centers, homeless shelters and refugees and their families will be available. Gifts should be returned by Dec.15th. Your participation will warm the bodies and hearts of those who need it most.



OAM Holiday Luncheon

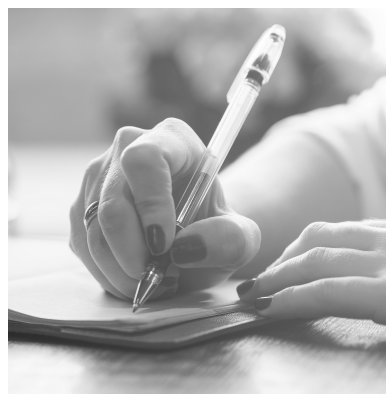
St. Paul's Older Adult Ministry is hosting a festive holiday luncheon in the Memorial Room at St. Paul's on Thursday, December 7, 12-2pm. If you don't receive an invite and would like to attend, please contact Jami Breedlove-Crouch, lovingcare@stpaulsithaca.org or 607-273-5971, by December 3. We'll share holiday wishes, sing Christmas carols, and enjoy a variety of cookies for dessert. You can bring your favorite holiday cookies to share (with ingredients listed, please!) and a container to take some cookies home with you. Please contact Cheryl McGraw, crm54@cornell.edu, if you have questions about cookies. Also: Mark your 2024 calendars now for our traditional Shrove Tuesday Pancake Lunch to be held Tuesday, February 13, 12-2pm at St. Paul's! Look for further details in the New Year!

Contributors to Lenten Devotional Booklet Needed

The 2024 Lenten Worship Series is titled, **"BUSY: Reconnecting with an Unhurried God."** Rather than selecting something to "give up" for Lent, this series focuses on "making room" for our spiritual journey with Christ during Lent. We'll explore what it really costs us to be so busy.

Pastor Beckie is seeking contributions of daily devotions in the form of inspirational writings, stories, poetry, prayers, favorite scriptures, drawings, etc... which convey our conviction that God desires to have a meaningful relationship with each and every one of us. Please consider making a submission to Pastor Beckie,

pastor@stpaulsithaca.org, **no later than January 25, 2024** for inclusion in our booklet. Thank you for prayerfully considering making a contribution from your heart and experience.



Blessing of the Animals

On Saturday September 16th, Pastor Beckie blessed creatures both great and small in front of St. Paul's in the annual "Blessing of the Animals." Here are canines Dotti and Ringo receiving their blessing from the pastor while dog dad Gary Rith looks on.



Touching Base with St. Paul's "Justice Seekers"

This year, the St. Paul's "Justice Seekers" team—part of a multiyear Annual Conference and local church process, *Imagine No Racism*—attended to our church's relationship with our Native American neighbors. Coming in 2024, we'll be sharing a resource list and discussing selected video and print resources as we seek to listen deeply and heed calls for justice and reconciliation with our indigenous neighbors. We hope you'll join us!

SPUMC Children's Ministry hosts Holiday Cookie Decorating Party*

SPUMC's Children Ministry will be hosting a Holiday Cookie Decorating Party* on Sunday, December 10, from 12:15-1:30p in the Memorial Room. *Persons of all ages* are invited to add a bit of holiday artistry to cookies destined

for the Friendship Center lunches that St Paulians are preparing on Dec 12th. Artists can take cookies home with them and are encouraged to invite friends and neighbors to join in the fun. We'll have an expanded Fellowship Time table of goodies and refreshments to take part in before decorating. But first—we need cookie bakers! At least 15 dozen sugar or gingerbread cut-out cookies need to be ready for the party. If you can provide us with cookies, please contact Joellyn Tuttle, jrwttuttle@gmail.com or 315-289-7187. Please email Dee at



office@stpaulsithaca.org ASAP or call 607-273-5971 to reserve a decorating station for you and your friends and family. We want to make sure to have enough cookies for everyone at our Extended Welcome Table. *This is a "Curious with Christ" service (outreach) project.

In Remembrance of...

We keep in our thoughts and prayers the saints who left us in 2023:

Eugene Bartell, Ardith Bennett, Rev. Warren Covell, Dorothy Davison, David Hall, Glenna Margaris, Robert Miller, Dorothy Scott, Rev. Arthur Swarthout, Marian van de Velde.



*You are invited to purchase a
holiday poinsettia in honor or
memory of a loved one.*

Your gift makes a difference in important ways:

- * You beautify our sanctuary during the Advent and Christmas seasons.
- * Your holiday plant brightens the season for our home-bound St. Paulians, with home delivery by our Loving Care ministry team the week before Christmas.
- * A portion of your donation helps fund our altar flower ministry all year.

The minimum donation requested, which includes a contribution to our flower ministry, is \$22. Please make your check payable to "St. Pauls United Methodist Church" with "poinsettias" in the memo line.

To be included in the bulletin, orders must be placed by **Sunday, December 10th**.

Enclosed is \$ _____ for a poinsettia.

Please specify which:

In loving memory of _____

In honor of _____

Given by _____

Phone _____

Please select one:

- ☐ I will donate my poinsettia
- ☐ I will pick up my poinsettia immediately following the 7PM worship service on December 24th

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