

THE EPISTLE OF St. Paul

September 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

State of the Church Address

Rev. Shelia Preacher

Each fall, every UMC church holds something called a Charge Conference where we review our church, its operations, its ministries, and outreach, and we present various reports to our congregation and our district superintendent. As much as I hate completing reports, it serves a

really good purpose. It causes us to pause and look at who we are and what we do, day in and day out. It gives an opportunity to "strut our stuff" in a snapshot and point out those things we do well and lift up new things we want to explore in a kind of State of the Union (in our case, "State of the Church") address. Folks, it is a GOOD THING to be a part of St. Paul UMC!

This year, the Leadership Team at St. Paul UMC wholeheartedly embraced the new United Methodist vision statement because it beautifully captures both who we are and what God is calling us to become: *"The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections."* Those words have become more than a statement on paper. They have shaped our vision, guided our priorities, and inspired our ministries through 2026.

In April, our Leadership engaged in a visioning weekend shaped by the words of Frederick Buechner, *"The place God calls you to... is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger...meet."* Vision emerges NOT from copying other



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churches, but from discovering the intersection between our gifts and the world's needs.

Through that process, we recognized what God has been cultivating at St Paul for decades: a

congregation marked by deep faith, genuine compassion, radical hospitality, relational warmth, and a desire to put love into action.

These gifts position us to participate in the Spirit's transforming work both within our congregation and throughout our community. And the resulting vision provides realistic and hopeful ministry pathways for the years ahead.

The following offers a glimpse of how that vision has already begun to take shape in 2026.

Forming disciples of Jesus Christ. We continue to nurture spiritual growth across generations through worship, learning, relationship, and service:

- ✿ Children, Youth, and Adult Sunday School
- ✿ Messy Church (worship encounters unlike traditional church)
- ✿ ChristWalk (a weekly gathering exploring spiritual growth and practical discipleship)
- ✿ Confirmation classes (6 youth this year... including 2 baptisms)



- ✿ Host site to the KSU Wesley Foundation
- ✿ New Stephen Minister training classes (July-October 2026)

Love Boldly. This becomes the means of extending Christ's compassion beyond our walls and into the lives of our neighbors through:

- ✿ GriefShare support groups gently holding the hearts and hands of those experiencing loss.
- ✿ Stephen Ministry providing one-on-one presence and prayer during life struggles.
- ✿ Drive-Thru Coffee & Blessing
- ✿ Parking Lot Picnics & Concerts;

Egg Hunt; Trunk or Treat; StoryTime with Santa

- ✿ Chair Yoga (seniors) and Community Soccer Leagues (kids ages 2-6)

Serve Joyfully. We seek not only to meet needs, but to serve with gratitude, generosity, and joy:

- ✿ Monthly Helping Hands benevolence support to those in our community
- ✿ Providing monthly dinners for MUST Hope House Shelter
- ✿ Red Cross Blood Drives and Life Line Screenings
- ✿ Thanksgiving Meals and one-on-one child mentoring at Sawyer Road Elementary
- ✿ Winter Coats for Bells Ferry Elementary and host site for Bells Ferry PTA activities and events

(Continued on page 3)

Step Forward—Together (Continued from page 2)

Lead Courageously. This directive means stepping forward in faith, embracing new ministry opportunities, and using our voice and resources to make a difference in the world.

- ✿ Incorporating our visioning process congregation-wide to further discern God's future plans for St. Paul.
- ✿ Continue to invest in leadership development through ministry teams, lay leadership, and Stephen Ministry training.
- ✿ Strengthening partnerships with schools, community organizations, and mission agencies to address real needs in our community.
- ✿ Continued partnership in the wider mission and ministry of the UMC through our connectional commitments and outreach efforts.

St. Paul UMC remains a small congregation by many measures, yet year after year our members demonstrate that the size of a church is NOT determined by attendance figures, but by the size of its faith, compassion, generosity, and commitment to Christ's mission. Through countless acts of worship, service, care, hospitality, and leadership, we continue to bear witness to God's transforming love in our community. We give thanks to what God has already done among us and look forward with hope and great expectation to what God will do next.



September Mission Focus: Helping Hands and UMCOR

Susan Short

This September, St. Paul United Methodist Church invites our congregation to open our hearts and extend our hands to neighbors who are facing difficult and uncertain times.

Our monthly mission focus will support two important avenues of compassion and relief both near and far: the **Helping Hands Fund** and **United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)**.



The **Helping Hands** Fund provides practical assistance to individuals and families in our local community who are experiencing times of need. Through this ministry, your gifts can help provide hope, encouragement, and a helping hand when it is needed most. Every gift, no matter the size, can make a meaningful difference.

Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we lift before You all those who are hurting because of disaster, loss, or difficult circumstances. Be with families affected by the earthquake in Colombia and those recovering from flooding throughout the U.S. Provide shelter for those who have lost their homes, comfort for those who are grieving, strength for those beginning again, and wisdom for those providing relief. Bless the work of Helping Hands and UMCOR, and use our gifts to bring hope where it's needed. Open our heart and remind us that *every* act of kindness can reflect Your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Our support for **UMCOR** will help respond to disasters, including the earthquake in Colombia and recent flooding across the United States. When disasters strike, UMCOR works through United Methodist connections to bring relief, recovery, and hope to communities affected by devastating events. Your generosity helps make it possible for people to receive assistance when they need it most.

As we give, let's remember that our mission is *more* than providing financial support. It is an opportunity to be the hands and feet of Christ. We may never meet the people whose lives are touched by our gifts, but we can faithfully share God's love with them through our generosity.

Step Forward—Together!

Mike McMillin

Jesus tells us, *"With God all things are possible,"* (Matthew 19:26). That does not mean we can accomplish anything we happen to desire. It means that when God calls us to serve, God will help us do what we could never do alone.

The song "Do Something," by Matthew West, asks an important question: When we see suffering and need in the world, are we waiting for someone else to respond—or are we willing to let God work through us?

Every ministry begins when someone notices: a family needs food, a child needs encouragement, a grieving person needs a listening ear, an older adult needs a ride, or a neighbor needs to know that somebody cares. But noticing is only the beginning. The next question is, "God, what are You calling us to do?"

That question can be frightening. We may think, "I don't have enough time. I don't know what to say. I don't have the right skills. Someone else could do it better." Perhaps we are afraid of failing—or afraid that saying yes will lead to more than we can handle.

That is why God gives us shared ministry. Shared ministry means that clergy and laity—and people of every age and ability—work together using the gifts God has given them. One person may offer time. Another may give money or needed

supplies. Someone else may bring practical skills, a welcoming location, a compassionate heart, or the willingness to listen. No single person has every resource, but together, the Body of Christ has much more than we realize.

And whatever we lack, the Holy Spirit supplies. The Spirit helps us recognize the need, calls people forward, gives us courage, brings the right gifts together, and strengthens us when the work becomes difficult. Shared ministry is not simply what we do for God; it is what God does through all of us.

So, what need has God placed before you? What resource are you being invited to share—prayer, time, money, possessions, skills, space, encouragement, or a listening ear?

Begin with prayer. Listen for the Holy Spirit. Talk with others who may share the calling. Then take one faithful step.

We do not need to have everything figured out before we begin. We only need to trust God enough to step forward together. When each person offers what they have, God can multiply those gifts into ministry—and with God's help, there is nothing beyond our reach!



Faithfulness: an Act of Worship

Hope Field

When I think about my ministry role in music and worship, I am reminded that music is about much more than singing songs. It is one of the ways we tell God's story, encourage one another, and open our hearts to what God is doing in our lives. The words we sing, the prayers we offer, and the Scriptures we hear all help shape us into the people God calls us to be.

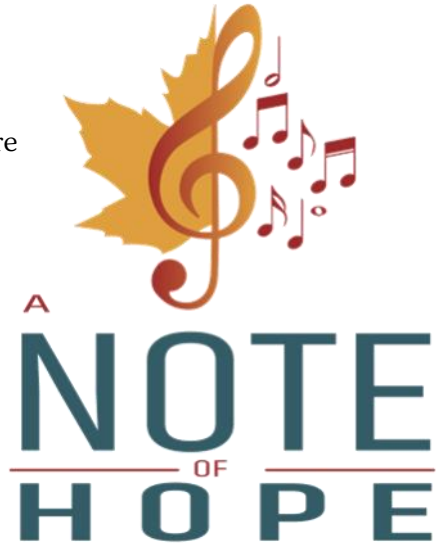
Our church sings a variety of music. We have older, cherished hymns that have been part of the faith journeys of many generations. We also sing contemporary worship songs that speak to where we are today. Both have an important place in our worship. A familiar hymn can bring back memories of a parent, grandparent, or a special time in our lives. A newer song can give us fresh words to express our faith and hope. Together, they remind us that God is present in every generation.

Our choir is small, but it is faithful. Each Sunday, our singers come together and offer their gifts to God and to the congregation. They are not there to perform. They are there to serve. They sing when they are tired, when life is difficult, and when they may not feel especially confident. Their faithfulness is itself an act of worship. This is where I see the words "love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously" come alive.

We **love boldly** when we use our voices to share God's love and when we encourage others through music. We **serve joyfully** when we give our time and talents, not for recognition, but because we are grateful for what God has given us. And we **lead courageously** when we help the congregation worship; even though our group is small, we are faithful and mighty.

Looking back, I am grateful for the music that has carried us through many seasons. Looking ahead, I pray that our music ministry will continue to be a place where people encounter God, find encouragement, and feel connected.

We may be a small choir, but God has never measured ministry by numbers. He asks us to be faithful. So, we will keep singing, keep serving, and keep trusting that God can use every note, every voice, and every heart offered to Him. *To God be the glory.*



What is God Calling Us to Value?

Chris Heldreth

Budgets are more than numbers on a page; they are a reflection of what we value and hold dear. As we look ahead, the words **Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, and Lead Courageously** can become more than a theme—they can guide how we faithfully give and steward the resources God has entrusted to us.

To **Love Boldly** means allowing our generosity to reflect God's abundant love. Our giving can prioritize ministries that care for people, strengthen families, welcome others, and share Christ's love in tangible ways. When we give boldly, we demonstrate that our trust is in God rather than in what our budgets say we can keep for ourselves.

To **Serve Joyfully** reminds us that generosity is an act of worship, not simply an obligation. Our ongoing budget should make room for ministries that meet needs, serve our community, support missions, and create opportunities for people to experience God's grace. Giving becomes joyful when we recognize that our resources can become instruments of blessing.

To **Lead Courageously** challenges us to look beyond maintaining what already exists and prayerfully invest in what God may be calling us to become. A courageous budget may require difficult choices, new priorities, and faith-filled investments in the future of the church and its mission.

As we consider our ongoing budget, these three values can serve as a spiritual compass. Before asking, "*What can we afford?*" perhaps we should first ask, "*What is God calling us to value?*" When our generosity flows from love, service, and courage, our budget becomes more than a financial plan. It becomes a visible expression of our worship, our faith, and our commitment to God's work in the world.





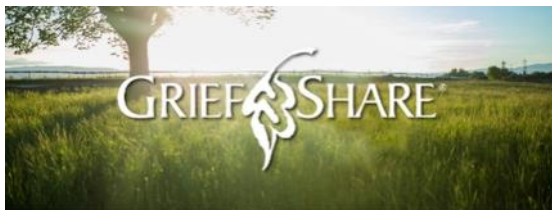
BLOOD DRIVE

Thursday, 09/10

1:00-6:00 pm

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

OR redcrossblood.org code SPUMC



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



Monday, October 5
8:00 am-5:00 pm

- Call 1-800-324-9458
- Promo Code HABC001
- text the word "circle" to 216-279-1607
- or visit <https://llsa.social/HC>

www.stpaulumc.com



Maintaining Our Campus—A Labor of Love

Bob Trengove



I cannot say enough about our Building and Grounds team. This team is on a journey of love, joy, and friendship. Everything that needs to be accomplished has someone stepping up to the plate to take it on. I have been on this team for fourteen years and have experienced the accomplishments of so many projects with so many great team members. Amazingly, most of the activities on our to-do list have been completed. Every year we have three workdays to beautify the church grounds. We also have extra days to work on special issues. In the building, we have had electrical, sound, HVAC, as well as painting and fellowship hall improvements. On the grounds, we had the playground assembly, deck improvements and staining, overseeing the parking lot paving project, roof repair and replacements, and so on. We also keep up with the maintenance of the parsonage.

This team understands that maintaining the grounds on a workday is a labor of love, and we normally have a great turnout to do everything required each time. I love looking at the accomplishments after a workday to see the beautiful job done by all. This team is also aware that the work put into making everything accessible and safe helps our church flourish. The new handrails near the educational building have been a great addition for many older people.

Join us as a team member or as a worker on Workday. In either case, you will be glad you did. You will get a feeling of accomplishment and pride every time.

Heavenly Father, please be with our church as it sets out to do so much for our community. So many events are planned over the year that allow so many to visit our church. Help us with hospitality as we prepare for their arrival. Thank you for all the blessings you shower on everyone as we all work for you. 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.

- ✿ Louise coordinated the pickup of the Waste Management container and getting the correct (locking) container delivered from Republic.

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More than Maintenance *Continued from page 10)*

- ✿ Darrell, Chris, Sheila, and Tom worked on the Annex. They removed a lot of debris and straightened up the rooms. Some repair work to the floor in the back room will be done soon. This is in preparation to have the building covered by insurance.
- ✿ The next Workday at church is scheduled for October 10th.
- ✿ E-Smith serviced the Heating and Air at the parsonage on July 27th.
- ✿ The tenant at the parsonage contacted Bob with a higher-than-usual water bill. Bob had My Georgia Plumber come out to determine the problem. The connection of the water line to the meter had to be replaced.
- ✿ While at the parsonage for the repair, a walkthrough was conducted and a report was furnished to Sheila.
- ✿ We received a quote from Distex to install the cabling needed to connect the remote to the projector, along with an estimate to repair the projector's LAN input.



Forever Young Presents: **SIM Swapping: Protect Your Phone. Protect Your Identity.** Fellowship Hall

Wednesday, September 23

Doors open at 10:30, Program at 11:00

Join us to learn how SIM swapping scams work and why they are becoming increasingly common. This presentation will cover how criminals hijack phone numbers, warning signs of compromise, steps to secure your mobile and online accounts, and what to do immediately if you become a victim.



About the Presenter

Aaditya Kulkarni is a student with strong expertise in cybersecurity and technology. He is Cisco-certified in cybersecurity and has received multiple awards from cybersecurity organizations.

Passionate about helping people protect themselves in their digital lives, Aaditya is known for explaining technology topics in a clear, practical, and easy-to-understand way.

Contact Susan McMillin, 770.310.4506 with questions or to RSVP.

Boldly. Joyfully. Courageously.

Victoria Godfrey

This year we have been challenged to notice more by slowing down, paying closer attention, and recognizing the ways God is already at work around us. As we move into September, I think noticing more gives us an even greater opportunity: to notice what God is doing in the lives of our children and to help them notice it, too.

Our new vision statement as the United Methodist Church is “**Love Boldly...Serve Joyfully...and Lead Courageously.**” These words are more than a catchy phrase or something we hope our children will remember. They describe the kind of faith we want to help our children live.

As a Children’s Ministry, we have the incredible opportunity to do more than simply teach children about God. We get to help them learn what it means to walk with God in real ways. We can teach them that loving boldly might mean including someone who feels left out. Serving joyfully might mean helping without being asked or using their gifts to bless someone else. Leading courageously might mean standing up for what is right, being kind when it is difficult, or having the courage to let their faith guide their choices.

And perhaps one of the most important things we can do is remind them that they don’t have to wait until they’re adults to live out their faith. God can work through them right now. We’ve seen that already, haven’t we? Our six confirmands stood boldly before their church family, vowed courageously to devote their lives to the Lord, and now joyfully serve Him.

As we teach, worship, play, serve, and learn together, I hope we will continue to notice more in the questions they ask, the kindness they show, the moments when they encourage one another, and the ways they are beginning to recognize God in their everyday lives.

My prayer for our children this month is that they will discover that following Jesus isn’t just something they learn about on Sunday. It’s something they can practice every day: loving boldly, serving joyfully, and leading courageously wherever God places them.



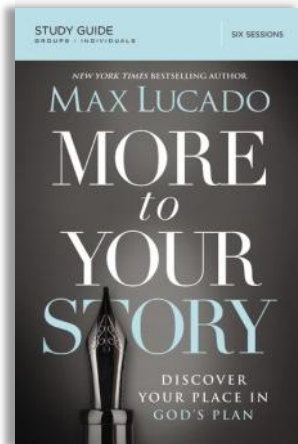
Discipleship Opportunities

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 30

The Open Door class will begin a new Bible study on Sunday, August 30, using Max Lucado's *More to Your Story*. This six-session video-based study walks through the events of the New Testament and invites participants to see how God is at work in the larger story of our lives.

Life can often feel busy, uncertain, or overwhelming, but this study reminds us that our stories are part of God's greater purpose. Through video teaching, group discussion, Bible exploration, and personal reflection, participants will be encouraged to recognize their value, trust God's direction, and discover their place in His plan.

All are welcome to join the Open Door class each Sunday at 9:45 a.m. in Room 206 for this meaningful time of study and fellowship.

Epistle Membership Spotlight: Dean Agresta

By Kathy Lim Sang

Meet **Dean Agresta**, a devoted member of our St. Paul family whose steady presence, technical expertise, and warm spirit have enriched our community for nearly three decades.



St. Paul
Member Spotlight



Dean Agresta

Dean's journey to St. Paul began 28 years ago when he spotted the church during his daily commute and decided to pay a visit. What he found was a welcoming congregation, and that initial visit blossomed into a long-standing spiritual home. Originally coming from a Catholic background, Dean deeply appreciates the warmth and friendliness that define our church family.

Family is at the heart of Dean's life. He and his wife, Lucy, have been happily married for 33 years, and together they raised their two children, Deanna and Mikey, who are now 29 and 27 years old. He is also a grandfather, aka Poppy, to Olivia and Hayden. He is also a twin. Family history holds a unique place for Dean as well—he shares a remarkable piece of history: an immediate family member survived the sinking of the Titanic as a child.

Professionally, Dean brings a wealth of diverse experience and a strong work ethic. In the past, he served his community as a police officer and shared his knowledge as a technical instructor at NCR. Today, he applies his practical skills as an HVAC professional working with Wellstar.

Dean recognizes that his God-given talents lie in fixing things and his specialized expertise in HVAC. True to his generous and servant-hearted nature, he looks forward to putting those skills to work by assisting St. Paul with any facility or HVAC needs.

When he is not working or volunteering his talents, Dean enjoys unwinding through hobbies that require patience and precision, spending his free time golfing and woodworking. As for what lies ahead, Dean has a clear and relaxing vision for his future passion: he eagerly looks forward to retirement and setting sail on future cruises.

We are truly blessed to have Dean, along with his rich life experiences and servant's heart, as an integral part of the St. Paul Methodist Church community. Be sure to say hello and introduce yourself to Dean the next time you see him around campus!



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	2 6p <i>GriefShare</i>	3 6p Stephen Ministry Training @ St Andrew	4	5
6 9:45a SS 11a Worship 3p Staff	7 LABOR DAY OFFICE CLOSED NO Chair Yoga	8 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 7p 10:30a Monday Servants 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	9 6p <i>GriefShare</i>	10 1p Blood Drive 6p Stephen Ministry Training @ St Andrew	11	12
13 9:45a SS 11a Worship 2p UPfield Soccer	14 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga	15 4:30p Flix & Food: <i>The 100-Foot Journey</i>	16 6p <i>GriefShare</i>	17 6p Stephen Ministry Training @ St Andrew 6:30p Stephen Ministry	18	19
20 9:45a SS 11a Worship 2p Leadership 2p UPfield Soccer	24 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga	22 NO <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 4p Hope House	23 6p <i>GriefShare</i>	24 6p Stephen Ministry Training @ St Andrew	25	26
27 9:45a SS 11a Worship 2p UPfield Soccer	28 10:30a Monday Servants 11:30a Chair Yoga	29 10a <i>ChristWalk</i> (FH) 7p <i>ChristWalk</i> (Zoom)	30			

Serving This Month

September Servants

Worship Leader—Mike McMillin

Open/Close Facilities—Tom Preacher

Monday Servants:

09/08 TU Darrell Morgan & Marj Rhodes
 09/14 Tom Short & Darrell Morgan
 09/21 Darrell Morgan & Marj Rhodes
 09/28 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!



3 John Kone
 17 William Hayes
 27 Phil Mahoney
 27 Thomas D. Short
 30 Olivia Agresta

5 Ruth Castellaw
 5 Jessica Moshglani
 6 Nancy Allen
 13 Sue Elam
 17 Samantha Ogene
 17 David Preuss
 20 Myra Morgan
 23 Kenneth Haile
 24 Kathy Lim Sang



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."*

JULY 2026

Our Presence

Average weekly Sunday School attendance 17
 Average weekly 11:00 worship attendance 43
 Average weekly online attendance 45

Our Gifts—General Fund

JULY 2026 Income

Contributions	\$17,860.00
Processing Gifts.....	\$85.80
Total Contributions.....	\$17,945.80
Rental Property.....	\$1,885.00
Soccer Rental	\$0.00
Total Revenue.....	\$19,830.80
YTD 2026 Income	\$146,913.35
Total Expenses for JULY	\$20,843.35
TOTAL 2026 Expenses.....	\$135,998.63
Net Total.....	\$10,914.72



Altar Flowers

Cost: \$55.00

09/06 Available
 09/13 Available
 09/20 Available
 09/27 Susan Short

Sign up on Bulletin Board



September 19

SUGGESTED WORD COUNT: 350-400