

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



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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Livestream: www.facebook.com/summerhillucc

Third Sunday in Lent

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 UCC Disaster 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.

LENTEN CANDLES

Pastor: In the days of Noah, the LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth.

People: And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

Pastor: So the LORD said, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created

People: Together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

[Extinguish one candle. Do not light it again until Easter]

Pastor: But Noah found favor in the sight of the LORD.

People: And God did not totally destroy his creation. He showed us his mercy, through Noah.
(Genesis 6:5-8)

RESPONSIVE HYMN NO. 354....."Just as I am" (verse 3)

*Just as I am, though tossed about, With many a conflict many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without O Lamb of God, I come, I come!*

INVOCATION

GATHERING FOR THE WORD

PRELUDE

The congregation may stand.

SOLEMN DECLARATION.....Sung "Amen"

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: The table is set. The banquet is laid.

People: Our souls hunger and thirst for God.

Pastor: Our gracious host welcomes us here.

People: God's steadfast love is better than life.

Pastor: Sing for joy in the shadow of God's wings.

People: We have come to praise the living God. Amen.

OPENING HYMN NO. 501....."Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"

CALL TO CONFESSION

CONFESSION OF SIN (Unison)

Merciful God, when we suffer thirst, you refresh us with the waters of life. When we set our jaws and lose our cool, you heal our hardness of heart. Forgive us when we stray, and help us abide in your steadfast love, both now and forevermore. 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 is our help in times of trial and when we lose our way.

People: When we place our trust in Christ, God helps us stand and restores our honor.

Pastor: Then rejoice, through Christ Jesus, we are forgiven. 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, Trevor Smith

Old Testament: Isaiah 55:1-9 (Page 635)

Psalm: Psalm 63:1-8 (**Read responsively**)

Lector: O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

People: So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.

Lector: Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.

People: So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name.

Lector: My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips

People: when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

Lector: for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.

People: My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 (Page 997)

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9 (Page 906)

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.....“Your Love Is Better Than Life” by Tom Fettke

SERMON.....“Seek Ye First”

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

The congregation may remain seated.

Ushers will receive tithes and offerings at this time.

HYMN OF REFLECTION NO. 422.....“Amazing Grace”

The congregation may stand.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (Unison)..United Church of Christ Statement of Faith– adapted by Robert V. Moss
**We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, who is made known to us in Jesus our brother,
and to whose deeds we testify: God calls the worlds into being,
creates humankind in the divine image, and sets before us the ways of life and death.
God seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.
God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness
declared through prophets and apostles.
In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord,
God has come to us and shared our common lot,
conquering sin and death and reconciling the whole creation to its Creator.
God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.
God calls us into the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship,
to be servants in the service of the whole human family, to proclaim the gospel to all the world
and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,
to join him in his passion and victory.
God promises to all who trust in the gospel forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,
courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing,
and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end.
Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God. Amen.**

The congregation may be seated.

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: Seek the Lord while God may be found.
People: We will call upon the Lord, while God is near.
Pastor: Embrace the paths that lead to life.

People: We will return to our God.

Pastor: Seek the Lord while God may be found.

People: We will call upon the Lord, while God is near.

BENEDICTION

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

CLOSING HYMN NO. 255.....“Beneath the Cross of Jesus”

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 B. J. Beu from the 2025 Abingdon Worship Annuals edited by Mary J. Scifres and B. J. Beu.

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-The altar flowers are in loving memory of Skip Clauser by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Clauser and family.

-The bulletins are in loving memory of Skip Clauser by Dick, Linda, Christopher and Amy Clauser.

-Offering on Sunday, March 16, 2025: \$4,012.00

-Weekly envelope & plate budget for 2025: \$3,285.91

-The March Communion offering will support the Palisades Fires impacting California. The April Communion offering will support the Schuylkill Association General Fund.

-There will be an Acolyte training session following worship TODAY for any youth that may be interested. If you have any questions, please speak to Laura Carll.

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

-Easter is Sunday, April 20! This year we are offering a variety of beautiful Easter flowers. (Prices: Easter Lily- \$15.00; Tulip- \$12.00; Daffodil- \$12.00) Order forms are available on the bulletin table. Orders and money may be given to Ardith Moyer or dropped/ mailed to the church office. Money is due at the time you place your order. **The Final deadline for ordering is next Sunday, March 30.**

-Next 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 are available on the bulletin table.

-The fifth Sunday Offering next Sunday, March 30 is designated to the Pastor’s Emergency Relief Fund. Special envelopes are available on the bulletin table.

-There will be a Sunday School Egg Hunt on Sunday, April 13 that will take place during the 9:15am Sunday School hour. **There is a plastic egg donation sign-up sheet on the table by the bulletin basket. PLASTIC EGGS ONLY- please no real eggs.** They may be filled or not, and can be placed in downstairs room B-1 by **next Sunday, March 30.**

-Pastor Ken's Lenten Study, "Message of Jesus: Words that Changed the World" by Adam Hamilton continues each week during the 9:15am Sunday School Hour. (downstairs room B1) There is no cost and all are encouraged and welcome to attend.

-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.

-A sign-up sheet is located on the table by the bulletin basket to sign up for a **Heart Association CPR, AED and First Aid Certification Class offered here at the church on Saturday, April 5** from 9am-12 noon. The class will be instructed by John Borchick and should last approximately 3 hours. The cost is \$20 per person, and the certification is good for 2 years. Please speak to the church office for more information.

-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.

-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, April 8.** 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.

-A **Palm Sunday Service, with the Blessing of the Palms, will be held on Sunday, April 13** at 10:30am. On **Maundy Thursday, April 17,** at 6:00pm, we will gather in the fellowship hall for our version of the **Seder meal.** There is a sign-up sheet for the Seder meal on the table by the bulletin basket. A **Good Friday Tenebrae Service will be held on April 18** at 7:00pm. **Easter Sunday, April 20:** We will rejoice and celebrate Christ's resurrection beginning with our Sunrise Service at 6:30am on Easter morning. An Easter Breakfast will be held in the fellowship hall at approximately 7:15am followed immediately by a worship service with Holy Communion around the breakfast table (8:15am). Sunday School will be held at 9:15am, followed by the 10:30am Easter Worship Service with Holy Communion. There is a sign-up sheet for the breakfast located on the bulletin table.

-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, April 14** at 8:30am and **Friday, April 18** at 12pm. Please speak to Verna Ebling, Bill Reber or the church office if you would like to help or donate items.

-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 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 AND also a prayer phone call chain for anyone interested.** Please contact the church office.

PRAYER CONCERNS: All those earnestly seeking God's help in difficult times, Military personnel & National leaders, *family and friends of Joan Berkheiser, Aiden Rodriguez,* Angie Kutz, Tom Saunders, Brandon Wright, Mary Maurer, Margot Evans Carey, Alvin Spirko, Brian Moyer, Dick Clauser, Ronald Blue, Nancy Shellhammer, Charlie Heim, Chris Berger, Jim Reibsane, Joe Maurer, Ardith Moyer

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

FOR THE WEEK OF SUNDAY, MARCH 23

Sunday, March 23

-Acolyte training following worship

4:00 PM -Cub Scout Blue and Gold Dinner

Monday, March 24

10:00 AM -Joan Berkheiser visitation/ 11:00 AM -Joan Berkheiser Service of Remembrance

6:00 – 9:00 PM -Boy Scout Meetings

Wednesday, March 26

7:00 PM -Lenten Worship Service

-Senior Choir Rehearsal following worship

Sunday, March 30 *Easter Flower orders due *Egg donations due

9:15 AM -Sunday School

10:30 AM -Worship (Fourth Sunday of Lent) with the One Great Hour of Sharing offering and the 5th Sunday offering (Pastor's Emergency Relief Fund)

2:00 PM -Pastor Ken conducts chapel service at Phoebe

4:00 PM -Cub Scout Meeting

***Lectionary Readings for next week:**

Joshua 5:9-12

Psalm 32

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32