

MONTHLY NEWS OF SAINT PAUL BENSON

Inspiration

January 2021

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

January beckons, enticing us with the notion of a new beginning. What will 2021 bring? I am sure of one thing: I will continue to see the people of Saint Paul find ways to continue forward in faith, supporting each other and the community beyond us in the midst of times of grief and frustration; celebrating triumphs large and small; and finding ways to continue to share the good news of God's love from wherever we are.

One of my favorite January church songs is "Go Tell it on the Mountain," I suspect in part because at my home church in Lincoln we kids were encouraged to sing it as loudly as we possibly could. Another January favorite of mine is "We Three Kings." Somewhere along the way, I picked up the habit of stretching up on my tiptoes to sing the "Ohhhhhh" that precedes the words "Star of wonder, star of night; Star with royal beauty bright; Westward leading, still proceeding; Guide us to thy perfect light."

I suspect that in 2021 we will find many opportunities to share the good news - sometimes loudly, other times more quietly by being present with and for people who need a reminder that they are not alone in this world. I trust that just as surely as the Wise Ones were guided in a dream to find a new way home, that we will continue to be a resilient congregation, adapting to whatever circumstances we encounter so we can continue to follow the Star - follow the Christ - as we grow in faith together.

I thank you for your faithfulness as we made our way through 2020 together, and I give thanks that we will continue forward in faith together as we embrace this new year.

Peace to you
Rev Stephanie Ahlschwede

Year-end giving

We thank you for your support of Saint Paul this year - your gifts have allowed the church to continue our work in ministry and mission in spite of the pandemic. Please be sure all year-end gifts are to the office by noon on December 31st or postmarked December 31st to be included in 2020 statements.

Church Council

The Church Council met Monday, December 14th to approve the 2021 budget. The 2021 budget includes a 2% increase for staff, a 5% tuition increase for the Child Development Center tuition, reductions in costs for several monthly bills due to consolidation of services or new contracts, and a commitment to pay our mission shares in full.

The Saint Paul UMC Foundation

The Saint Paul UMC Foundation thanks all donors for your support this past year and invites members and friends to consider a gift to the Foundation. Information regarding how to include a gift to the church in your will or how to make a one-time donation to the Foundation is available by contacting the church office.

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The Inspiration is published monthly. Information is due to the editor by the 19th of the month to be included in the next issue.

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January Church Calendar

Special Communal Offering for Human Relations Day

Sundays

8:00 am Pianoside Worship Available on YouTube
10:00 am Worship Livestream on Facebook
11:00 am Dyno Kids on Zoom
12:15 pm Kirundi/Kiswahili Worship Livestream

Saturday, January 2, and Sunday, January 3

11:00 am-1:00 pm Drop off times for Reverse Advent Calendar items, Corby Street

Sunday, January 10

4:00 pm-5:00 pm Youth meeting on Zoom

Sunday, January 24

2:00 pm-4:00 pm Family Sledding Party at Mahoney State Park
Time TBD Pick up Homedish, a pop-up drive-up meal, a project of BART

Mondays through Fridays

7:00 am-5:30 pm Child Development Center open
9:00 am-5:00 pm Church Office Open (sometimes closes at 3:00 pm, please call ahead)

Mondays

10:00 am Clergy Meeting

Tuesdays

9:00 am Lectio Divina Prayer Group

Tuesday, January 5

4:15 pm Serving Dinner at Siena/Francis House;
call the church office if you are interested in serving

Tuesdays

3:00 pm Pianoside Taping

Wednesdays

11:00 am. Staff Check-in

Wednesday, January 6

3:00 pm Service of Healing Livestream on Facebook

Wednesdays, January 13, 20, 27

10:00 am *Grateful* Book Study on Zoom
6:00 pm *Grateful* Book Study on Zoom

Thursdays

6:00 pm Bell Choir Rehearsal
7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal

Parking lot

Our new neighbors are beginning to move into the building on the north side of the church. Until we are able to restripe the parking lot to better indicate which spaces are ours, please do not park in the spaces along their building or in the first two parking spots in the rows of the lot on weekdays. Once spring comes, we will restripe the lot to indicate which section is on Saint Paul's property.

January Book Study

Our winter book study will be *Grateful*, by Diana Butler Bass. We will begin the second week of January, with zoom classes at 10am and 6pm on Wednesdays. Books are available from the church office for \$14.

We anticipate 2021 with great hope, but also a sense of current anxiety. Saint Paul is well versed in the Covenant service in the style of John Wesley, our Methodist founder, having started the New Year in this manner for many years. We will celebrate our covenant with God through the use of Wesley's model as part of a special live stream service on Thursday, **December 31** at 3:00 p.m. Epiphany worship **January 03**, will include the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion, and the reflection on what it means to "Following the Star." We will be joined by Heidi Copeland, violinist, as part of 10:00 a.m. worship. As the Magi brought gifts, one of which was healing oils, we celebrate Epiphany Day, **January 06**, with a special afternoon live stream service of healing at 3:00 p.m. It is hoped that this opportunity to look toward a new year's fresh start will bring comfort and joy to all able to view it. Both PianoSide (8:00 a.m.) and LiveStream (10:00 a.m.) as well as all special services, are archived and accessible via YouTube by searching "Saint Paul Benson" and you are encouraged to do so. The rest of the month will include special musicians, The Choir, and Joy Bells as we seek to honor the rich worship history of Saint Paul. We thank Warren Johnson and Hank Robinson for their tireless efforts at logging all worship presentations so that the congregation may continue to participate in this important practice of spiritual growth.

Clergy Corner ~ Rev. Jerry Brabec

(On staff at Saint Paul Church since 1990, Rev. Brabec has been appointed to serve in an ordained clergy capacity since 2000.)

November's writing dealt with losing the flora and fauna of summer. Perhaps it's the result of our current situation, aka COVID, but for many, loss was really present in 2020! December 11, with a sad heart we said "good-bye" to our faithful sixteen year old, tri-color Jack Russell terrier, Sophie. Those who have visited the cement plat behind the duplex over the years of countless indoor/outdoor banquets, have come to expect the running, yipping, jumping presence of that little fifteen pound ball of terror. She was a constant explorer of all things scented...edible and otherwise. During Sophie's first indoor holiday gathering of singers, ringers and other musicians, an annual event for the last twenty-plus years save this one, she became so overwhelmed with excitement that she sprang straight up and landed, miraculously, in the only open spot possible on the heavily dessert laden table! At that point Judge Walter Cropper exclaimed, "Oh brother, the nut didn't fall very far from that tree!" It was his kind way of saying she reminded him of me, a compliment and warm memory that has always brought a smile. Her larger-than-life presence was a standard for all outdoor food events where she passed from person to person in search of a hand out. If memory serves, Penne Carpenter was a frequent soft touch and Sophie seemed to always know where Penne would be sitting at every gathering. The last couple of years have been tough ones for Sophie. She suffered a cognitive-changing episode in October of 2018 and became a totally different dog; we kiddingly referred to her as "Peaches." Barking, which heretofore had been her moniker, was noticeably and totally absent. Her rapid decline these last month's was marked by times of gentle, constant pacing and circling, failing eye sight and selective hearing, yet her typical ravenous appetite. It came with a certain shy sweetness, too. Slowly, all the tricks she willingly performed for treat or no had faded away...sit, left-handed shake, down and stay, and hind leg dancing...all gone; now replaced with her inability to sit by your feet, get out of a corner by herself, or lay calmly on the lap. Many of you know the heart-heaviness losing a pet brings, but want to or not, the time had come to make the difficult decision to let go. And so, the arrangements were made for an in home end of life ritual. Her final gift in the last seconds of that parting was a giant, full body stretch which looked as though she were crossing the Rainbow Bridge in a single bound! God reminds us that in all things to give thanks, good times and bad, and that steadfast love will surround us always. These last months could certainly be remembered as bad times for all of us, but only if we choose not to see the good...the times of God wrapping warm arms of love around our wounded heart as a mother eagle wraps her young. For the unconditional love Sophie brought and for the unconditional love of our parent God, I say, "thanks girl; thanks God!"

January Communal Offering, Human Relations Day

When you support Human Relations Day, your gift builds community leadership and resources. In Chicago, churches are in partnership to engage in community-based alternatives to juvenile incarceration. In the Philippines, organizations strengthen family resiliency to address substance abuse. And in West Congo, United Methodist Churches are working with ecumenical partners to provide pastoral support and advocacy for children and youth who are in prison. There are programs that support immigration and lobby for human rights legislation. When we give generously, we are participating in building beloved community across the world. Please write "HRD" on the memo line of your check or online giving to support Human Relations Day. Thank you!

Reverse Advent Calendar Donation Drop off for Together, Inc.

Saturday or Sunday, January 2 or 3; 11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

We appreciate those who participated in this year's Reverse Advent Calendar! You are welcome to drop off donations on the Corby Street (south) side at the handicapped entrance with the red colored awning.

Please call the church office if you need to have your items picked up or plan to drop the items off at a different time prior to December 30, 2020.

Christmas Angel Tree Giving

We are grateful for those who donated \$990.68 to the angel giving tree as well as those who gave gift cards from Target and WalMart!

This year fifty \$25 gift cards were given to Youth Emergency Services (YES) and to Health and Human Services (HHS). The remainder was donated to Together in order to provide utility assistance.

Saint Paul Benson, your generosity is appreciated!

Hat and Mitten Tree

The Mercy & Justice Team delivered 72 hats, 8 pairs of gloves and 4 scarves to elementary schools near Saint Paul Benson. The schools appreciate the donations. We will continue to collect hats and mittens throughout the winter.

Dyno Kids

We are very proud of our Dyno Kids and their families for the one of a kind Christmas Pageant that was posted to our YouTube page in December. After being provided with a few verses of the Luke Nativity scriptures, choosing costumes, and figuring out how to best portray their verses, they recorded at home in very creative ways. Kudos to Hank Robinson for stitching all of the parts together. Please check it out if you've not seen it yet!

January 3rd -Dyno Kids online Sunday School class will begin meeting again after a one week break on Dec. 27th. We will be celebrating Epiphany! We meet on Sunday mornings at 11 am and you can check us out on Saint Paul Benson's YouTube or Dyno Kids on FaceBook.

January 10th -We will begin a new series entitled "Children Called by God." Both Biblical and present day examples will be presented with the prayer that each child will know ways that they are also called by God. Practicing listening to God will be included

January 24th -Children of all ages are invited to the sledding party held at Mahoney State Park. The hill is long, but not so steep it's too difficult to make it back up! They have a snow machine so we can plan on snow unless it's a really warm day.

Hospitalizations

Shawn Hough, Sue Bobek, Phyllis Wilmoth

Congratulations

To Kris & Zack Wilcox in the birth of their son, Zaidan, born December 7. Zaidan's big brother is Zander, and his grandparents are Charlene & Greg Wilcox.

To Mary & Nick Stolzer, who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on December 17.

Memorials

For Shirley Higbee—Rosemary Soukup, Breezy Pines Resort and Campground, Nancy Goldberg, Anita Solon, Annette Walsh, Mary Killpack, Bob & Carol Chambers, Michael Lee, Bonnie Barbe & Ann Welton, Charlene Wilcox, Diane & Harden Aden

Special Thanks

To Kristin Camp for her time and creativity designing our winter graphics for social media and mailings. They have brought good cheer while sharing good news this season.

2021 Communal Offerings

January	Human Relations Day	July	District Ministries
February	Together, Inc.	August	Mission Shares
March	UMCOR Sunday	September	Guatemala Stove Project
April	Habitat for Humanity	October	World Communion Sunday
May	Native American Ministries	November	Ministerial Education Fund
June	Peace with Justice Sunday	December	United Methodist Student Day

Homedish Now Serving

Homedish, a project of Benson Area Refugee Task Force, will be hosting a pop-up drive-up meal on Sunday, January 24, 2021. Details and prepayment info will be posted soon to our church and the BART FaceBook pages. Pick-up will be on the Corby Street (south) side of our building.

Learning, Serving, Praying, and Playing

The youth were involved during the month of December in several ways. We played an Advent Jeopardy game on zoom, gave out the Christmas Cheer bundles to those who had pre-ordered them, lit 100 luminaries around Saint Paul's campus as well as the neighbor's. Some of the youth also participated in the Christmas Pageant by recording readings. It's been a very good month while learning, serving, praying, and playing together!



We are looking forward to involving more youth in recording the Dyno Kids videos this month!

January 2nd, Saturday, 11am -1 pm assist with curbside drop-off of items collected for Together, Inc. while using the Reverse Advent Calendar. Dress warm!

January 10th, Sunday, 4 pm- 5pm zoom Spiritual Gifts Assessment and discussion.

January 18th, Monday, MLK Service Day. TBD

January 24th, Sunday, 2-4 pm Mahoney State Park-Saint Paul Sledding Party! Bring your own sled or rent one from the park. \$6 per car park entrance fee. Wearing a mask will help keep our faces warm, too!

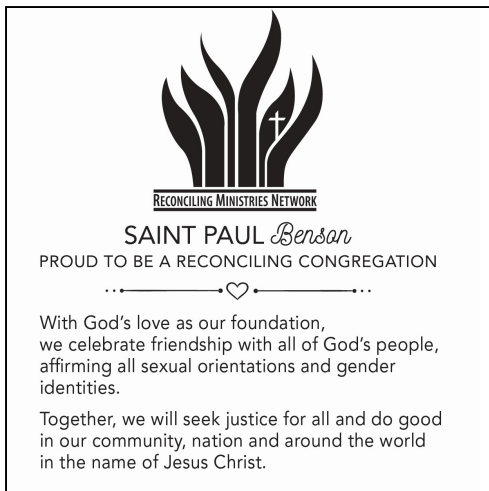
Thank you for your support of the youth. Prayers are appreciated as they grow in faith while continuing to figure out how to navigate a pandemic.

SAINT PAUL *Benson*

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UMW News

As you all know, this has been a wild year for UMW, a year we hope will not be repeated. While we are still committed to the mission of United Methodist Women, we are concerned about the health and wellbeing of our members as well as our Saint Paul Benson family.

Therefore, the UMW meeting that was scheduled for Wednesday January 6th will be cancelled due to Covid -19.

In our ongoing concern, we will begin to look at each month and see where we are with the safety and health of our members and within the guide lines that are set forth from the church and the health department. We thank you for your understanding and cooperation in all the decisions that are made on your behalf.

The Saint Paul UMW Board will remain as is until we are able to meet again and discuss our options.

Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede to receive the Special Mission Recognition for her efforts to protect our church family from Covid-19

Dedicated lights are Mary Stolzer and Belinda Johnson

Gift in Memory for those who graced St Paul Church

Betty Brown
Penne Carpenter
Shirley Higbee
Laura Ostby
Sharon Staal

We would like to wish all of you a Blessed Christmas and Peaceful New Year. May the Peace of God be with each of you and keep you safe until we meet again. Remember we are all knitted together as one.

Peace and Love be with you always

Belinda I. Johnson, UMW President