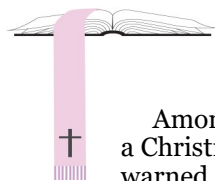


ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

201 N. PERRY STREET • ST. MARYS, OHIO, 45885
419-394-3811 opt. 3 * www.stpaulsuccsm.com

December 2023



THE COMMUNICATOR

Rhonda's Reflections

Among the countless Christmas legends, there is one involving a Christmas spider. According to this legend, when Joseph was warned in a dream to flee from King Herod and the massacre which he intended to inflict upon the children of Bethlehem, several animals from the manger decided to accompany the Holy Family on their journey. Each of the animals was determined to protect the baby Jesus, and each felt sure his or her particular talents would prove invaluable in that task. There also happened to be a spider who wanted to come. Yet none of the other animals felt the spider would be helpful. After all, she was only an insect. She had no keen ears or sharp teeth, no strong bones and no claws whatsoever. However, the spider persistently pleaded to be included, until at last the other animals agreed she could join them, provided she did not get in the way.

Unfortunately, as the journey unfolded, all the other supposedly brave animals either were frightened off or else were distracted. They ended up returning home or embarking on a more appealing adventure of their own. With Herod's troops on the march, and with the Holy Family growing more and more tired, Joseph and Mary had little choice but to try and hide. Finding a small and inconspicuous cave, they huddled inside, seeking shelter and rest, with the donkey and the spider their only remaining companions. Holding Jesus in her arms, Mary gently rocked him to sleep, and, for a while, it appeared everything would be fine. The only immediate problem was the chill in the air. Seeking to be of help in some small way, the spider carefully wove a web over the opening of the cave to try to keep the baby warm.

The spider had just finished her weaving when suddenly voices were heard outside the cave. The soldiers had caught up with the Holy Family, and they were diligently searching the entire area. When they came to the cave where the Holy Family was hidden, both Mary and Joseph held their breath, certain their doom was upon them. Yet, the soldiers passed by the cave. One soldier said it was a waste of time to search it, since anyone who had entered the cave would have broken the spider's web over the opening. Thus, it was that the seemingly insignificant spider saved the day, and the legend goes on to say that this is why we hang tinsel on our Christmas trees ... to remind us of the silver strands of the web which the little spider wove ... and to remind us that no act of kindness, no act of courage, no act through which we seek peace with justice is ever wasted.

The legend also reminds me that someone once suggested we need not only to keep Christ in Christmas but also, believe it or not, to keep Herod in Christmas because Herod, like Pharaoh before him, worships the love of power (enforced by violence) rather than the power of love. And in turn, Herod reminds us all that we do not live in an ideal world, but one where we often face both the threat and the destructive reality of violence. For the followers of Jesus, then, to be alive in him—to be alive in the adventure the Christ Child calls us to—is to side with all those who are vulnerable, even as the Christ Child was vulnerable. It is to live in defiance of those who see the vulnerable as expendable. It is to refuse to bow to any and every Herod and to any and every ruthless regime. Furthermore, it is instead to kneel in the manger before the Prince of Peace and then to go out to weave whatever webs we can as we continue to commit ourselves to acting justly, loving tenderly, and walking humbly with God.

Blessed Advent and Joyous Christmas,

Pastor Rhonda



SPECIAL TIMES

Sunday Worship 10:30 am

**Sunday School and Adult
Forum 9:15 am**

Sunday Worship 10:30 am

Sunday Service Live Streamed
on Facebook and YouTube

**Televised Service - TSC
Cable, Channel 2 , Digital Chan-
nel 1 (1 week delay)**

• **Monday @ 7:00 pm**

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS SERVICE TIMES

*Wednesday Advent Services,
December 6, 13 and 20th at 7:00
p.m.*

*Christmas Eve—10:30 a.m. Wor-
ship. Christmas Eve Candlelight
Service at 7:00 p.m.*





Hanging of the Greens: First Sunday of Advent

Join us at 10:30 a.m. on December 3, as we begin Advent and celebrate the timeless tradition of “The Hanging of the Greens.” This special service is based on the English tradition of decorating the home with wreaths, garlands, a Christmas tree, and evergreens for Advent and Christmas. During the service, we will discover the meaning behind the decorations that adorn the church and bask in the joy of celebrating the excitement of the upcoming birth of our Savior as we prepare the sanctuary and church members for the season.

Rev. Jeanette Tangeman's 25th Anniversary Ordination Celebration

Rev. Jeanette Tangeman was honored for her 25th Ordination Anniversary by the congregation at St. Paul's UCC, St. Marys on Sunday, October 15th. Congratulations! Pictured with Jeanette is Association minister, Rev. Daniel Busch.



Prayer and Care Ministry

- ♦ **Prayer Team:** Prayer requests are welcome for any concern or thanksgiving. Requests are kept confidential and not included in public worship screen unless specifically requested. Contact Carol Schmidt with a prayer request at cschmidt@stpaulsuccsm.com, Carol's cell (419) 305-6164, or the church office.
- ♦ **You are invited** to the “Caregiving from the Heart Support Group” held at St. Paul's, **which meets on the first Monday each month at 7p in the church Chapel.** This is a gathering for any caregivers (and others who are involved) whether you are doing it within your home, within your loved one's home or if your loved one resides in a care facility. The session will be led by Rev. Jeanette Tangeman. The purpose of the gathering is to support each other, learn from each other, and locate helpful resources. Please call Jeanette at 419-234-7935, if any questions.





**Become
Part of
Our
Church
Family**

Join us for our "Third Sunday Membership Opportunity" on the third Sunday of the month. Sunday, January 21st at 11:45 am (time approx.)
Following the 10:30 am Worship Service—Due to December's busy schedule, we are postponing the next Membership Opportunity until January 2024.

Interested in learning more about becoming a member of St. Paul's United Church of Christ? We invite you to our "Third Sunday" membership opportunity. Pastor Rhonda will be available following the worship services on the Third Sunday of each month. If you would like to join, you will be received into membership at that time. New members will then be recognized during worship the following Sunday (or the next Sunday you will be in attendance).

We meet in the Chapel (fka Library).

Please contact Pastor Rhonda with any questions at 563-210-3508.



Christmas Fund—Veterans of the Cross SPECIAL OFFERING December 17th

They came when you needed them. They answered the phone when you called. They baptized and married and buried your loved ones. They gave up weekend after weekend after weekend to care for your spirit, lead you in worship, and point to God in your midst.

Some of them did it for less money than they could easily live on. Some of them did it for less than they would have been willing to do any other job for, because of what they believe about who God is, and what they believe about who *you* are.

For all the sacrifices that clergy and lay church workers have made in our congregations, over 100 years ago the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ created the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. The fund helps support the clergy.

The Christmas Fund provides Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks for retirees and those facing unforeseen financial hardship.

Join with others in the United Church of Christ to make "the light shine in the darkness" for those who have given so much to our church.

This special offering is part of our UCC 5 for 5.



Helping Each other Adjust to Loss H.E.A.L.

HEAL is St. Paul's grief group of people who gather monthly on the **third Thursday at 1:30** to Help Each other Adjust to Loss. Pastor Rhonda is a trained bereavement counselor, and leads this group for anyone who has recently or long ago experienced a loss of a loved one and would like a safe place to share their feelings. **HEAL** grief group is open to all faiths. The next meeting is **December 21, 2023, 1:30 p.m.** in the Chapel (fka the old library).



Small Group Bible Study

Every Tuesday Afternoon 1:00 pm in the church chapel - led by Derick Johnson. Join us for study, reflection, and fellowship as we grow closer to Jesus Christ. **The Bible Study Class will be taking a break for the holidays and will return on Tuesday, January 9th! A new study series will begin at that time. All are welcome.**



Breaking Bread will be serving from **4:30 to 5:15pm**, unless food is all gone. **Grab and Go from your car only.** We look forward to providing delicious free meals to our community every Thursday except the first Thursday of the month.

There will be **NO MEALS in the month of December** Breaking Bread Staff are taking a Holiday Break. **Please join us back here on January 11th! Thank you.**

BREAKING BREAD COMMUNITY DINNER NEWS

If you would like to make a financial contribution to help with costs for the weekly community dinner, these will be gratefully accepted. Donations can be placed in the Sunday offering plate or mailed to the church office. Please be sure to indicate your name on the envelope if you would like to receive credit on your giving statement. Contributions of #10 canned food are also accepted.

ONLINE GIVING IS AVAILABLE

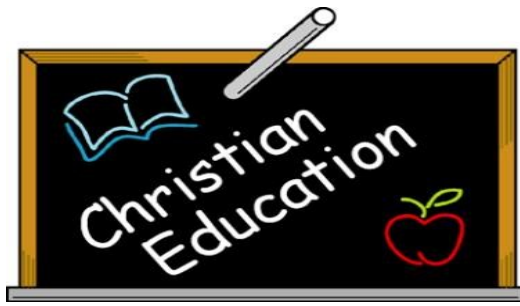
Don't forget that we now have online giving! It is available now by downloading Vanco Payment Solutions on to your mobile device by going to the app store or Google Play and search for "Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement" The download is free. We also have a button on our website that will also take you to the Vanco site. This service is available for your convenience!

2023 CHURCH OFFICIALS

President of Congregation Greg Leffel
Vice-president of Congregation Bill Nuss
President of Consistory 2023 Kevin Gehres
VP of Consistory 2023 Susan Braun

2023 Members of Consistory

Elders:	Janet Gibson	Susan Braun
	Kevin Gehres	Lori Now
	Diane Gayer	Marsha Heckler
Deacons:	Vicke Miller-McGee	Fred Scheer
	Carol Waesch	Tom Dickman
	Becky Anderson	Jill Dickman
	Carol Schmidt	Jen Lucas
	Carol Gehres	Marsha Landers
	Kelly Kill	Ruth Knous
Trustees:	DeWayne Marsee	Tim Hirschfeld
	Larry Kill	



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

13th—Waylon Mabry

13th—Sam Marcus

23rd—Ellie Burden

GOAL MET! 118 solar lanterns! (the goal was 100). Thank you to everyone who donated to this mission project. The children of Ukraine will feel your love in their hearts. Thank you to all who purchased lanterns!

The Sunday School children have been working hard on their Dec. 10 Christmas program, "Hotel Noel". We are extending our invitation to all to come watch us perform the program and see our excitement for the Christmas season. Please invite your friends, grandparents, and neighbors!

Upcoming calendar:

Sunday, Nov. 26: NO SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday, Dec. 3: Sunday School at 9:15am

Saturday, Dec. 9: Program Practice from 1pm to 3pm. No nursery class is needed to come. Please bring your child to the sanctuary.

Sunday, Dec. 10: Christmas Program during 10:30am worship service. We will do a run-through during Sunday School, starting at 9:15am. Please be prompt or early. The confirmation youth will be performing a live nativity scene in the evening.

Sunday, Dec. 17: Sunday School at 9:15am. This will be a fun Sunday and will probably be concluded by 10:10am.

Sunday, Dec. 24 and Dec. 31: NO SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday, Jan. 7: Sunday School at 9:15am.

LIVE NATIVITY SCENE DECEMBER 10th

On Sunday, December 10th from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm in front of the church on Perry Street, the kids from Sunday School will be performing a live nativity scene. Hot chocolate will be available for visitors.



Aluminum Can

Recycling for the Youth Group

Thank you to everyone who is saving aluminum cans for the **YOUTH GROUP**. We will continue to save, collect, and recycle cans. Cans need to be **rinsed out** and brought to St. Paul's - **just leave them behind the curtain under the stairs of the Creation Station door**. If you have a lot of cans and would like to take them to the recycling center and donate the money, it may be just as easy once they are in your vehicle. Thank you for your support.

High School YOUTH GROUP St. Paul's UCC

On behalf of St. Paul's UCC High School Youth, I want to wish every member of our congregation a very Merry Christmas! As you know, the Thanksgiving Youth Sunday service was a great success again, and I am grateful for all those who volunteered their time to make that happen. The Youth celebrated the holiday season by engaging in fellowship (and some healthy competition) at Grand Lake Pickleball at the beginning of this month. Many thanks to the Vanderhorst family for hosting us.

As we move forward into the winter season, please let the Youth Group know if we can be of any service to those in our church community. Our members are involved in many activities, but we are available to help as needed with emergency snow removal, moving large items, and so on. Please contact the Youth Director (me) at (567) 279-1101 if you need the Youth Group's assistance.

We hope the upcoming holidays bring you peace, love, and joy as we are reminded of The Lord's faithfulness in fulfilling his promise to us through his Son, Jesus. May He bless you and keep you as we round out this year and begin the next.

In Christ,
Nick Frankenhauser, Youth Director

GRAND LAKE HOSPICE COMMUNITY CANDLE LIGHT SERVICE

Grand Lake Hospice cordially invites all community members to attend the annual Community Candle Light Service. This service will be held at Zion Lutheran Church in St. Marys on Thursday, December 7th, at 6 pm. Everyone from the community is welcome to attend to remember those who are not with us this holiday season. Please invite your family and friends to join us for a beautiful evening of fellowship and a time to share memories and prepare for the upcoming holiday season. For additional information or questions, call Grand Lake Hospice at (419) 394-7434.

**Grand Lake Hospice
Community Candle Light Service
Thursday, December 7, 2023 6pm-7pm
Zion Lutheran Church
210 N. Wayne Street
St. Marys, OH**



The Family Room Event

Mark your calendar and watch for more details for upcoming Family Room events that are geared for all ages, singles, children and families.

December 3: Christmas Party Carry-In—Fellowship Hall 5-7:30 pm Special music and a Christmas Carol sing-a-long. Be sure to wear your most beautiful Christmas sweater, or your “ugliest” Christmas sweater!

Blessings,
Amy Keller



Stewardship Committee’s “Our Two Cents Worth”

“**Because of you, our church changes lives.**” When we think of *stewardship*, most of us first think of money, and then we may let out a silent groan, remembering that it is once again stewardship season. But stewardship is so much more. Stewardship is the act of taking care of something. In the church, it is so broadened to mean taking care of all that God has entrusted us with. Stewardship is a lifestyle.

At St. Paul’s, YOUR church—this church—changes lives when we deliver food to a food bank, feed our neighbors through Breaking Bread, visit the sick, or pray for all our neighbors—even those who look different from us. Our church changes lives when we fill disaster buckets or personal care kits for those hit by natural disasters, or purchasing solar lanterns for the children in Ukraine. Our church changes lives through volunteers working at the Back Bay Mission. Our church changes lives when we make changes in our daily habits that help instead of damage our earth.

God calls us all to be stewards of this earth and all the gifts we have been given. Help us to be mindful of how we live our lives so that together we can help our church, THIS CHURCH, changes lives.

Advent Midweek Worship begins Wednesday, December 6 at 7:00 p.m.

Using the book All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings, we will gather on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. as the wonder of advent is unveiled in a fresh way through the most natural life of this world -- that of God’s humblest creatures. We humans far too often make Christian faith all about us -- seeing ourselves as the pinnacle of life on earth. This captivating study reminds that we are a part of the “whole creation” and that advent is a “mystery of new beginnings.”

In our time together, we will remember that every single creature is full of God and is a book about God. *All Creation Waits* takes us into the peace -- and grace and hope -- of wild things and the mystery and blessing of Advent. Join Pastor Rhonda as she leads us into a more profound understanding of God and God’s creation.



**ATTENTION
LADIES OF ST. PAUL'S**

The regular monthly Ladies Luncheon and Samaritan Sisters will meet at **JT's Brew & Grill** on Thursday, December 7th at 11:30 a.m. All of the ladies of the church are welcome. **Please RSVP to the church office or Jane Nuss by Noon on the Monday before the luncheon.**

KROGER REWARD UPDATE

Thanks for supporting this program. Our supporters (38 households) who shopped at Kroger between 8/1/2023 and 10/31/2023 have contributed to our \$122.78 total donation. Thanks for your continued support of this program & please consider joining if you shop at Kroger's!

QUILTERS: Our quilting ladies meet on Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to ??? in the sewing room. Questions? Call Margaret Hunter at 419-733-4332. *(Note: We don't meet in the summer months)*



Bingo will be held on the following Tuesdays:

Dec. 5th — Otterbein 5:30-6:30p

We are in need of BINGO helpers and cookies

Please call Janice Katterheinrich at (419) 394-3264 to let her know if you can help in any way.



- **To the Current Fund in memory of Dorothy "Dot" Silver:** Jane and Thomas Tillman.
- **To the Organ Refurbishing Fund in memory of Carol McDonald:** From the family of Carol McDonald.



Dear Scholarship Committee,

I am sincerely honored to have been selected as one of the recipients of the St. Paul's UCC Scholarships. Thank you for your generosity, and I apologize for the late response. This money has allowed me to pursue my education at Apollo Career Center as a licensed Esthetician. I am very thankful for receiving this thoughtful gift and I hope to represent the church in good ways.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Clausing

Hello,

I'm Eric Place. I visited on November 12th and wanted to reach out and thank Rev. Hainer and the congregation for such a warm welcome. It was so nice to meet so many people who remembered my mom (Teresa Frazier Rodeheffer). It brought back many memories of being back in the church.

I apologize if I seemed nervous; it had been quite a while since I had attended a church service. I'm also sorry I had to leave so quickly; I had to work a little while after the service. I work most Sundays, so it makes it difficult to attend Sunday service. It may be a Sunday or two, but I look forward to attending in the future.

Thank You so much,

Eric Place

~~*~*~*

Dear Scholarship Committee,

I am so thankful to have received a scholarship from St. Paul's UCC. The money has allowed me to pursue my education at Rhodes State College for Veterinary Technician Nursing.

Sincerely,

Brooke Turner

REMINDER -- CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2023 should be submitted to the church office **no later than 10:00 am on December 29th**, in order to receive credit on your 2023 giving statement. This gives the office time to make all final deposits for the end of the year. Any contributions received **after** 10:00 am on December 29th will be credited to you in 2024. Thank you!!

NOTICE – CONGREGATION/ANNUAL MEETING

On Sunday, December 17th, following worship there will be a Congregation Annual Meeting. At this meeting we will be voting/approving the 2024 Church Budget, the 2024 New Consistory Member, and do a brief review of the committee events of 2023. Information on Budget and Consistory Members items will be included in this Communicator. Please plan on reviewing the documents as well as attending the meeting on December 17th. The 2023 Annual Report will be out in late January

Christmas Eve Service: On Christmas Eve we will conduct a regular Sunday worship service at 10:30 am. The Candlelight Service at 7:00 pm is packed full of Christmas carols, scripture readings and holy communion will be served. We look forward to seeing everyone in church!



Reminder that The Giving Tree is up and ready to be decorated with **NEW** hats, scarves, gloves and mittens! **New this year** we are asking for socks and slippers too! **All** items donated are given to Goodfellows to distribute to needy



DECEMBER LOOSE OFFERINGS

- ♦ December 3—Organ Refurbishing Fund
- ♦ December 10—Current
- ♦ December 17— Christmas Fund 5 for 5



Deadline for articles, announcements, etc. for the January 2024 Communicator will be December 18th

FINANCIAL REPORT

October 2023

Current Fund:

Budgeted through Oct. 31, 2023	= \$ 229,600.00
Received through Oct. 31, 2023	= \$ 180,818.93
Expenses through Oct. 31, 2023	= \$ 192,541.05
Received through Oct. 31, 2022	= \$ 179,016.85

Mission Fund:

Budgeted through Oct. 31, 2023	= \$ 12,500.00
Received through Oct. 31, 2023	= \$ 11,169.00
Received through Oct. 31, 2022	= \$ 9,463.50

STATUS OF 2023 BUDGET:

Current Fund:

Budgeted through Nov. 30, 2023	= \$252,560.00
Budgeted through Nov. 12, 2023	= \$241,080.00
Received through Nov. 12, 2023	= \$189,432.86

Mission Fund:

Budgeted through Nov. 30, 2023	= \$ 13,750.00
Budgeted through Nov. 12, 2023	= \$ 13,125.00
Received through Nov. 12, 2023	= \$ 11,664.00



Our sympathy to the family and friends of the following member who passed away since the last newsletter:

Dorothy Silver —October 25, 2023*

*indicates Pastor Rhonda performed the service



If you are not already on the prayer team email list, and would like to be, please provide Carol Schmidt with a valid email address. Carol's email is:
lschmidt@bright.net

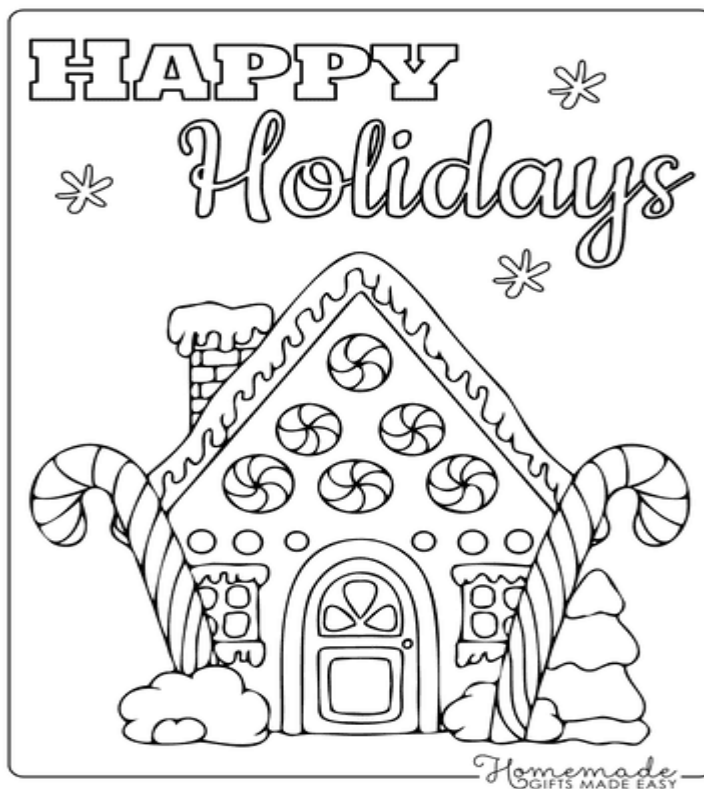
Highlights from the November 8, 2023 Consistory Meeting

- Budget and Finance presented the 2024 proposed Church Budget, which was reviewed and approved.
- The Trustees shared they are working on upgrading the interior/exterior camera security system. They are looking into grants to assist in the costs of replacement.
- Mission, Outreach & Evangelism reported the congregation had supported the Sunday School project with the purchase of 114 solar lanterns for the children in Ukraine.
- The Strategic Planning Committee shared that 168 surveys have been returned. The Committee will be presenting the results in a joint planning meeting with the Consistory at their January meeting.
- The Safety Committee reported that they are working on CPR training, in conjunction with the SMFD, for interested church members, training will be held early 2024.
- Fred Scheer reported church signage for the west side of the church is being created.
- 175th Anniversary Committee is working on events/celebrations for 2024.
- The Annual meeting for St. Paul's will be held on December 17th, following the service. Consistory elections and approval of the 2024 budget will be voted upon.

Full Consistory Minutes are available upon request in the church office.

The Bulletin Board

- ♦ If you will be going to the hospital or if someone you know is hospitalized, please notify the church office and let us know.
- ♦ Please call the church office with address corrections or if you do not see your **Birthday** or **Anniversary** listed during the correct month. Call 419-394-3811. Thank you!!
- ♦ **CALL-EM-ALL** - Please let the church office know if you are experiencing any problems with the Call-Em-All phone messages. **Also, if you would like to be removed from the calling list, listen to the broadcast and at the end follow their directions to 'opt out' of any future broadcasts - this will remove your number from the calling list.** Thank you!
- ♦ **VANCO electronic giving** - Download Vanco Payment Solutions onto your mobile device by going to the app store or Google Play and search for "**Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement**". The download is free.
- ♦
- ♦ **OFFERING ENVELOPES** - are distributed by quarterly mailing. Please notify the church office if you are not receiving envelopes and would like to be added to this mailing list. Also, **PLEASE NOTIFY THE CHURCH OFFICE IF YOU HAVE A CHANGE OF ADDRESS.**
- ♦ **COPIES** - if you need copies made of any personal items, you may stop by the church office, and we will be glad to make them for you. If it is a large project, it is best to call ahead. **Cost for making copies for church members is 15 cents per copy if you use the office paper, or 10 cents per copy if you bring your own paper.**



Rev. Rhonda A. Hainer, Pastor
Carolyn Garrison, Administrative Assist.
Amy Keller, Confirmation Teacher
Nick Frankenhauser, Youth Director
Tracy Winget, Sunday Nursery Supervisor
Cynthia Hanover, Choir/Church Pianist
Ann Vogel, Organist
Andrea Spencer, Organist
Maddy Frankenhauser, Children's Music Director
Brad and Nam Gehrlich, Custodians
Rich Spencer, Audio and Video
Jim Huckemeyer, Multi-Media
Jeanette Tangeman, Back Bay Missionary
Joan Leffel and Jane Nuss,
Children's Ministry Coordinators
Becky Anderson, Church Pianist, and
Volunteer Coordinator of Special Music

Church email: smucc@bright.net
Website: www.stpaulsuccsm.com
Email for Rev. Rhonda A. Hainer: rhainer@bright.net
Rev. Rhonda's cell phone number: (563) 210-3508
Email for Prayer Team: cschmidt@stpaulsuccsm.com
Email for Christian Education: jnjl2021@gmail.com
Email for Youth Director: franken.nick@gmail.com
Email for media: spmedia@bright.net



THE COMMUNICATOR
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St. Marys, OH 45885
(419) 394-3811, opt. 3

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