



The Pastor's Study

Yesterday was our annual meeting and it was a great time – a time to recognize the successes and challenges we have experienced together as a healthy church. No conflict. No difficult votes. A delicious pasta and salad lunch topped off by some of the best desserts in Michigan. And of course, as always happens when we gather together, good fellowship. Before we began, we participated in an interactive worship service, clustering in groups of 3 or 4 to engage the lectionary text (Mark 1: 21-28) with questions that challenge our faith journey. Or should. For when we do that, we allow our still-speaking God to actually speak to us, don't we? Our Scripture is meant to be a living document. It is the framework upon which we build our faith, pointing us to the God in whom we live and move and have our being.¹ There can be no doubt that Jesus challenged every one he encountered (followers and critics alike) with amazing new teachings that blew their minds and eventually got him killed. In this particular text and throughout his ministry, Jesus taught a new message of God's radical welcome and inclusivity "with authority" and his teaching words became, as always, teaching in action. How many times have you heard it said, perhaps even saying it yourself now and then, "Practice what you preach!" Can we say we truly believe that we are all God's beloved children with value and purpose and that we welcome everyone, whoever and wherever they are on life's journey (as we do in our statement of identity) if we choose not to follow these words with action both inside and outside our family of faith?

In this newsletter you will read the results of our ONA Survey, and while it does not include everyone in the congregation, because not everyone was here on Sunday, it is an unquestionable barometer of where many folks stand today on the question of Open and Affirming with which we will wrestle in the coming year. What is most interesting to note is that 96% of those who responded believe that we ALREADY welcome everyone (including LGBT folks) into the full life and ministry of our church, while only a bit more than half think we should act on that belief, by making it official so those outside our family of faith know that we will welcome them if they come.

As we walk this way together, may we allow ourselves to continually be challenged by Christ, who taught us to love and welcome those who differ from us, especially the outsider whom others turn away, and whom God also loves, just as God loves each and every one of us...unconditionally. And may we remember that his very last words to the disciples on that mountaintop in Galilee before he entered into eternity were to send them out to share this message with the world. They were not meant to sit at home and keep it to themselves. And neither are we.

*With love in Christ,
Pastor Terri*



NOTES FROM THE CONSISTORY PRESIDENT

¹ Acts 17:28

This is always a difficult report to write as we are having two of our most important events in between the Consistory meeting and the publication of the newsletter. As I am writing this, the Warming Center is up and running. By all reports things are going well and we are serving approximately 65 people a night. An incredible undertaking by an incredible group of people. Also, we will be having the Annual Meeting of our congregation on January 29. This is always an important day in the life of our church.

At the January Consistory meeting we discussed a few items. First, it was agreed that the remaining trees along the education wing would be removed. In the spring replacements will be discussed. Second, Ron will be calling to have work done on the men's bathroom upstairs. We are coming closer to having a fully functioning upstairs once again. To that end, we will be purchasing a TV and Blu Ray player for the Youth Room in the coming weeks. Donations are still needed to offset the cost of this project. Once it is done it will be a very comfortable place for movie nights and for other groups to hold their meetings.

February 5 is Women's Sunday. After the service, make sure you join us for a real manly coffee hour. We are not exactly sure what is on the menu just yet, but rest assured there will be no croissants or lady fingers.

Finally, I want to take a moment to thank everyone for their support over the last 5 years. This will be my final report as I am stepping down from the presidency of the St. Paul UCC Consistory. With only one year left on my term I felt it was necessary to allow someone else the opportunity to become acclimated to the job. With the great people who are both on the Consistory and part of the congregation I know St. Paul UCC will continue to be a vital part of this community.

**Peace,
Brent Grawburg**



REMINDER

Rummage Sale coming up March 17th!!!



February Birthdays

7. Dick Schuster
8. Kay Zivkovich
11. Ellen Fox
16. Beth DeVlaminck
21. Joan Pinegar
22. Lori Berry
23. Dorothy Zink
Roweena Kennedy
24. Steve Popyk
26. Theresa Pfromm
27. Edith Anthony

Happy Birthday to all those born in February.
If you would like to be added please contact the church office.



Ellsworth Anthony

Edith Anthony
Sanctuary at the Abbey
12250 E. 12 Mile Rd.
Warren 48093

Wanda & Wally Bailey
7700 Nemco Way #111
Brighton, Mi 48116

Ronald Coutts

Marilyn Dopp
14900 Shoreline Dr.
Sterling Heights 48313

Esther Hornyak

Margaret Kelly
6071 York Blvd.
Los Angeles CA 90042

Joan Newbury
Good Shepherd House
3801 Vanesta Dr.
Manhattan, KS 66503

Mae St. Clair

Susan Schlemmer
Shelby Nursing Center Room 406-B
46100 Schoenherr
Shelby Township MI 48315

Irene Stricker
Martha T. Berry Medical Care Center
43533 Elizabeth
Mt. Clemens 48043

Ann Sturner
14650 Lakeside Circle Apt. 3018
Sterling Heights 48313-1269

Dorothy Zink
Independence Village of Grand Ledge
4775 Village Dr. Apt 220
Grand Ledge 48837



Welcomers- 5 -H. Wolgast
12-J. Coleman's
19-Frangquists
22-Confirmation
26-K. Stephens

Ushers- Sue Regier, Dick Schuster

Anyone wanting to sign up to be a liturgist, usher, welcomer or sanctuary keeper and have never tried it before please speak with Pastor Terri. We are running low on names and it would be nice to add new faces to the list! When at church please check the list! The secretary will no longer insert names. Please fill in spots as you are able.



2012 Offering Envelopes

Envelopes are in.
You may pick them up in the educational wing.



Women's Fellowship Chit-Chat

It was a beautiful day and we only had 10 women and one brave man for our over-all meeting. When I talked to Sandy Stilwell about lunch I was being optimistic and said probably about 20. We had enough pizza and salad to feed many more.

Due to technical difficulties Pastor Terri could not show the film on O&A downstairs, so we moved up to the library and enjoyed lunch while watching the film.

We did pass the calendar and budget for the year. The budget was raised by \$100.00. So we will have to work a little bit harder and have 2 good rummage sales.

We decided to sell knives to possibly help defray the cost of the fabric for this years quilt.

Sunday, February 5th is Women's Sunday, so we will be doing the service and Consistory will be doing coffee hour. Who knows it just might be sliders Sunday. Please plan to attend.

**In Christian love,
Sally Paczkowski, Secretary**



Has anyone ever told you that you have excellent penmanship? Do you have a few hours to spare that you might be willing to hand write dedications inside the new red pew bibles on sticker bookplates? We just need someone who writes well to accept this call to ministry. Please speak to the pastor if you are willing



When bringing in food for the pantry, please check expiration dates on items such as dry goods, milk based products etc. Canned goods last longer than their expiration dates, but should not be given out two years after the expiration date. Dry goods cannot be given out with dates that have expired. Thank you for supplying food to our pantry. We could use the following:

Cereal
Jelly
Peaches
Peanut Butter
Soups
Tuna



A WINTER GIFT

The bleak winter months can be an especially difficult time for those who are alone. Many of our older and disabled neighbors are isolated and looking for a special friend who can drop by every week or two to chat, read mail, go out for coffee, or just let them know that someone cares. If you have just a few hours each month that you can give to someone who has no one, you can make a real difference in the life of a frail or homebound neighbor. Your special gift of time may turn into a very rewarding gift for you as well. For more information, call Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers at (586) 757-5552.



MUSIC FUND

For the last several months, because of a gift from a generous donor, we have been blessed to enjoy quite a bit of special music from Suzanna & Michael as well as from other soloists and even a liturgical dancer. If you would like to make a designated donation to our “Music Fund” so that we may continue to offer this as often as we have, you may do so at any time, by placing your donation marked as such, in the offering plate, or by sending a check into the office.



MEMBER BENEVELANT FUND

Your consistory has voted to use \$1000 of the memorial donation given in Fern Garner’s name by her family to begin a Benevolent Fund for church members who are in need. Clearly this will not go very far without additional funding. If you feel called to contribute to this fund at any time you may do so. And if you are in need of a bit of help with prescription costs or to pay a utility bill or anything else, please speak to the pastor. This is a pastoral discretionary fund that will remain confidential.



AND THE RESULTS ARE....

The surveys taken at the annual meeting regarding Opening and Affirming have been tabulated and here are the results:

- **96%** of the respondents agree that St. Paul welcomes **EVERYONE** into the full life and leadership of the church **INCLUDING** persons of “all sexual orientations, gender identities expressions” (or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and those questioning).
- **54%** of the respondents agreed that St. Paul should become an officially designated **ONA** congregation. **30%** need more time or will go along with a consensus and **16%** said no.
- **82%** feel comfortable or very comfortable broadening an **ONA** statement to include the following: every race, ethnic background, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability or health concern, social and economic situation, marital status and faith background. We welcome all to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities and blessing of participation in our congregation. **14%** are unsure or ambivalent and **4%** are uncomfortable,
- Most respondents indicated which educational events they would find interesting. While every type of event garnered some votes, the front runners were guest speakers (23), the experience of other churches (28), and movies (23). Sadly, eight respondents indicated that they would not attend any educational events at all. The following is where additional interests lie: Bible study (16), Panel discussions (16), Book study (10), Personal testimonies (17), Medical experts (17).

The Open and Affirming Discernment Team will be using the information from the survey, and other feedback from the congregation, as this initiative moves forward. It should be noted that we received 50 responses to the survey, nearly half the active number in our congregation (103)!

Gail Popyk



The season of Lent at St. Paul will begin with an Ash Wednesday light supper (6:30) and worship service with imposition of ashes (7pm) on February 22nd.

On the first Sunday of Lent, Feb 26, a one hour adult forum will be offered following worship to generate a list of scripture passages from which Pastor Terri may choose to plan a Lenten Bible study to address what scripture has to say about sexuality, gender, and inclusiveness and how it informs our faith. If you have a particular passage that you would like to understand better, please come and let us know so that we may include it in our study.

On the next five Wednesdays in Lent, (2/29, 3/7, 3/14, 3/21, 3/28) we will gather in the sanctuary for a brief worship service at 7:00 followed by a bible study in the library on the passages that are generated at the adult forum on the 26th. While you are welcome to attend either the worship service or the bible study, it is our hope that you will participate in both, so that we might have a deeper conversation.