

St. Paul's United Methodist Church

Winter 2024 Newsletter

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



The Pastor's Epistle

"City of Zion, sing and rejoice! The Lord has promised to come and live with you!"

Zechariah 2:10

Friends in Christ,

Some of you will remember that in August I traveled to Ocean Grove, New Jersey to spend a few days with my college roommate, Cindy, and her partner, Judy. They spend the summer in a tent dwelling in that historically Methodist village by the Atlantic Ocean. The second evening of my visit, I had the wonderful experience of attending an annual Ocean Grove tradition: a Christmas pageant on the beach. This was no small-scale pageant!

It included a narrator, song leader, a small orchestra, the Holy Family, many shepherds and sheep, stable animals, two-person camels of all sizes, Wise ones, and (my guess) about forty angels making up the heavenly host. The diverse cast were well-rehearsed and seemed as if on cue to float over the sand to their places as the story of Christ's birth was read and sung for hundreds of onlookers to enjoy. (Angelic Judy is on the right in the picture!)

And that was just one of the many wonderful experiences we shared while together. Hours on the beach, attending daily Bible Hour, walks, visits to local museums and a candy store, sharing stories while rocking on the porch, discussing theology, reconnecting with cherished friends... At one point late in the week Judy commented, "You've brought so much joy to our tent!" My response: "You make me feel right at home!"

During Advent this year, we're all invited to make the journey home. That home is not a geographical place; rather, it's a spiritual space of comfort, belonging, safety, nurture, and love created for us by God through the gift of Jesus, our Messiah. Having moved many times throughout my life and ministry, I often tell folks that the new house only becomes a home when we share a Christmas there-- for the holy season of making room for and welcoming the Christ child creates that space for love like nothing else. Come home for Christmas as you experience God's love living in you!



~ Rev. Beckie Sweet

2024 Advent Worship Series: “COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS!”

Advent is an invitation. For many, it's the invitation to get into that Christmas spirit, counting down the days until the grand celebration and letting the holiday transform everything around us. But here at St. Paul's, we're about more than Christmas the holiday with all the jingle bells and tinsel. We're about Christmas, the Mass of Christ, the celebration of the Incarnate One who comes to remind us that we're not alone and that God is with us. We're about the longing for the coming kin-dom, where we'll study war no more, where people will walk in the light, where joy will be found, and love will be the tie that binds us together. That's the home for which we long. That's the invitation this Advent season to the church and the world: "Come Home for Christmas!"

2024 Advent Devotional Booklet: “Emerge into Great Joy” by S. James Meyer

Take a deep breath and look up. Whoa! The most amazing gift is coming your way, and life will never be the same. Are you ready? Ready to set down your anxieties and step away from worry and fear? Ready to emerge fully into a life of steadfast hope, abiding peace, and endless love? This year's daily devotional will guide us on a journey toward the promised new life around and within. Booklets will be available November 24th.

Advent/Christmas Worship Schedule

****Sunday, December 1, 2024 @ 10:30am – First Sunday of Advent***

Holy Communion ~ Advent Wreath HOPE ~ “Time to Go Home”

****Sunday, December 8, 2024 @ 10:30am – Second Sunday of Advent***

Advent Wreath PEACE ~ “The Fear of Home”

****Sunday, December 15, 2024 @ 10:30 am – Third Sunday of Advent***

Advent Wreath JOY ~ “The Joy of Home”

****Wednesday, December 18, 2024 @ 7:00 pm – Blue Christmas Service***

This reflective service acknowledges the challenges of life during this season and offers hope and healing.

****Sunday, December 22, 2024 @ 10:30 am – Fourth Sunday of Advent***

Advent Wreath LOVE ~ “The Blessing of Home”

****Tuesday, December 24, 2024 @ 7:00 pm – CHRISTMAS EVE***

Advent Wreath CHRIST ~ “Welcome Home”

****Sunday, December 29, 2024 @ 10:30 am – First Sunday after Christmas***

“The Light of Home”

Sunday, January 5, 2025 @ 10:30 am – EPIPHANY

Holy Communion ~ “Follow That Star!”

Christmas Offering

St. Paul's 2024 Christmas offering will support two causes: Cornell Protestant Cooperative Ministries, an ecumenical ministry with Cornell students seeking faith development and nurture; and Parsonage upgrades, including sealing the front doors and some painting. Your generous gifts are greatly appreciated. Please make checks payable to “St. Paul's UMC” and write “Christmas Offering” on the memo line.

Late Epiphany Worship Series: “COURAGEOUS” Feb. 9-March 2, 2025

Our world often tells us that being courageous is about strength, bravery, and heroic acts. This series explores what courage looks like in the New Testament and expands our understanding of courage. Together we'll learn how courage can help us raise other people up, transform our communities, and face new and challenging situations.

Church Family Celebrations

We welcome to the Family of Christ those who were baptized in October:

*Lydia Mae Hansen, daughter of Joshua Hansen & Rose Streets, and sister of Anne. It was a delight to have Lydia's grandfather, the Rev. E. David Streets, participate that day.

*Miles Stephen Hall, a high school student who has been actively participating in ministries at St. Paul's for well over a year!

We welcome to the membership of St. Paul's UMC:

*Vito and Janet Sciscioli, who transferred their membership from University UMC in Syracuse.

*Natalie Mottl and Molly Dempsey, who are also Carson's parents, and join via Profession of Faith.

*Katrina Carpenter, who is also joining via Profession of Faith.

*Grace Demerath, who is transferring from St. Catherine's of Sienna.

*Andrew and Kelli Hansen who, along with daughter Margaret, are transferring their membership from Missouri UMC. Their daughter, Lydia Hansen, will be joining via Confirmation.

*Isaac A.V.W. Chizhik, who is transferring his membership from Foothills UMC.



Row 1: Vito Sciscioli, Janet Sciscioli, Lydia Hansen, Kelli Hansen, Natalie Mottl, Grace Demareth, and Molly Dempsey. Row 2: Andrew Hansen, Margaret Hansen, Katrina Carpenter, Isaac Chizhik, and Pastor Beckie Sweet.



Blessing of the Animals

On Saturday, September 15th, Pastor Beckie blessed all creatures great and small in front of St. Paul's in the annual "Blessing of the Animals." Lucky recipients included Pepper the lizard, pictured here in the arms of his owner, choir director Maia Finkel, who brought along some of her friends.

Porchfest and Ministry Fair

Porchfest and Ministry Fair was a huge success! As is tradition, we opened the doors of the church to invite the public inside to view our different ministries (as well as use the restrooms and get some refreshment if needed). It certainly didn't hurt that both the Opus Jazz Ensemble and the Odyssey Choir played on the church steps, or that Cheryl McGraw (pictured) shared the cookies she lovingly baked as a representative of the Children's Ministry. Many thanks to all our volunteers!



Pastor Beckie Will Retire in June 2025

On September 29th I announced my intention to retire from active ministry in June of 2025. That month I'll turn 65, and will have completed 43 years of ministry in the United Methodist Church. And while it will be very difficult to bid farewell to the loving and amazing St. Paul's congregation, it's the right time for a new adventure in both life and ministry for me. When I retire, Mom and I will be moving to a home I purchased last Spring just outside of Greene, New York, which is about an hour drive from Ithaca.



Our Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is already hard at work preparing the St. Paul's UMC Profile, which Bishop Hector, DS Rev. Sherri Rood, and the Cabinet will use to prayerfully discern the next pastor to appoint to serve with you here at St. Paul's.

If you'd like to read about the process for making pastoral appointments in the Upper New York Conference of the UMC, you can find that information here: <https://www.unyumc.org/news/appointment-making>. Please pray for the bishop and cabinet during this time of discernment, and for our SPRC as they represent our congregation in the process as well. The desire of everyone involved is to equip St. Paul's UMC for thriving, faithful, and loving ministries to honor and build upon the legacy of the past which is growing in relevance in our rapidly changing culture. May Christ be glorified in all that we say and do!

~ **Rev. Beckie Sweet**

Please Contribute to the 2025 Lenten Devotional Booklet

The 2025 Lenten Worship Series is titled, "**Drink from the Fountain of Grace.**" While we recognize that God provides for our human need for physical sustenance and spiritual nurture, this Lent we'll try to remember what it means to be human and to find refreshment from God's fountain of grace. In the midst of brokenness, seeking justice, and growing in discipleship, we'll follow Jesus in faith. When and how have you experienced God's grace? Tell the story. Share your feelings. Create art. Sing a song. And share that with the family of faith so that others may be comforted and inspired, and so that God may be glorified. Please consider making a submission to Pastor Beckie no later than February 11, 2025 for inclusion in the booklet. Thank you for prayerfully considering making a contribution from your heart and experience.

Sing a Song of Christmas with the Chancel Choir

The Chancel Choir welcomes new members to join them for the merry month of December. For Advent and Christmas, they'll be singing "Mary Did You Know," "The Road Home" by Stephen Paulus, "African Noel" by Andre Thomas, and finally "Christmas is Coming," which will be performed with the Festival Chimes. They're looking forward to an exciting Christmas season and would love some new voices to add to the mix! No prior choral experience necessary. Rehearsals are Thursday evenings from 7:15 - 8:30 downstairs. Please email Maia Finkel, (choirdirector@stpaulsithaca.org) with any questions.

Family Celebrations

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 any pictures that symbolize family to you that can be placed on a small tree in the Welcome Room. Our hope is that as we reminisce and share past memories, we'll also make new memories together as a church family. If you have any questions contact Jami Breedlove-Crouch.

Mission News

Missions Team chair Dwight Mengel, along with Diana and Jami Breedlove-Crouch, attended a day long ERT training (Early Response Team) at Syracuse's Annual Conference Center on Oct 5th. The purpose of the training is to equip ERT teams to go to places of natural disaster and assist ready volunteers with recovery work.

Calling All Coffee Hour Hosts!

Are you into baking and/or chatting with others after church? Do you like sharing what you've made with others? If so, coffee hour is the place for you! In addition to home baked goods, fruits and vegetables, dips, cookies, breads, cheese and crackers are all welcome. Hosts set up and make coffee, then clean up afterwards. But it's the hour in between where the fun happens, talking to old friends and making new ones. Please contact Jami Breedlove-Crouch if you have food and/or drink items you'd like to contribute, or if you'd like to host.



OAM Holiday Luncheon December 10th

Come join St. Paul's Older Adult Ministry for their annual holiday luncheon on Tuesday, **December 10, from 11:30am-1:30pm** in the Memorial Room. We'll share holiday wishes, sing Christmas carols accompanied by Molly McMillan, and enjoy a "soup and sandwich" lunch with a variety of homemade cookies for dessert. If you wish, you may bring your own favorite holiday cookies to share (with ingredients listed) as well as a container to take cookies home with you. Please contact Cheryl McGraw (crm54@cornell.edu) if you have questions about cookies. Please note: If you don't receive an Evite and would like to attend, please contact Jami Breedlove-Crouch by December 7.

St. Paul's Justice Seekers

This year, the St. Paul's "Justice Seekers" team continued the good work of fostering our church's relationship with our Native American neighbors. They hosted reading groups and the Witness to Injustice Blanket Exercise; led a field trip to the Great Law and Peace Center in Liverpool and supported St. Paul's Indigenous People's Day service; and held ongoing conversations around boarding schools, missing/murdered women, and the redemptive purpose and practice of land acknowledgements. This winter, a group of St. Paulians will be working on plans for a congregational Land Acknowledgement for St. Paul's. They invite anyone interested in the process to join them in the planning. For further info contact Nancy Potter (potternancy20@gmail.com) or Karen Kaufmann (tunafiki@twcny.rr.com).

ACT Thanksgiving Interfaith Service

Area Congregations Together (ACT) held their annual Thanksgiving Interfaith Service Sunday, Nov. 24th here at St. Paul's. The service included speakers from Temple Beth El, Al- Huda Islamic Center, and Namgyal Monastery. Choral music was provided by St. Paul's along with the Family Singers from the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints. All participants were from congregations that are members of ACT. A reception was held after the service featuring food and baked goods donated by the Friendship Donation Center as well as various guests. Thank you to all who participated and attended.

Feed My Starving Children

This year's volunteer group totaled thirteen people united by one goal: pack as many meals as possible at the Feed My Starving Children Annual Food Pack on September 28th. For two hours, SPUMC'ers worked with roughly ninety others to ensure children worldwide would be able to eat at least one meal a day for the next year. Church members also joined other packing sessions if they were unable to help on the 28th. This year, more meals than ever were packed and more money than ever raised--meaning FMSC will be able to continue their good work well into the future!



Left to right: Kathy Modisher, Holy Mathison, David McElrath, Brian Modisher and Dwight Engel

Please Keep Giving to the Code Blue Breakfast Program

Thanks to all who have donated items to the Code Blue Breakfast Project, the new local initiative aimed at providing shelf-stable food for the new Code Blue Shelter downtown ("Code Blue" means the shelter is mandated to allow unhoused individuals stay overnight when temperatures dip below freezing). We continue seeking donations of breakfast bars and tea bags, as well as packets of instant oatmeal, hot chocolate, and instant coffee. Please pray that we as a congregation might understand the importance of being in relationship with those that have no home. For questions and info, contact Jami Breedlove-Crouch.

Women of Faith Attend Jacksonville UWF Meeting

On October 3 a dozen women from St. Paul's attended a United Women in Faith luncheon at the Jacksonville United Methodist Church, where a nice soup and salad lunch was served. The luncheon included at least fifty other UWF women from different congregations. It was fun learning about the work they're doing within their own communities-- all while supporting other women in their congregations.

Local and World Missions Giving Tree

The Local and World Mission "Giving Tree" in the Welcome Room has been 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.

Card Writers Needed for Loving Care Card Ministry

Each month a team of parishioners send out cards to shut-ins as well as folks needing a little extra encouragement to make it through their day. This is a special ministry, designed to reach out and touch the hearts of the recipients, who enjoy receiving the cards because they can feel the love that went into writing each one. This ministry takes nominal time each month, and cards can be provided. If you'd like to become part of the team, contact Jami Breedlove-Crouch.

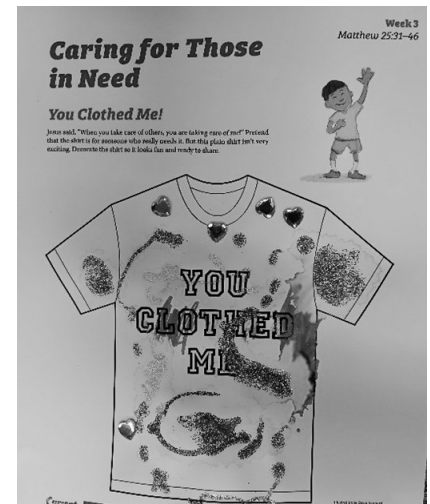
SPUMC's Children's Ministry Hosts Holiday Cookie Decorating Party!

SPUMC's Children's Ministries Team will be hosting a Holiday Cookie Decorating Party on Sunday, **December 15th, from 12:15-1:30pm** in the Memorial Room. People of all ages are invited to add a bit of holiday artistry to cookies that will be distributed to those in need. Artists can also take cookies home! We'll provide a nourishing, "expanded" Fellowship time menu before we start decorating. Please email Dee at office@stpaulsithaca.org or call 607-273-5971 ASAP to reserve a decorating station for your friends and family. Last but not least—**we need cookie bakers!** At least 15 dozen sugar or gingerbread cut out cookies need to be ready so we have enough to extend our St Paul's Table of Grace to our community members, as well as for our cookie artists and their friends, too. A few dozen gluten-free cookies would be greatly appreciated as well. If you can provide cookies to decorate, please contact Joellyn Tuttle at jrwtuttle@gmail.com cell/text: 315-289-7187.



Justice Explorers Update

Since Sept 8, seven children have participated in the Justice Explorers Sunday morning experience. Participants range in age from 4 years to 11 years old and meet with a teaching team every Sunday except for the First Sundays of each month, when the children remain in worship with their families for Holy Communion. The Bible stories taught focused on issues of justice. The class prayed, moved, drew pictures, discussed, acted, and explored how to treat classmates, family members, and neighbors with God's justice and kindness. Next month the children will start exploring how Jesus' birth fulfilled God's promises that the Prophet Isaiah related to the people. We welcome more children to join us! Because we always need two unrelated adults in the classroom each Sunday morning, we're looking to add some teachers and/or substitutes for Module 3, December 8- January 26. (There will be no Justice Explorers sessions on December 29 and January 5.) The lesson plans and all the materials needed for each session are provided ahead of time. If you're interested in being a teacher or co-teacher, please contact Joellyn Tuttle (jrwtuttle@gmail.com cell/text: 315-289-7187) or Nancy Potter (potternancy20@gmail.com)



We Need Hospitality Help/Greeters

Do you like meeting new people and greeting your friends on Sunday mornings? If so, consider joining our Hospitality team! This pressure free task takes only half an hour: arrive around 10am, then greet until 10:30am when services begin. Just step in when available and join in the fun! Contact Jami Breedlove-Crouch for an assignment.

In Remembrance Of...

We keep in our thoughts and prayers the saints who left us in 2024: John Scott Agard, Imogene Stoner Hyde, Malcolm Harvey Davison, Kathleen Jacklin, Robert Travis, Clare Hardesty, Anthony Fratelli, and Larry Joseph Wampler.



*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 **Thursday, December 19th**.

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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