

The *Epistle* of St. Paul

February 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

Lent: Return to Your First Love

Rev. Shelia Preacher

February highlights the incredible gift of love. So... think for a moment about your FIRST love. Perhaps what comes to mind is “puppy love” and your “first crush.” Or maybe your recollection is that of a

“love at first sight” moment. Those are

exciting! Or even sweeter still is the dawning realization that a relationship developed over time is more than just friendship.

No matter how it takes place, there is something special about that “first love.” Even years later, the memory can stir something deep inside—the excitement, the vulnerability, the way your heart leaped within you. First love has a way of marking us. It shapes how we remember ourselves and reveals what mattered most.

In much the same way, God’s love reaches for us—and marks us still. Do you remember when you first discovered God’s embrace? The experience of his grace was astounding, like nothing we had ever known! Our prayers tumbled forth, honest and alive! Moment by moment, Christ’s love shaped our days in ways that surprised us!

But over time, before we know it, things change. We don’t intentionally step away from that first love we experienced with him...it’s more like our attention drifts. Life gets busy.



(Continued on page 2)

Lent: Return to Your First Love *(Continued from page 1)*

Responsibilities pile up. And what once felt central slowly moves to the margins. And one day, we realize that something precious has been neglected.

Lent is a season that invites us to pause and take an honest look at our lives. Lent asks us to reevaluate our walk alongside him. It asks us to consider where and how our hearts have wandered. Lent asks some probing questions. *Is something missing? When was the last time our hearts leaped for joy in his presence? Has it been a while since we paused to really hear him speak?*

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, and it offers us tangible ways to return to that first love. Ashes placed on our foreheads declare that each of our days begins and ends with dust, but they also highlight how God lovingly and uniquely shapes our dust. Communion reminds us that God eagerly offers his constant love and nourishment for life's journey. Scripture speaks of a God whose heart continually leans toward us—who calls us beloved, who longs for our return, who remembers us as his first, last, and always love. Even when we drift away, God does not. Even when our attention wanes and wanders, God's love remains steady.

Lent becomes a season to listen for that first love call again. Not just to examine what we believe, but to rediscover whom we love—and who has been loving us all along. This Ash Wednesday, we are invited to return to our first and truest love...to a love that still calls our names...to a love that has never let us go.



Ash
WEDNESDAY

Ways to give:

Place offering in basket

www.stpaulumc.com/donate;



◀ Scan the QR Code

Text SPUMC244 + amount to 73256

Download the App on our website.



February Mission Focus: Love in Action through UMCOR

Susan Short

February is a month wrapped in the language of love—hearts, flowers, kindness, and reminders to care for one another. As people of faith, we know that love is more than a feeling; it is something we live out with our hands and feet. This month, our Mission Focus invites us to share Christ’s love powerfully and practically through the **United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)**.

Scripture reminds us, *“Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action,”* (1 John 3:18). UMCOR embodies this calling. Through disaster response, refugee assistance, hunger relief, health initiatives, and community development, UMCOR serves people in need—without regard to race, religion, or nationality. When disasters strike or communities struggle to rebuild, UMCOR is often among the first to arrive and the last to leave.



One of the coolest aspects of UMCOR is that 100% of designated donations go directly to ministry and relief efforts. Administrative costs are covered elsewhere, allowing every gift to become a tangible expression of God’s love in the world. Whether it provides clean water, medical care, shelter, or hope after loss, each offering makes a difference.

You can learn more about UMCOR at <https://www.ngumc.org/umcor>.

As we celebrate love this month, let’s remember that through our prayers and our gifts, we can be part of Christ’s enduring love at work in the world.

Ongoing Mission News

- ♥ You’re welcome to continue to bring **toiletries** until February 5th. The **Hygiene Kits** will be assembled as part of our next Messy Church.
- ♥ Show some love to our **Little Library** on campus! Pray for the readers! If you have children’s books you’d like to donate, drop them by the Library or feel free to contact us if you’d like a pick up.

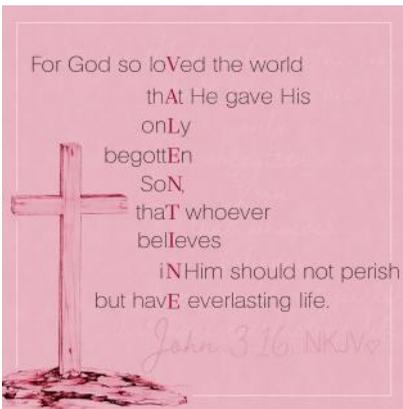
Truly, thank you for your continued generosity and faithfulness. Together, we are sharing Christ’s compassion—one act of love at a time.

From Heart to Hands: Love That Moves Toward Us

Mike McMillin

When I think about Valentine’s Day this year, I know I’ll be taking my wife out to dinner. It’s a simple and joyful way to celebrate love. Yet Valentine’s Day also nudges me into reflection—about where I first learned what love really looks like.

My mind drifts back to my high school days in the Catholic Church, where statues of Jesus often depicted him with a large red heart, glowing with light. At the time, I didn’t think much about it. But now I wonder: could Jesus be the model of the perfect Valentine? And perhaps he learned what it meant to love so fully from his Father.



Scripture tells us that *“greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends,”* (John 15:13). The death of Jesus on the cross is often described as the greatest act of love ever given—a love freely offered, self-giving, and deeply personal.

In Christian tradition, the Sacred Heart of Jesus symbolizes God’s deep love for humanity: a heart filled with compassion, mercy, and suffering love. It is love that does not remain distant or theoretical, but love that moves toward us—Love that enters our pain, our need, and our brokenness.

Jesus describes this kind of love clearly in Matthew 25: *“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat... I was a stranger and you invited me in... I was sick and you looked after me... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”*

This passage reminds us that love is not only something we feel—it is something we do. Methodists have long understood this connection between heart and hands. God’s grace transforms our hearts, and that transformation naturally flows outward into acts of mercy, justice, and service.

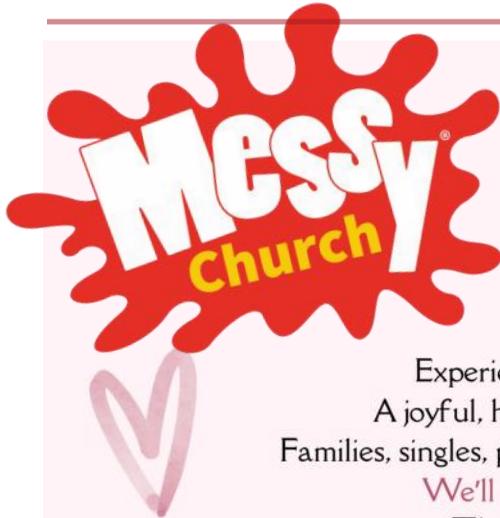
John Wesley captured this beautifully when he said, “There is no holiness but social holiness.” Faith is personal, yes—but it is never private.

(Continued on page 5)

From Heart to Hands (Continued from page 4)

This Valentine's Day, if you're looking for a way to practice love that moves from heart to hands, I invite you to join us at Messy Church on February 7th as we pack hygiene kits for our unhoused neighbors. You can also help by purchasing supplies and bringing them to church; the list can be found in the bulletin.

A Methodist might say it this way: Christianity is not a cold belief, but a living relationship with a loving Savior—one whose grace shapes our hearts and sends us into the world to love, serve, and care for others.



Put on Love
 Messy Church at St Paul UMC
 Saturday, February 7
 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Experience **MESSY CHURCH**

A joyful, hands-on worship for all ages.

Families, singles, pew-lovers, and free spirits welcome.

We'll learn from Jesus together.

Theme: Colossians 3:12-14.

Putting on: compassion, kindness, humility,
 gentleness, patience, forgiveness—
 and above all, LOVE.

Enjoy crafts, communion, games, music,
 and the "Love Hokey Pokey" (hehe!).

We'll follow Jesus and "Put On Love."

Grand finale: "That's Amore" Italian Dinner with spaghetti, salad,
 garlic bread, and desserts including chocolate!
 (because what's love without chocolate).

Free and All Are Welcome
 COME as you are. LEAVE wearing love.

 St. Paul United Methodist Church
 244 Kurtz Rd · Marietta, GA 30066 · 770-
 422-1089 · www.stpaulumc.com

Love Is in the Air

Bob Trengove

Valentine's Day, which is just around the corner, helps us remember what love is all about. Love comes in many forms: love of family, love of friends, love of pets, love of church and its family, as well as love of a spouse. Every year, Valentine's Day brings back memories of the day sixty years ago when my wife and I met. Our love continues to grow stronger, thanks be to God.



In December, we experienced the Love of Jesus through His birth and the activities surrounding it. We also expressed Love through our cantata, "LOVE," which was very inspirational.

John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* That is a mouthful. This shows God's unconditional Love, offering a path to spiritual rebirth and freedom from condemnation through faith in Christ, not just for good people but for all.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 13:13, *"There are three things that remain—faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is Love."* Again, in verse 13:4, he states, *"Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud."*

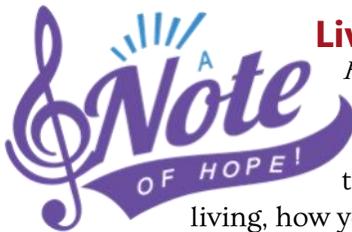
The Building and Grounds team will again show their love as they beautify the church on the first workday of the new year.

God is good all the time. All the time, God is good.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for all you do with us and through us every day. Thank You for the birth of your son and all he did while on this earth and through his resurrection. Thank you for allowing us to experience Love in so many ways throughout our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, AMEN.

- ♥ Darrell and Tom replaced the garbage disposal and sink faucet on the right side of the kitchen, and all is well.
- ♥ The Sanctuary windows have been professionally cleaned at no charge and look great. GOD Bless.

(Continued on page 7)



Living in Love

Hope Field

Love isn't just something you fall into. It's something you practice. It's not limited to warm feelings, chemistry, or those moments when everything feels easy. Love is a way of living, how you move through the world and treat the people around you, day in and day out. Feelings change. Some days you wake up full of affection, other days you're tired, annoyed, or overwhelmed. If love were only a feeling, it wouldn't last long. But when love becomes a way of life, it shows up even when the feelings are thin. It shows up in patience instead of snapping back. In listening instead of interrupting. In choosing kindness when irritation would be quicker.

Living in love means you don't just ask, "How do I feel?" You ask, "How can I respond with care?" It means telling the truth gently. It means setting healthy boundaries without shutting people out. It means forgiving, not because someone earned it, but because holding on to bitterness slowly hardens your heart.

Love as a way of living shows up in small, ordinary choices. It's making room for someone else's story. It's giving your time and attention, not just your words. It's showing up when it's inconvenient. It's staying engaged instead of walking away when things get messy. This kind of love isn't flashy. It doesn't always get noticed. But it's steady. It builds trust. It creates space where people feel safe, seen, and valued. Over time, it changes relationships, communities, and even the person practicing it.

When love becomes how you live, not just how you feel, it becomes deeper, stronger, and more lasting. It becomes less about emotion and more about intention. And in the end, that kind of love is what truly makes life whole.

(Continued from page 6)

- ♥ Our next workday will take place on March 14, with a rain date of March 21st. We hope to see everyone who can come help get our church ready for Easter.
- ♥ During the upcoming workday, we hope to remove the AC window units in the annex building, which have not been used for over 10 years.
- ♥ The playground apparatus needs to be cleaned.

The Building and Grounds team continues to work hard caring for our facilities and responding to requests. God has plans for all of us, and together we can do more than we think.



JOIN US
for
ASH
Wednesday

Return to your
First Love

5:30 p.m.
Wednesday,
February 18

A poster for Ash Wednesday. It features a purple vertical band on the left side. The background is a grayscale image of a concrete cross on a textured surface. The text is arranged in a clean, modern font, with "ASH" in large, bold letters and "Wednesday" in a smaller, italicized font.

Red Cross

**BLOOD
DRIVE**

Thursday, March 5
1:00-6:00 pm

call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767)
OR redcrossblood.org code SPUMC

A poster for a Red Cross Blood Drive. It features a gray background. The Red Cross logo is prominently displayed, consisting of a red blood drop and a black heartbeat line. The text is in a clean, sans-serif font, with "Red Cross" in a larger font size than the other text.

**CHURCH-WIDE
WORK DAY**

**Saturday
March 14
8 a.m. - Noon**

There's something for everyone
indoors and out

**Upfield
SOCCER**

Sundays at 2:00 PM
March 15 - April 26
<https://upfieldatlanta.com/>

**COMMUNITY
Easter Egg
Hunt**

Sunday, March 29 | AT 1:30 PM

Bring your...

- Friends
- Family
- Neighbors
- Easter Baskets

St. Paul United Methodist Church
244 Kurtz Rd. • Marietta, GA 30066
www.stpaulumc.com

Glorious Cross
SALVATION'S STORY, EASTER'S SONG

Easter Cantata

AT 11 A.M.
EASTER SUNDAY
APRIL 5

Created by
DALE MATHEWS
Arranged & Orchestrated by
MARTY HAMBY

Discipleship Opportunities

Open Door Class

Shaken: Discovering Your True Identity in the Midst of Life's Storms

A 4-Session Bible Study by Tim Tebow

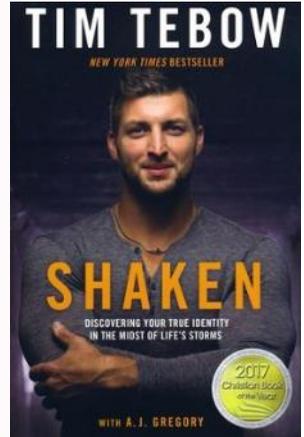
Have you ever questioned God's plan, wondered why life unraveled in an unexpected direction, or struggled with disappointment and doubt? You're not alone.

This four-session study offers a powerful, Scripture-filled message about anchoring your identity in a God who never changes. Tim Tebow encourages participants to reflect deeply, trust boldly, and live with renewed purpose.

In this series, you'll be inspired to:

- ♥ Release bitterness from past hurts and trust in a loving God
- ♥ Recognize and use your God-given talents to make a difference
- ♥ Remain resilient and grounded in faith despite extraordinary odds

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



ChristWalk

The Chosen Season 5

ChristWalk small group continues to explore Season 5 of *The Chosen*, entering the final days of Jesus' ministry—marked by tension, courage, and deep love. As the disciples face the cost of following Him, we're invited to reflect on our own faith and transformation.

ChristWalk meets Tuesdays at 10:-00 a.m. in person and at 7:-00 p.m. on Zoom.

All are welcome. See Shelia for details.



Lent: A Journey of Love

Chris Heldreth

Lent is often described as a season of sacrifice, repentance, and self-denial, but at its heart, Lent is a journey of love. It is a sacred invitation to walk more closely with God, to reorder our hearts, and to rediscover what it truly means to love—God, others, and ourselves—more deeply.

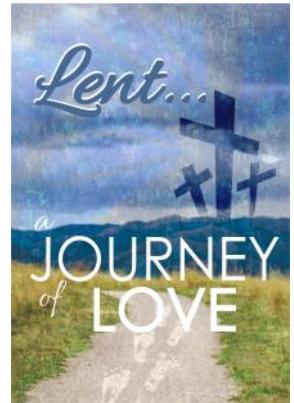
The journey of Lent begins with God’s love for us. Scripture reminds us, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,”* (John 3:16). Lent draws our attention to this profound gift, calling us to reflect on Christ’s willingness to enter human suffering out of love. Jesus’ path to the cross was not motivated by obligation, but by compassion and mercy for a broken world.

As we travel through Lent, we are invited to respond to this love through repentance and transformation. The prophet Joel urges, *“Return to me with all your heart... for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,”* (Joel 2:12-13). Repentance during Lent is not about fear or guilt; it is about returning to a God who loves us and longs for relationship with us.

Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—traditional Lenten practices—are expressions of love in action. Prayer deepens our love for God as we learn to listen and trust more fully. Fasting teaches us to let go of distractions so that love may take root in our hearts. Almsgiving extends God’s love to others, especially the poor and vulnerable. As Jesus teaches, *“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me,”* (Matthew 25:40).

Lent also reminds us that love often involves sacrifice. Jesus tells his disciples, *“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me,”* (Luke 9:23). This call is not about loss, but about discovering a deeper, truer life shaped by love.

Ultimately, Lent leads us to the cross and beyond it to resurrection. In this journey, we learn that love is patient, faithful, and redemptive. As Saint Paul writes, *“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things,”* (1 Corinthians 13:7). Lent is a journey that teaches us to live this love more fully, guided by Christ, who loved us to the very end.



Spotlight on Carol Preuss

Celebrating a Heart for Service and Song

Kathy Lim Sang

This month, we are delighted to shine our membership spotlight on Carol Preuss, a woman whose life is a beautiful tapestry woven with threads of deep love, faith, and a calling to care for others.



St. Paul
Member Spotlight



Carol Preuss

Carol and her husband, David (Dave), recently celebrated a monumental milestone—their 50th wedding anniversary on November 29, 2025! Their journey together began at the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, where Carol, a native Floridian, first encountered Dave’s “strange” Long Island accent. After two years of dating, Carol did what she once thought was “unthinkable.” She married a Yankee and moved to the Northeast for what became a 35-year adventure. The first thing she did was go to Macy’s and buy a down-feather winter coat! If not for that coat, she says she would have gone back to Florida.

A Journey Guided by Faith and Fellowship—The Preuss’s path eventually led them to Marietta in 2013 for Dave’s career as a retirement plan consultant. While Carol was still in Raleigh finalizing their move, Dave found his way to St. Paul. He was immediately embraced by Jeanine and Jim Jenkins—a spontaneous act of kindness that Carol still holds close to her heart. This warm welcome cemented their decision to join St. Paul in 2014, marking their first experience as Methodists. Before St. Paul, Carol’s faith journey began at age 13 in the Baptist church, while Dave was raised Catholic before choosing the Protestant faith. Today, they are both deeply committed to our church family.

Carol’s talents are rooted in compassion, reflected in both her professional life and her nurturing spirit. After 20 years as a Licensed Dental Hygienist, she pursued a degree as a Physician Assistant to become a broader health advocate. She is passionate about empowering patients with chronic diseases through education and lifestyle support.

Carol shares her many God-given gifts—she loves singing and finds great joy in performing with the St. Paul choir. She also possesses the gift of empathy and listening, using her life experiences to offer encouragement and a caring presence to others. She is a devoted advocate for stray and abandoned cats, a passion that began with a rescue

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

around her fifth anniversary.

Community Service—Before the pandemic, she was a dedicated classroom volunteer at Bells Ferry Elementary and hopes to return to serving local students soon.

When she isn't singing or birdwatching with her "soulmate in nature," Myra, Carol, and Dave enjoy exploring the great outdoors. They have visited 15 National Parks and look forward to exploring the Georgia coastline in the near future.

Please join us in celebrating Carol Preuss—a listener, an encourager, and a cherished member of our St. Paul family.



To the Saint Paul Methodist Church Congregation,

All my life, all I ever truly longed for was to be loved, to stand on my own two feet, and to have friends who would meet me where I was. You have given me exactly that. Thank you for living out what the Bible teaches—bringing the tithes into the storehouse and sharing so that no one is left wanting. That spirit of generosity and community is something I dreamed of since I was a little girl, and I have found it here.

There are moments when I don't fully understand God's methods, but somehow they always work. I'm learning to trust Him unconditionally as I move forward in this beautiful world He created. I once spoke with Pastor Shelia about my work, and she encouraged me to keep going—reminding me that Jesus died on the cross for this very purpose. Those words stayed with me.

Thank you for supporting me even when I didn't fully understand what God was doing. I look forward to becoming part of this congregation and joining in weekly worship now that I see more clearly how God moves. And thank you for Messy Church—it has been such a blessing.

With gratitude and love,

Cheryl Nick

**Download the Realm Connect APP
from our website to donate online**

stpaulumc.com/donate

**SCAN. TAP.
CONFIRM.
DONE!**



Simply scan the QR code with your smartphone camera, tap the link, confirm your details—and you're all set!

Love Worth Noticing

Victoria Godfrey

February arrives with hearts in store windows, pink envelopes tucked into backpacks, and lots of talk about love. Children notice it all. They notice who gets Valentine cards, who sits with whom at lunch, and who might be feeling left out. January invited us to notice more, to slow down and look for God in ordinary moments. Now, in February, we are invited to notice how love shows up in our everyday lives.

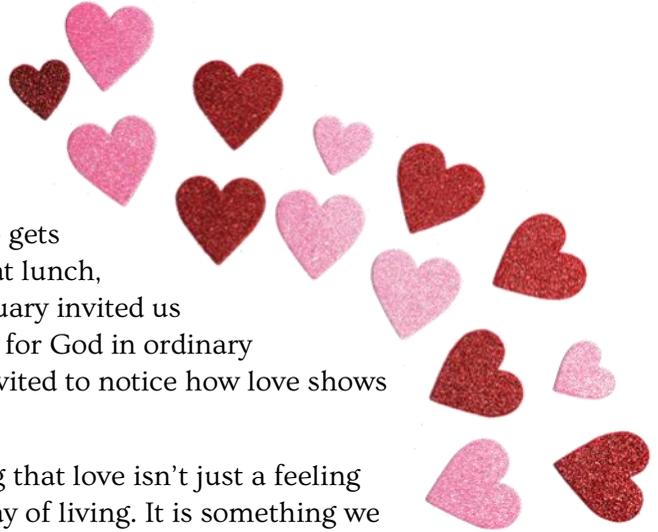
In Children's Ministry, we are learning that love isn't just a feeling we talk about once a year. Love is a way of living. It is something we practice with our hands, our words, and our choices.

When we pay closer attention, love often looks quieter than we expect. It looks like a preschooler scooting over to make room for a friend. It looks like a child choosing kindness instead of winning an argument. It looks like a deep breath before forgiving, or a brave prayer whispered at bedtime. These

February also brings us into the season of Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday. Children are often curious about the ashes—the cross on the forehead, the stillness of the moment. We talk about how the ashes remind us that we belong to God, and that we are marked by love and grace. Lent becomes a time not to do more, but to notice more—how we love God, how we love others, and how God's love is already at work within us.

Jesus teaches us to love God and love our neighbors, not as a suggestion, but as a way of life. For children, this means love that shows up at home, at school, on the playground, and even when it's hard.

As a church family, my hope this February is to continue the practice we began in January: slowing down, paying attention, and recognizing love in ordinary places. May we notice love not just in big gestures, but in small, faithful ones—and may our children see in us that love is something we live every day.



FEBRUARY

2026



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:45a SS 11a Worship 3p Staff 5:30p KSU Wesley Bible Study/Hangout	2 10:30a Monday Servants 12:15p Chair Yoga	3 10a ChristWalk (FH) 7p ChristWalk (Zoom)	4 8p KSU Worship	5	6 5p Messy Church Setup	7 4p Messy Church
8 9:45a SS 11a Worship 5:30p KSU Wesley Bible Study/Hangout	9 10:30a Monday Servants 12:15p Chair Yoga	10 10a ChristWalk (FH) 7p ChristWalk (Zoom)	11 8p KSU Worship	12	13	14
15 9:45a SS 11a Worship 3p Leadership 5:30p KSU Wesley Bible Study/Hangout	16 President's Day 12:15p Chair Yoga	17 10a ChristWalk (FH) 10:30a Monday Servants 7p ChristWalk (Zoom)	18 5:30p Ash Wednesday Service 8p KSU Worship	19 6:30p Stephen Ministry	20	21
22 9:45a SS 11a Worship 3p Leadership 5:30p KSU Wesley Bible Study/Hangout	23 10:30a Monday Servants 12:15p Chair Yoga	24 10a ChristWalk (FH) 4p Hope House 7p ChristWalk (Zoom)	25 8p KSU Worship	26	27	28

Serving This Month

February Servants

Worship Leader—Mike McMillin

Open/Close Facilities—Mike McMillin

Monday Servants:

- 02/02 Darrell Morgan & Marj Rhodes
- 02/09 Tom Short & Darrell Morgan
- 02/17 TU Darrell Morgan & Marj Rhodes
- 02/23 Tom Short & Marj Rhodes

Media Team—Mike McMillin

Easy Worship—Terry Palmer, Tom Preacher

Audio/Video—Robbie Littlefield, Jyo Vanapalli

Could it be YOU? Join Us!

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."

DECEMBER 2025

Our Presence

- Average weekly Sunday School attendance 20
- Average weekly 11:00 worship attendance 48
- Average weekly online attendance..... 58

Our Gifts—General Fund

DECEMBER 2025 INCOME

Contributions	\$ 26,673.97
Processing Gifts.....	\$ 92.50
Total Contributions.....	\$ 26,766.47
Rental Property.....	\$ 1,695.00
Soccer Rental	N/A
Total Revenue	\$ 28,461.47
YTD 2025 Income.....	\$216,224.62
Total Expenses for DECEMBER	\$ 17,925.45
TOTAL 2025 Expenses.....	\$229,854.95



05 Laura Lim Sang	03 Hannah Ogene
06 Stephanie Fleming	04 Ed Jackson
07 Jasmine Ogene	09 Carrie Whiten
12 Ndidi Ogene	12 Dean Agresta
14 Karen LeCroy	15 Louise Pomeroy
15 Thomas Preacher	19 Bob Trengove
16 Anna Castellaw	19 Cyrus Moshglani
18 Lynn Tanner	25 Mary Mahoney
19 Darrall Salter	26 Alma Taylor
19 Cheryl Nick	
20 Lucy Agresta	
26 Jamie Hayes	
27 Bob Homer	
28 Sherry Pletcher	



Altar Flowers

Cost: \$55.00

02/01	Available
02/08	Available
02/15	Available
02/22	Available

Sign up on Bulletin Board



February 16

Suggested word count: 350-400