

The *Epistle* of St. Paul

July 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

Something More

Rev. Shelia Preacher

Isn't it interesting...Independence Day and Pentecost each offer us freedom's doorway to become SOMETHING MORE! Those first pilgrims and every immigrant since came to America with the hope and dream to discover something more than their old life. And if you think about it, Jesus came so that we might become something more as well. For the Season of Pentecost urges us all to become who we were always meant to be!

In America and in Christ, we discover... freedom to grow...freedom to dream big...freedom to try new things...and freedom to become more than we once imagined. Yet we need to realize that freedom itself is not the destination. Freedom is the doorway. Transformation is the end goal.

Isn't it funny...God's dreams for us are ALWAYS much bigger than our own. So just take a moment and consider... "What dreams might God have for us, our church, our community?" As we look around at our pews, it is obvious that many of us have walked with Christ for a very long time. But what if God does not view our maturity as a limitation? What if the wisdom gained through our years is a true gift to younger generations? Beloved, God is not finished with us yet! And our best days as God's servants lie before us...not behind us.

The prophet Joel writes, "*And your old men shall dream dreams,*" (Joel 2:28). What dreams are being birthed right now... that need our wisdom and experience to burst into life? Perhaps the future God longs to unfold needs exactly what this congregation has to offer—wisdom, faithfulness, experience, and most of all, hearts still willing to dream. The question before us is not whether we are too old to dream, but whether we are willing to dream God's dreams once again.



Freedom to Choose Our Path

Hope Field

As our nation approaches its 250th year, many people are reflecting on what it means to be an American. We often think about the rights we enjoy, the freedoms we cherish, and the opportunities available to us. One of the most treasured freedoms is the ability to pursue our dreams and to live according to our convictions.



For Christians, freedom means more than the rights protected by a constitution. It is also the freedom to believe, to worship, and to live out one's faith without fear. Christianity teaches that true freedom is found in a relationship with God—a freedom that reaches beyond circumstances and speaks to the condition of the heart.

This freedom allows believers to seek God's purpose for their lives, to pray openly, to gather with others in worship, and to share their faith with future generations. It is the freedom to choose compassion over hatred, forgiveness over bitterness, and hope over despair. Christians believe they are free not only from external restrictions but also from the burdens of guilt, fear, and sin through faith in Jesus Christ.

Exploring these freedoms means asking deeper questions: How can we use our liberty to serve others? How can we show love to our neighbors? How can our faith inspire us to contribute positively to our communities and our country?

As Americans, we celebrate the freedom to choose our path. As Christians, many believe that freedom finds its highest purpose when it draws us closer to God and leads us to love and serve others. In that way, freedom is not simply the ability to do whatever we want; it is the opportunity to become who we were created to be.

As we look toward this historic milestone in our nation's story, perhaps the greatest reflection is not only on the freedoms we possess but also on how we use them—with gratitude, responsibility, faith, and a commitment to the good of others.



Mission Project for July 2026:

Back to School Blast

Susan Short

It feels like the freedom of summer has just begun... and yet another school year will start very soon! As we prepare for school to begin in early August, we're making our **July Mission Project** a fun one. We are inviting the community's children to the St. Paul campus for our annual **Back-to-School Blast** on **Saturday, July 25, from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m.**

We'll give local students backpacks, school supplies, AND an encouraging word for the year ahead. We will set up school supply stations under the covered areas surrounding the church entryways. We will also open the Sanctuary so students and families can visit a prayer station. Additionally, we will offer light refreshments and games.

Based on recent history, we expect about 150-200 children to be on the campus for supplies, so your help is greatly needed, both in serving in person and/or providing supplies. If you prefer not to shop, we can shop for you. Simply indicate "School Supplies" on the memo/dropdown line of your offering. Most of all, please pray for the recipients, their families, and our beloved teachers. Let's give these students and their families freedom and peace in knowing they can begin the school year well-prepared!

Please bring the supplies to church as soon as possible and place them in the **MUST** box located in the Narthex.

On **Monday, July 20, at 1:00 pm**, we will sort supplies and prepare for the "Blast." We could use your hands!

And finally, on the day of the Back-to-School Blast, Saturday, July 25, we need 12-15 volunteers to greet students and hand out supplies and snacks. Please arrive at 2:00 p.m. to help set out tables, supplies, and snacks.

Thank YOU so much, for all you do in His precious name.



Shopping List

***Note teacher-preferred brands**

- ☆ 24-count ***Crayola** Crayons
- ☆ ***Crayola** Colored Pencils
- ☆ Highlighters (chisel point)
- ☆ ***Elmer's** Small & Large Glue Sticks
- ☆ Two ***Mead** 5-Star 3-prong, 2-Pocket Folder w/ Clamps
- ☆ ***Fiskars** Scissors (round tips)
- ☆ Markers (***Crayola** or ***Mr. Sketch**)
- ☆ Spiral notebooks (70-page wide rule)
- ☆ Pink ***Pearl** Erasers
- ☆ Wide ruled loose leaf paper
- ☆ Yellow #2 ***Ticonderoga** Pencils



Freedom to Say “Yes”

Victoria Godfrey

As we move into July and celebrate Independence Day, we often think about freedom. Freedom to choose. Freedom to speak. Freedom to pursue our dreams. These are important gifts, but as followers of Christ, there is another kind of freedom worth noticing.

This year, we have been exploring the idea of noticing more. That means noticing God in ordinary moments, noticing the people around us, and noticing the ways God is at work in our lives. This month, I invite us to notice something else: the freedom God gives us to become something together.

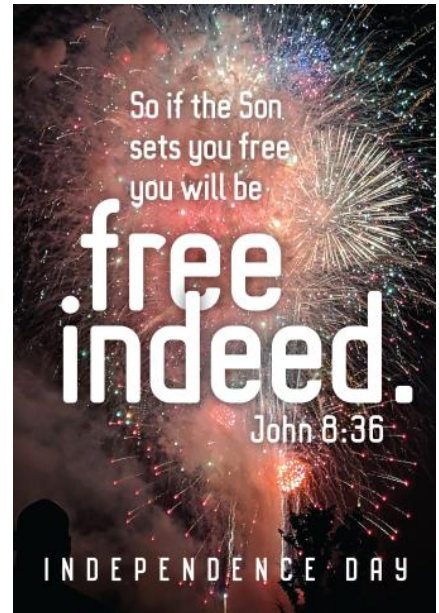
Pentecost reminds us that God did not pour out the Holy Spirit merely to inspire people for a moment. The Holy Spirit came to transform lives. And that it did! The message of Pentecost is still true today. Through Christ, we are given the freedom to become who God created us to be.

For children, this means discovering the gifts and talents God has placed within them. It means learning that they do not have to be a carbon copy of everyone else. God delights in who they are and is continually shaping them into who they can become.

This month, six of our youth will also take an important step on that journey through **Confirmation**. After spending time learning about faith, asking questions, and exploring what it means to follow Jesus, they will have the opportunity to publicly affirm their faith and become professing members of the church. What a beautiful reminder that faith is not something forced upon us, but an invitation we are free to embrace. We celebrate their freedom to say “yes” to God's call and to dedicate themselves to a life of growing, serving, and belonging within the body of Christ.

As a church family, we also have the opportunity to help nurture this freedom to become. Confirmation isn't just a milestone for our students. It's a reminder that faith grows best within a community. One of the greatest gifts we can offer these young people is our support through prayer, encouragement, and presence. As Confirmation

(Continued on page 5)



Freedom to Say Yes *(Continued from page 4)*

Sunday approaches, I invite you to continue praying for each student as they take this important step in their faith journey. If you are able, join us for worship on Confirmation Sunday, July 26th at 11:00 a.m., as we celebrate their commitment to Christ and the church. Your attendance is a powerful way of saying, "You belong here, and we are committed to walking alongside you."

This July, as you enjoy summer activities and gather with family and friends, take a moment to notice where God may be inviting you to grow. The Holy Spirit is still at work, and God is still calling each of us into the freedom to become.

Confirmation Weekend

Christian confirmation is the process by which a person publicly professes, or "confirms," their belief in and commitment to live according to the Christian faith. Confirmation takes place when an individual affirms the vows of baptism and membership before a pastor and the gathered congregation.

In The United Methodist Church, persons brought up in the church as children are typically confirmed during adolescence when they are considered mature enough to properly understand the commitment they are making. Preparation for confirmation usually includes a period of structured learning, often beginning during Lent, culminating in Confirmation Sunday when they take their vows.

We have 6 students who will go through Confirmation class in July. Please keep them in your prayers: Stephanie Fleming, Alex Morgan, Jimmy Morgan, Hannah Ogene, Jasmine Ogene, Samantha Ogene. Those of you who picked up a "confirmation cross", please continue to pray for your student. We will ask you to return the cross on Confirmation Sunday and we will present them to each child.



More than Maintenance

Bob Trengove

July 4th this year marks the semi-quincentennial (250th) anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, stating our determination to become a free country. I remember when we celebrated the bicentennial (200th). It seems like it was just yesterday, but it was 50 years ago.

July 4th is a time to reflect on God's goodness to us as a nation. Molded into the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia (which proclaimed our independence) are these words from the Bible: *"Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof,"* (Leviticus 25:10, KJV).

While we look with gratitude to the past on this July 4th, may we also look in faith to the future, and commit it and our lives to God and His will. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." Let Freedom Ring and God Bless America. Remember, freedom is not free. It comes with a price. Wars have been fought in the name of freedom.

Immigrants come to the U.S. for many reasons, including better jobs, more freedoms, and a chance at a better life. Some people move to escape hard times in their home countries. Others want to join family members already living in America. Many see the U.S. as a place where they can chase their dreams. The U.S. has long been seen as a land of hope and fresh starts. I hope the future provides these people with the opportunities they desperately need.

Many jobs are available if you are willing to put in the work. We need doctors and nurses, but that is a hard profession to succeed in. I do not know what Artificial Intelligence has in store for us, but I am sure it may change the landscape of the workforce.

God seems to be reminding us that the pulse of America was beating strongly in its people. Today, hope surrounds us as we bow our heads in prayer.

God is Good All the Time. All the time, God is Good.

Dear Heavenly Father, you tell us that we are your children, your family. Move us past strife and bring us together to realize America's dream for all. Thank you for all

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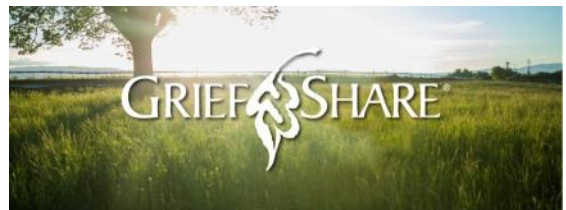
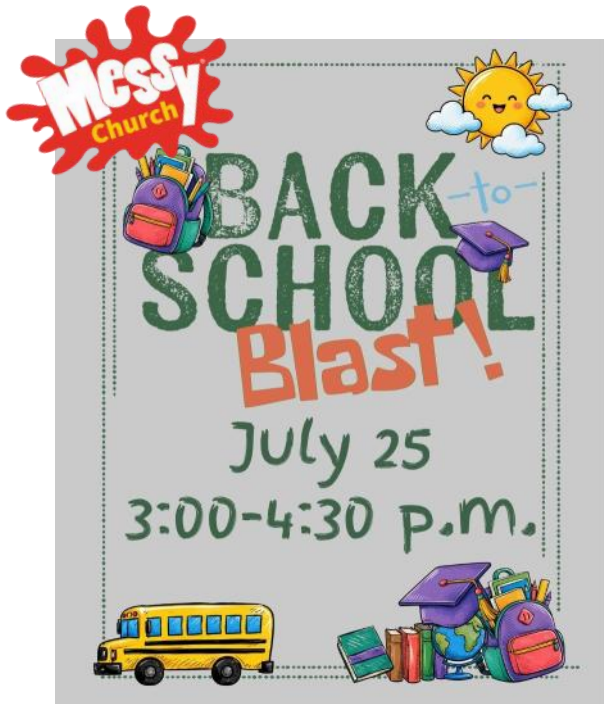
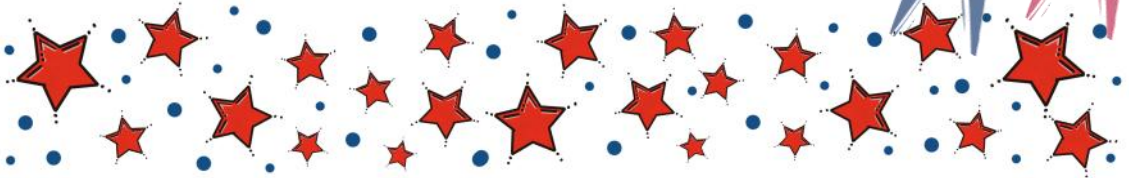


More than Maintenance *Continued from page 6)*

*the blessings you give this nation as it continues to fight for freedom everywhere.
God bless America. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

The Building and Grounds Team is still performing many activities at St Paul. The following are a few of the tasks completed or in progress.

- ☆ Workday at church was a success on June 6, with 10 in attendance.
- ☆ The deck and playground were both cleaned during our June workday.
- ☆ E-Smith Heating & Air came out on June 16 to service our Heating and Air units.
- ☆ The deck was stained in preparation for the back-to-school blast.



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

Thank You Notes...

My Dear St. Paul Family—

I love y'all! Thank you so much for your kindness, love, support and prayers during my recent illness. I felt the prayers and am grateful to each of you. You are indeed God's hands.

Tom and I appreciate our church family more than we can say. With much love & Peace—

Susan and Tom (Short)

Dear St. Paul,

Thank you all for your prayers for my recovery. As ever I go with God's help and also yours as my extended family.

Thank you for your Love for Me.

God Bless you all. I shall persevere.

With God's help we all can.

Love,

Jeanine Hartman



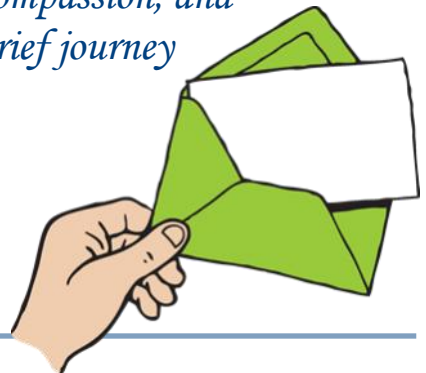
Kathy—

Your session last night (GriefShare) was such a blessing. I gained so much insight. I have created a plan for my weekend trip to my late father's hometown tomorrow. Your passion, compassion, and genuine desire to see others heal during their grief journey is such a blessing.

Keep shining!

Rochelle Smith

Novi, MI





“
Meet Tempestt,
our new yoga
instructor.
Stretch and
relax!

”

Mondays at 11:30a.m.



Getting to Know Our Members

Kathy Lim Sang

If you've spent any time soaking in the beautiful music at St. Paul, you've likely been blessed by the talents of Dorothy McCracken. This month, we are delighted to feature Dorothy in our membership spotlight and share more of her wonderful journey with our congregation.

Dorothy's roots are deeply intertwined with both faith and music. Growing up in the Seventh-day Adventist church, she attended Adventist schools until the tenth grade, where music was a core pillar of her education. Her ministry as a musician began at age 13, when she started playing for Putney Methodist Church near Albany. Remarkably, she balanced playing for the Adventists on Saturdays with sharing her gifts at Morningside UMC and Palmyra Road UMC in Albany on Sundays.

Life shifted in 1976 when Dorothy met Ernie, a handsome man from Miami. This October, they will celebrate 50 years of marriage. Together, they share a beautiful, blended family of three adult children—their son, Joshua, and her stepchildren, Sumitra and Matthew—and five young-adult grandchildren.

In 1978, Dorothy and Ernie moved from Albany to Decatur, then settled in Woodstock in 1980. The following year, Dorothy spotted a newspaper advertisement for a church in need of an



St. Paul
Member Spotlight



Dorothy McCracken

organist. She called, and Dusty Rhodes answered the phone. Recognizing her extensive experience in Methodist churches, they both knew it was a perfect match. Now, 45 years later, St. Paul is simply home to Dorothy.

Professionally, Dorothy spent her days navigating the legal system. She worked as a paralegal for the District Attorney in Cherokee County for eleven years—spending many hours in the courtroom—followed by 23 years at a private law firm in Marietta until her retirement in 2019.

Today, Dorothy continues to dedicate her God-given musical talents to the Lord, serving faithfully in our choir. For Dorothy, working with the choir is pure fun, and music remains her ultimate stress reliever. When seeking daily inspiration, she turns to Scripture, finding her favorite life-giving promises in Romans 8, Isaiah 40, and Psalm 91.

We are profoundly grateful for Dorothy's 45 years of dedication, music, and warmth. Next time you see her in the choir loft, please say a warm hello and thank her for making St. Paul feel like home for all of us!

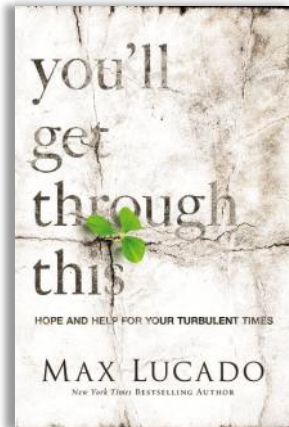
Discipleship Opportunities

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 July 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.

Freedom to Serve

Chris Heldreth

America was shaped by people seeking freedom. The Pilgrims left behind familiar homes and traditions because they longed for religious freedom—the freedom to worship God according to their convictions. They stepped away from their old life and journeyed into the unknown, trusting that something better lay ahead.

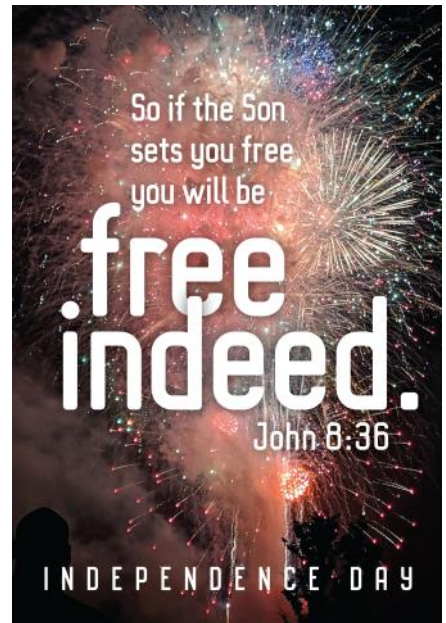
The Christian faith tells a similar story. Jesus came to bring freedom—not simply political freedom, but freedom for the soul. He came to free us from old ways of living, from guilt and regret, and from the burdens of our past. Through Christ, we are not defined by who we once were. Instead, we are invited to become who God created us to be.

The Apostle Paul wrote, *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free,”* (Galatians 5:1). This freedom is more than being released *from* something; it is freedom *for* something. It is the freedom to grow, to serve, to forgive, to love, and to dream bigger dreams than we ever imagined possible.

Many of us carry old stories: past mistakes, disappointments, or fears that tell us we cannot change. Yet Christ speaks a different message. He offers freedom from the chains of yesterday and opens the door to a new future filled with hope and purpose.

God's grace gives us the courage to step forward, just as the Pilgrims once did, leaving behind what is familiar and trusting in His promises. In Christ, we discover the freedom to become: to become more compassionate, more generous, more faithful, and more fully the people God created us to be.

Freedom in Christ is not only a gift; it is an invitation to a new life.



Freedom to Become

Mike McMillin

As we celebrate Independence Day, we give thanks for the many freedoms we enjoy as Americans. Freedom is a precious gift, purchased through sacrifice and entrusted to every generation. Yet as Christians, we are also reminded that there is another freedom—one that reaches even deeper than political liberty.

John Wesley would likely encourage us to see freedom not as an end in itself, but as an invitation to become the people God created us to be.

The Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 5:13-15 (The Message): *“God has called you to a free life... use your freedom to serve one another in love.”* Those words capture the heart of the Wesleyan faith.

For Wesley, God's grace is always at work in our lives. Through Christ, we are forgiven, but God's work does not stop there. The Holy Spirit is continually transforming us into people who love more deeply, forgive more freely, serve more willingly, and reflect Christ more faithfully. In other words, we are free—but we are still becoming.

Perhaps that is the best way to understand both our nation and our faith. America continues striving to become a “more perfect union.” Likewise, every disciple of Jesus is on a lifelong journey of becoming more like Christ. We never “arrive” this side of heaven. Each day offers another opportunity to grow in grace.

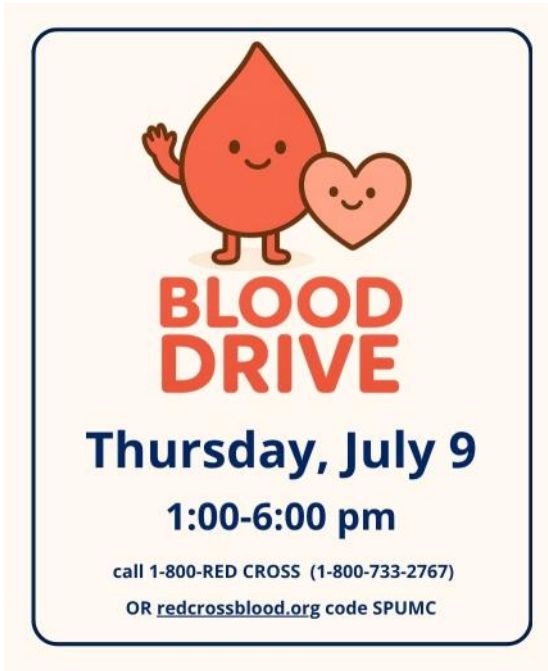
Wesley also believed that freedom was never meant to be lived only for ourselves. He famously taught that “there is no holiness but social holiness.” Our faith is lived out in relationship—with God, with one another, and with our neighbors. Genuine Christian freedom always leads us outward in love, compassion, justice, mercy, and service.

This Fourth of July, let us celebrate with grateful hearts. But as we wave our flags and gather with family and friends, may we also remember the greater freedom Christ offers—the freedom to become all that God has created us to be.

May the Holy Spirit continue shaping us into disciples whose lives proclaim not only liberty, but love. For that is where true freedom is found.



Freedom begins at the cross and continues in a life transformed by grace.



Our Next Movie Evening

Our May "Dinner and a Movie" showing the Passion of the Christ was a hit. We will do another movie offering on Tuesday evening August 4. Dinner at 4:30 and the movie will begin at 5:00 pm.

We will introduce a regular movie and meal series (in the winter months, we might do a lunch showing). So...I need help coming up with a generic branding name:

- ☆ **Flix & Food** (Good Food. Great Movies. Meaningful Conversation)
- ☆ **Bites & Blockbusters** (Sharing Meals. Sharing Stories. Building Community)
- ☆ **Faith, Food & Film** (Exploring Life, Faith, and Hope Through Story)
- ☆ **Movies, Meals & Meaning** (Where Great Stories Spark Great Conversations)
- ☆ **Reel Connections** (Making connections...with faith, life, and one another)





Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 6p <i>GriefShare</i>	2 6:30p Stephen Ministry	3	4 
5 9:45a SS 11a Worship Noon Nominating Team 3p Staff	6 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga 6:30p Building & Grounds	7 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	8	9 1p Blood Drive	10 4p Confirmation Class	11 10a Confirmation Class
12 9:45a SS 11a Worship 5p UPfield	13 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga	14 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	15	16	17	18
19 9:45a SS 11a Worship 3p Leadership 5p UPfield	20 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga 1p Sort School Supplies	21 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	22	23	24	25 3p Back to School Blast
26 Confirmation Sunday 9:45a SS 11a Worship 5p UPfield	27 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga	28 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 4p Hope House 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	29	30	31	

Serving This Month

July Servants

Worship Leader—Bob Trengove

Open/Close Facilities—Tom Preacher

Monday Servants:

07/06 Tom Short & Ruth Castellaw
 07/13 Darrell Morgan & Marj Rhodes
 07/20 Tom Short & Ruth Castellaw
 07/27 Darrell Morgan & Marj Rhodes

Media Team—Mike McMillin

Easy Worship—Terry Palmer, Tom Preacher

Audio/Video—Chris Morgan, 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."*

MAY 2025

Our Presence

Average weekly Sunday School attendance 18
 Average weekly 11:00 worship attendance 39
 Average weekly online attendance..... 43

Our Gifts—General Fund

MAY 2026 INCOME

Contributions \$ 14,230.00
 Processing Gifts.....\$ 74.00
 Total Contributions.....\$ 14,304.30
 Rental Property.....\$ 1,520.00
 Soccer Rental.....\$ 0.00
Total Revenue\$ 15,824.30
YTD 2026 Income\$ 79,102.80
Total Expenses for MAY\$ 19,684.80
TOTAL 2026 Expenses.....\$ 96,052.80
Net Total..... (\$ 16,950.00)



03 Jeannine Hartman
 12 Alvin Arcayan
 16 Morgan Hope Field
 18 Zahra Taylor
 26 Derek Jackson
 30 Dorothy McCracken
 31 Hope Field

04 Ann Trengove
 06 Susan Latham
 13 Marcie Windsor
 21 Marj Rhodes
 24 Shirley Childers
 26 Pam Mangrum
 28 Amy Cole



Altar Flowers

Cost: \$55.00

07/05 Available
 07/12 Available
 07/19 Available
 07/26 Available

Sign up on Bulletin Board



**NEWSLETTER
 DEADLINE**

July 20

Suggested word count: 350-400