

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Sunday, February 23, 2025

But to you who are willing to listen, I say,

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES!

DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU.

BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU.

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HURT YOU.

- Jesus -
(Luke 6:27, 28)

1235 Summer Hill Road, Auburn, PA 17922

Pastor: Rev. Ken McDowell, cell phone: 610-207-4783

Church Office Phone: 570-754-7225

Office Hours: Monday – Thursday 9am–2pm; Closed Friday

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1782
Sunday, February 23, 2025

243 YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE

2025
10:30am

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany
The Sacrament of Baptism
CWS (Church World Service) Blanket Offering

Rev. Ken McDowell, Pastor

Music Director and Pianist- Rae Ann Borger

CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH

This morning we remember in prayer, from our Schuylkill Association Prayer Calendar, **the Wider Church Ministries.**

Please read the announcements that are in this downloadable bulletin, as well as those we post on our Facebook site, our emails, and our phone calls, and then help spread the word to those who do not have access to any of those messages.

Congratulations to Joseph and Breanna Bassininsky on the baptism of their son, Joseph Francis Bassininsky Jr.

INVOCATION

GATHERING FOR THE WORD

PRELUDE

The congregation may stand.

SOLEMN DECLARATION.....Sung "Amen"

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: In these uncertain times, we come together, searching for peace.

People: We will be still before the Lord and wait patiently.

Pastor: We will open our hearts and minds, that the Lord may show us mercy.

People: When we trust the Lord, we can do good things and live with one another in peace and security.

Pastor: The Lord is our refuge in times of trouble. In God, we find forgiveness, mercy, and love.

People: We will be still before the Lord and wait patiently. Amen.

OPENING HYMN NO. 14....."Now Thank We All Our God"

CALL TO CONFESSION

CONFESSION OF SIN (Unison)

Lord God, we come to you as imperfect creatures. Like Joseph's brothers, we're afraid of the past and are wary of the future. Yet, we yearn to feel your warm embrace. We long to touch your love and forgiveness, despite our shortcomings. Ease our journey toward mercy, as we grow in faith and love. Help us bless those who curse us and to pray for those who mistreat us. This is your direction for our lives and we will follow as we are able. Amen.

MOMENT OF PERSONAL CONFESSION

KYRIE

Pastor: Lord, have mercy upon us.

People: Lord, have mercy upon us.

Pastor: Christ, have mercy upon us.

People: Christ, have mercy upon us.

Pastor: Lord, have mercy upon us.

People: Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor: God’s love and mercy are freely available to all.

People: When we trust and delight in God’s mercy, we are better able to show this mercy to those around us.

Pastor: God always forgives those who repent. Rest in this assurance and be at peace. Amen.

THE GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, it is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

The congregation may be seated.

ENGAGING THE WORD

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

READING OF THE WORD.....Lector, Brook Koch-Guers

Old Testament: Genesis 45:3-11, 15 (Page 40)

Psalm: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40 (**Read responsively**)

Lector: Do not fret because of the wicked; do not be envious of wrongdoers,

People: for they will soon fade like the grass, and wither like the green herb.

Lector: Trust in the LORD, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.

People: Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Lector: Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.

People: He will make your vindication shine like the light, and the justice of your cause like the noonday.

Lector: Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him; do not fret over those who prosper in their way, over those who carry out evil devices.

People: Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath. Do not fret—it leads only to evil.

Lector: For the wicked shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

People: Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look diligently for their place, they will not be there.

Lector: But the meek shall inherit the land, and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

People: The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their refuge in the time of trouble.

Lector: The LORD helps them and rescues them; he rescues them from the wicked, and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50 (Page 1002)

Gospel: Luke 6:27-38 (Page 895)

Lector: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE.....“Let Thy word abide in us, O Lord.”

SENIOR CHOIR ANTHEM.....“Sweet Rivers of Mercy” by Sheldon Curry

SERMON.....“Seriously?”

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

The congregation may remain seated.

Ushers will receive tithes and offerings at this time.

HYMN OF REFLECTION NO. 61.....“There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Invitation and Welcome

Address

Questions

Congregational Assent

Elder: Jesus Christ calls us to make disciples of all nations and to offer them the gift of grace in baptism. Do you, the congregation of St. Paul's United Church of Christ, who are witnesses and celebrate this sacrament, promise your love, support, and care to the ones about to be baptized, as he lives and grows in Christ? If so please say, "We promise our love, support, and care."

People: We promise our love, support, and care.

Affirmation of Faith

Pastor: Do you believe in God?

People: I believe in God.

Pastor: Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

People: I believe in Jesus Christ.

Pastor: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

People: I believe in the Holy Spirit.

Prayer of Baptism

Pastor: Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray.

The Blessing of the Water

Act of Baptism

Prayer for the Baptized

Pastor: Let us pray for the ones baptized today.....Unite them in the peace of Christ and the company of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

The Introduction of the Baptized

Presentation of the Gifts

Benediction

Pastor: Go in the peace of Christ.

All: Thanks be to God.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray.

SILENT PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE

Hear our prayer, O Lord; Hear our prayer, O Lord; Hear our prayer, O Lord, And grant us Thy peace. Amen.

CALL TO OFFERING

The congregation may stand.

OFFERING RESPONSE & DEDICATION.....DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

OFFERING PRAYER

GOING WITH THE WORD

COMMISSION

Pastor: May the peace of Christ follow you from this place.

People: We will remember the grace of Joseph, the mercy of God, and the love of Christ.

Pastor: Go beyond the Golden Rule and forgive first, love first, and give first.

People: As followers of Jesus, we will do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

BENEDICTION

THE THREEFOLD AMEN.....*Amen. Amen. Amen.*

CLOSING HYMN NO. 72.....“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

SILENT MEDITATION

POSTLUDE

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Portions of today’s worship resources were reproduced or adapted from the UCC’s Book of Worship, Worship Connection by Nancy C. Townley on MinistryMatters.com, and by Sara Dunning Lambert from the 2025 Abingdon Worship Annuals edited by Mary J. Scifres and B. J. Beu.

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- The altar flowers are in honor of Robert and Violet Guers Birthdays by the Guers Family.
- The bulletins are in memory of granny and poppy, Uncle John, cousin Jamie and Aunt Sus from Dustin and Derek.
- Offering on Sunday, February 16, 2025: \$0 ****Don’t forget! Please include last week’s offering with this or following weeks giving!**
- Weekly envelope & plate budget for 2025: \$3,285.91
- The Communion offering for February 2025 supports the Church World Service Blanket Drive. The March Communion offering will support the Palisades Fires impacting California.**
- We are collecting monetary donations TODAY to be used toward the Church World Service Blankets+ Program.** Blanket offering envelopes are available by the bulletin basket.
- The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held TODAY following worship.** Please plan to stay and attend this very important meeting.
- TODAY is the deadline to sign up for a group outing to see the Reading Fightin’ Phils on Saturday, June 14th.** Treat dad to a ball game the night before Father’s day! First pitch is at 6:45pm. We have moved the seat

location for our outing to the "67 Club" along the third base line on field level for even better viewing of the game. Tickets are \$41.00 each and include admission to the game, AYCE Buffet supper (starts at 5pm) and fireworks to follow the game. Children under 4 years old are free. A sign-up sheet is on table as you enter the sanctuary. Payment for tix can be given to Kelly in the church office or paid directly to Mike Fessler.

-Summer Hill Youth Group wants you to ROLL WITH US! Join us this Saturday, March 1 from 12:30 to 3:30 PM at the Roller Roost Sports Arena for an afternoon of fellowship and fun. Sunday School will pick a raffle winner and cover the cost of admission and skate rentals for children 18 and under. Please don't hesitate to reach out to Laura Carll with any questions.

-Please note: During periods of inclement weather, please check the church Facebook page, emails or phone messages for cancellation notices. We will strive to make the decision to cancel church activities as soon as practical and in the best interest of the safety of our members.

-Anyone interested in learning more about our Sunday School program is welcome and invited to attend the **Board of Christian Education Meeting on Tuesday, March 4** at 7pm. The meeting will take place downstairs in room B1. Please speak to Laura Carll, any Sunday School teachers, Pastor Ken or the church office for more information.

-A traditional **Ash Wednesday Service will be held on Wednesday, March 5** at 7:00pm in person and live-streamed. The service will include the imposition of ashes and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

-Please remove any arrangements from the cemetery that you want to keep for future use before Sunday, April 6. After that date any outdated or worn arrangements will be removed.

-Beginning Sunday, March 9, Pastor Ken will be leading the Lenten Study, "Message of Jesus: Words that Changed the World" by Adam Hamilton during the 9:15am Sunday School Hour. In this study, pastor and best selling author Adam Hamilton explores six of the most important themes in Jesus's teachings, why they matter and how they speak to us today. The book will explore Jesus's preaching on the Kingdom of God, the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, the "I am" sayings in John and more. The study will take place in the downstairs room B1. There is no cost and all are encouraged and welcome to attend.

-Join us for our monthly fellowship time- conversation, along with a cup of coffee and light refreshments following our 10:30am worship service on Sunday, March 9. We will gather in the rear of the Sanctuary the second Sunday of each month. Catch up with old friends, make new ones, and stay up to date on everything happening at St. Paul's. We have been having a wonderful response to our monthly fellowship times! Donations of treats (cookies, brownies, cupcakes, muffins, etc.) are welcome and very much appreciated. Please speak to Lori Moyer if you would like to help.

-The Prayer Shawl Ministry will meet the second Tuesday of each month from 10am-12noon in the conference room. **The next meeting will be held Tuesday, March 11.** If you are interested in knitting and/or crocheting, we can hook you up! If you know of someone who could use a prayer shawl, please contact the church office.

-Wednesday evening Lenten services will begin March 12 and continue through April 9 at 7pm in the sanctuary. Please join us as we journey with Jesus to the cross.

-The Schuylkill Haven Food Pantry is in great need and accepts all non-perishable food items and paper products. Items can be dropped off at the church during the week or placed in the shopping cart at the back of the sanctuary. **NO OUTDATED FOOD PLEASE. We will be helping Monday, March 17** at 8:30am and **Friday, March 21** at 12pm. Please speak to Verna Ebling or the church office if you would like to help or donate items.

-You're invited to the Everybody's Birthday Party on Friday, March 21 from 6-9pm. It will be a pot-luck style, so you may bring a dinner choice and/or a dessert choice. Come for fellowship and fun!!

-An outdoor grounds clean up will be held on Saturday, March 22 beginning at 8:00am. ALL HANDS ON DECK – Children would be great. Please bring gloves, rakes, shovels, wheelbarrows.

-On Sunday, March 30, we will receive the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. OGHS, the refugee, relief and development offering of the UCC, transforms lives through health, education, agricultural, and emergency relief initiatives in 138 countries. Special envelopes will be placed on the bulletin table prior to that Sunday.

-The fifth Sunday Offering on Sunday, March 30 is designated to the Pastor's Emergency Relief Fund.

-There will be a Vacation Bible School Planning Meeting on Tuesday, April 1 at 7:00pm in room B1. Anyone interested in helping at VBS, which will be held June 17-21, is invited to attend. Please speak to Bill Reber for more information.

-If you are CPR/AED certified, please contact the church office. We are updating our certification list for the church AED machine. If you would be interested in a certification class, please contact the office.

-Sunday School Raffle: Every week that our youth participate in Sunday School, they will get a raffle ticket that will be entered into a drawing for a prize. Drawings will then happen quarterly at the Youth Group Events. (winners do not need to be present) Please speak to Laura Carll (484-269-4405) for more information.

-Following many natural disasters, **Clean-Up Buckets** provide those affected with the essentials to begin getting their lives back in order. The Schuylkill Association, working with the UCC Disaster Ministries, helps provide these kits through Church World Services anywhere they are needed, to include right here in Schuylkill County. Our Association currently has over sixty empty five gallon buckets that need to be filled. **If you would like to help in this ministry by coordinating the filling of some of the buckets or can donate materials or money to buy the required materials, please contact the church office.** Learn more at <https://cwskits.org/>.

-Our members, friends and visitors give their offerings and donations to the church in many different ways, to include electronically via apps like [Tithe.ly](https://www.tithe.ly) and bank transfers. To help accommodate the varied ways of giving, we have an offering box in the narthex as well as offering plates by the pews in the rear of the sanctuary to place Sunday morning offerings as you enter or leave the sanctuary. We will also have two ushers accept offerings during the Hymn of Reflection after the sermon as another option. Thank you for your financial support of the ministries of St. Paul's and your faithful giving in response to what God has given us!

-In an effort to keep our records up to date, please contact the church office if you have had a change to any of your information, to include phone or cell phone numbers, email or home addresses, or any family updates.

-When you or a loved one is sick or in the hospital for an extended stay, do not assume that the pastor will know you are there. Please call or email the church office so that Pastor Ken can provide you with spiritual care!

-Prayer is Powerful! Please call or email the church office with your prayer concerns. We believe in the power of prayer and want to pray for you. **We have a prayer concerns email group for anyone interested.**

PRAYER CONCERNS: All those earnestly seeking God's help in difficult times, Military personnel & National leaders, *family and friends of Stacey Peterka*, Dick Clauser, Ronald Blue, Nancy Shellhammer, Charlie Heim, Chris Berger, Jim Reibsane, Joe Maurer, Ardith Moyer

CANCER PATIENTS: Boone, Marie Bleu, Cindy Boyer, Karen DiCamillo, Alex DuVee, John Eckert, Yvonne Edling, Glennis Eifert, Joanne Forbes, Thomas Galligan, Meg Goodwin, Rebecca Henderson, Sherri Jo Jennar, Deb Kemmerling, Joan Krause, Lori Krug, Carol Mallory, Tom Nagle, Rich Nickel, Judy Ohl, Nick Reading, Pat Reading, Jim Thompson

FOR THE WEEK OF SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Sunday, February 23

-Annual Congregational Meeting following worship

4:00 PM -Cub Scout Meeting

Monday, February 24

6:00 – 9:00 PM -Boy Scout Meetings

Wednesday, February 26

7:00 PM -Senior Choir Rehearsal

Saturday, March 1

12:30 – 3:30 PM -Youth Group Roller Skating Outing

Sunday, March 2 *Transfiguration Sunday

9:15 AM -Sunday School

10:30 AM -Worship with the Sacrament of Holy Communion

4:00 PM -Cub Scout Meeting

***Lectionary Readings for next week:**

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)