

THE PATHFINDER



Merry Christmas

From all of us here at
St. Paul UCC



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
-Isaiah 9:6



The season of Advent, a time of waiting and anticipation, is a sacred journey, and we're excited to embark on this spiritual voyage together. In this series, we'll be delving into the Gospel readings from the lectionary calendar cycle B, which will guide us from the initial anticipation of Christ's coming to the joyful celebration of His birth. Each week, we'll explore a different aspect of the Advent story and hear these timeless truths afresh.

December 3, 2023

Hope: Anticipation and Alertness

Mark 13:24--37

A sermon on the first Sunday of Advent about the importance of readiness for Christ's return.

December 10, 2023

Peace: Affirmation in the Wilderness

Mark 1:1--8

A reflection on John the Baptist's dedication and his role in paving the path for Christ.

December 17, 2023

Joy: Acknowledging the Anointed One

John 1:6--8, 19--28

A sermon on the third Sunday of Advent about John's testimony about Jesus and his selfless nature.

December 24, 2023

Love: Angelic Announcement

Luke 1:26--38

A reflection on the angel Gabriel's message to Mary and her courageous response.

Christmas Carol Service, December 24, 6:30 pm

A service of hymns about Christmas presented by the choir and readings from the gospels telling the Christmas story.

Christmas Eve Service, December 24, 11:00 pm

The Arrival of the Almighty

Luke 2:1--20

A sermon on Christmas Eve about the nativity story and the joyous response of the shepherds.

This Advent, as we prepare our hearts and minds for Christmas, let us journey together. May we welcome the awe-inspiring, the wonderful, the Anointed One into our lives anew. May this series bless you, challenge you, and bring you closer to the heart of God as we anticipate and celebrate the arrival of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

From the Desk of Pastor Jonathan

Dear Fellow Believer,

As the echoes of Thanksgiving fade and the sanctuary starts to twinkle with the colors of Christmas, we transition into a season of anticipation and preparation—Advent. However, in the Gospel of Mark, we encounter a unique perspective of this season. Instead of the birth of Baby Jesus, Mark's Gospel begins with the voice of John the Baptist, a voice crying out in the wilderness.

John the Baptist emerges as a symbol of Advent, embodying the necessity to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. In Mark 1:4, he proclaims a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. This is a call for each of us to prepare our hearts for the coming of our Savior.

Advent, therefore, becomes a season of spiritual preparation. It should be a time for us to examine our hearts, to repent of our sins, and to clear our paths—removing any obstacles that might hinder us from fully receiving Christ.

The Gospel of Mark also reminds us of the enduring promise of Jesus: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Mark 13:31). During this Advent season, we should meditate on His promises that never fail and anticipate with joy the fulfillment of His promise: the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As the candles of the Advent wreath are lit each week, remember that each flame is a symbol of Christ's light breaking into our world, our lives, and our hearts. It is our responsibility to share this light with others, extending love, peace, hope, and joy to those around us.

This Advent, it is important to prepare our hearts anew to receive the Christ, our Savior, King, and Redeemer. The humble circumstances of His arrival remind us that He is Immanuel, "God with us," in every circumstance of our lives.

Throughout this blessed season of Advent, my prayer is for each of us to experience a fresh encounter with Christ, and that His love, peace, joy, and hope would fill our hearts to overflowing.

In the love of our coming King,
Pastor Jonathan

Consistory Corner

BY ROB DEHN

As 2023 comes to a close, the Consistory is grateful for the positive movement that has been made this year at St. Paul UCC. The congregation has become stronger as more families return to the weekly services and more folks, both members and non-members, are participating in all the activities that our church and its people have to offer.

There are things always going in the background at St. Paul UCC that the many boards and committees are tasked with. The Nominating Committee is working hard to address the upcoming five Consistory member seats that will need to be filled, not to mention vacancies on other committees that are seeking members. The Board of Worship is actively making improvements to make worship services more fulfilling. And the Technology team is in the middle of upgrading sound system equipment that had been compromised by power loss as a result of thunderstorms. This team has also modernized some of the church office's equipment that will allow for easier and more efficient work for our staff. It was also recently decided to match dollar for dollar the amount of donations that the Mission and Stewardship team raises for the Hawaii Relief Fund which will benefit all of the victims in Maui.

We as Consistory members are always interested in hearing input from church members, so please reach out about anything that may be of concern.

From all of us, we wish everyone a blessed Christmas season full of Hope, Joy, Peace and Love.

Do you need a "Faith Recharge"?

Beginning in January, Pastor Jonathan will be leading a class called "Faith Recharge". It will meet at 10:00 am on the first and third Saturdays of the month, starting on Saturday, January 6. This will be your chance to learn more about the Bible and scriptures and how they relate to life today. The class is open to all ages. It's your opportunity to have a Faith Recharge.

If you are interested, please register at the sign-up table or online via the Realm website (you can also scan the QR code located here) → so we can have enough materials for the class.



Even if you forget to register, please come anyway and join the group.

We look forward to having an interesting time of learning and fellowship!

Christmas Cookie Sale and Craft Stand



There is going to be a fund raiser in the Church Fellowship Hall on December 17 after the 9:30 church service, which is also the Sunday School Christmas program.

This event is to raise money for Maui to help them recover from their recent tragedy. We are planning to have a cookie sale and a craft booth, which will include some stocking stuffers. We would appreciate the bakers in the congregation donating 2 dozen (or more) of their favorite cookies and bringing them to the kitchen on December 15 or 16. The cookies will be packaged in containers containing one dozen cookies, which will be for sale on December 17. Please label what kind of cookie it is for us. This way you can try other people's favorite cookies and have a variety of cookies at Christmas and not have to bake them all yourself!

We also plan on having a craft stand. If you want to contribute crafts, bring them on Saturday, December 16, at 10:00 am when we will be setting up the stand. If you don't think you are a crafter, we would also like to have food items, such as fudge, chex mix, peanut brittle, or any other kind of candy. Please package it for sale in a container and label what it is. We would like to have those on December 16, at 10:00 am also while we are setting up. Tell all your friends and neighbors to come and pick up last minute gifts. If you are not a person that usually comes down to the fellowship hall on Sunday mornings, please come on December 17 and support this mission for Maui.

Please help us make this a success!

Board of Evangelism

BY DIANE HANNA

We have lots of numbers to share in this month's report.

- Our church scarecrow won the best use of recycled items in the Scarecrow Crawl. Thanks to Drew Curry, Bruce & Joanne Counce, Dean Riebeling and Pastor Julie for their work! The \$50 prize was donated to the Maui fund.
- The Pumpkin Hunt made \$1,105.50 in profit, which was put in the fundraising fund.
- We handed out 330 bags of candy at the YMCA Trunk or Treat and over 550 bags of candy at the Halloween Hi-jinks. Each bag had a note from the church, with our name, social media addresses and information about the church, including Messy Church. Thanks to the generous donations of candy and glow sticks, we had plenty of candy for those two events.
- We will be handing out 900 candy canes attached to a note about the church at the Lighted Parade on Saturday, December 2. Watch for our float and walkers in the parade. Anyone wishing to walk, please sign up in the Welcome Center or contact Diane Hanna at hanna@htc.net. Sunday School students are invited to ride the float or walk, depending on age.
- We will hold the final 5th Sunday Potluck on Sunday, December 31 following church. Come and enjoy an early start to your New Year.

Merry Christmas from the Evangelism Team and a Blessed New Year!



Parents of College Youth... We need addresses!!

If you have a member of your family in college, we would love to have their address. Please email Amanda office@stpaulcolumbia.org or call the office (618)281-5102

Board of Mission and Stewardship

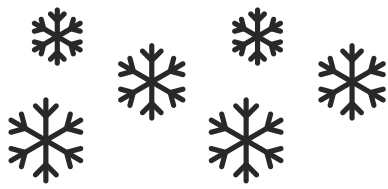
BY LYNDA SAUER

Oh my goodness!! By the time you read this, December will be here along with all the hustle and bustle of the season. Mission and Stewardship thanks all of you for your contributions to our food collection for the House of Neighborly Service. They were thrilled with all that we took to them.

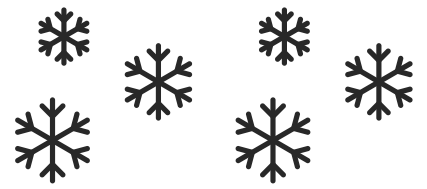
December's mission is the Star Tree located in the Welcome Center. You can also order gifts online. We really do need members to sign up for our boards and committees!! The church needs your help for our church to function properly. Many of you have wonderful talents to share, so please prayerfully consider being a part of a board or committee!!

We wish all of you a Blessed and Merry Christmas!!

And a huge thank you for all the gifts you have given this past year!!



Care Connection



by Joanne Counce

HERE WE GO AGAIN!

Yes, this is the Holiday Season that is full of decorations, cookies, carols, and Joy that can be associated with the colors Red and Green Christmas. But let us not forget, it is also the time for others that have anger, rejection, loss, mourn, or imperfect lives which is the BLUE Christmas. We have all gone through this at one time or another in some way or another when happiness is not with us. We are searching for calm and reflection and the ability to move forward in our lives. Paying attention to what things bring us joy is one way to move forward. Honor all of your feelings by embracing the feeling and not run away from it. Feeling gratitude for what you had, even if it was lost such as a loved one or employment is loving yourself and to keep on going. Know that others love you! Grab that hope over despair! Keep loving and talking about your loss in happy memories. Some days will be better than others and that is OK! This Christmas and every Christmas will be different but recognize the HOPE, the JOY, the PEACE, the LOVE, and be gentle and kind to yourself!

Prayer:

Spirit of God, You know when we have sorrow. Some grieve of a loss of a child, a spouse, a loved one, changes in our lives. You come to us and know our thoughts. Some are full of rage and anger, some of acceptance, some of weariness for ourselves. May we trust your presence in both the highest and lowest of mountains. We know that you are with us in life and death and Your Light shines within us. Amen



The holidays are keeping our Littles very busy. Late November we wrapped up our Cardinal calendar fund raiser. We also celebrated Thanksgiving with our own version of a Feast complete with jello, turkey, pumpkin bread, and popcorn.

In December, you will find us creating gifts for our parents and practicing songs & fingerplays for our Christmas program. Our last day before Christmas will have plenty of excitement! We will begin the day with our holiday program, go on a scavenger hunt to find Santa, his elves & treasures, have special treats, play games and end the day with a gift exchange.

We will be back from holiday break on January 9th.

Everyone at Little Friends appreciates your continuous support with your donations and items bought for us off of our Wish Tree! We wish you and your family a blessed holiday!

Book Club



St. Paul UCC Book Club meets monthly on the 4th Monday of the month.
All are welcome to join.

This month will feature:

• **December- The Handmaid and the Carpenter by Elizabeth Berg**

A novel about love and trust, hope and belief when the author transports readers to Nazareth in biblical times to reimagine the events of the Christmas story.

And coming soon...

- January - Lady Tang's Circle of Women by Lisa See
- February - The Secret Daughter by Kelly Rimmer
- March - The Music Shop by Rachel Joyce
- April - Good Night, Irene by Luis Alberto
- May - The Heaven and Earth Grocery Shop by James McBride

Weekly Attendance

OCTOBER 2023

- October 1- 118
- October 8- 92
- October 15- 140
- October 22- 159
- October 29- 119

Please note...

It's that time of year again...
we need your articles for the Annual Report.

If you are responsible for your groups report,
please email them in to Amanda at
office@stpaulcolumbia.org **no later than 12/15.**

Also if you have anything for the January
pathfinder, please send them in as well!

Thank you!

PRAYERS FOR OUR MILITARY And Their Families

Nathan Schnittger

U.S. Army
Nephew of Cathy Huels

Roberto DeMarquez

Army National Guard
Son of Ursula DeMarquez

James K. Combs

Marine Sgt.
Son of Jim & Debbie Combs

Jack Augustin

U.S Army
Son of Jason & Shelly Augustin

Sean Parrin

Army Ranger - Italy
Nephew of Jody & Jeff Taake



Luke Volmert

U.S. Peace Corp- Morraco



Youth Ministry News

FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR JULIE

Youth Fun Stuff

Our first Thursday night youth event was October 26th, the same night as Messy Church. There was a great turnout! Youth met on the third floor for pizza and games like Rock, Paper, Scissor Tag and more. Many stayed on for an impromptu Ping Pong tournament or board/card games. We scheduled two more Thursday youth nights in November. See below for the coming December events!!



**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Mark Your Calendars...
You won't want to miss these events!

On Sunday, December 10 we will meet at 2:30 pm at the Bottom Ave parking lot to go ice skating at Steinberg rink in St. Louis. We'll plan to skate from 3:00 to 5:00 and return by 5:30 pm.

Please RSVP so we can further plan this event!

Adults please contact Pastor Julie if you would like to be a chaperone.



Thursday, December 21st is our next youth night, with games and activities starting at 5:30 pm. The following Thursday (the 28th) is Messy Church.



Confirmation



Our Confirmation class is moving into our field trip season and the time when the class develops their group service project. We visited St. Louis Cathedral Basilica on Sunday evening, November 26. In class, we are brainstorming our interests and ideas to focus our project.



On Saturday, November 18, our Confirmation class and Faith Partners got up early to help sort donations at the Arnold food pantry. Whoops, we arrived earlier than we should have, so we took the opportunity to get donuts and work on the Parade of Lights float. We returned to put in a good three hours of volunteer time. Our visit coincided with the annual Boy Scouts food drive. It was a well organized operation and we helped receive 24,700 items of food. This was a new opportunity for us and we look forward to volunteering again soon!

Participants included youth: Grant Bolyard, Kellan Brunkhorst, Dexter Crawford, Molly Harres, Nathan Jackson and Eli Kirk, adult faith partners: Kathleen Habermehl, Faye Mehrmann, Mark Thompson and Pastor Julie.



New! Graceful Motherhood Fellowship

Small Group Bible Study for
Moms with Young Kids
(Newborn-4th Grade)

First and Third Tuesday of Each Month
at 7:00 PM

Starting January 2, 2024
Held at St. Paul UCC-Columbia

**Strengthening Faith
while raising children.**

For inquiries and sign up
please contact Carrie Clayton
618-444-2902 or carrieclayton12@gmail.com

Mom of a middle or high schooler and would like to start a small group? Contact Carrie

Director of Christian Ed Denise Johnson

YOUTH UPDATES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION



We would like to thank all who participated in the Samaritan's Purse Shoebox mission gifts. Faye Mehrmann promoted and delivered forty-three shoeboxes to the drop off center in Waterloo. The shoeboxes will begin their journey and the little bar code will enable us to see where in the world they arrive. Forty-three children will receive a nice surprise and know that someone cares.

Your Advent Journey

December 3 is the first Sunday of Advent. An Advent Devotional called Glow will be handed out on December 3, the first Sunday of Advent.

We will also hand out A Family Advent Wreath Kit. It is a resource that will help your family focus on the birth of Jesus this Advent/Christmas season!



Straight Outta Bethlehem Christmas Program

"God is with us, and we don't have to be alone! All of us can be adopted into God's family. Come and join us in the "sleepy" little village of Bethlehem. But in this tiny town something huge and miraculous is about to happen...the birth of the Messiah! Right in the midst of all the action is a group of orphans who reside at the Inn of Bethlehem. This loveable ragamuffin group of characters will put a smile on your lips and a song in your heart as they unveil the story of Christmas and how God sent His only Son to be born. As eyewitnesses to the holy, blessed event, their special re-telling of the story is sure to shine a bright new light on the importance of our Savior's birth!" Our Sunday school Christmas Program will be Straight Out of Bethlehem! On Sunday December 17 @ 9:30 am. service.

Please mark your family schedules for our Christmas program rehearsals:
Sunday: (during Sunday School)
December 3
December 10
Our Saturday practices are
December 9 and December 16
at 10:30 am.-12:00 pm



Youth Night Hang Out

Calling all middle and high schoolers. Join us for an evening of bonding, board games and Christmas celebration. Oh, and don't forget to bring a friend.

Thursday, December 21 at 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm



January Messy Church will be on Thursday, January 26 at 5:30 pm.



Pajamas, Pancakes, and Praise Party

Sunday, December 31 there will be Sunday School.

All children and youth can wear their pajamas to church and enjoy a pancakes breakfast, and praise God for the birth of Jesus!

Save the Date

Epiphany Party!

Sunday, January 7 there will be Sunday School. We will celebrate Epiphany!

December Messy Church

Thursday, December 28

5:30 pm

December Messy Church will be on Thursday, December 28 at 5:30 pm. Nativity Escape Room and Epiphany We can help the shepherds find Jesus.

We can solve the mysteries of the Birth of Jesus. We can celebrate Epiphany. What does Epiphany mean?

We will find our "star gifts" Make origami stars.

We will create a Home Blessing Kit.

All are welcome. Bring a friend or family!



december

SUN

MON


TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

					1 8 am Quilters	2 7pm Eppinger Concert
3 Kindercottage Collection 9:30 Worship & communion 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Social Time	4 10 am Staff Mtg 6pm Band Cedarhurst Waterloo 7pm Property Committee 7 pm Stewardship Board	5 9 am Preschool 7pm Boy Scout Troop 357	6 9 am Preschool 10am Morning Bells 3:30 pm Kids Crew 6pm Evening Bells 6pm Confirmation 7pm Chancel Choir	7 9 am Preschool 5:30 pm Personnel 6pm Cub Scouts 7pm Executive Committee	8 8 am Quilters	9
10 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Social Time 12pm Band Acorn Country Club	11 10 am Staff Mtg 6pm Girl Scout Daisy Troop 449 6pm Band Bria Integrity Columbia 6pm Finance 7pm Consistory	12 9 am Preschool 6pm Daisy Troop 148 7pm Boy Scout Troop 357	13 9 am Preschool 10am Morning Bells 3:30 pm Kids Crew 6pm Evening Bells 6pm Confirmation 7pm Chancel Choir	14 9 am Preschool 7 pm Evangelism Bd 7pm Cemetery Board	15 8 am Quilters Pathfinder and Annual Report Articles Due	16
17 9:30 Worship and Children's Christmas Program 10:30 Christmas Cookie sale and Craft Booth	18 10 am Staff Meeting 6pm Band Practice 7:30 pm Board of Worship	19 9 am Preschool	20 9 am Preschool 10am Morning Bells 3:30 pm Kids Crew 6:00 pm Girl Scout Troop Leaders 6pm Evening Bells 6pm Confirmation 7pm Chancel Choir	21 9 am Preschool 5:30 pm Tech Team 5:30 pm Youth Night 7pm Pastoral Relations	22 8 am Quilters	23
24 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Social Time 6:30 Christmas Eve Service 11pm Christmas Eve Service	25  Merry CHRISTMAS Office Closed	26 7pm Boy Scout Troop 357	27 10am Morning Bells 6pm Evening Bells 6pm Confirmation 7pm Chancel Choir	28 530 pm Messy Church	29 8 am Quilters	30
31 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Social Time 11am 5th Sunday Potluck						

Memorials



Memorials and Tributes Fund
In Memory of George Eckert given by:

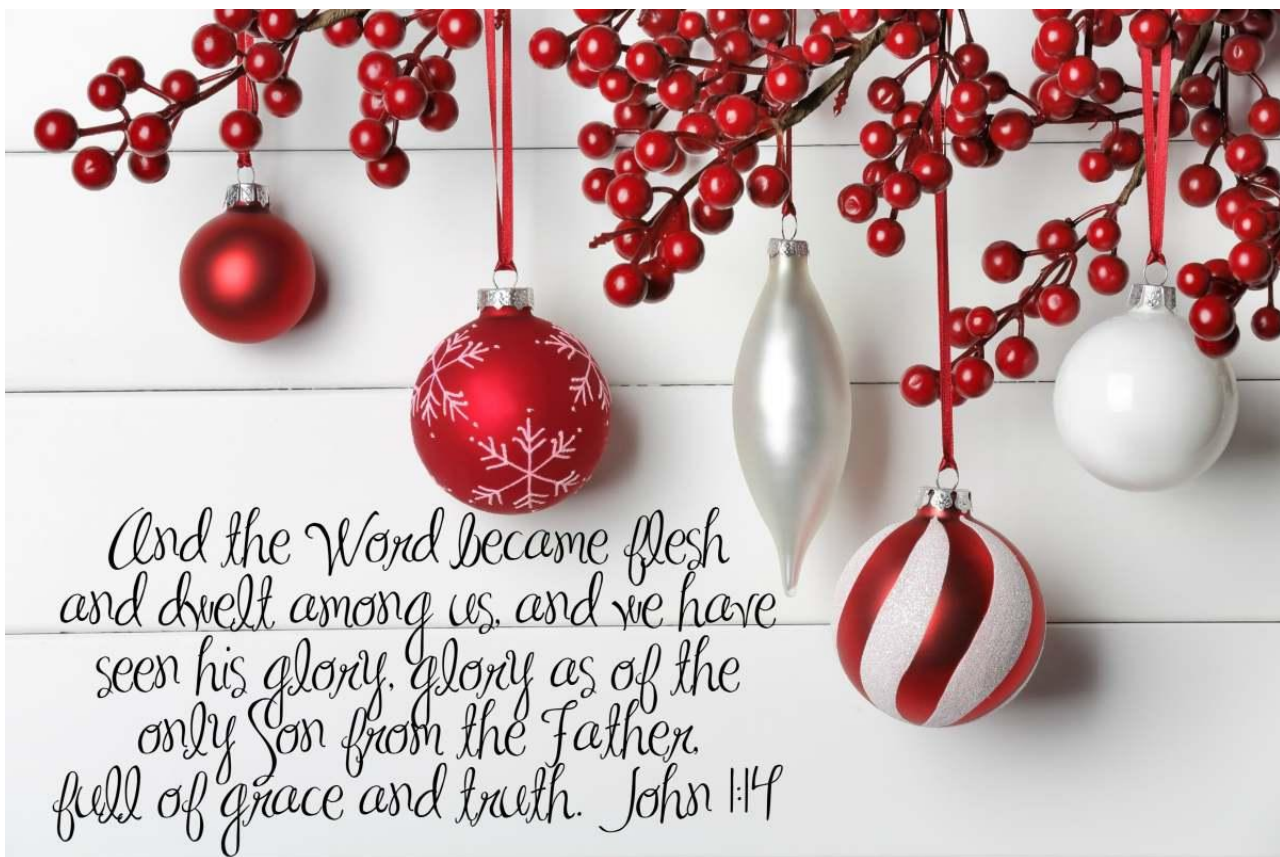
Lynda Sauer

Neighbors In Need Fund
In Memory of George Eckert given by:

Bill and Ellen Lewis

Memorials and Tributes Fund
In Memory of Sharron Burgdorf given by:

Lynda Sauer



Our Members in Senior Living

Garden Place
480 DD Rd.
Columbia, IL 62236
618-281-4200
Clarice Giffhorn Rm. 204
Ed Schutte Rm. Rm. 113
Grace Volkert Rm. 110

Dammert G.C.
The Esquiline
Betty Lou Carle
726 Community Dr.
Belleville, IL 62223

Garden Place
Gene Haller: Apt 15
735 Columbia Ave.
Waterloo, IL 62298
618-223-5834

Magnolia Terrace
Mary Fassel
623 Hamacher St.
Apt 122
Waterloo, IL 62298

Our Members in Nursing Homes

Integrity
Dorothy Klein
253 Bradington
Columbia, IL 62236

Eden Village
Nira Probstmeyer
400 S. Station Rd.
Glen Carbon, IL 62034

Oak Hill Nursing Home
Gladys Ludwig
Don Naumann
623 Hamacher St
Waterloo, IL 62298
618-939-3488

Financial Report

	October		Year to Date	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Revenue				
Tithes & Offerings:				
Pledged & NonPledged	32,492.34	31,655.54	305,992.35	327,446.39
Misc. Contributions	91.00	291.00	5,698.00	7,466.00
Interest Income	719.55	739.47	3,899.16	4,051.20
Endowment Interest Income	13,731.07	13,929.10	55,004.19	55,339.81
Rental Income	0.00	0.00	300.00	1,450.00
Misc Income	15,268.57	2,386.33	26,406.82	34,918.39
Total Revenues	62,302.53	49,001.44	397,300.52	430,671.79
Expenses				
Personnel	28,189.35	30,961.78	283,388.92	312,938.46
General Expenses	6,243.44	6,276.50	111,290.79	127,475.70
* OCWM	1,527.24	2,649.20	24,885.97	27,413.84
Total Expenses	35,960.03	39,887.48	419,565.68	467,828.00
Net Receipts	26,342.50	9,113.96	(22,265.16)	(37,156.21)
RESERVES			100,125.47	52,744.84
*OCWM 10,000.00 out of St Paul Mission (833.33 monthly)				

St. Paul United Church of Christ
127 St. Paul Street, Columbia, IL 62236



The Pathfinder

Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday
9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Monthly Newsletter of St. Paul United Church of Christ
Phone - 618-281-5102 / FAX - 618-281-3032 /
E Mail - office@stpaulcolumbia.org
stpaulcolumbia.org

Does the church office have
your current contact information?

We don't want you to miss out on any information. If you haven't been receiving emails, chances are we don't have a current email address for you, or the email went to your spam.

If you are unsure, please contact Amanda in the office by email (see below) or call 618-281-5102.

Staff Contact Information:

Senior Pastor

Rev. Jonathan Bangera- srpastor@stpaulcolumbia.org
Cell phone (215) 512-4024

Interim Associate Pastor for Youth & Visitation

Rev. Julie Kies - assocpastor@stpaulcolumbia.org

Office and Communications Coordinator

Amanda Stapf office@stpaulcolumbia.org

Financial Administrator

Barb Gerstenecker- financial@stpaulcolumbia.org

Christian Education Director

Denise Johnson - christianed@stpaulcolumbia.org

Lead Custodian

Terry Schramm - custodian@stpaulcolumbia.org

Custodian, Madison Shoellhorn

Music Coordinator/Organist

Lori Morton - music@stpaulcolumbia.org

Youth Bell /Inspire Band Director

Sue Phillips - band@stpaulcolumbia.org

Evening Bell/Choir Director

Emily Thoman- choir@stpaulcolumbia.org

Morning Bell Director, Patti French

Preschool Director

Jody Taake - preschool@stpaulcolumbia.org

Cemetery Treasurer, Robin MacLaughlin
cemetery@stpaulcolumbia.org

Consistory Members

President - Dennis Hoguet

Vice President - Shirley Bergmann

Secretary - Shirley Hoy

Shirley Asselmeier

Carrie Clayton

Rob Dehn

Susan Hibbits

Diana Kleinschmidt

Susan Kuergeleis

Faye Mehrmann

Mark Thompson

Al Wolfe