

THE EPISTLE OF St. Paul

August 2026

St. Paul

United Methodist
Church

244 Kurtz Road
Marietta, Georgia 30066
770-422-1089

www.stpaulumc.com
churchoffice@stpaulumc.com
<https://onrealm.org/stpaulumc>

Rev. Shelia Preacher
sheliapreacher@comcast.net
678-925-0103

Children's Ministry
Victoria Godfrey

Music Director
Hope Field

Accompanist
Dorothy McCracken

Administrative
Assistant
Louise Byrd

Financial Secretary
Ed Jackson

Lead Nursery
Morgan Field

Nursery Assistant
Zahra Taylor

Sunday Schedule
9:45 Sunday School

11:00 Worship

The Family Name

Rev. Shelia Preacher

One of my favorite moments from Confirmation Sunday happened in a place most people probably never noticed. As we baptized two of our youth, I called them forward by their given names—Alexander

Christopher and James Darrell—not by their family name, Morgan. Just Alexander Christopher. Just James Darrell.



That's not because their family name isn't important. It is. But in baptism something even bigger is being celebrated. We are remembering that before we belong to any family, nation, profession, political party, or social group, we belong to God.

In a sense, baptism reminds us that we all share the SAME family name—God's. And this is a family that stretches across generations, continents, cultures, and centuries. It is a family where the primary thing we share isn't a last name, a hometown, or a DNA test...we share Christ. And THAT is quite a vision when you stop to think about it. Perhaps that's why one of our congregation's favorite hymns remains "I'm So Glad I'm a Part of the Family of God," for it speaks to something our hearts desperately need to remember.

Families are interesting things. No two members are exactly alike. Some are quiet. Some are loud. Some love sports. Others love books. Some arrive early. Others arrive whenever they arrive. We may not always agree on everything, but healthy families are held

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

together by something stronger than sameness. They are held together by love.

The same is true of God's family. Look around any Sunday morning. We are young and old. Lifelong Methodists and brand-new believers. Retirees and working parents. People with different stories, gifts, personalities, and perspectives. Yet somehow God takes all those differences and weaves them into something beautiful.

Sadly, the world often encourages us to focus on what separates us. Headlines thrive on conflict. Social media rewards outrage. Every day we are handed new reasons to draw lines between "us" and "them." But baptism tells a different story.

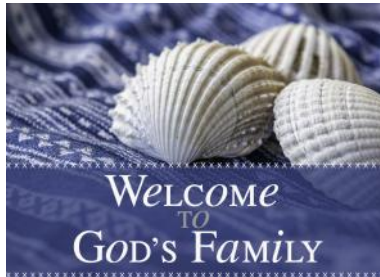
Through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, God is creating one family. Through the waters of baptism, we are reminded that our deepest identity is not found in what divides us but in the One

who claims us. God's dream for humanity has always been larger than the division we create. And while the world constantly sorts people into categories, teams, and tribes...God keeps gathering people around a different center—grace.

Beloved, when we begin to see the bigger picture of God's family, our hearts change. We discover that strangers become neighbors. Neighbors become friends. Friends become brothers and sisters in Christ. That doesn't mean we become identical. It means we learn to love

one another as members of the same household.

Last Sunday, six young people stood before God and this congregation to claim that identity for themselves. What a gift! And what a reminder for all of us. No matter what name appears on our driver's license, we belong to something larger than ourselves. We belong to the family of God.



August Mission Focus: Praying for a New School Year

Susan Short

As summer ends, a new school year begins with fresh opportunities, new challenges, and renewed hope. Throughout August, St. Paul United Methodist Church invites our congregation to join together in lifting students, teachers, administrators, school staff, and families in prayer.

Whether it is a child walking into kindergarten for the first time, a high school senior preparing for graduation, a college student beginning a new chapter, or a teacher preparing a classroom, each person entering a school carries unique hopes, concerns, and responsibilities. Our prayers can be a powerful reminder that no one walks alone—God goes before them, walks beside them, and remains faithful every step of the way.

Scripture reminds us: *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go,"* (Joshua 1:9 NIV)



Prayer

Gracious God, we thank You for the gift of learning and for all who teach, serve, and grow in our schools. Surround every student, teacher, administrator, and staff member with Your love and protection. Grant wisdom for every decision, patience for every challenge, courage in every circumstance, and joy in every success. Help our schools to be places of learning, compassion, respect, and hope. May Your presence be evident in every classroom and every heart throughout this new school year. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

As a church family, let us pray:

-  For students to grow in wisdom, confidence, kindness, and faith.
-  For teachers to be given patience, creativity, strength, and encouragement.
-  For principals, counselors, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians, and all school staff as they faithfully serve our communities.
-  For parents and caregivers as they support and guide their children.
-  For safe classrooms where every student feels valued, respected, and able to learn.

We invite everyone to make prayer a daily mission throughout August. Take a moment each day to pray for the schools in our community and for those who dedicate themselves to educating the next generation.

May this school year be filled with God's peace, protection, and purpose.

More Deeply Rooted

Hope Field

Last month, we celebrated the confirmation of six young people. While confirmation is a personal commitment to live as faithful disciples and members of the Church, it is also a commitment made by the congregation. We promise to support, encourage, and guide these confirmands as they continue to grow in faith.



Through confirmation, they have publicly affirmed their faith and taken their place within the body of Christ. As we sing, “We are one in the Spirit, We are one in the Lord...” These words are more than a familiar hymn, they are a declaration of who we are and to whom we belong. United by the Spirit, we are called to love, serve, and walk alongside one another as one family in Christ.

To be the body of Christ means that none of us journeys in faith alone. Christ is the head of the body, and each of us has been given unique gifts to strengthen and serve the whole. Some teach, some encourage, some lead, some pray, some sing, some offer hospitality, some quietly care for those in need. Every gift matters because every person matters. When one member rejoices, we all celebrate; when one member suffers, we all share the burden. We belong to one another because we belong to Christ.

For our newly confirmed youth, this means they are not simply joining an organization or reaching a milestone. They are becoming more deeply rooted in a community that will celebrate their joys, stand beside them in their struggles, challenge them to grow, and remind them of God’s grace when they need it most. And for the rest of us, their confirmation is a reminder that our own calling continues. We are invited to be examples of faith, to encourage the next generation, and to live in such a way that they can see the love of Christ at work among us.

Being the body of Christ is both a privilege and a responsibility. Together, we bear witness to the gospel through our worship, our fellowship, our service, and our love. As one body, united by one Spirit, may we continue to welcome, nurture, and encourage one another so that, in all we do, Christ may be seen in us and through us.



Community and Service: Living as the Body of Christ

Chris Heldreth

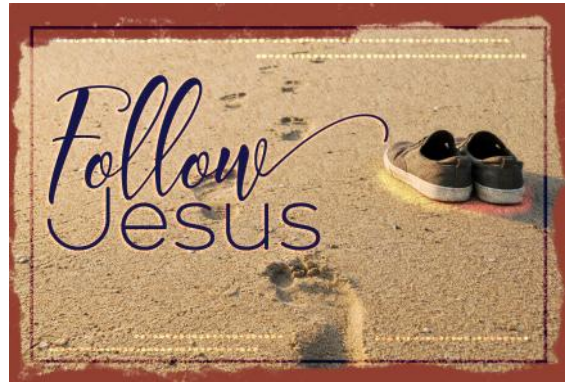
What does it mean to be a church member? It means much more than having our name on a membership roll or attending worship on Sunday mornings. Church membership is an invitation to become part of the Body of Christ—a community of believers united in faith, love, and purpose. Together, we reflect Christ's presence in the world in ways none of us could accomplish alone.

One of the most meaningful steps in this journey is confirmation. Confirmation is a public affirmation of faith and a commitment to follow Jesus Christ as part of the church. It is a time when individuals, often after a season of learning and prayer, say “yes” to God's call and embrace the responsibilities and joys of church membership. Through confirmation, we are reminded that faith is not meant to be lived alone but within a community that encourages, teaches, supports, and serves together.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12 that the church is one body with many members. Each person has unique gifts, talents, and experiences that God has entrusted to them. Some teach, some encourage, some lead, some pray, and others quietly serve behind the scenes. Every role is valuable, and every person is essential. When we work together, our individual gifts become a powerful witness to God's love.

Community and service are at the heart of following Christ. Jesus fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, comforted the hurting, and showed us that greatness is found in serving others. As members of His Body, we continue that mission. Together we can care for neighbors, strengthen ministries, and share Christ's hope in ways that no one person could accomplish alone.

Whether we have been members for decades or are newly confirmed, each of us has a place in God's family. By offering our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness, we help the Body of Christ flourish and become a living testimony of God's love in our community



The Journey of Faith

Bob Trengove

God is good all the time; all the time God is good. When you think about it, we cannot say that opening phrase enough. God is so good; it is overwhelming.

Following Jesus is not a one-time decision; it is a lifelong journey of surrender, transformation, and daily commitment.

My time with the church has been quite a journey. I was baptized as an infant and then brought up in the Methodist church. At church, I attended Sunday school, church events, associated with so many wonderful people, and then found my wife through a church-sponsored event while at college. At college, my need for church and God continued. I found a small Baptist church nearby and joined the choir. After meeting my future wife, I started attending her church in Springfield, Massachusetts. It was a Congregationalist church, but it worked for me.

After marriage, my journey brought us back to my hometown church, St John's UMC, where I again joined the choir and sang with several family members. My job then resulted in a transfer to Georgia and St Paul UMC, where we have now been for over 50 years. At St Paul, we have met and associated with so many wonderful believers, participated in so many events, activities, teams, and we pray more now than we have on this journey. Some of our friends at church have passed, but that is part of our journey to be with Jesus.

Believers have a never-ending opportunity to take a moment and glorify GOD. This has been a life-changing experience. If we take time to indulge in God's faithfulness, His endless gifts can stir us toward praise. And quite often that praise flavors our days with the priceless sweetness of peace.

When we become members of a church, we profess our faith in God, our desire to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, and commit to join with our church community to keep the vows that were made at baptism. The vows made include promises to faithfully participate in the life and ministries of our local congregation through our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.



(Continued on page 7)

More than Maintenance *Continued from page 6)*

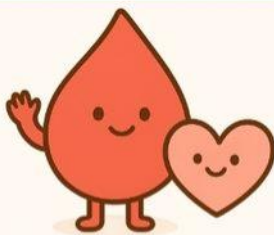
When we say, "I choose to follow Jesus," we are acknowledging both the beginning and the ongoing path: the moment of faith and the daily walk in His ways

Gracious Father, we so desire to pause daily and appreciate your manifold blessings. Help us to continue to do your will in our lives. Thank you for all the blessings you give us daily on this journey of life. In Jesus' Name we pray AMEN.



Many activities are still being performed at St Paul by the Building and Grounds Team. The following are a few of the tasks completed or in progress.

- ✍ The Building and Grounds Team completed the deck staining on July 7.
- ✍ A loose screw in the furnace door kept the AC from working in the fellowship hall. E-Smith corrected the problem with a longer screw.
- ✍ The gas line installation crew dug up our internet/phone line, and the lawn company cut the line. Comcast spliced it back free of charge, and Tom buried the line.
- ✍ Louise has coordinated the pickup of the Waste Management container and arranged delivery of the correct locking container from Republic.



**BLOOD
DRIVE**

Thursday, 09/10

1:00-6:00 pm

call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767)

OR redcrossblood.org code SPUMC



**Hope House
Dinner**

**Tuesday, August 25
@ 4:00 p.m.**

**Call the Church Office
or Sign up in Narthex**





*Confirmation
& Baptism
July 26, 2026*

Stephanie Fleming, Hannah
Ogene,
Jasmine Ogene,
Samantha Ogene, Alex Morgan,
Jimmy Morgan



More Than a Meeting: Why Annual Conference Matters

Mike McMillin

When someone asks, “What happens at Annual Conference?” the easiest answer may be: **a little bit of everything!** There are reports, discussions, elections, votes, budgets, worship services, prayers, celebrations—and sometimes some very long days. But Annual Conference is much more than a church business meeting. It is one of the places where we see what it truly means to be a connectional church.

The United Methodist Church describes the Annual Conference as the “basic body” of the church. Each year, an equal number of clergy and lay members gather to worship, review ministries, make decisions, approve budgets, and help guide the mission of the church in their region. Every four years, annual conferences also elect clergy and lay delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences, where decisions are made that affect the wider denomination.

The 2026 North Georgia Annual Conference met June 18–20 at the Classic Center in Athens under the theme “**Unto the Least of These**,” drawn from Matthew 25:37–40. It was a historic gathering because it was the 160th—and final—session of the North Georgia Annual Conference as we have known it. Members voted 96 percent in favor of moving toward unification with the South Georgia Conference, which had approved the same plan by a similarly overwhelming vote.

Yet the most meaningful moments were not simply about structures, policies, and votes. We heard how United Methodists are serving people who are too often overlooked. The North Georgia Housing and Homeless Council supports ministries serving people without stable housing. Murphy-Harpst helps children find healing and stability.

Disaster Response continues rebuilding work following Hurricane Helene. Wellroot serves children and families affected by foster care, while Wesley Woods provides housing, meals, and pastoral care for older adults. These reports reminded us that our connection is not merely organizational; it enables local churches to accomplish together what few could accomplish alone.

Worship kept the Conference centered on Christ. Bishop Robin Dease challenged us to remember the faces of people society often overlooks. During the

(Continued on page 11)



Annual Conference *(Continued from page 10)*

Service of Licensing, Commissioning, and Ordination, Bishop Héctor Burgos Núñez reminded new clergy that while the church places a stole upon their shoulders, Christ places a towel in their hands. We remembered faithful saints who have gone before us, celebrated retiring clergy, received Holy Communion, and were reminded that Christian leadership always begins with humble service.

Annual Conference also has a personal side. It feels a little like a Methodist family reunion. Pastor Sheila and I enjoyed time together during the drive and over meals, and we had the pleasure of seeing Jackie, our former St. Paul pastor. It was wonderful to hear about the new ministries God is leading her into during retirement. Being surrounded by Jesus-loving clergy and laity is spiritually contagious. You can sense the Holy Spirit moving—and sometimes wonder, with a little holy nervousness, what God may call you to do next.

That is why I encourage others to consider serving as a lay delegate for the Annual Conference. Lay members do not merely observe. They listen, participate in discussions, vote, pray, learn, and return home prepared to help their congregations understand the work of the

wider church. A person may be elected by a local church, selected by the district as a lay delegate at large, or follow the proceedings online. Please get in touch with Sheila or me if you have any questions about serving as the St Paul Lay Delegate or district Lay Delegate.

The next steps toward unification include a Southeastern Jurisdictional called session on August 11, 2026, and a Unifying Conference on September 26. The first session of the proposed Georgia Annual

Conference is projected for June 16–18, 2027.

When opportunities are announced, prayerfully consider applying or allowing St. Paul to nominate you. You do not need to be a theologian or an expert in church law. You need a listening heart, a willingness to learn, and an openness to

the Holy Spirit.

You may go expecting to attend a meeting. You may return with a larger vision of Christ's church—and perhaps a new calling from God.

For more information and videos on the 2026 Annual Conference, please visit this website:

[https://www.ngumc.org/
eventdetail/18399323?
month=6&year=2026&day=1&display=m](https://www.ngumc.org/eventdetail/18399323?month=6&year=2026&day=1&display=m)



The Gift of Confirmation

Victoria Godfrey

Over the past few months, we've been talking about the importance of noticing more and slowing down long enough to recognize where God is already at work. This month, I found myself noticing it in some incredible ways through our confirmation students.

Over the course of our confirmation weekend, I watched our students wrestle with big questions, laugh together, encourage one another, and step outside their comfort zones. They pieced together the story of God, talked honestly about who Jesus is, discovered how God has uniquely gifted each of them, packed hygiene kits for those experiencing homelessness, and explored what it means to live out their faith beyond Sunday mornings. More than anything, I noticed students who were genuinely curious about God and eager to discover where they fit within His story.

One of my favorite moments wasn't a planned lesson or activity. It was hearing students continue conversations during lunch, ask follow-up questions after a session had ended, or encourage one another as they shared their thoughts. Those moments reminded me that faith often grows in ordinary conversations just as much as in carefully planned ones.

Now, as these students take the next step in publicly affirming their faith, I hope we continue to notice something important: they are already a vital part of our church family. They don't have to wait until they're older to make a difference. God is already working through their compassion, their questions, their gifts, and their willingness to serve.

Thank you for praying for these students, cheering them on, and reminding them that they belong here. As a church, may we continue creating spaces where our children and youth are known, encouraged, challenged, and trusted to use the gifts God has given them. When we notice and invest in the next generation, we aren't just preparing the future of the church- we're celebrating the church that God is growing today.



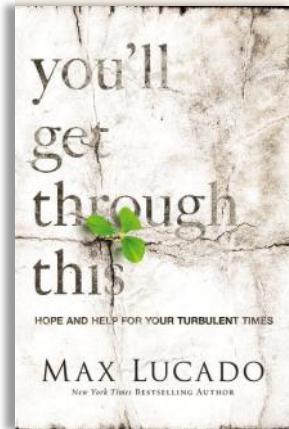
Discipleship Opportunities

ChristWalk

Strangers, Neighbors, Friends

Are you troubled by the growing division and hate on display? Do you look at the world and wonder, "How did we ever grow to be so divided?" and "Surely, humanity was made for something better."

Join us for our exciting *ChristWalk* book study called "Strangers, Neighbors, Friends." Written from three different faith perspectives (Muslim, Christian, Jewish), this book explores a different topic each week from different vantage points...seeking new understanding, common ground, and ways to engage with one another that are pleasing to God.



Open Door Class

New Study beginning August 12

With God's help, you'll get through this.

You fear you won't make it through. We all do. We fear that the depression will never lift and the pain will never leave. We wonder: Will this gray sky ever brighten?

In *You'll Get Through This*, pastor and New York Times best-selling author, Max Lucado reminds readers God doesn't promise that getting through trials will be quick or painless. But what Satan intends for evil, God redeems for good. With the compassion of a pastor, the heart of a storyteller, and the joy of one who has seen what God can do, Max explores the story of Joseph and the truth of Genesis 50:20.

Join us each Sunday at 9:45 a.m. in Room 206 for lively discussion and fellowship.



Good Food. Great Movies. Meaningful Conversations.

A great movie or a good meal is even better when shared with friends! Our May "Dinner and a Movie" was a real hit with 30 people gathering to enjoy all their favorite theater snacks along with great fellowship. Hey...who doesn't love a good movie, popcorn, and lively conversation!

SO...we are excited to launch a regular movie and meal series (in the winter months we will do a lunch showing so you don't have to drive at night) that we are calling **Flix & Food**. Whether it is a light-hearted comedy that makes us laugh out loud or a thought-provoking film that sparks meaningful discussion, each gathering will offer an opportunity to enjoy a meal, watch a movie, and connect with friends old and new.

Join us for our next feature in the Fellowship Hall on **Tuesday, August 11**. Dinner will be served at 4:30, and the movie will begin at 5:00 p.m. Help spread the word...there is always room for one more at the table...see you at the movies!



13-WEEK SUPPORT GROUP

Wednesdays,
August 5-October 28
6:00-7:30 PM (In person)

Cost: \$20.00

Contact Kathy Lim Sang for info

404.578.1241

kathylim10@gmail.com



•Wesley Chapel

•St Paul

•Sacred Tapestry

Sunday, August 9 | 1:30 p.m.

@ Wesley Chapel UMC

4495 Sandy Plains Rd 30066



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2 9:45a SS 11a Worship Noon Churchwide Meeting 3p Staff	3 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga	4 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	5 6p <i>GriefShare</i>	6 6p Stephen Ministry Training @ St Andrew	7	8
9 9:45a SS 11a Worship 1:30p Charge Conference @ Wesley Chapel	10 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga	11 4:30p Movie & a Meal (Fellowship Hall)	12 6p <i>GriefShare</i>	13 6p Stephen Ministry Training @ St Andrew	14	15
16 9:45a SS 11a Worship 3p Leadership	17 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga	18 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	19 6p <i>GriefShare</i>	20 6p Stephen Ministry Training @ St Andrew 6:30p Stephen Ministry	21	22
23 9:45a SS 11a Worship	24 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga	25 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 4p Hope House 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	26 6p <i>GriefShare</i>	27 6p Stephen Ministry Training @ St Andrew	28	29
30 9:45a SS 11a Worship	31 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga					

Serving This Month

August Servants

Worship Leader—Kathy Lim Lang

Open/Close Facilities—Tom Preacher

Monday Servants:

08/03 Tom Short & Ruth Castellaw
 08/10 Darrell Morgan & Marj Rhodes
 08/17 Tom Short & Ruth Castellaw
 08/24 Darrell Morgan & Marj Rhodes
 08/31 Tom Short & Ruth Castellaw

Media Team—Mike McMillin

Easy Worship—Terry Palmer, Tom Preacher

Audio/Video—Chris Morgan, Jyo Vanapalli

Could it be YOU? Join Us!



4 Ann Trengove

6 Susan Latham

13 Marcie Windsor

14 Jimmy Morgan

21 Marj Rhodes

24 Shirley Childers

26 Pam Mangrum

28 Amy Cole

3 John Kone

17 William Hayes

27 Phil Mahoney

27 Thomas D. Short

30 Olivia Agresta



Our Faithfulness

*"I will be loyal to St. Paul United Methodist Church
 and support her with my prayers,
 my presence, my gifts, my service and my witness."*

JUNE 2025

Our Presence

Average weekly Sunday School attendance19

Average weekly 11:00 worship attendance 37

Average weekly online attendance..... 46

Our Gifts—General Fund

JUNE 2026 Income

Contributions \$ 46,193.75

Processing Gifts..... \$ 76.00

Total Contributions..... \$ 46,269.75

Rental Property..... \$ 1,710.00

Soccer Rental N/A

Total Revenue..... \$ 47,979.75

YTD 2026 Income \$127,082.55

Total Expenses for JUNE \$ 19,102.48

TOTAL 2026 Expenses..... \$ 115,155.28

Net Total..... \$ 11,927.27



Altar Flowers

Cost: \$55.00

08/02 Available

08/09 Available

08/16 Available

08/23 Available

08/30 Available

Sign up on Bulletin Board



**NEWSLETTER
DEADLINE**

August 19

Suggested word count: 350-400