

St. Paul's United Methodist Church

Spring 2025 Newsletter

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



The Pastor's Epistle

*The story we tell is not about ourselves. It is about our Honored Chief,
Creator Sets Free (Jesus) the Chosen One. And because of him
We see ourselves as your servants. For the same Great Spirit
Who told light to shine out of darkness has shined his light into our hearts.
His light helps us to see the beauty of the Great Spirit in the face
Of Creator Sets Free (Jesus) the Chosen One.*

II Corinthians 4:5-6 (First Nations Version)

Beloveds in Christ,

The season of Lent will soon be upon us. This is the season during which those who follow Jesus endeavor to purge the shadows of sin from our lives, allow Christ's light to fill our hearts, and prepare for the celebration of Christ's resurrection ~ EASTER! The first step is the most challenging. In order to make room for the amazing love of Jesus in our hearts, souls, and lives, we must eliminate the evil thoughts, harmful practices, and selfish living that separate us from living the faith-full lives that God intended for us at creation.

This is the time to prepare for change. We can hardly anticipate what God has in store for us. But we're promised that living God's Way will bring bright, everlasting light, unconditional love, and eternal joy!

We embark on this journey knowing that we do not walk alone. Within the family of faith, under the watchful care of the abiding Spirit, together we make a way to Christ! What a wonderful opportunity this is to invite family, friends, and neighbors to re-engage in making a spiritual journey which promises to bring renewed purpose and light to one's life! To whom will you offer this invitation? Begin praying now for one or more of those you desire to assist in making this journey. Then, with a prayer-filled heart, offer to another the transformative experience of being part of a family of faith in both worship and ministry.

Along the way we'll learn, put faith into action through mission, and speak truth to power as we seek justice together, and watch with delight as brokenness is healed by Christ's loving power.

~ Rev. Beckie Sweet



Lenten Worship Series: “Drink from the Fountain of Grace”

Throughout Scripture and today, God sustains God’s people in the most basic of human ways ~ physically, with food and drink, and spiritually ~ with food and drink for our souls. This Lent, as we remember what it means to be human, we find refreshment from God’s fountain of Grace. The different images of cups shown in Scripture will serve as a touchstone for exploring aspects of our relationship with God. What does our brokenness say about us? What does discipleship look like? What does it mean to seek justice? This exploration culminates in the most exciting celebration of all ~ that Jesus is risen for us, and in him we have new life!

Lent-Easter Worship Schedule

Sunday morning worship begins at 10:30 am

*** March 5 – Ash Wednesday – 7:00 pm**

Isaiah 58:1-12; “The Cup of Fasting” with imposition of ashes.

*** March 9 – First Sunday in Lent**

2 Corinthians 4:5-11; “The Broken Cup”

*** March 16 – Second Sunday in Lent**

John 4:7-29, 39; “The Cup of Living Water”

*** March 23 – Third Sunday in Lent**

Psalms 16; “The Cup You Choose”

*** March 30 – Fourth Sunday in Lent; UMCOR Sunday**

Matthew 20:20-28; “The Cup of Discipleship” with special offering

*** April 6 – Fifth Sunday in Lent**

Matthew 25:34-40; “The Cup of Compassion” with Holy Communion

*** April 13 – Palm Sunday**

Mark 11:1-11; “The Cup of Humility” (Neighborhood parade at 9:30 am)

*** April 17 – Maundy Thursday – 7:00 pm**

Matthew 26:20-29; “The Cup of the New Covenant” with Holy Communion

*** April 18 – Good Friday – 7:00 pm**

Matthew 26:30 – 27:66; “Jesus’ Cup for Us”

*** April 20 – EASTER**

John 20:1-18; “The Cup that Never Runs Dry”

Lenten Study: The NEW Social Principles

Our Lenten Study this Spring invites us to examine and understand the newly adopted United Methodist Social Principles. In five sessions we’ll explore: 1) The Preface and Preamble; 2) The Community of All Creation; 3) The Economic Community; 4) The Social Community; and 5) The Political Community. Please sign up in advance to attend the sessions on **ZOOM at 7:00 pm on the Mondays of March 10, 17, 24, 31, and April 7**. Pastor Beckie gladly send you the ZOOM invitation.

Reconciling Sunday 2025

On February 2nd, SPUMC celebrated its 27th Reconciling Sunday. It was exciting to be able to rejoice in the changes that have been made in the UMC Discipline, removing harmful language that has discriminated against both LGBTQ+ parishioners and their ministers. Thanks to these changes, *all* people are now included in every aspect of the church, including marriage and ministry. What a joy it is to be free to serve God just as we are!



The Chancel Choir celebrating Reconciling Sunday.

Rev. Alicia Wood to Join SPUMC in July

Our beloved Pastor Beckie will be retiring at the end of June. Taking the reins will be the Rev. Alicia Wood, a graduate of SUNY Oswego and Boston University School of Theology, who has spent the past 10 years serving the University United Methodist Church in Syracuse. Members of St. Paul's Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) met with our District Superintendent and Pastor Alicia on Saturday, February 8, to share introductions and conversation. She described herself as "a pastor with a big smile and an even bigger exuberance to share God's love with people on their journey of faith." Those of us who met her that day can testify to the truth of this! Pastor Alicia expressed genuine and enthusiastic excitement about joining us in ministry both at St. Paul's and in the greater Ithaca community. There will be opportunities in the coming weeks and months for all of us to meet, greet, and welcome her with the warmth and love we at St. Paul's are known for. Members of SPRC invite prayers for Pastor Beckie, Pastor Alicia, and our congregation as we move into this important transition. Pastor Alicia's first Sunday at St. Paul's will be July 6th.



Art! It's in the Bag

After seeing a colorful art-like reusable bag while in line at the grocery store, our very own Jami Breedlove-Crouch got the idea for the current art show at St. Paul's titled, "Art! It's in the Bag." An invitation went out to the congregation to share their unique, reusable bags and before long, bags of all kinds and colors began coming in and are now displayed in the Welcome Room. Each bag also features an encouraging statement, with several coming from churches including St. Paul's, Jacksonville Community Church, and Estes Park UMC in Colorado. Do you have a bag you'd like included in the exhibit? If so, contact Jami. No artistic skills are required so everyone has a chance to participate.



Justice Explorers' Goings On

Our group of children ages 4-11 continue to meet every Sunday morning after the "Message for All God's Children," except when they remain in worship the first Sunday of the month to receive Holy Communion.

During Advent, our materials explored the theme "Isaiah Promised: Jesus Fulfilled." We met the Prophet Isaiah and heard Isaiah speak God's words, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Almighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace Isaiah." 9:6. During the Advent Module we learned "The King of Glory Comes" and sang and danced to it to open every class session.



Our current learning module (February 9 – March 30) focuses on doing justice in the world by speaking up when others are oppressed, and making amends when we've hurt someone. We're thankful for our teachers and many co-teachers for their willingness to help our children understand that God is calling them to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. If you're interested in teaching in the months of March, April, or May, please contact Joellyn Tuttle (jrwtuttle@gmail.com, 315-289-7187). Our final Justice Explorers class session will be May 18.

SPUMC has a "Safe Sanctuaries" policy, which means we always need two unrelated adults to lead the class sessions. We ask that our teachers take the online Safe Sanctuaries Training (see article below) when it's available. Those assisting Drucilla in the nursery on Sundays are required to complete it as well.

Safe Sanctuaries Training

The Safe Sanctuaries 3.5 Hour Training Sessions are held online on Saturdays, 9:00am – 12:30pm on May 3, 2025 and August 2, 2025. Register in advance by going to the Upper New York Conference Website (unyumc.org) and scroll under the "Ministries" heading down to "Safe Sanctuaries." You'll be directed to the registration forms. You need only take the course once to meet SPUMC's Safe Sanctuaries requirements. A copy of your Certificate of Completion should be submitted to St. Paul's office.



2025 Easter Offering

This year's opportunity for ministry through the Easter Offering will support repair of St. Paul's organ. This church has a long-standing reputation for exemplary music, both within and outside of worship services. Enjoying the vast array of musical expression offered by many gifted organists has been a highlight for many. Please note "Easter Offering" on the Memo line or offering envelope.

Seniors Spotlight

Joan Reppert, who was a long-time member of the bell choir, sends a loving and cheery “Hello!” to everyone at St. Paul’s. Joan now resides at Longview, where from her apartment window she’s able to enjoy the beautiful Bob and Alice McCune Memorial Garden. While she misses worshipping in person and ringing her bell, she enjoys watching us online every week on her computer.

Dick Sheffield, a long-time usher at St. Paul’s, also resides at Longview and sends his fondest regards to everyone as well! While Dick would rather still be living in his home on Willow Avenue and driving around the countryside, he appreciates getting cards and visits from his friends at St. Paul’s.



SPUMC Older Adult Ministries Activities

The St. Paul’s Older Adult Ministries (OAM) team sponsored a delightful holiday lunch and cookie exchange in December. Soup, sandwiches, cookies, fellowship, and Christmas carols were enjoyed by all! On March 4, the team will mark the beginning of Lent with their traditional Shrove Tuesday Pancake Brunch, followed by a presentation from the Tompkins County Office for the Aging. Join them again on Tuesday, June 10th in Stewart Park for their early summer BYOL picnic. Contact Jami Breedlove-Crouch (lovingcare@stpaulsithaca.org) or call Dee at 607-273-5971 if you’d like to join us and are not already on our evite list.

UMCOR Sunday Special Offering

The UMCOR Sunday offering underwrites UMCOR’s administrative costs, allowing UMCOR to directly use 100% of all funds given to humanitarian response and recovery efforts to communities in need.

These gifts ensure UMCOR responds swiftly to disasters around the world as well as act as a source of hope and healing for those left most vulnerable. UMCOR is the

United Methodist Committee on Relief! This Special Offering will be received on **March 30.**



Coming Sunday, March 30th: “Justice for Lunch,” A Free Lunchtime Conversation with St. Paul’s Justice Seekers

Last year, St. Paul’s hosted the heart-opening Witness to Injustice™ Blanket Exercise. Since then, the Justice Seekers have continued exploring the past and present realities of our Native American neighbors, as well as learning all we can about indigenous practices of resilience, reciprocity, and peacemaking that complement our own faith tradition.

Our Justice-Seeking path for 2025 includes adoption of a congregational Land Acknowledgement statement, a way of calling to mind those Native Americans who tended this place before we were here, and committing to reconciliation with those who remain—often hidden—in our midst. After worship on Sunday, March 30th, we’ll join with the Lay Leadership Team to host a congregational lunch/guided conversation. The event will feature a brief overview of Native American concerns and hopes presented by Elizabeth Brando, an engaging local speaker from the Cherokee nation. Please join us! Keep your eyes on the weekly Sunday bulletin and Friday email for further info.

Code Blue Donations

New York state law dictates that when temperatures dip below freezing, those without a place to stay overnight are required to be housed. Known as Code Blue, the program begins in November and continues until the end of April. Here in Ithaca, the unhoused can go to the new shelter at 300 N. Tioga Street when the weather is bad. Those seeking shelter are not only provided with a roof over their heads, but are also fed lunch or dinner donated by Loaves and Fishes and The Salvation Army. When these outreach programs aren’t available, meals are prepared and provided by volunteers using commercial kitchens found in churches and businesses throughout Ithaca.

Since the downtown Code Blue residence center doesn’t have a commercial kitchen (and guests must leave by 9am) breakfast items are donated, usually in the form of breakfast bars, instant oatmeal, etc. St. Paul’s is one of the area churches contributing breakfast foods weekly. Thank you for continuing to bring in donations each week to help those in need. The shelter is extremely grateful.



The new shelter is in the old Key Bank building.

We’ve received an update from George Gull and Nancy Potter who are off doing good works in Costa Rica! Look for it on the SPUMC website (along with next Sunday’s bulletin) starting Friday, February 28.

2025 Upper New York Annual Conference

The United Methodists of Upper New York will gather for their Annual Conference **May 22-24, 2025** at the OnCenter in downtown Syracuse. The theme this year will be “Believe... and see the Glory of God,” utilizing John 11:1-45 (the death and raising of Lazarus), Luke 1:47 (“My spirit rejoices in God my savior”) and Philippians 4:13 (“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”) as guiding scriptures. Jami Breedlove-Crouch, our Lay Member, and Rev. Beckie Sweet will be in attendance. Others desiring to attend may do so as a Lay Equalization Member (with voice and vote, pending application) or as an observer. There is a cost associated with attendance.

This year’s speakers include Bishop Ruben Saenz, Jr of the Central and North Texas Conferences, as well as Rev. Kris Sledge and Rev. Rachel Gilmore, co-authors of *Followers Under 40*. More information will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead!

Flowery Fundraiser for Festival Chimes

Come April, Festival Chimes will once again be selling (mainly) hanging baskets to raise money for their group.

You might want to consider the beauty of a hanging basket of Fuschia, Million Bells, Geranium, and Petunia; or perhaps you and a friend would like to share a flat (48 plants) of Begonia, Impatiens, Marigolds or Coleus.

Whichever you choose, rest assured that none of these beauties are coming your way via a big box store; all have been grown in a local greenhouse!

Look for an order form in the April weekly emails. Flowers are to be picked up on **Saturday May 17th from 10-12pm**.



Lectio Divina During Lent

The Lay Leadership Team will host two Sunday morning opportunities to experience Lectio Divina, a contemplative approach to the Bible. Join them **March 16 and March 23 at 9:30 a.m.** in the Durham Room to read, contemplate, and reflect together on select passages from the Lenten Lectionary, allowing the movement of spirit in and among us to shape our understanding. No preparation is needed and all are welcome! If you have questions, contact either Karen Kaufmann (tunawiki@twcnj.rr.com), Diana Breedlove-Crouch (dcrouch@tompkins-co.org), or Arlene Hewitt (arlene.hewitt@gmail.com).

Coming in May: SPUMC’s Summer Newsletter!



You are invited to purchase an
Easter plant in honor or memory
of a loved one.

In addition to beautifying our sanctuary on Easter Sunday, some of these plants will be delivered to our homebound sisters and brothers through our Loving Care Team.

The suggested donation is \$22. Please make your check payable to "St. Pauls United Methodist Church" and write "Easter Plants" in the memo line.

To be included in the bulletin, orders must be received in the office by **Wednesday, April 16.**

Enclosed is \$ _____ for an Easter plant.

Please specify which: (Please print clearly)

In loving memory of _____

In honor of _____

Given by _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please select one:

☐ I will donate my Easter plant

☐ I will pick up my Easter plant

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