ST. PAUL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST COLUMBIA, IL JANUARY 2024

THE PATHFINDER

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024

Lord, as we enter into the unknown of the coming year, we ask for your guidance and wisdom. Illuminate our path with your light so that we may walk in your ways and make choices that align with your will. Help us to seek first your kingdom and trust that all other things will be added unto us. Amen.

(Belief and Beyond

Sermon Series - January 2024

January 7, 2024

Beginnings and Baptism Mark 1:4--11 An exploration of the baptism belonging, and the breakthro

An exploration of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, emphasizing the themes of new beginnings, belonging, and the breakthrough moment of Jesus's ministry. We will delve into what baptism represents for Christians today and how it signifies both an end and a beginning in our spiritual journey.

January 14, 2024

Beholding the Beloved John 1:43--51 We will focus on Nathanael's encounter with Jesus and the revelation of Christ as the Son of God. The passage will encourage us to behold Jesus in our daily lives and recognize Him as the beloved Son, inviting us to become beloved children of God.

January 21, 2024

Bountiful Beckoning

Mark 1:14--20

The calling of the first disciples by Jesus serves as a model for our own response to God's call. This week, we will be encouraged by the bountiful life that beckons us when we choose to follow Jesus, leaving behind our nets and the familiar to embrace a journey of faith and fruitful service.

January 28, 2024

Boldness and Breakthrough

Mark 1:21--28

The authority of Jesus is revealed as He teaches in the synagogue and casts out an unclean spirit. This message will cover the themes of boldness and the breakthrough power of Christ's authority in our lives. We'll be challenged to live out our faith with boldness and to rely on Jesus's power to bring breakthroughs in our personal and communal challenges.

As we move forward from this place, may we carry with us the lessons of this series: A reminder of our identity as beloved children of God, called to new beginnings; a challenge to see Jesus anew and to allow our understanding of Him to transform our faith and actions; an encouragement to step into the future with courage, trusting that the One who calls us is faithful to lead us into a life of fruitful discipleship.

Let us go forth with the assurance that the God who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. May our lives bear witness to the breakthroughs of the Beloved, and may we be bold in proclaiming the Good News, just as Jesus proclaimed the coming of God's kingdom. Amen.



From the Desk of Pastor Jonathan

Dear Fellow Believer,

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, it is natural to look back at the year that has passed and to look forward with hope and expectation to what lies ahead. The year 2023 has been a year of both challenges and triumphs, a year when our faith was tested and our resilience was forged in the fires of trial and perseverance.

In the past year, we witnessed extraordinary events that have shaped the world and our community. We saw political upheavals, natural disasters, and the enduring effects of a global pandemic that taught us the value of life, the importance of community, and the power of prayer. Through it all, our church stood as a beacon of hope, a testament to the unshakeable faith that sustains us in times of uncertainty.

This past year has a special significance in the history of our church. I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to have been called as your senior minister. It has been an immense blessing to serve alongside you, to learn from your collective wisdom, and to witness the remarkable ways in which God's love and grace are at work within our church. Stepping into this role during such a pivotal time in 2023 was a profound responsibility, one that you have made all the more joyous and rewarding with your open hearts and unwavering support. Together, we have navigated the complexities of the year, and I am deeply honored to continue leading and growing with you as we embrace the promises and challenges of 2024.

The Scripture reminds us in Isaiah 43:18-19 (NIV):

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

As we step into 2024, let us hold onto this promise of renewal and restoration. The Lord is always at work, creating new paths and possibilities where we see none. It is faith that unlocks the power of God's promises in our lives, and it is our hope that propels us into the future He has prepared for us.

To begin this new year with a heart of wisdom, let us heed the words of Psalm 90:12 (NIV): "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

This wisdom is not only to count our days but to make our days count. It is to live intentionally, purposefully, and with a vision that aligns with God's will for our lives and our community.

Consider the words of Billy Graham:

"The will of God will not take us where the grace of God cannot sustain us."

In 2023, we have all had our share of waves, but let us take this wisdom into 2024, embracing every challenge as an opportunity to be thrown back upon the steadfastness of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we face the unknowns of 2024, let us be encouraged that we are never outside the reach of God's grace. His will for us is always accompanied by His strength and provision to carry us through.

In this new year, I call upon each one of you to set aside time for personal reflection, to read and meditate upon the Word of God, and to seek His guidance for the year ahead. Engage in acts of kindness and service, for in serving others, we serve Christ Himself (Matthew 25:40). Let us also commit to being a community that supports one another, stands in the gap in prayer, and reaches out to those in need. There is no greater witness to the love of Christ than a church that embodies His love in action.

As we embark on this new journey, join me in this prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your faithfulness throughout 2023. As we enter 2024, we ask for Your guidance and wisdom. Help us to see the new thing You are doing. May we walk in Your ways, embrace Your will, and serve Your people with love and humility. We trust in Your unfailing love and grace to sustain us through this year. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

May this year be one of growth, joy, and deepening faith for you and your loved ones. God bless you all in 2024.

In His service,

Pastor Jonathan





A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a tax-free withdrawal from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) made directly to a qualifying charity. It serves as a popular way to do good while also satisfying the IRA holder's required minimum distribution (RMD). Although not eligible for a charitable deduction, a QCD is not included in the IRA owner's adjusted gross income (AGI) under IRS rules. Leveraging a QCD to lower one's AGI could potentially reduce those taxes based on income, such as Social Security benefits or Medicare Parts B and D premium surcharges. Available to owners and beneficiaries age 70 ½ or older, a QCD offers tax-free IRA distributions of up to \$100,000 in 2023 (\$105,000) in 2024. Roth IRAs are not subject to RMDs in the owner's lifetime, but their heirs will have to take them.

Many people that do this choose to make their QCD distribution to their church as a lump sum rather than making monthly or quarterly donations.

If you feel you would be interested in doing this, PLEASE discuss this with your tax and/or financial advisor.

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!



As we head into 2024, if any meeting times will be changing, please be sure to let Amanda know so the church calendar can be updated accordingly. Thank you!

Please Join Us... Our Annual Congregational Meeting will be Sunday, January 28 following worship

All are welcome and encouraged to attend!



Star Tree Highlights

Thanks to the generosity of our great congregation, we were able to fulfill 132+ Christmas Wishes to those less fortunate than ourselves.

There were several different ways to help. Gifts for Hoyleton and Kindercottage were bought directly from Amazon, wrapped, and delivered. Gifts for various families were on the Star Tree, returned and delivered. Donations in the amount of 685.00 and gift cards were also used to fulfill wishes.

It's wonderful that we can spread so much joy and goodwill. Thanks to all who brought presents or donations towards this mission. Special thanks to Santa's Elves for wrapping and delivering gifts.

I hope you had a blessed Christmas.

Barb Gerstenecker





Board of Evangelism

BY DIANE HANNA

Evangelism would like to thank all the folks involved in the Christmas parade – float builders, walkers, and riders. It was cold, but everybody had a good time!

Our final 5th Sunday Potluck will be held on December 31. End the old year with a hearty meal and fellowship!

Pastor Jonathan's class still has room, if you'd care to sign up in the Welcome Center. Happy New Year!

Board of Mission and Stewardship

BY LYNDA SAUER

Almost another year has flown by, but a huge thank you to all of you who have participated in our missions this year. Our November mission was a collection of food for the House of Neighborly Service in Waterloo. They were so thankful for our large donation. In December, you answered the call for gifts from the star tree.

That brings us to our January, 2024 mission. We will be collecting supplies for Moms on a Mission in Dupo. They give supplies to homeless families in the area. Following is a list of items needed. There will be collection tubs at the back door and in the Welcome Center. New or gently used items on this list would be welcome.

- PERSONAL HYGIENE ITEMS
- CHAPSTICK
- HOODIES & COATS
- SOCKS & UNDERWEAR (all sizes)
- BLANKETS & SLEEPING BAGS
- THERMAL / LONG UNDERWEAR
- GLOVES & WINTER GEAR
- SNACKS & DRINKS
- FIRST AID ITEMS
- HOT HANDS
- BACKPACKS

Care Connection

by Joanne Counce

Each month when having to come up with a topic, it is not always easy to know the focus. When my granddaughter, Madison McCarty, a Junior at Boston College sent me a draft of a personal credential essay she was doing for her business class project, I was impressed with her insight of her life at age of 20. She gave me permission to share this that I thought may be helpful to others as we live our lives. I have added the following scripture: Psalm 121:1-2-- I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.



I believe in looking up at the sky. When noticing the clouds passing by, or the stars twinkling above, I am reminded of how large the world is, how many humans and animals live here in a variety of circumstances, and how perfectly miniscule I am within it all. People are often focused on the trivial responsibilities of their lives. Working to live turns into living to work all too quickly, and minor setbacks become the "end of the world". It is easy to lose sight of what they truly value. While looking up, I am reminded of everything that I have done and seen in my life. All the positive experiences that I was lucky enough to have, and all the negative experiences that I was lucky enough to grow from. The vast amount of natural and man-made beauty in the world often goes unnoticed, and looking up at the sky allows me to refocus and find gratitude. The most important thing is not winning the argument, or succeeding in every challenge. Perfection is not attainable, nor it is necessary. What matters most is who I am and how my experiences shape my me. With my life being unknown and insignificant to most, I am free to create my own purpose and focus on the relationships, work and passions that truly matter to me. Through always looking up in the sky, I am reminded of how lucky I have been and the endless possibilities I have ahead!

-Madison/Joanne





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

This month will feature:

• January - Lady Tang's Circle of Women by Lisa See

The true story of Tan Yunxian, a woman born in the 15th century, who becomes a doctor to women and girls. A captivating story of women helping women and reimagining of a woman who was remarkable in the Ming Dynasty.

And coming soon...

- 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 NOVEMBER 2023 November 5- 163 November 12- 143 November 19- 171 November 26- 164



Health Tip!

With the cold, flu, and increase numbers of COVID-19, please feel comfortable to wear a mask at church if you desire, and be respectful of those that will do so. When Passing the Peace in the church service, give the person a wave or a nod with your smile if want to avoid direct contact. Stay healthy!



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

On Sunday, December 10 we went ice skating at Steinberg Rink in Forest Park. Zach and Matthew Maue, Kellan and Avery Brunkhorst and Chaperones Mike Maue and Pastor Julie got out on the ice. We slid gracefully around the rink then took a break for cocoa and snacks. We went back on the ice and can celebrate that there were no major wipe-outs!





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

Check in with your youth friends to see what's happening at Thursday youth nights! Our events in January will be on the 4th and the 18th, starting at 5:30 pm.

We're looking forward to the Frostbite Fun Youth Event at DuBois Center on January 13. The sign-up deadline is January 2! We are planning to stay overnight and learn together about "Breaking Down Walls" and "Building Bridges" in friendship and faith. Meet at 8:00 am on the Bottom Avenue parking lot to travel together.

We are hosting a Parent Night Out on Saturday, February 3. Youth will plan and lead activities for the younger kids with some Valentine's themed fun!

On Sunday morning, February 11th, we will be opening the kitchen before worship at 8:30 am to make sub sandwiches for our SouperBowl of Caring fundraiser. GO TEAM!

Join us next month for a trip to the St. Louis Science Center on Saturday, February 17. We'll leave at noon to take in a star show and explore the exhibits. Save the date for a visit to the Arch Museum on Sunday, March 10.



tacklehunger.org





Our Confirmation class has begun our fieldtrips exploring other faith traditions with a trip to the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis on Reign of Christ Sunday (November 26th).

Our upcoming events in February include a trip with faith partners to the Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum on February 3 meeting at 9:30 am on the Bottom Avenue parking lot.



February Messy Church will be on Thursday, February 29 at 5:30 pm.

January Messy Church Thursday, January 25

5:30 pm Our November Messy Church "Christmas Around the World" was our greatest attended yet, with 70 people!

December's celebration included a Nativity Escape Room adventure and Epiphany crafts and worship.

All Aboard! the DiscipleSHIP: in January we will be focusing on some "-ships" in our Christian Journey. Don't miss the boat!



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



Reminder: All Cemetery Christmas Decorations are to be removed by February 1 weather permitting

Director of Christian Ed Denise Johnson

YOUTH UPDATES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION



Epiphany Party!

Sunday, January 7 there will be Sunday School. We will celebrate the Wise Men arriving to see Jesus!

1 John 4:19 (NIV) We love because He first loved us.

Our Youth Group is hosting a Parents' Night Out Valentine Fun Night on February 3, 2024, from 6:00pm to 10:00 pm. Ages 3 to fourth grade are invited to join us for a night of crafts, games, food, storytelling, and a movie.

To Register go to our website: stpaulcolumbia.org Free will donations for Souper Bowl of Caring: Fight Hunger. Come and join the fun! Invite your friends!





Vacation Bible School Save the dates for Vacation Bible School Camp Firelight June 10-14 9:00 am to Noon "Whenever I'm afraid, I put my trust in you." (Psalm 56:3)

During Vacation Bible School, we will join Counselor Sam and Lumen, "Lu," the lightning bug puppet, for a summer adventure at Camp Firelight. We accompany Counselor Sam and Lu as they learn to face their fears while trusting in God. We will explore timeless Bible stories showing how Old and New Testament Bible figures trusted God, faced their fears, and went on to do wonderful things in God's name. As we experience the stories through music, drama and storytelling, games, arts and crafts, science, and even snacks, we will learn ways to connect with and trust God. And best of all, we will understand how we can connect with God at VBS, church, home, and every area of our lives. We are invited on an exciting journey where will we learn to trust God no matter what situation life brings, know God is always with us, and feel confident in sharing the good news of God's love through Jesus Christ.



We are excited we will again be participating in the Souper Bowl of Caring: Tackle Hunger campaign. "Since 1990 over 170 million has been reported donated to local food charities across fifty states with over 300,000 unique groups participating. our Subs for Hunger this year.

The Youth Fellowship will be promoting, selling, and preparing their unique Subs for Hunger. All youth fifth grade through eighth grade are invited to help with this mission project on Sunday, February 11 at 8:30 a.m. to assemble sub sandwiches. Youth will have tables set up at 10:30 a.m. in Welcome Center and Fellowship Hall to pick up your sub sandwiches. Please fill out the order form may be put in the offering plate or return to church before Wednesday, February 7th.







SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

OUR YOUTH GROUP IS PARTICIPATING IN THE SOUPER BOWL OF CARING: TACKLE HUNGER CAMPAIGN. "SINCE 1990, OVER 170 MILLION DOLLARS HAS BEEN DONATED TO LOCAL FOOD CHARITIES ACROSS FIFTY STATES WITH OVER 300,000 UNIQUE GROUPS PARTICIPATING.

YOU CAN SUPPORT THIS EFFORT BY ORDERING SUB SANDWICHES BY WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7. ORDER FORMS MAY BE PUT IN THE OFFERING PLATE OR TURNED INTO THE CHURCH OFFICE. THE SUB SANDWICHES WILL BE READY FOR PICKUP ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11 IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL FROM 10:30-11:30 AM.

NAME: PHONE NUMBER: NUMBER OF SANDWICHES: BREAD CHOICE:

WHITE

WHEAT

____GLUTEN-FREE





PAGE 12

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SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 Happy, New Years Office Closed	2 6pm Daisy Troop 148 7pm Graceful Motherhood Fellowship	3 10am Morning Bells 6pm Evening Bells 7pm Chancel Choir	Personnel	5 8 am Quilters	6
Collection 9:30 Worship & communion 9:30 Sunday	8 10 am Staff Mtg 6:00 Boy Scout Cyber Program 6pm Band Practice 7pm Property 6pm Daisy Troop 449 6pm Finance 7pm Consistory	7pm Boy Scout Troop 357	9 am Preschool 10am Morning Bells 3:30 pm Kids Crew 6pm Evening Bells 6pm Confirmation 7pm Chancel Choir]] 9 am Preschool 7 pm Evangelism 7pm Cemetery	12 8 am Quilters	13
14 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Social Time	15 10 am Staff Meeting 7:30 pm Board of Worship	16 9 am Preschool 7pm Graceful Motherhood Fellowship 7pm Boy Scout Troop 357	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	9 am Preschool 5:30 pm Tech Team 5:30 pm Youth Night 7pm Pastoral Relations	19 8 am Quilters	20
2] 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday Schoo 10:30 Social Time	22 10 am Staff Meeting 6 pm Band Practice 6pm Girl Scout Daisy Troop 449 7pm Book Club	23 9am Preschool 7pm Boy Scout Troop 357	24 9 am Preschool 10am Morning Bells 3:30 pm Kids Crew 6pm Evening Bells 6pm Confirmation 7pm Chancel Choir	25 9am Preschool 5:30 pm Messy Church	26 8 am Quilters	27
28 9:30 Worship 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Social Time 10:30 Annual Meeting	29 10 am Staff Meeting 6 pm Band Garden Place Millstadt	30 9 am Preschool 7pm Boy Scout Troop 357	31 9 am Preschool 10am Morning Bells 3:30 pm Kids Crew 6pm Evening Bells 6pm Confirmation 7pm Chancel Choir			



Memorials and Tributes Fund In Memory of Laverne Schmidt given by:

Sheldon Culver Carol Jean Faust Glenn Stumpf

Van Fund In Memory of Laverne Schmidt given by: Gigi Abbott

Van Fund In Memory of Virgil Fassel given by:

Mary Fassel

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

Jo Anne Odem Shirley Harres Lorraine Hoffmann Judy Mavers

Renovations Fund In Memory of Sharron Burgdorf given by:

Bruce and Joanne Counce

Memorials and Tributes Fund In Memory of Janet Kies given by:

Dennis and Laura Hoguet

Nativity Set In Memory of Arlen Harres given by:

Rick and Deborah Tiefenbruck Veronica Hicks

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

ltegrity 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

	Novem	ber	Year to Date	
	2022	2023	2022	2023
Revenue				
Tithes & Offerings:				
Pledged & NonPledged	26,731.00 869.75	27,464.00	332,723.35	354,910.39
Misc. Contributions	869.75	551.00	6,567.75	8,017.00
Interest Income	24.52	147.66	3,923.68	4,198.86
	0.00	0.00	55,004.19	55,339.81
Rental Income	600.00	750.00	900.00	2,200.00
Misc Income	2,452.94	5,578.76	28,859.76	40,497.15
Total Revenues	30,678.21	34,491.42	427,978.73	465,163.21
Expenses				
Personnel	26,727.25	31,415.60	310,116.17	344,354.06
General Expenses	4,649.51	5,668.13	115,940.30	133,143.83
	3,870.07	3,828.18	28,756.04	31,242.02
Total Expenses	35,246.83	40,911.91	454,812.51	508,739.91
Net Receipts	(4,568.62)	(6,420.49)	(26,833.78)	(43,576.70)
RESERVES			95,556.85	46,324.35
*OCWM 10,000.00 out of St Paul	Mission (833.33	month ly)		

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