

St. Paul's Letter

From Our Pastor

February 2009

St. Paul's United Methodist Church

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Dear Friends,

As I write this, two things are foremost in my mind and heart. First, I am still high, having just witnessed the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States Barack H. Obama. Although folks in the office had come in to work today, I urged them to take a break and join me over at the parsonage, so we could witness together the making of history. Whether you were for Obama or not, surely this day has inspired millions as we watched our nation pull together and celebrate in harmony. Of course, now all the hard work begins for not just Obama, but for the rest of us as well. For he certainly gave a clarion call to each and every one of us to roll up our sleeves and become a part of the solution to the many problems that are confronting not just our nation, but our world today. While he did not use the phrase he made so famous earlier in his campaign, he made it clear that he has no doubt that, yes, we can change the course of history and become the people we aspire to be – people who value the dignity of every man, woman and child and people who are willing to work for what we believe in.

Yes, we ALL can!

As I listened to him recount some of our early American history, I could not help but think back to the ancient days of the early church. Having just returned from a exhilarating, albeit whirlwind trip to Turkey, I was still pondering the magnificent sites we visited...the ruins at Ephesus where Paul lived and preached for over three years, or the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, which stands as a wonder of beauty and prayer for many Muslims today, or the monastery in the cave dwellings in Cappadocia where the early Greek Church fathers fashioned a life for over 500 years, or the wondrous new archaeological museum in Ankara which houses artifacts from those lesser known Biblical tribes, the Hittites and Assyrians and Babylonians. The artifacts, the grounds we walked on, the sites we visited all represent people who, no doubt, have aspired to the same hopes and dreams we have...to live in peace with one another...and yet they too, each in their own time, faced sufferings, persecutions, natural disasters, oppression and war.

Continued on p. 3

*A Reconciling
Congregation
where all are
invited to share
the Basics of
God's love with
the world*

Ash Wednesday

Join in worship on Wednesday night, February 25 as we observe the rituals of Ash Wednesday—the imposition of ashes on the forehead of those who wish to come forward, and the sacrament of Holy Communion. The service starts at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary.



Lectionary Readings for February:

<u>February 1</u>	<u>February 15</u>
Deuteronomy 18:15-20	2 Kings 5:1-14
Psalms 111	Psalms 30
1 Corinthians 8:1-13	1 Corinthians 9:24-27
Mark 1:21-28	Mark 1:40-45

<u>February 8</u>	<u>February 22</u>
Isaiah 40:21-31	2 Kings 2:1-12
Psalms 147:1-11, 20c	Psalms 50:1-6
1 Corinthians 9:16-23	2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Mark 1:29-39	Mark 9:2-9



Child Care
Sunday, 9:30 AM

Durham Class
Sunday, 9:30 AM

Adult Fellowship Class
Sunday, 9:30 AM

*Faith Explorers and
Faith Discovery Groups*
Sunday, 10:45 AM

Worship Services
Sunday, 8:30 AM, 10:30 AM

Church Office Hours
Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM—5:00PM

Eunice Tabor
Tuesday, 9:30 AM—11:30 AM

**Note: Margie is off on Thursdays
Jacqueline is off on Fridays**

St. Paul's Letter
St. Paul's United Methodist Church

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All The People

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Pastor's Message (continued from p. 1)

A cynic might return from such a trip and opine that life never changes, but I am not a cynic. Instead, I believe that there are points in history when the tides turn and change is possible. As Joseph Lowery prayed in his closing inaugural prayer for "inclusion, not exclusion" and "tolerance, not intolerance," it seemed to echo some of what St. Paul's has long affirmed and worked towards. In his delightfully humorous yet poignant words, he echoed what we claim to believe ...saying he was hoping for the day ... "When brown can stick around" "When yellow can be mellow" "When the red man can be the head man" And "when white will embrace what is right" and of course, I would add, *when gay is welcomed to stay.*

On February 1st, we will celebrate the 11th anniversary of being a Reconciling Church. It is one of the unique ways St. Paul's makes it clear that we practice what we believe...that God loves us all and that the church can be the change we hope to see. My hope is that all will come to show support and solidarity for this important event in our life together.

As we move into this new year, I pray that each of us will find the place where we can serve our neighbors; each of us will find St. Paul's to be a place where we are welcomed and accepted no matter who we are or what we are facing; and each of us will experience God's gracious Spirit encouraging, inspiring and leading us on through the turning points in history, that together we will be the people God longs for us to be.

Serving Together,

Margie

St. Paul's Staff Person of the Month

The members of the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) are sponsoring a Staff "Person of the Month". We hope this will help the congregation to learn more about our staff and recognize the great work that they all do. There will be a poster, with a photo, prominently placed in the church so that you will know who the staff member is for each month. This also will give you a "nudge" to tell that staff person how much you appreciate what they do for St. Paul's.

Many of you have not met **Sue Orzel**. She is the person who keeps St. Paul's clean and shiny. You may not have seen her because she usually works when most of us are not in the building. However, if you do know her, you will agree that she is a lively, energetic, outgoing person who is fun to be around. Her work ethic is to be admired.

Sue began working in a part-time position at St. Paul's in August, 2005. The other part of her time is spent at St. James Episcopal Church. Sue says she really enjoys making things look better, and we agree that she does that in our church. She also enjoys getting to know people here and thanks everyone for their thoughtfulness.

Sue lives in Willseyville. Her 21-year-old son, TJ, lives and works in Johnson City. She is not lonely at home, as she enjoys caring for her birds; a cockatiel, two parakeets and four finches. When Sue was asked about her hobbies, she replied "I like to shop." She added that she likes to shop for other people. We also found out that she likes scary movies.

We salute Sue as our staff "Person of the Month". We thank her wholeheartedly for the fine job she does in keeping things at St. Paul's looking good and running smoothly.

Thanks Sue!

Great News from the Finance Team

Hooray!! We did it! With the congregation's faith in our future, we have reached our goal for the 2009 budget for pledges. To date we have received 207 pledges and a few more have been promised, but not yet received. Wouldn't it be fantastic if a few who did not pledge by the end of the year would do so?



What does meeting our pledge objective mean for planning (and for execution, if we receive all committed pledges throughout the year)? It means:

1. We have some funds that will allow us to give our dedicated staff a modest salary increase.
2. We will be able to maintain all our existing ministries and programs and provide an increase in the program budget - which has been at the same level for too many years.

If you would like to help in going over the top, please make your pledge as soon as possible.

Looking back at 2008, with your dedication and participation, we made nearly 98% of our pledges and contributions budget. With the frugality that the staff and congregation always use, savings on expenses did help us to offset this shortfall, giving us basically a break-even year.

Again, thank you to the congregation for your faithfulness.

Loving Care Ministries

Thanks to all who attended the Valentine card workshop and for the beautiful cards that have been given to Loving Care to send to our seniors and homebound. The cards will certainly brighten up their winter days and let them know that we care.

A Note about Confidentiality...

We truly appreciate those who have concerns for others, both members and friends, and want to include them on the prayer list that appears in the bulletin each week or on the prayer chain. Many appreciate knowing that people of the church are praying for their situation, but others are uncomfortable with it. So just be sure that permission has been given to be on the prayer list and/or on the prayer chain because there are some who do not want their name listed. When you are talking with them, it's easy enough to say, "May I put your name on the prayer list at church that is printed each week in the bulletin or on the prayer chain?" We must respect their choice and honor it. Thank you!

Loving Care Greeting Card Ministry

Here is a ministry that can be done from your own home and can help people to feel connected to us at St. Paul's. In the next few months, we plan to organize and extend our card ministry. I will be asking for persons who are interested in sending cards to those who don't get to church often to sign up. Cards and postage stamps can be provided if that is a problem. Or if you have cards or stamps that you would like to give to this ministry, we would appreciate having them. Most of us can't do everything that we'd like to do in ministry, but all of us can do something. Maybe this is the "something" that will work for you. Sign up by calling the church office or contact me at etabor@stpaulsithaca.org. Thanks for considering this important ministry!

Rev. Eunice Tabor, Loving Care Coordinator

Adult Spiritual Growth

Where to Start: The Nooma Conversation Continues

Please join us as we start another session of our popular **Nooma film discussion class**. (*Nooma is a phonetic spelling of the Greek word for breath or spirit.*) These provocative, short films by Rob Bell provide a jumping off point for discussions about the role of faith in our lives. Are we stuck holding onto old wounds? Do we spend our lives wishing to be someone else? How do we learn to forgive? What is the secret to living in the moment?

We will offer the classes at two different times in February:

Sunday mornings at 9:15 am

and Tuesday evenings at 6:30 pm

Both classes meet in the Durham Room

To find out more or to sign up, contact Jacqueline Bonner at jbonner@stpaulsithaca.org or 273-5971, or Rebecca James, Adult Spiritual Growth chair, at rebecca.ithaca@gmail.com or 273-8339.

Schedule for both sessions with film titles and a description of the issues raised:

February 1 (Greg Eells, facilitator) & February 3 (Lesley Yorke, facilitator)

“Shells” It’s easy to get overwhelmed with appointments, gatherings, to-do lists. We’re doing so many things, a little bit of everything, and yet it doesn’t feel like much of a life. But most of us find it hard to say no. There are so many good things to do. So many good causes to join. Maybe saying no would be easier if we knew what it meant to say yes.

February 8 (Greg Eells, facilitator) & February 10 (Lesley Yorke, facilitator)

“Today” How much time and energy do we spend wishing things were how they used to be? If we’re longing for the way things used to be, what does that really say about our understanding and appreciation of our lives today? Maybe we need to learn to embrace our past for what it is, in order to live our lives to the fullest, right here, right now.

February 15 (Lynn Martin, facilitator) & February 17 (Lesley Yorke, facilitator)

“Name” Why are we so concerned with what other people think, say, or look like? What does it say about us if we are unable to accept who we are? Maybe if we really knew our true selves, we wouldn’t give so much attention to other people’s lives and live more in tune with the life God wants for us.

February 22 (Teresa Motz, facilitator) & February 24 (Lesley Yorke, facilitator)

“Luggage” Maybe a friend turned their back on you. Maybe someone you loved betrayed you. We all have wounds and we end up carrying around these things that people have done to us for weeks, months, and sometimes even years. Maybe forgiving isn’t something you do for someone else to let them off the hook. Maybe forgiveness is about you and what God wants for you.

Our Ministry of Reconciliation: History and Hopes

by Karen Kaufmann



In the beginning, back in 1994, four St. Paulians—inspired by Pastor Rebecca’s preaching? or by Disciple Bible study? or by the workings of the holy spirit in our midst?—independently called the Reconciling Congregations Program (RCP), a national advocacy group encouraging orientation-inclusiveness in the United Methodist Church. The RCP put the last caller in touch with the other three, and a church-transforming study and advocacy group, the St. Paul’s Reconciling Congregations Task Force (RCTF) was born! “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything... has become new!” [2 Corinthians 5: 17]

For over three years, with the support of Church Council, the RCTF opened discussion at St. Paul’s around the issues of inclusiveness and sexuality. Drawing first on RCP resources, the task force soon embarked on uniquely St. Paulian “course of study,” including field trips, a human sexuality class, a retreat, an annotated bibliography and lending library, and a series of church-and-community forums on Bible teachings, led by pastor/theologians from Colgate Rochester Divinity School. The process reached St. Paulians and others at many levels—youth and seniors, gays and straights, heart-led and head-led, hesitant and bold. The issues were many, and tough:

- **whether and why persons were excluded from the life of the church on the grounds of orientation,**
- **whether and why the church should single out orientation as a basis for welcome or participation,**
- **what teachings about orientation and sexuality we were comfortable with or could learn from,**
- **whether we could agree to disagree about this or any other issue of congregational life,**
- **what the guiding principles of the church and the faith were anyway....**

Meanwhile, the RCTF worked to agree on the principles and visions underlying a Statement of Reconciliation that might be presented for congregational review. This was also a challenging process. Even on the task force, people came to the ministry of reconciliation with differing histories and expectations: some spoke from places of exclusion or persecution, others from the pain of friends or family; some urged justice, others conciliation; all had to work to build trust and shed fears, defenses and stereotypes.

And yet, undergirding and overarching the task force’s work was a shared appreciation of the grand and moving themes of our Biblical and historical faith: liberation, justice, wisdom, prayer, blessing, healing, and grace. These themes inspired our final Statement, drafted by former St. Paulian Anne Foster, a church historian and grace-filled writer.

In February 1998, with the support of council, the Statement was brought to the congregation for a three-week period of Q&A, followed by a sacred Sunday of open comment and vote. Sensitive to congregational needs, the task force asked that an outside leader conduct the voting session, under rules set forth in the formal Discipline of the Church, and that any vote of approval be by super-majority. In the end, the task force’s hesitations were groundless. Over 90% of the voters approved the Statement, and St. Paul’s became a reconciling congregation, boldly extending a welcome (and a role) to all, regardless of orientation.

In the ensuing eleven years, as a reconciling congregation, St. Paul’s has tried to reach out to all who seek a welcome (and a role) in our warm-hearted, visionary community of faith. We have offered formal and informal support to individuals and families who, irrespective of orientation, seek to live out their faith and share their gifts and burdens in Christian community. We have shared our message of reconciliation in our community, and with other congregations seeking to discern the nature of their own reconciling ministry. And we

continue to advocate for openness in the United Methodist Church, which struggles mightily with its call to be the church of open hearts, open minds and open doors.

We are, indeed, a new creation, ever open—we trust—to the stirrings of spirit and the boundary-challenging, grace-filled teachings of the Christ. “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.... So we are ambassadors for Christ.” [2 Corinthians 5: 18, 20].

On Sunday, February 1, St. Paul's celebrates its 11th anniversary as a reconciling congregation. (Anyone who has a prayer stole from last year's 10th anniversary celebration, is encouraged to adorn the reconciling stole.) It's a privilege to be one of the 262 reconciling United Methodist Churches in the United States! On these two pages, you can appreciate our vision for being a reconciling congregation at St. Paul's and our history of how we worked together as a community to discern this calling.

**St. Paul's United Methodist Church Statement of Reconciliation
Adopted by Church Conference vote on February 1, 1998**



Because we are an invitational church, we, as members of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, affirm Christ's unconditional invitation to all to seek a personal relationship with God through him.

Because we are a supportive, inclusive church, we affirm all loving relationships among people, and further affirm that love is found in friendships, parent-child relationships, heterosexual relationships, homosexual relationships, and families created by birth or by choice.

Because we are a Christ-centered church, we believe Christ when he said that in Christ there are only two commandments. We must love God with all our heart and soul, and love our neighbor, whether that neighbor is like or unlike us, as ourselves. We believe this commandment allows us to draw no boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable members of our church.

Because we are a United Methodist Church, we rejoice in our church's history of fighting injustice and oppression, of calling attention to the needs and rights of all persons. We challenge ourselves and our denomination to affirm in word and deed the fundamental spiritual principle that all people are children of God.

Because we are a people of faith, we believe that it is part of our ministry and God's plan to affirm the glorious diversity of our community, made up of people of different ages, abilities, races, ethnicities, genders, backgrounds, nationalities, and sexual orientations, and yet to affirm also the unity we experience in Christ. We pray that in so doing we will encourage all persons of faith as they work for God's Glory.

We hereby affirm our commitment to the basic principles of our faith by declaring St. Paul's United Methodist Church a Reconciling Congregation, a congregation which welcomes gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals into the same community of faith into which all are invited. We pledge also to work for the day when society will welcome in the same way Christ welcomes.

A Sustainable Heart

Imagine Participating

By Lee Bailey



An anthropologist visited a Navajo village in springtime. A native man explained that the people remove their moccasins in spring in honor of Mother Nature, so as not to crush the newly growing sprouts. “Do you mean that if you did not remove your moccasins, the plants would not grow?,” he inquired. “I don’t know about that,” the native man replied, “but it would just show what kind of person you are.” What kind of people are we? The massive problems of global warming and sustainability call us to ask this.

The Navajo tradition expresses indigenous peoples’ sense of the sacredness of life on Earth. Western industrial culture has bulldozed this delicate perception with plows, chemicals, and mechanical, commercial systems. To do this we had to “desacralize” or “disenchant” nature with industrialism’s dogma that humans stand outside of and above nature. This is not a self-evident fact, but a philosophy of domination over nature. It has been blessed by the ancient injunction in Genesis that humans should “fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen. 1: 28). This theology may have made sense in the ancient world, where people were herding animals, beginning to develop agriculture, and overcoming the fear of ancient religions that saw spirits in nature hostile to human survival. Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea, sent furious storms and sank ships. Inca mountain spirits sent storms upon villages that people thought required a human sacrifice to prevent. So the ancient Jewish shift toward placing humans above nature, with God’s blessing, helped overcome archaic fears and raise human consciousness into what later became the dogma of the strong expectations of the scientific-technological control over nature.

But this philosophy of dominion has become madly excessive, and has blinded people to the dogmatic nature of the aggressive power of modern technology that has led to the ecology crisis, population explosion, resource depletion, and global warming.

Some religions have chosen the ethics of stewardship for nature, caring for it in a responsible, “humanistic” way. But the idea of preventing or solving the ecology crisis still involves the idea of humans standing outside and above nature, responsible for maintaining God’s creation in working order. Nature is too big, and we are too inadequate to manage it. We need a stronger theology to solve the extreme crises in which we find ourselves -- pollution, global warming, population control, and resource depletion. Each aspect will take major changes, and offer massive opportunities for a new Green economy.

Religions need to go beyond stewardship towards “participation” theology. This is the basis of the Nature Theology that has been overshadowed by the anthropomorphic images in Christianity of God the Father and Jesus the Son. These human images have drawn us too far away from the much broader view represented in Nature Theology’s ancient perceptions that we all participate in the sacred in nature.

We urgently need to re-awaken these perceptions to counter the dominion philosophy, by letting Nature Theology motivate a sense the rightness of living not outside and above nature, but within and dependent on nature. Nature Theology is the primordial revelation, before the texts, the Word, the Scriptures. Glimmers of Nature Theology remain in the scriptures, as in Job 12, reminding us that the animals know, without words, that God made life:

But ask the beasts, and they will teach you;
The birds of the air, and they will tell you;
Or the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
And the fish of the sea will declare to you.
Who among all these does not know
That the hand of the Lord has done this?
In his hand is the life of every living thing
And the breath of all humankind (Job 12: 7-10).

Although the image of God like a human peeks through in the phrase “in his hand,” the more primordial message is that the pre-verbal, pre-human world of animals and plants conveys a deep, intuitive, sense of the sacredness pervading nature. Of course not everything in nature is sacred. But the whispers of sacredness that we can sense open to the divine promise, verbalized in scriptures, that God’s grace overcomes evil and suffering.

We feel the sacredness in nature that we are part of in moments of awe for the majestic snow-capped mountains, the vastness of the Grand Canyon and the seas, the powers of storms, the beauty of delicate reproductive flowers blossoming each spring, the amazing wonder of animals born, the astonishing process of a child growing up, the sense of rightness in our relations to nature. The Lakota Sioux call this feeling *mitakuye oyasin* -- “we are all relatives.”

We admire a great “view,” but even the concept of a “view” suggests that we stand outside nature and experience it in our senses. On the contrary, our senses are variations of many other species’ senses. We are part of this entire life system, evolved from the creative burst of the great mystery of our sacred origin. And the sacred mystery continues through evolution.

We do not stand outside of nature. We try to when we attempt to dominate it by saying things such as “What bad weather.” But there is no such thing as bad weather, in itself. It may be bad for certain human activities, but for us to call it “bad” is a narrow focus on our needs, ignoring the vast system of weather doing its own thing. We should be grateful for this planet’s life-supporting weather, providing the right amount of water, oxygen, food, etc. for our species to exist, unless we throw it out of balance.

We respond naturally with a fragment of respect for nature’s sacredness, but we must amplify that respect, celebrate it loudly in new religious ceremonies that upgrade our sense of being not above, but part of the wonders of God’s creation. Imagine taking off your shoes in the presence of new plants growing. Imagine singing thankful praises outside, facing the waterfalls, the lakes, the clouds, the gorges.

Imagine using less energy and stopping the massive government subsidies of dirty energy sources, even shifting that fortune to building clean, renewable, sustainable energy sources -- wind, solar, water. Imagine clean air and water. Imagine halting the violent, polluting, resource-depleting system of factory farming and eating less or no meat. Imagine feeling your species dependent upon the entire delicately balanced system of life on this planet, and the awesome vastness of the universe’s bursting wonders. Imagine discovering a still, small voice leading you to want to live sustainably, rather than as a compulsive consumer in a nature-ravaging industrial society. Imagine instead of callously dominating it, feeling humbly grateful to be a part of this wondrous system. Imagine re-awakening to participation in this ancient, silent but roaring reality.

Imagine feeling the excited beating of a sustainable heart.

Children's Ministries



FAITH EXPLORERS (K-6th grades)

Follow me and I will make you fishers of people.

Matthew 4:19

The Faith Explorers are in the middle of an exciting unit about Jesus calling the 12 disciples. Jesus called his disciples to leave their nets and follow him. He promised to make them fishers of people. Jesus continues to call each of us to be disciples today!

Storytelling – Children hear and dramatize the story of the Rainbow Fish to help them understand how difficult it must have been for the disciples to give up what was precious to them in order to follow Jesus.

Music and Movement – Children are learning new songs and fun dances to help reinforce the idea that Jesus calls us to be his disciples.

Art – Children are making fish hooks and lures to help them remember what it means to ‘fish for people.’

Games – In this workshop, children are learning the names of the 12 disciples and what they did before they were called to follow Jesus. They are also exploring ways that they can be disciples today.

Meditation – This workshop will allow the children to experience a guided meditation that allows them to listen for Jesus’ call.

Thanks to all who have helped make this unit so rewarding.

Teachers

David Bell
Jai Hari Meyerhoff
Beth Mudge
Patty Sipman
Mary Ellen Stewart

Guides

Greg Eells
Steve Johnson
April Denman
John Sammis
Michael Culotta
Leslie Byron

Writers

Barbara Eshleman
Karen Kaufman
Ruth Keagle
Jacquie Lopez
Lesley Yorke

Props, Etc

Audrey Bradburn
Pam Gillow

Faith Discovery Group



The children in Faith Discovery Group (3 & 4 year olds) have also been learning about Jesus calling the 12 disciples. Each week they hear a Bible story and do a simple craft to reinforce the lesson.

Are you interested in helping with either the Faith Explorers (k-6th grade) or Faith Discovery Group (3 & 4 year olds)? Adult volunteers are always needed for these programs. We have a number of roles; Short-term or long-term. Sunday morning or during the week. Working with the children or behind-the-scenes. All contributions are valuable. Contact Laura Dolch, Children’s Ministries Coordinator, at lauradolch@stpaulsithaca.org if you are interested! There are many ways to lend a hand.

2009 Fun and Fellowship Retreat April 24th - April 26th



Save the date for the annual Fun and Fellowship Retreat! The retreat is a fun, lightly structured weekend for singles, couples, and families of all ages.

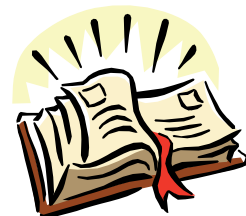
The retreat will take place at the picturesque Camp Casowasco (Bethany Lodge) just south of Auburn! The retreat is open to St. Paulian's of all ages! Cost is \$137 for adults, \$38.50 for children ages 4-12. Kids under 4 are free! There is some scholarship money available.

So please put the date on your calendar and let us know if you are planning to attend! Call the church office, 273-5971, or email Laura Dolch at lauradolch@stpaulsithaca.org. Thanks!

Bible Voyagers

Calling all Third Graders! (and any Fourth/Fifth Graders who missed the class last year)

Every year in the spring, St. Paul's offers the Bible Voyagers Class to all children in 3rd grade (and 4th graders who missed it). This is an exciting introduction to the Bible and its collection of 66 different books!



Jacque Higgins-Lopez will be teaching the class this year. One big change is that the class will meet during the regular Faith Explorers program so that all who are interested may attend.

This year's class will begin on March 1st and run through late April.

Watch for more details in the bulletin. Questions? Contact Laura Dolch, Children's Ministries Coordinator, lauradolch@stpaulsithaca.org.

Summer Camp

In the bitter cold of winter, it's fun to start thinking about swimming, hiking, campfires, boating, and other warm-weather activities. Summer camp online brochures and registration are now available for both Aldersgate and Casowasco (both camps are owned and operated by the North Central New York Conference of the United Methodist Church). They run overnight summer camp experiences for youth ages 6 -18. Check out www.aldersgateny.org or www.casowasco.org for more information.

Many thanks in advance to the United Methodist Women for their generosity in giving camp scholarships to children who would like to attend camp. Please contact Laura Dolch (lauradolch@stpaulsithaca.org) for more information.

St. Paul's Youth Ministry

Youth Group News

Sr. High Youth have been busy selling Dewey Neild Calendars and have raised about \$500 towards their next Mission Trip. Thank you to all those who purchased calendars!!

December and January have brought some special youth events. Youth and several members of the congregation joined together to decorate our sanctuary for the Advent season. That same afternoon youth also participated in a super yummy candy making workshop. Thank you to the Lillard family for sharing this special workshop with us!

The youth annual Christmas Party was a time of fellowship with Holiday charades, Christmas Story quizzes and a silly gift exchange. This year, the leaders went shopping for the gifts for the gift exchange. Gifts and game prizes ranged from fuzzy slippers, to a tiny action-figure Jesus!

Youth also ventured out into the cold January weather to enjoy an afternoon of ice skating at Cass Park. We are hoping the snow will last so we can get in some sledding this year.

Youth Events for February

AM Impact will meet 9:30-10:15 Feb. 1st, 8th, and 22nd.

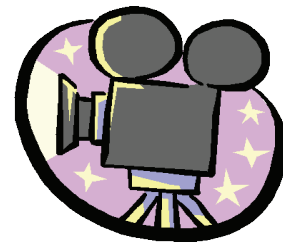
Sr. High Youth Group will meet noon to 2:00 Feb. 1st.

Film Fest Fridays (For Sr. High Youth) will meet on **SATURDAY** (instead of Friday) Feb. 7th. St. Paul's Youth are hosting this month. Please plan to arrive at 5:30 to help with set up and food prep. The movie choice is *The Bucket List* and the menu will be spaghetti and salad.

Youth Council will meet Sunday, Feb. 8th directly after worship till about 1:00. Please bring a dish-to-pass.

Middle School Youth Group will meet noon to 2:00 Feb. 22nd

Upper Sr. High Youth (11th and 12th graders) will meet Saturday Feb. 28th.



Film Fest Fridays

Film Fest Fridays, which happens the First Friday of every month, is a gathering of Sr. High Youth from several area churches that meet for dinner, a movie and discussion. Attendance has ranged from 8 to 21 youth each month. It is a great way for youth to make connections with other youth and to visit other churches, as Film Fest rotates among various churches. The discussions have been very interesting and quite varied as we look at how each movie has some sort of hidden message and in many cases biblical symbolism. This year we have viewed *The Village*, *Evan Almighty*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, and *A Beautiful Mind*.

*****Looking for a way to help St Paul's Youth?** Part of AM Impact (Sunday Morning Christian Education) is to have a breakfast snack together. We are looking for donations of bagels and cream cheese, or muffins, fresh fruit, and juice. Contact Ruth "Rue" Keagle, Youth Ministries Coordinator, rkeagle@stpaulsithaca.org if you can help!***

St. Paul's Connections

Older Adults

Enjoy a Valentine Pancake & Sausage Lunch

Followed by a Movie with Friends!

Tuesday, February 10, 11:30 am

St. Paul's Dining Room

After our pancake lunch in St. Paul's Dining Room, we'll view the movie *August Rush*. This film is part romance, part gentle fantasy, but this sweet drama is all heart. After cellist Lyla (Keri Russell) and guitarist Louis (Jonathan Rhys Meyers) share an enchanted night together, circumstances rip them apart, and the child produced by the union is raised by a caring stranger (Robin Williams) who nurtures the boy's musical talent. Determined to find his parents, the boy, known as August Rush (Freddie Highmore), relies on music to draw his mother and father to him.



Someone will be calling soon for your reservation.

We know parking can be a challenge, so ask about carpooling!



Calling all pre-schoolers

Registration for next September at St. Paul's Weekday Nursery School begins February 2. Our fun, activity filled morning program was first established in 1956. We have separate classes for 2, 3, and 4 year olds in small classes with experienced teachers. Priority registration which includes church families runs through February 13th. To find out more about our program, look for our blue brochure in the Welcome Room, check our website at spnsithaca.googlepages.com, or leave a message for me with the church office 273-2367. We welcome you to come and visit!

Beth Mudge bmudge@stpaulsithaca.org



Calling all sopranos

The St. Paul's Chancel Choir needs voices, particularly soprano voices! Our conductor, Lee Steward, has planned some great music for this coming spring, but we need more sopranos to fill out the choir. Of course, we welcome all voice types in the Chancel Choir. Join us on Thursday's from 7:30 to 9:00 pm and on Sunday mornings at 9:30.

Church Tour



Have you ever wanted to explore some of the nooks and crannies in this huge, some-say-labyrinthine building? Or simply wanted to know how to find the gym (yes, St. Paul's has a gym!)? Plan to stay after worship for about 20 minutes for a brief **Church Tour on Sunday, February 8th**. Meet Paul Allen, one of our Spirited Connections Tour Guides, at the front of the sanctuary at the conclusion of the postlude.

**St. Paul's United
Methodist Church**

St. Paul's Letter

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Periodicals Postage Paid

Ithaca, NY 14850

Please pray for these members of our church family: Ted Bliven, Phyllis Bowers, the Dockstader family, Dora Fratelli, Kay Friedlander, the Krolak/Torrans family, Frank Mazurek, Jane Mazurek, Ben Richards, Wendy Rightmyer, Dottie Scott, Laverne Snyder, & Emily Eshelman Virkler.



Please pray for these members of our extended church family: Alex Arnold (*Ellie Phillips-Burdge's nephew*), Jack Bailey (*Sylvia Bailey's uncle*), Gina Bakota (*Teresa Yatsko's sister*), Michael Birdsell, Hazel Bonner (*Jacqueline Bonner's mother*), Joanne S. Brue (*Bill Sammis's sister*), Trudy Cism (*Josette Garrison's friend*), Faith Ennis (*Don Ordway's niece*), Misty Foster (*Patrick & Josette Garrison's friend*), Janet Georgia (*Carolee Vink's mother*), Aly Grygiel (*friend of Diane Lauzun*), Sabrina Jean (*Priscilla Lawrence's niece*), Cheryl Macomber (*Phyllis Bower's friend*), The Motz family, Larry Motz (*Teresa Motz's brother*), Kathy Orr's aunt, Antionette Schettini (*Jason Keagle's grandmother*), Dorothy Schumacher (*Laverne Snyder's Aunt*), John

Baptisms

We celebrated the Sacrament of Baptism for Ella Holland Walker-Triplett, Savannah Alexis-Walker-Triplett, and Anthony James Walker-Triplett, children of Pam Walker and Amanda Triplett on December 28, 2008.

Deaths

We extend our deepest prayers and sympathies to the friends and family of Douglass Payne; Jean Payne died on January 12, 2009. Jean was a long time member of St. Paul's.

Memorials

We give our sincerest thanks to those who have made contributions to the church in the memory of
Westy Gelder
Dr. W. Frank Shipe
Jean Payne

"Bear one another's burdens....." Galatians 6:2