

Epistle

*A welcoming community
sharing Christ's love
in service
through relationships.
Welcome. Share. Serve.*

February 2021

REFLECTIONS FROM PASTOR AMY JO

I am anticipating good things during this new year of 2021. First, I am anticipating an improvement in public health, preserving the life and health of many people, and allowing our congregation to safely resume in-person worship and in-person small groups this year.

Phase Orange of Safety Plan. We continue to follow the bishop's guidance in our safety plan. Right now, in Phase Orange, weekly worship is by video, and small groups that are able to meet by video are encouraged to do so. Baptisms, weddings, and funerals of up to 10 people are conducted at the pastor's discretion. We are missing one another, and I am looking forward to seeing everyone again as soon as we are able to do so safely! Our staff is already beginning to prepare for the time when we are able to be together again. We do intend to continue posting video worship once in-person worship begins again.

Serving and Sharing. The economic turbulence of 2020 has affected our communities and caused many people to experience true need. In the midst of painful circumstances, I know that the church will continue to provide great leadership in serving and sharing Christ's love with our

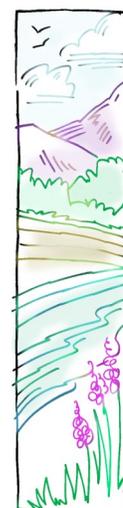
neighbors. March is Minnesota Food Share month, and we will be participating in sharing food with those in need. Please watch the upcoming announcements and newsletters for information about how to participate. Our partnership in mission with Garlough School continues as we provide funding for emergency food needs through Every Meal and our pen pals promote both literacy and friendship. Our friendly phone callers are also continuing to reach out with Christ's love.

Learning and Growing. During this school year, I am back to school at Dakota Wesleyan, in the Certificate Program for Non-Profit and Church Leadership. It is my hope that this continuing education will benefit our congregation as I grow in leadership skill. I know that many of you have also been engaging in Zoom classes throughout this time—good for you! I believe that God will bless us as we develop our gifts and use them for the common good.

Building Friendships & Partnerships. As public health conditions improve, I am also anticipating a time when it will be easier to make new friends and work together with others. It is my hope that our congregation continues to

grow and strengthen its mission partnerships. In doing so, I pray that we will better serve others and also build and strengthen relationships that support racial reconciliation in our community.

Lenten Adult Education. I look forward to hearing what your dreams are as we share our dreams with each other during the adult education videoconference during Lent. John Wesley included Christian Conferencing as one of the spiritual disciplines necessary to growing in our faith. As we share our God-inspired dreams with one another, we lift one another up and provide encouragement in our spiritual journey. May God bless Saint Paul's UMC with good things during 2021.

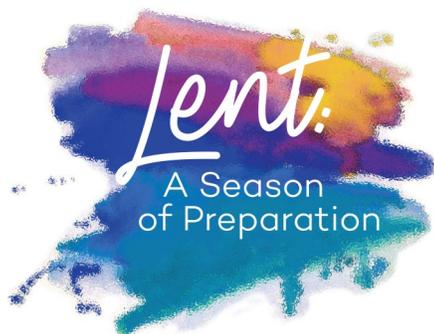


*We know
that all
things work
together
for good for
those who
love God....*

Romans 8:28

ASH WEDNESDAY

The beginning of Lent



ASH WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 17th

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent, when we prepare our hearts for Easter. It is a day during which we pause for honest self-reflection and listen for God's direction on how we might *turn from* sin and apathy and instead *turn toward* faithfully, actively, and intentionally living out our Christian faith. The word "repentance," which is the Christian practice we are following on Ash Wednesday, shares its root meaning with the word "turn." I encourage you to take time for prayer, meditation, self-reflection, and listening to God on Ash Wednesday. An Ash Wednesday worship service will be available online, and small bags of ashes will be available for pick-up in the covered box at the covered entrance to the church building.

A few words of explanation

regarding the ashes follow. Ashes are used to make the sign of the cross on the forehead or back of the hand of the person who is worshipping. The ashes remind us that human beings are indeed mortal—made from dust and to dust will one day return. They are also a symbol of mourning. As we turn from sinful behaviors on Ash Wednesday, we mourn those places in our lives where we have strayed from God's path, and we turn to follow God's path of discipleship. While it is often pastors who mark us with ashes during Ash Wednesday worship services, this ritual is not considered a sacrament in the United Methodist tradition, so it may be done by lay people as well. In order to follow our safety policy, this year we will ask you to pick up ashes and make the sign of the cross on yourself (or with others in your home.) May God lead you and guide you in observing a faithful Lent .

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Helping families
nurture lifelong
disciples of Christ



2021 FAMILY LENTEN DEVOTIONAL KITS

Lent officially starts in 2021 on Wednesday, February 17th, with Ash Wednesday, and while we can't be together to observe this season, we would like to find ways to continue with traditions and rituals that you can participate in at home, either by yourself or with your families. That is why we are putting together and delivering Lenten home devotional kits for families with

children and youth that will work for all ages. Each kit will include a devotional guide as well as supplies to help you join in and observe the season with special at-home rituals for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Easter Sunday.

If you do not have a child or youth in your home, but would still like a devotional kit please contact Lani Thompson and we will gladly put one together for you!

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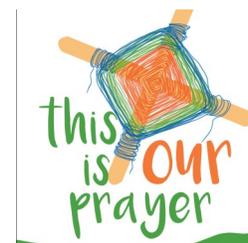


It's Time To Register For Camp! Registration is open for the 2021 camping season! Check out the camp sessions at Camp Minnesota website and pick your favorite camp location: Northern Pines, Koronis Ministries, or Kowakan Adventures.

Registration and all information for the 2021 camping season will be digital and available on our website. With the potential for changes to schedules and events leading up to summer due to the

coronavirus pandemic, the Dakotas and Minnesota Camp & Retreat Ministry team chose to forgo the traditional printed camp brochure this year. Instead, all camp listings and registration information are on the Camp Minnesota website where details will be updated quickly, and changes made in real time. This ensures you will always have the most up-to-date information.

Space may be limited this season, so sign up soon!



Register by April 30th to receive the Early Bird Camp Store Credit of \$25 to be used during the time at camp. Bring-A-Friend Incentive is back in 2021! For each new camper you bring to camp you can earn a discount of \$25 off the price of your camp. Before registering, check with your local church to see if they offer local church scholarships.

The theme for 2021 is *This is Our Prayer*. Some people pray by speaking their thoughts aloud or quietly clearing their mind. Others pray through music, art, dance, and being active. God is longing to connect with us. Campers will experience many different ways to pray and connect to Christ, Creation, & Community in our special places apart.

FINANCE

Support of our church and its mission



I am writing this piece on the day that has proven to be the peaceful transition of power that we expect from our democracy. This seems like a good time for reflection on what is old, what can be new and the value of unity. There have been days in the last year that it felt like Groundhog Day. Same old, same old. But as we close a year and look to the future and all it holds, I am hopeful. I am hopeful that I will see you all in person in the near future. I'd like to share a quote that reminds me that new beginnings are work but the rewards can be great.

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” - anonymous

One of the ways we come together is our financial support of the mission of our church. I would like to share a few highlights from our 2020 finances. (A full financial report will be in the 2020 Annual Report. I welcome questions or comments at any time.)

- Our investment portfolio performed very well this year. We had gains of \$59,754. A fantastic year. These investment gains allowed us to transfer \$10,000 from the earnings into the General Fund for expenses associated with our church upkeep.
- This has been a difficult year on the giving side. Total 2020 gifts of \$242,092 were down \$21,805 or 8% from 2019. Our leadership has done a wonderful job of keeping expenses down. Basically our budgets have been flat over the last three years. Our 2020 budget was \$281,633 and you will see a 2021 budget at the annual meeting of \$280,544.
- So the obvious question is, how did we manage to pay our 2020 bills with such a significant gap between gifts and expenses? A number of things occurred:
 - ◆ The most important reason we were able to meet our obligations was because our members contributed as they were able this year. It has been a difficult year personally and all gifts are appreciated but the extra effort and even some extra gifts are especially appreciated this year.
 - ◆ We were able to save some costs with the building closed for the majority of the year. 2020 expenses were \$255,705 or down 7 ½% from 2019.
 - ◆ We were able to obtain a PPP loan of \$37,600 as a part of the CARES Act. This is a loan and thus has yet to be recognized in the above total giving. We have applied for the loan forgiveness and are hopeful that will happen. Assuming it is forgiven, those funds will flow to giving. The dollars from the PPP were directed to payroll and allowed us to meet many of our obligations throughout the year.

(continued on page 5)

FINANCE

Support of our church and its mission



(continued from page 4)

- ◆ We also benefited from the MN Conference providing a holiday or waiver of pastor pension and health care costs for three months. These expenses were paid by the Conference out of their reserves. That amounted to a savings of \$5,371.
- ◆ Above I mentioned the \$10,000 that we were able to move from investment gains to be used for daily expenses.

As we look at the new beginning created by 2021 I don't think we can expect to see as much outside help as what we received in 2020. Your continued support and willingness to give what you are able continues to be critical to our ability to be disciples of the Lord and spread the good news of the gospel. May this be a year where our "working together is success."

Blessings,
Kae Jewell, Finance Chair

SMALL GROUPS

United with Purpose



RACHEL CIRCLE

Rachel Circle has one of the many 'unsung heroes' in our group and circle members have been busy providing support through many acts of kindness in addition to prayers and conversations. As with many, just knowing that someone is thinking of you is a day brightener. Our circle has not met this year and we are hoping that soon we will be able to meet again as a small group.

Nancy Pierson
Rachel Circle Chair

LENTEN ADULT EDUCATION

Dreamers are those who hope, who anticipate, who look forward to good things to come in their lives. What are your dreams for yourself, your family, your church, your country? To participate in the videoconference discussion, send your email address to info@stpaulsmn.org. We will then email you the Zoom link necessary to join the discussion. Our first 40-minute Zoom meeting is Wednesday, February 24th at 7:00 pm. We will also meet on Wednesdays, March 3rd, March 10th and March 17th. Come dream with us!

EVENTS

What's
happening and
when



CHURCH CONFERENCE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15th

7:00 pm

Saint Paul's UMC will be having our annual Church Conference Meeting on Monday, February 15, 2021 at 7:00 pm. According to our safety plan, the meeting will be held by videoconference, and information providing the link will be sent closer to the time of the conference. Paper copies of the reports will be available prior to the meeting.

VALENTINE'S DAY GREETING PHOTOS

We are looking for folks to submit digital photos for the video worship greeting time for Sunday, February 14th – Valentine's Day! Do you have a photo of your engagement, wedding or anniversary? Please send them by Monday, February 8th to: lani.thompson@stpaulsmn.org.

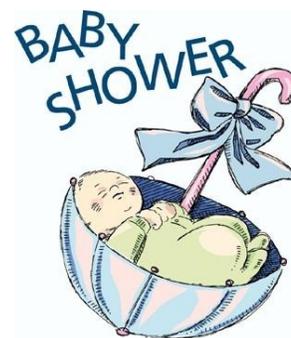


LANI'S BABY SHOWER SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21st

Come one come all to a baby shower for Lani! On **Feb 21 at 11:00 am**, Carol Rix, Kae Lovaas and Bev Momsen are planning a virtual baby shower for Lani and her family, as they await the birth of "Baby Boy Schrandt". Please join us in this celebration!

If you would like to participate in the virtual Zoom gathering for Lani's Baby Shower, please email the church office at info@stpaulsmn.org by **Feb 18**. The Zoom link and any handouts will be sent to those who will be attending the shower closer to Feb 21. If you cannot attend the virtual shower and would like to contribute a message of congratulations to Lani and her family, please let Bev know at momsenb@comcast.net. so we can include your wishes.

For those wishing to donate to Lani's baby gift, send a check made out to St. Paul's UMC with a note in the memo "Lani Baby Gift". Please send your check to the church office, St. Paul's UMC, 700 Wesley Lane, Mendota Heights MN 55118 **no later than Feb 15, 2021**. We hope to see you on Feb 21st!



REACHING OUT

Living our faith
and connecting
with our
neighbors



OUTREACH REPORT

We have attempted to continue as many of our mission programs as we can through the pandemic. We have sent money to Every Meal, formerly known as Sheridan Story. They are working hard to deliver meals to kids even as the kids are on lock-down at home.

Some individuals chose to support the Neighbors Christmas program by "adopting" families for whom they shopped and then delivered Christmas gifts. You can take food donations to Neighbors and drop them in the bin which is in the parking lot during the hours that Neighbors is open. Or you can make cash donations to church and ear-mark them for Neighbors. We continue to attempt caring for our neighbors who experience food insecurity.

Recently we applied for and received a \$600 grant for Garlough Elementary. Their goal is for every Garlough family to have books at home; the \$600 will go toward the purchase of those books. A few volunteers are participating in the pen pal project with kids from Garlough. We had more adult volunteers than kids who signed up. If you still wish to be a pen pal and didn't get an assignment, contact Diane in the office, and we will see if Garlough can get more kids to turn in those permission slips.

Please pray for our neighbors and all who are struggling through uncertain times. We appreciate your support of our outreach efforts throughout the pandemic restrictions.

Outreach Committee Meeting

Monday, February 22, 2021
4:45 —6:15 pm

The All Church Mission Planning Meeting

has not yet
been scheduled.



Please pray for the following:

Joys:

Maggie Wells accepted in St. Catherine University's School of Nursing

Lani Thompson and Steven Schrandt, engaged

Jack and Jo Baker's great grandson, Jacob Baker, married January 1st in AZ to Morrena

Deaths:

Marsha Knuth, January 2nd

Sam Young's brother, Michael Young, December 31st

Mark and DeeDee Anderson's sister-in-law, Joyce Anderson, January 5th

Health Concerns:

Chuck and Dawn Everling's great niece, Emilee Arriaga, recovering from heart surgery

For those testing positive for COVID-19

Barb Helmken's friend, Ashley, and her baby after an emergency C-section

Chrisana Tripodi's father, David Webb, for healing from pneumonia and COVID-19 and strength for his daughter and primary care giver, Rebecca Rodgers

Dick Robinson, as he begins home hospice care

Sam Young, undergoing treatment for a detached retina

Tim and Andrea Larson's friend, Laura, recovering from surgery for a brain tumor

John and Beth Schmidt's friends, Jerry, battling undiagnosed health issues, and Tom, recovering from a stroke

Jim and Rhea Nyquist's neighbor, Robert, with lung cancer

Curt Almberg's cousin, Loren, undergoing long-term cancer treatments

Chrisana Tripodi's husband, Greg, a high risk person for the virus, working in a hospital with COVID-19

Jo Reck's friends, Charlotte, healing after leg amputation and Angie, continued healing

Bob Mahoney, Corrine's brother, healing

Mike LaGuire's daughter, Cheryl, healing from breast cancer

All homebound with health problems

Additional:

For peace in St. Paul and throughout the world

For Lane Skoglund-Anderson's niece, Rachel Madrigal, and her husband and 4 children, who lost their home to a fire the day after Christmas

For an end to violence and racism in our communities

Those in recovery from addiction without in-person meetings

For healthcare professionals, including those affiliated with our congregation: Arin, Carrie, Deanna, Greg, Heidi, Jade, Kevin, Mary, Nikki, and Reed

For those who are unemployed

For those affected by the coronavirus and wisdom for our public health officials

Peace and safety in our communities

Please e-mail the office with joys and concerns at info@stpaulsmn.org or call Pastor Amy Jo at (507) 341-1760.



CENTRAL LEADERSHIP

CHAIR: Leslie Watkins

ST. PAUL'S STAFF:

Pastor: Rev. Amy Jo Bur,
pastor@stpaulsmn.org

Director of Children, Youth and Mission:

Lani Thompson,
lani.thompson@stpaulsmn.org

Director of Music Ministry:

Lane Skoglund-Anderson,
laneskoglundanderson@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant:

Diane Pelinka,
info@stpaulsmn.org



Thank you so much for your December gift (\$8,282.50). We are all aware how 2020 was different and the need continues to grow. People who were on the edge of needing assistance, have experienced more difficulties with feeding their families and have turned to Neighbors to help. We feel privileged and grateful to be here for them....It is only through your support that our work is possible. Thank you for being the 'spirit of the season' and for bringing health and hope to your neighbors in need. We wish you a bright 2021!

With gratitude,
Beth Skwira,
Dir. Of Mission Advancement
Neighbors Inc.

(The December gift to Neighbors, Inc. included \$7,827.50 from the Christmas special offering and \$455 of other special giving to Neighbors, Inc.

Pastor Amy Jo)



Marsha Knuth

January 2, 2021



Sympathy cards may be sent to:
Tom Knuth
740 Mohican
Mendota Heights MN 55120



NEW ADDRESS

Jane Spaulding

730 S. Plaza Dr.
#208

(new unit in same
building as before)
Mendota Heights MN 55120

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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Address Service Requested

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



**Monday, February 15, 2021, 7:00 pm
via teleconference**