

Epistle

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

January 2022

REFLECTIONS FROM PASTOR AMY JO

With the new year arriving, many of us are making resolutions about doing new things in the new year. I hope that we all are pausing to reflect on how we wish to be made new in the coming year, and resolving to rely on the power of God's Spirit and the practice of spiritual disciplines in order to realize that spiritual growth. God's Spirit is always at work in our lives, perfecting us in love and molding us into the image of Christ.

In addition to our personal spiritual growth, we are also transforming as a congregation. Part of this congregational transformation includes moving forward on guest readiness recommendations received during the Healthy Church Initiative process. For this reason, the new year will bring a refresh to the sanctuary, including new paint, flooring, and sound/video system. More information about these long awaited changes can be found in Bob Brocklehurst's article on behalf of the Operations Team. I am particularly excited about some of the improvements to our sound and video systems. The T-Loop technology that is being installed is a network of electronics that will run under the new flooring and connect automatically with many

digital hearing aids. Congregations who have used this technology have found it vastly improves sound quality for people wearing digital hearing aids, including more people in the full worship experience. A change from projection on walls to screens in the new system will improve the clarity and resolution of pictures used during worship, allowing us to appreciate the beautiful visual detail that our volunteers create to enhance our worship experience each week. There are many more details, for which I will refer you to the Operations Team article. Please be sure to watch upcoming announcements for details—it is likely that we will worship together with our neighboring congregation, Faith UMC in West St. Paul on January 9 and January 16 while part of the sanctuary refresh is happening.

Other plans for the new year at Saint Paul's UMC include joining our schools in celebrating February as "I ♥ to Read" month. During the month of February, we will include more story books in our worship experience. Jesus taught through the use of parables because the people of his time loved a good story, and love of stories hasn't

changed!

We also look forward to our Lenten theme during the new year: *God loves green*. During the season of Lent we will focus on the relationship between human beings, God, and the natural world. The beautiful outdoor landscaping that has taken place around the church building has been reflective of many of the stewardship principles that we will consider during this Lenten season.

May the Spirit of God bless you and your family with transformation and spiritual growth during this new year!



PROJECT: REFRESH 2022! Revitalizing the church



PROJECT: REFRESH 2022!

During the past year I have been most fortunate. Following in the footsteps of previous trustees and operations team leaders, I have learned much while serving in both roles. I have witnessed the inspiring work of others through their talented gifts in creating and providing access to worship services; congregation members and neighbors contributing ideas and actions to enhance our landscape; mission outreach in service and support of health workers; the “carry out turkey dinners” that continued a tradition of fellowship and service; just to name a few examples.

As we wait for the pandemic to become less dominant and for far less restrictive CDC guidelines, our goal is not just to get more people to church, but to refresh facilities and expand activities of fellowship and service. The overall goal is to radiate the spirit and values that inspire our church community, hopefully drawing others to join our community. We look to the full reopening of an invigorated church, attracting neighbors to our church home.

And, as we spiritually celebrate the birth of Jesus, for many it is also a time of making resolutions for the coming year, and we as a church will begin 2022 with projects that have been long in their development.

Project Refresh 2022 begins with a story: It is a tale of transitions and changes, of visions and synergy that have enabled the reality of *Refresh 2022*.

In the fall of 2011, the First United Methodist Church in South St. Paul merged with St. Paul’s United Methodist Church. The people who transferred their membership to SPUMC brought their energies and talents to blend with those of their new congregation. The blending resulted in new growth, resources, and fellowship. The members from First United Methodist also brought with them the cash reserves from their former church with a stipulation that those funds could only be used for capital improvements.

In 2018 the Methodist Conference offered resources to implement strategic planning through a process called “The Healthy Church Initiative”. Many of you participated in focus groups and interviews to get ideas that could be used to revitalize the church. At the end of this study, the congregation voted to accept the five goals that were proposed by the Leadership Team. Action plans were created, and church structure was modified for efficiency, along with processes. One of the goals focuses on creating an attractive environment inside and out.

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The Operations Team and others began to identify projects and priorities to refresh the church landscape and the inside of the church. Facilities and technologies would be updated with a purpose to increase the efficiency and functions of church infrastructure. In January of 2019 the Leadership Team formally approved implementation of the plans... and then came COVID-19.

The ability to plan on implementing the priority projects inside the church has been challenging with supply chain issues and staffing shortages adding to the COVID safety protocol requirements. It has been a challenge to plan even a few weeks into the future with any confidence.

Many of the projects envisioned have been completed. **Our current good news is that we have an action plan to advance another one of the HCI Goals identified over two years ago!** Do I hear a cheer?

Optimistically and with funding from the Capital Improvement Fund, we have a New Year's Resolution to start a "Refresh" of the interior of the church. An interior design consultant met with a small group of members over several months to choose colors for paint and carpeting, that will give us an updated look and feel. The four major projects in the first quarter of 2022 include:

- ♦ Painting the Sanctuary, the Narthex, the Fellowship Hall, the kitchen, and all the hallways.
- ♦ Refreshing the Sanctuary, the Narthex, the Fellowship Hall, and the hallways with new carpet.
- ♦ Installing what is known as T-Loop technology in the sanctuary to improve hearing for those who wear hearing aids.
- ♦ Installing new audio/visual and recording equipment in the sanctuary which will include new speakers and TV monitors in place of the wall projection we have been using.

These projects will begin in January and with confidence, they will be completed within a three-to-four-week period. We elected to implement the projects in January because the installers have people and supplies available.

A goal in the planning was to try to keep worshipping in person by moving the pews offsite. This option proved to be very expensive though it would have enabled us to rotate worship service locations between the sanctuary and the Fellowship Hall. We decided that it would be more fiscally responsible and time saving to move the pews into the Fellowship Hall while the sanctuary was being refreshed.

In lieu of worshipping at SPUMC, Pastor Amy Jo has reached out to Pastor Marianne at Faith UMC who was delighted to extend an invitation to worship with them while our Refresh is going on. This spring we can invite Faith UMC to visit with us and share in the joy of our new surroundings.

These projects don't include everything we wanted to accomplish, but it is a significant start. Project schedules will be shared with the congregation as soon as they are confirmed, but we are aiming to start the first week of January. We are excited, maybe a little nervous, but delighted with the fine vendors who have contributed ideas and their support as we have negotiated projects over many months.

We may also request some help to prepare for the project start up – moving/storing chairs and tables, taking down wall art and decor and packing up/covering smaller items in the kitchen to avoid damage. The prep work will likely be done the last week of December. If you can lend a hand or have questions about these projects, please leave a note in the church office to my attention or send an email to the church office at info@stpaulsmn.org. I will be happy to respond to you.

Also, you might offer a few prayers of support for the many people who have collaborated on these projects and for the vendors who were selected to carry them out. ☚

Purposefully and upbeat, *Bob Brocklehurst, Operations Chair*

FINANCE

Support of our church and its mission



FINANCE UPDATE AS OF 11/30/21

Last month we completed our Stewardship Campaign. Thanks to all who shared “Why I give to St. Paul’s . . .” by submitting a selfie for video worship and slides during in-person services. It was fun to see everyone’s smiles and comments on giving. Giving truly brings a smile to our faces. If you’re old enough, you remember David Letterman and his famous Top Ten lists. The selfies got me thinking about the Top Ten reasons for giving to my church.

1. **Giving is a joy!** God is a giver and giving allows us to experience God’s joy.
2. **Giving is an opportunity to show gratitude.** We are all recipients of God’s blessings. Giving is a way to say thank you for our blessings.
3. **Giving is an opportunity to participate in the ministries of a larger church.** We can’t do it alone but together we can care for God’s people and fulfill the mission of the church.
4. **Giving is an opportunity to give beyond my family.** An important tenet of Christian giving is to give beyond ourselves and our own circle.

5. **Giving is an opportunity to pay for services we receive.** As members of this church we have access to counseling, youth programs and many other services.
6. **Giving is what Jesus asks us to do.** The widow gave of her want two mites, more than she could afford. Jesus commended the widow for her giving.
7. **Giving is the only thing we will ever keep.** Money is temporary, we will lose it. But giving is permanent.
8. . . .
9. . . .
10. . . .

You can see I’ve only listed some of my Top Ten reasons to financially support our church. What are your reasons for supporting the ministries of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church?

Happy New Year,
Kae Jewell , Finance Team

	November 2021	2021 Year-to-Date
General Fund Gifts	\$ 25,775	\$ 230,556*
Less General Fund Expenses	\$ 24,811	\$ 224,372
Balance	\$ 964	\$ 6,184
Less Unpaid Apportionments	\$ (2,501)	\$ (27,514)
Balance After Unpaid Apportionments	\$ (1,537)	\$ (21,330)

*Includes \$36,382 PPP loan

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Helping families
nurture lifelong
disciples of Christ



YOUTH GATHERING

St. Paul's UMC youth in 6th-12th grade have started gathering every fourth Wednesday from 5:00-8:00 pm for some guided Faith, Fellowship, and Fun. Each youth gathering will be focused on a combination of a faith topic, mission project, worship participation, fellowship building, and of course a fun activity.

In November we made Christmas cards for homebound members and families that are still worshipping from home for health and safety reasons, and we rehearsed and

recorded some videos for this year's Kidz 2Gether Christmas pageant.

We took the month off from our youth gatherings in December to spend time with family.

Our next Youth Gathering will be on January 26th and we will be working on a group mission project. (Details are still in the works – but parents can look for an email coming soon).



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CONFIRMATION

2021-2022

In November the confirmation class theme was *"Holy Spirit & Gifts and Presence"*. We discussed the presence of the Holy Spirit as well as the importance of our presence at church. We also talked about our gifts and how those could be shared and used to help others and how Jesus was our gift from God.

The night ended with some fun Christmas themed games including a Hot Potato version of a present game that was just as entertaining for those playing as well as the adults watching.

Our next class is on Wednesday, January 12th from 6:00-8:00 pm and the theme will be *"Seasons of Faith"*.



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More pictures on pages 8 & 9!

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

We had a great turn out of excited and energetic Children and youth in the building on December 12th, the morning of our Christmas pageant - and what a great morning it was! A lot of hard work by all resulted in a fantastic pageant. The church was full of shepherds and wise men, lots of

excited angels, baby Santa, and of course a large three humped camel, all while little animals roamed the aisles and got an up-close view of Mary and Joseph laying baby Jesus into the manger. A popular addition this year was our All Puppet Children's Choir – which was loved by so many that it will definitely come back again soon.



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MORE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2021



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MORE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2021





SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Sunday School: 9:30 am

Worship: 10:30 am

Kidz 2gether worship: 2nd Sundays of the month

Communion on 1st and 2nd Sundays of the month

VIDEO WORSHIP

Available on Facebook, YouTube (St. Paul's UMC Mendota Heights) and the church's website:
www.stpaulsmn.org

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,
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 1131 S. Mabelle Ave.
 Fergus Falls MN 56537
 Emmy's direct phone number:
 218-998-4912



NEIGHBORS HOLIDAY

GIFT PROGRAM

A HUGE Thank you to everyone who donated to this years Neighbors Holiday Gift Program! We were able to deliver an overflowing tote of gifts for all ages and Neighbors was ever so grateful to be able to give them out to families in need this year.



Christmas 2021

St. Paul's United Methodist Church

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

PROJECT: REFRESH 2022!

Revitalizing the church
begins in January!

