

Epistle

*Inspired by God's love, we:
offer a spiritual oasis,
teach one another to serve,
and reach out to encourage
others to know Christ.*

December 2018

REFLECTIONS FROM PASTOR AMY JO

Advent is the name for the time on the church calendar when we prepare for the coming of Christ. The name for the season is a word that means “coming into being,” or “appearing.” It is a time to consider what is dawning, appearing, or coming into being in our spiritual lives. How is God’s light breaking through in a new way? How is God beginning to lead us forward in a new direction, both individually and as a Church? Who is the new neighbor that we are called to love? What is the new way in which we’re called to share more generously?

Throughout the season of Advent, I’m going to be trying a new spiritual discipline, and I invite you to join me. The spiritual discipline is

meditating daily on compassion and loving kindness. Some time ago, I preached a sermon on the way that neuroscience has documented changes to the neurons in our brain that occur after a time

of meditating on compassion and loving kindness. These biological changes are one way to “see” the spiritual growth that can occur through godly meditation. An interesting book to read on this topic is “Altruism,” by Matthieu Ricard. If you want to join me in this spiritual exercise, here’s how I’m proceeding:

- 1.) Read or say aloud a Scripture to focus: “God is love.”
I John 4:8b



- 2.) We often experience God’s love through our relationships with other people. Remember a person with whom you have experienced God’s love (perhaps a close family member, friend, or

mentor.) Concentrate/meditate on the feeling of compassion and loving kindness that you experience in relationship with that person.

- 3.) Once you have focused in on that feeling of compassion and loving kindness, think of expanding it to encompass those who are close to you (either physically close to you—for example, if you’re doing this while sitting stuck in traffic as I may be, in the cars on either side of you. Or relationally close to you—close friends and family.) Include this widening group in your sense of compassion and loving kindness.
- 4.) After focusing on this small group, think of expanding the sense of compassion and loving kindness outwards to a larger group—your geographical neighbor, your acquaintances, or extended family. Include this large group in your sense of compassion and loving kindness.

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

5.) After focusing on this large group, continue to expand your sense of compassion and loving kindness outward again slowly, until it embraces all of the world. Remember that this even includes the enemies who we are called to love. (Matthew 5:44) Hold on to this idea of all-embracing love, and remember that God's endless love is beyond our human understanding, reaching out to all of creation.

6.) End with this sentence prayer: God help me to love as you love. Amen.

This spiritual practice is similar to

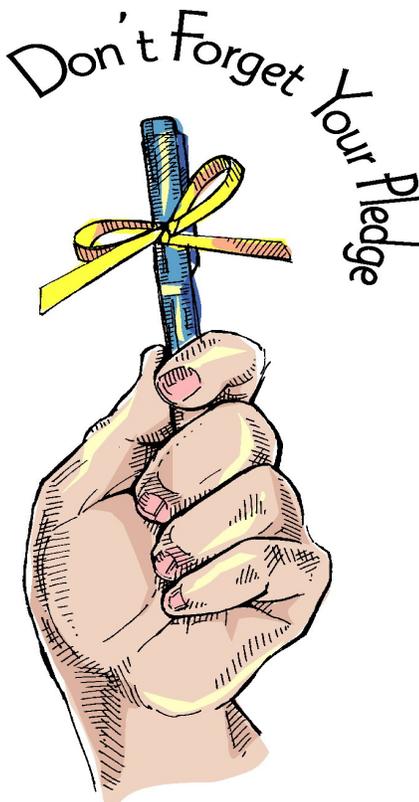
the style of meditation featured in the neuroscience experiments documented by Dr. Ricard. When the holiday season becomes busy during December, I hope that this spiritual practice of meditation helps me (and you, too!) to calm our hearts, stay close to God, and not be distracted from the meaning of Christ coming into the world.

The season of Advent is also a good season for our congregation to receive the recommendations of the Healthy Church Initiative consulting team. The recommendations look at places where God is appearing and calling us to grow forward together. During Advent,

we look for those new ways that God is appearing and making God's self known in the world. Perhaps we will find some of those ways within the recommendations of the HCI team. As we receive the recommendations, we humbly look for the ways in which God is guiding us as a congregation. May God help us to grow in spirit in this season of preparation for



*Preparing for the
Christmas Season*



HAVE YOU PLEGGED YET?

It's not too late to complete a pledge. Receiving the Estimate of Giving cards truly helps your leadership team plan for the coming year. We've heard from some members that they are concerned about making a pledge as they know their family circumstances may change throughout the year. That's not a problem. If you need to make a change in your pledge, just let us know. Also, using the automatic withdrawal system for your pledge

makes everything super easy. No need to remember your checkbook or envelopes on Sunday morning. Just pick a time-frame (weekly, monthly etc.) and your designated pledge will be automatically withdrawn from your savings or checking account. Estimate of Giving forms and ACH authorization forms can be found on the table in the narthex.

*Dale Fletcher and Kae Jewell,
Co-Chairs, Finance Committee*

FALL FEST

2018

A great
time was had
by all!



CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Helping families
nurture lifelong
disciples of Christ



2018 CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Our Church Christmas pageant will be a little different this year. For starters it will be during Kidz 2gether worship on Sunday, December 9th at 10:30am. We will be rehearsing music for the pageant with children during the beginning of the Sunday school hour throughout November, so please try to get your children there to practice. We have a whole new script this year! It will be heartfelt and traditional, but will also be funny and entertaining.. You wont want to miss it!

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Please join us after the Christmas pageant for a Christmas party to celebrate all the hard work! There will be good food, music and fellowship, and lots of activities for children and youth including everything you will need to build an amazing gingerbread bread house for you to take home.



CONFIRMATION

2018-2019

In November the confirmation class theme was the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. We watched videos, had discussions, and played games that helped us learn about the four important principle factors that John Wesley believed was necessary in developing thoughts on god and living out this Christian faith:

~Scripture is how we rely on the inspired Word of God to instruct us in the way of salvation and living; therefore, we must study the Bible carefully.

~Tradition is the experience and wisdom that we read through writings, rituals, prayers and liturgy of Christians before us, learning from what they did and how God spoke to them.

~Experience is the individual's understanding. Because we have been gifted with the Holy Spirit, each of us has our own relationship with God and personal sense of faith that can help us understand God.

~And finally, although we serve a vast and mysterious God, we also have evidence of faith and revelations that support scripture and can help us interpret the way of faithful discipleship. Which is our Reasoning.

Our next class is on Wednesday, December 12th from 6:00-8:00 pm and the theme will be the "Gifts and

REACHING OUT

Living our faith
and connecting
with our
neighbors



FOOD SHELF NEEDS DURING THE HOLIDAYS- BIN IN NARTHEX

Cream soups for making hot dishes
Pasta and/or rice
Cooking oil
Sugar
Hot cereals
Canned fruits
Personal care items of shampoo,
tooth paste and toilet paper

LEWIS HOUSE NEEDS

Lewis House thanks us for our generous donation of toiletries. They have enough toiletries and currently need the following:

- Bath towels
- Diapers—size 4 and 5
- Pull-ups
- Ethnic haircare products
- Feminine care products

The collection bin is in the narthex.

NEED FOR BLOOD

The Red Cross is very short on blood supply. Please make an appointment: use their Blood Donor App, or through RedCrossBlood.org or by calling 800-733-2767. Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays see less donors, but the need is great as people travel the world. If questions, call Jude Rikala 651-454-6885.

GARLOUGH SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES

- ◆ Sheridan Story, putting weekend food in backpacks, happens the first two Thursdays of each month at 8:30 am at Garlough School. The work takes about an hour. Please help. Contact Carol Egan, merryhands@gmail.com or 651-452-5161 to volunteer.
- ◆ At this time we do not need more Reading Buddies volunteers.
- ◆ Want to help out at Garlough in another way? You can always help serve on PIE nights or volunteer in the library. Contact Carol Egan, merryhands@gmail.com or 651-452-5161 to volunteer.



NEIGHBORS' HOLIDAY GIFT PROGRAM

We have participated with Neighbors for many years. We have been asked to focus on teens this year. On Sunday, November 25th, the Mission team put up a small Christmas tree in the narthex with tags listing gifts you might like to purchase. Black Friday is a great time to be on the lookout for deals! Gifts will be delivered to Neighbors' on December 10th. You have a few weeks now to be a secret shopper to make Christmas a miracle for a needy individual/family/senior. You can also adopt a family/individual/senior by calling 651-306-2140 or email holiday@neighborsmn.org.

A few examples are:
Cash to use to buy gifts not donated and to keep programs running

Gifts under \$10: sketch pads, nerf darts, paracord bracelet kits, 9V batteries, girl headbands/hair clips, nail polish remover.

Gifts over \$10: AMC movie/Target/Walmart gift cards, blow dryer/curling iron, wireless speaker, science kits, sports balls, superheroes, Legos, waterproof snow pants/jackets/gloves, sleds, sports team jersey/hoodies and the many ideas you may have.

Plastic bins will be available in the narthex.

EVENTS

What's
happening and
when?



HEALTHY CHURCH INITIATIVE TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Come hear our report and recommendations from the Healthy Church Initiative team on Sunday, January 6th and Sunday, January 13th, following worship.

UMC 50th ANNIVERSARY WITH BISHOP OUGH DECEMBER 7th

3000 5th St NW
New Brighton MN 55112
11:00 am

You are invited to a service led by Bishop Ough and including United Methodist students, faculty and alums. The service is followed by lunch. Questions: Dr. J. Samuel Subramanian, jssubramanian@unitedseminary.edu

SMALL GROUPS

United with
Purpose



MEN'S GROUP

The Men's Group will not meet in December. Any questions please call Dick Robinson at 651-207-8643 or email him at dickrobinson2@msn.com.

UMW CIRCLES

Rachel Circle

Rachel Circle will not meet in December. Questions? Contact Barb Jorgenson, 651-414-0054.

Rebekah Circle

Rebekah Circle will meet on December 19th at 11:00 am at church. We welcome visitors! Questions? Call Beda at 651-554-3600

Ruth Circle

Ruth Circle will meet on Monday, December 17th, at 12:30 pm at Rhea Nyquists's home. Questions? Contact Rhea Nyquist, 651-457-5623.

ADULT EDUCATION SUNDAYS, 9:30 am BERTLESEN LIBRARY

In December, we will finish up the discussion of *Invitation to John* by reading two chapters per week. A classic up-to-date Bible study, highlighting the most relevant passages.

Charles Duddingston will convene the classes. You are especially invited!

WEDNESDAY ADULT EDUCATION BOOK GROUP, NOON FELLOWSHIP HALL

The Book Club will not meet in December. Look for more information on upcoming books in future newsletters and bulletins.

HEALTHY CHURCH INITIATIVE (HCI) CONSULTATION WEEKEND

NOVEMBER 9-11 2018

First, a special thanks to all who participated in the activities (including Sunday morning worship) of the HCI weekend. As you know, St. Paul's UMC was invited last fall by the United Methodist Conference to participate in an initiative designed to aid healthy and active churches strengthen and grow in discipleship. This is the Healthy Church Initiative Program that we began with a "Breakthrough Prayer" (remember the 3 minute egg timer?)

After a year's preparation consisting of "self-study" and "community-study" by a team of our own members (HCI team), the Consultant Team from the United Methodist Conference visited St. Paul's UMC to review our findings and to learn more about us through interviewing some people and conducting focus group discussions with many others from our congregation. Such was the purpose of the past weekend visit.

Question: You might still be asking yourself: "Why, since St. Paul's UMC is healthy and active, are we interested in looking at recommendations, which might mean changing some ways?"

Did you know the fastest growing religion in the USA is "None" and it is growing exponentially by

generations. It's not that many of the "Nones" (people unaffiliated with a church or religion) are not spiritual, but they are seeking other paths or ways to spirituality.

All denominations are experiencing shrinking populations. The number of adults currently identifying as having no church affiliation has doubled since 1990 and now stands at 6 million. According to a Pew Research study referenced in an article on the front page of Sunday's StarTribune (11/11/18), the percentages of "the unaffiliated" grow with every new generation. In 2014, of those born between 1929-1945, 11% considered themselves unaffiliated with a church or as an atheist; of those born between 1946-1964, 17% ; of those born between 1981-1989, 23% ; and, of those born between 1990-1996, 36%.

In about two weeks, we can expect a final report from the Consultants of their understanding of "Who we are now as St. Paul's UMC" and who we say we want to be and how we want to see ourselves in 5 or 10 years. It will also include five (5) recommendations of ways to grow our community, to expand our presence and to connect with many who will benefit from a spiritual connection.

At that time we will conduct "Town Hall Meetings" for our membership to discuss recommendations and the "Way Forward." After that, the Recommendation Package will be voted upon by the congregation

Also a special thanks to our HCI team members and all who through their diligence and commitment during this past year (self-study, interviewing, assigned readings, trainings, and weekend food preparation) in bringing this past weekend to fruition. If you have questions please feel free to speak with one of the team.

UMC HCI team:

Bob Brocklehurst, Deb Curran, Christie Cuttell, Charles Duddingston, Barb Goin, Katie Hamilton, Shirley Holmay, Andrea Larson, Sharon Monroe, Chrisana Tripodi, and Pastor Amy Jo Bur.



HOLIDAY



**CHOIR
PROGRAM
SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 16th**
Inspiring music!

**CANDLELIGHT
CHRISTMAS EVE
SERVICES,
DECEMBER 24th**
3:30 pm
and
5:00 pm
Candlelight, readings,
& carols!

HOLIDAY LETTERS

We invite you to send one to our homebound family:

Mary Bell: Good Samaritan Society, 1301 50th St. E. #38, Inver Grove Heights MN 55077

Jo Daugherty: Sunrise of Minnetonka, 18605 Old Excelsior Blvd #214, Minnetonka MN 55345

Sharon Holmes: Augustana Care, 930 16th St. W., Hastings MN 55033

Marsha Knuth: Coventry of Mahtomedi, 720 Mahtomedi #301, Mahtomedi MN 55115

Eleanore McGlothlin: Brookdale Senior Living, 315 E. Thompson Ave. #8, West St. Paul MN 55118

Del and Gerry Nicklaus: 2065 Park Center Dr. #206, Eagan MN 55122

Ernest and Alice Peitso: Hilltop Manor, 595 Hwy 110, Mendota Heights MN 55118

Della Relation: 720 Linden St. #315, Mendota Heights MN 55118

Jackie Swanson: The Willows of Ramsey Hill, 80 N. Mackubin St. #100, St. Paul MN 55102

Myrle Voynovich: The Waters, 7088 11th St. N. #308, Oakdale MN 55128

Bob and Shirley Wilson: Southview Senior Living, 1984 Oakdale Ave. #414, West St. Paul MN 55118

If you are not personally acquainted with all of our homebound family, just sign "St. Paul's UMC family" under your name!

ADVENT DECORATING SATURDAY

DECEMBER 1st

Help is needed to decorate the church for Advent, Saturday, December 1st. If interested, contact Lane Skoglund-Anderson.

CAROLING

THURSDAY

DECEMBER 6th

You are personally invited to be a "Christmas Caroler" on Thursday, December 6th, as we share the spirit of Christmas.

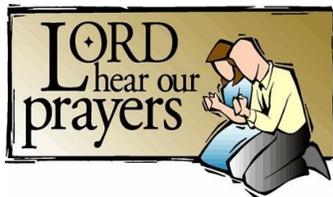
We will meet at St. Paul's at 6:00 pm and then return to St. Paul's around 8:00 pm for hot cocoa and cookies. All ages and singing levels are welcome!

COOKIE EXCHANGE SUNDAY

DECEMBER 16th

Have a favorite Christmas cookie or maybe you're eager to try a new recipe? Please bring a couple dozen cookies to church on Sunday, December 16th. Even if you are not a baker, store bought are fine! During the Fellowship Hour after church we will eat our tasty creations.

With the remaining cookies we will have each family fill a tin with cookies to bring to neighbors, friends, teachers or relatives. The tag on the tin will invite them to join us for one of our Christmas Eve services.



Please pray for the following:

Joys:

Mike LaGuire and Sherri Ziekowski, married October 27th
 Del Nicklaus, home after spending time in transitional care
 Jan Marshall's son successfully defended his recent PhD thesis in Materials Science

Deaths:

Jude Rikala's sister, Barb Hernandez, died November 20th
 Cheryl Anderson's friend, Wayne Carlson, died November 23rd
 Jo Baker's niece, Debbie Earl, November 9th
 Barb Goin's brother-in-law, Jim Goin, November 5th
 Cheryl Anderson's friend, Sue Sjoblom, October 27th

Health Concerns:

Jack Baker's cousin, Eve, heart surgery
 Bettie Robinson as she recovers from a broken shoulder
 Sharon Medjanyk, healing from surgery
 Roxy Crane's brother in hospital in Texas
 Jerry Moffitt's back surgery January 8th and 15th goes well
 Barb Helmken's friend, Irma, for the death of her husband; healing for John who broke his elbow; Phil, diagnosed with leukemia; Mary, recovering from heart valve surgery and breast cancer
 DeeDee Anderson beginning chemotherapy
 Kae Jewell's uncle, Bob Grich, with a re-occurrence of lung cancer
 Friends of Dan and Barb Hamilton: Todd's upcoming heart surgery, Barb's co-worker with breast cancer, and Mike with lung disease
 Molly Glover finished radiation and will have an MRI in December for brain tumor
 Ben Pressnall as he begins radiation treatment
 Jude Rikala's sister, Barb, in nursing home
 Jo Reck's friend, Sherry, had cancerous kidney removed, and now remaining kidney not functioning well, and for Jo's mother, struggling with near blindness
 Jill Lewis, music director at Mt. Bethel UMC, with pancreatic cancer
 Brent Cuttell's 18 year old cousin, Lincoln, still in Traumatic Brain Injury facility
 Barb Jorgenson's friend Gail, has MS and broken foot
 All homebound with health problems
 Yeen Chong's co-worker, Clara, with leukemia
 Jo Daugherty and Della Relation for health concerns and continued healing

Additional:

Safe travels for Roxy Crane as she moves back to MN
 Those affected by the California fires
 Those affected by the Chicago, California, and Pittsburgh shootings
 Those affected by Hurricanes Michael and Florence and Typhoon Mangkhut
Please call the office with joys and concerns

**OFFICE HOURS:**

Monday - Friday: 8:00 am - noon

LANI'S OFFICE HOURS:

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday

10:00 am - 6:00 pm

Tuesday, 12:00—8:00 pm

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Education Hour for All: 9:30 am

Worship: 10:30 am

2nd SUNDAYS SCHEDULE

Education Hour for All: 9:30 am

Kidz 2gether Worship: 10:30 am

Brunch: 11:30 am

Communion will be offered the 1st and 2nd Sundays of every month.

CHURCH COUNCIL CHAIR:

Leslie Watkins

ST. PAUL'S STAFF:

Pastor: Rev. Amy Jo Bur,

pastor@stpaulsmn.org

Director of Children, Youth and Mission:

Lani Thompson,

lanithompson@stpaulsmn.org

Director of Music Ministry:

Lane Skoglund-Anderson,

laneskoglundanderson@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant:

Diane Pelinka,

info@stpaulsmn.org



Our sincere thank you for the generous donations you made to us in September and October. Your donation of 106 pounds of groceries to our food shelf is greatly appreciated. Many of your neighbors will benefit as a result of these gifts given from your heart. Thank you for being part of the Neighbors' family.

*Beth Skwira,
Neighbors' Inc., Dir. Of Dev.*

Dear Friends,

As we draw near to Thanksgiving and Giving Tuesday, I give thanks for all the gifts and prayers and support that you have given to my ministry and the Vietnam mission. I have attached my Thanksgiving newsletter to share with you my reflection upon this past year.

(posted on Fellowship Hall bulletin board)

With thanks and peace,

Quynh

On behalf of The Educational Department at Osseo Area Schools, we would like to extend a big thank you to your church for helping accommodate our last-minute needs on November 7th for our Indian Education event. We are truly grateful for your kindness and welcoming staff. Our event was a success and the space that was offered to us was very cozy. We will reach out again with more of an advanced notice for our future events if the number of attendees fits with your capacity. We also would like to give a special thanks to Diane and Lani (sic) for helping to make it all work with such short notice. You guys are awesome! Sincerely,
The Educational Dept. and Rev. Hillstrom

**Thank you to the
Counters
in November:**

Sarah Arnold
Barb Goin
Barb Jorgenson
Mike LaGuire
Bob Walker
Melissa Wilson



DECEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 9:30 am Education Hour for all w/ Adult Ed 10:30 am Worship w/ Communion	3 6:00 pm SPRC	4 <i>6:00 pm Yoga</i>	5 6:00 pm Confirmation 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	6 6:00 pm Caroling	7	1 8:30 am Fit Moms 4 Life 9:00 am Advent Decorating
						8 8:30 am Fit Moms 4 Life
9 9:30 am Education Hour w/ Adult Ed 10:30 am Kidz 2gether Christmas Pageant (no Communion) 11:30 am Christmas Party	10	11 <i>6:00 pm Yoga</i>	12 6:00 pm Handbell Choir 6:00 pm Confirmation 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	13 <i>10:00 am Quilters</i>	14	15 8:30 am Fit Moms 4 Life
16 9:30 am Education Hour w/ Adult Ed 10:30 am Worship w/ Choir Concert 11:30 am Cookie Exchange	17 12:30 pm Ruth Circle, Rhea Nyquists's home <i>6:45 pm 4H</i> 7:00 pm Rachel Circle, Jude Rikala's home	18 <i>6:00 pm Yoga</i>	19 11:00 am Rebekah Circle, church 6:00 pm Handbell Choir 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	20	21 Newsletter Deadline	22 8:30 am Fit Moms 4 Life
23 9:30 am Education Hour w/ Adult Ed 10:30 am Worship	24	25 <i>Christmas Day Office Closed</i>	26 6:00 pm Handbell Choir 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	27	28	29 8:30 am Fit Moms 4 Life
30 9:30 am Education Hour w/ Adult Ed 10:30 am Worship	31	<i>Italicized events are conducted by outside groups renting space at the church.</i>				

St. Paul's United Methodist Church

700 Wesley Lane
Mendota Heights MN 55118

Phone: 651-452-5683
Email: info@stpaulsmn.org

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Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors
The People of the United Methodist Church®



**CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES,
MONDAY, DECEMBER 24th**

**3:30 pm
and
5:00 pm**

**Candlelight, readings,
& carols!
Guest violinist: Laurie McFaul**