



ST PAUL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

January 2014



The Pastor's Study

It's that time of year again! Yup! **New Year's Resolution** time. Like many of you, I am hesitant to even make a resolution, because my track record for keeping them is so abysmal. Thankfully, God is not as hard on me about keeping my faith promises, as I am with myself about keeping my resolutions. I guess that's where Grace abounds. But here's the thing – even though we know we may fail more often than we succeed, that doesn't mean we stop trying, does it? It doesn't mean we stop setting goals or resolving to do better, especially in our lives of faith. The following adaptation of the familiar serenity prayer is a reminder that while we are certainly NOT God, with God's help we can always do better. Happy New Year everyone!

A New Serenity Prayer by Jim Manney

God grant me the serenity
to accept the people I cannot change,
which is pretty much everyone,
since I'm clearly not you, God.
At least not the last time I checked.

And while you're at it, God,
please give me the courage
to change what I need to change about myself,
which is frankly a lot, since, once again,
I'm not you, which means I'm not perfect.
It's better for me to focus on changing myself
than to worry about changing other people,
who, as you'll no doubt remember me saying,
I can't change anyway.

Finally, give me the wisdom to just shut up
whenever I think that I'm clearly smarter
than everyone else in the room,
that no one knows what they're talking about except me,
or that I alone have all the answers.
Basically, God, grant me the wisdom
to remember that I'm not you. Amen

Jim Manney is a popular writer on Ignatian topics (God Finds Us, A Simple, Life-Changing Prayer) as well as the editor of many books on Ignatian spirituality, including What Is Ignatian Spirituality? He lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

With Love in Christ, Pastor Terri



NOTES FROM THE CONSISTORY PRESIDENT



The Consistory met on Tuesday, December 10.

The Confirmands did an excellent job as being Liturgists. Confirmation classes are going well.

The Church roof will be complete once we get a break in the weather. One week was extremely cold, then the snow, and Christmas. I talked to the roofer and they should begin work after the first of the year, when the weather cooperates.

Lunch with Santa was another big success. All kids, young and old had a great time. There were fun activities, good food, and of course, Santa.

The Church of South India breakfast was great and we are all looking forward to the next one.

Don't forget your pledge cards. The Consistory is trying to budget for next year and it really helps if we know what the givings will be going into 2014.

Our annual meeting will be January 26. Also, if anybody is interested in joining the Consistory, please see anyone on the current Consistory.

Funds for next year are extremely low. There will be some very tough decisions going forward with our budget. The Consistory has been looking at ways to increase revenue and reducing some spending. We had some big expenses this past year with the roof and other building issues. I do not see that slowing down in 2014. The Consistory had created a fundraising committee to look at ways to increase our revenue and streamline them along with maybe new fundraisers. All Church members are needed for this committee as Consistory members do not have all the ideas. All are welcome to share their thoughts. Please see anyone on Consistory if you are interested.

Peace, Hope & Love, Erich Regier

NO Community Supper in January

See You February 5



Our church will again be hosting the Warming Center and it will be conducted from Sunday, February 23, 2014 through Sunday AM, March 2, 2014. To accomplish this task, we are in need of multiple volunteers to assist with the intake process, screening, food preparation, and supervision. The guests will only be admitted from 8-9 pm, so most volunteers will only need to be onsite from approximately 7:30-9:30 pm, unless they are working overnight or in the kitchen. Volunteers will also be needed after church on February 23 to put together the tables and screens in the basement dining room and hallway, as well as putting together the bedding packs. **If you are willing to volunteer, please contact Marge Murrell at church or by calling 586/415-0648.**

On Sunday, February 9th and Sunday, February 16th, we will have sign-up sheets in the library for any volunteers to indicate which days they can work and in what capacity, similar to what were used in past years. Again this year, Barbara Stephens has volunteered to handle all the food preparation/coordination. We again need both monetary donations and actual food donations to provide the dinners and breakfast meals for the week.

There will be a sign-up sheet on the blacktop on the same above two Sundays to indicate what food items you will be able to donate for the warming center week. Those items must be at the church no later than Sunday, February 23rd. **Please contact Barbara at 586/268-3232 in regards to any donations and volunteers to assist with food preparation.** Any monetary donation checks should be made out to St. Paul UCC but earmarked for the warming center expenses.

We also will be collecting new white athletic socks and underwear for both men and women (sizes medium to large). These items will be given to our guests during the week, as needed, and must be donated by February 23rd.

Please mark your calendars and plan to help us as you are able. We cannot do this without you.

Edith Anthony

Margaret Kelly

Susan Schlemmer

Walter Bailey

Mae St Clair

Irene Stricker

SHUT INS

Marilyn Dopp

Joan Pinegar

Dorothy Zink

Esther Hornyak

Anne Pyciak





The **Lunch with Santa** program was a great success again this year. After pictures with Santa, a great kid's lunch menu, visits to the train and nativity rooms, making ornaments and hand prints, and decorating cookies, the day ended with a profit of \$523. Since the program is an outreach to the community, this money was sent to the Gleaner's program that provides children's weekend backpacks of food. We were especially blessed this year, as the donation was made to Gleaner's during the time funds were being matched – thus doubling the effective gift. Thank you to everyone who shared in the work and joy of making this project such a success!

In Memory

Our deepest condolences are extended to Margery Studnicki's family
(Darcy Sufnar's mother)

Joint Service &
Taking Down the
Greens w/CSI

Sunday, Jan 12 at 11 am



The work of Christmas
by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.

RETHINKCHURCH

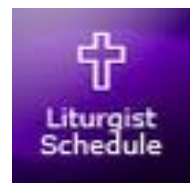
An "adult mitten & glove tree" will be available for your donations on the black countertop. All donations will be given to *Anne's Mitten*

Tree. They will be available for our guests during the Warming Center that we are hosting in February.



January Liturgists

5 Gail Popyk
12
19
26



January

5 Kathy Hefley
12 Lauren Byars
13 Irene Stricker
15 Loretta Miller
26 Vera Galvin
30 Wally Paczkowski

If you would like to be added to the birthday list or we have incorrectly listed you, please let Maria know.



AN OPPORTUNITY FOR STEWARDSHIP (AND IT WON'T COST YOU A CENT)!

Here's the plainspoken truth: most of you are giving as much as you can afford to support the ministry and mission of our congregation, and yet we are still failing to meet our needs without having to cash in our investments. We know you would give more if you could, but you probably can't, or you would already be doing it. The good news is there is a way for you (**yes, you!**) to help generate additional income for St. Paul to supplement the fundraising events already offered each year. Won't you prayerfully consider chairing a "new" fundraising event? Lots of folks will gladly help, but we need to generate new ideas with new leadership, so that we don't completely burn out our long-time members who are frankly overburdened organizing the events we already hold. Please share your ideas with the pastor or a member of consistory. We invite you to think outside of the box and be creative. Let's bring some new energy and joyful enthusiasm to our stewardship efforts here at St. Paul!

JOIN MEIJER COMMUNITY REWARDS!



We are excited to announce we have found one way to help us generate some extra funds. It is Meijer Community Rewards, a program designed for schools and religious groups offered through Meijer!

Simply shop at Meijer, and we will automatically receive cash rewards from your purchases! First, you have to join Meijer Community Rewards. It's free and can be done on-line at Meijer.com/rewards.

Enrolled members then pay for their Meijer purchases with cash or a PIN-debit card and their Meijer 1 Card or with their Meijer Credit Card.

This program has proven to make a significant impact in serving other nonprofit organizations - ours will be no different. The sooner you join, the sooner we will begin receiving rewards! So please, apply today! Here are steps to enroll in this program:

Join in the store with your Meijer Credit Card: supporters can join in the store when you apply for a Meijer Credit Card. If approved for instant credit, you can earn rewards that same day. You can also apply online at Meijer.com/creditcard

Join on the Internet to receive a Meijer 1 Card and keytags: Join online and receive a Meijer 1 Card and keytags within 2 weeks. (The Meijer 1 Card is the store customer card, not a credit card).

Join by mail: supporters can join by completing and mailing an application (found on the black countertop). You will receive your Meijer 1 Card in approximately 3 weeks.

Our 6-digit code number for you to use when joining is **685094**. This number has to be used to link your account to SPUCC to receive the benefits of this program. Thank you for your support.

I am excited to announce the addition of 3 new choir members. Starting in January, the choir will be singing the first **Sunday** of the month. This will allow folks who do not wish to make the weekly commitment to the choir to participate once a month. The rehearsal will be the Thursday before the first Sunday of the month. Please join us for a rehearsal on Thursday, January 30th for Sunday, February 2nd.

Also coming in January, I will begin my Music Fundamentals class on Saturday, January 11th from 11am to 12pm in the choir room. The class is designed for anyone who wishes to learn about music reading, theory and history.

Hope to see you there!

Suzanna Canales, Music Director





It is standard in the United Church of Christ (and in many other denominations as well) to offer the pastor a 3 month Sabbatical after every five years of ministry. The purpose of this time away depends upon the needs of the pastor and is planned with representatives of the congregation. Not intended to be an extended vacation, it is a time for rest and spiritual renewal to revitalize the pastor for

continued ministry. Last spring, Pastor Terri, Dick Schuster, Lisa Kennedy and Penny Lowes worked on a grant proposal requesting funds from the Lilly Foundation to provide funding for educational and travel opportunities for the pastor and to help cover pastoral leadership in the congregation during her absence. Unfortunately the grant wasn't approved and so a substantially stripped down version is being planned. Keeping in mind that Pastor will continue to receive her full salary and benefits while she is on her renewal leave, the congregation will be asked to help provide the funding for a part-time interim sabbatical pastor in her absence. Consistory has already approved hiring a licensed pastor two Sunday's a month (the first and third Sunday), and is hoping our seminarian, Bonnie Meek, an active member of St. Paul UCC, will be given authorization by the Detroit Metropolitan Association Church & Ministry Mission Area team to fill that role. Other Sundays will be covered by our members who enjoy preaching (and are so good at it!). We will also be looking for folks to join our Pastoral Care Team (led by Barbara Stephens and Diane Schuster) to call on our shut-ins and members who are in the hospital or who request a visit.

You are invited to prayerfully consider making a donation to the St. Paul Sabbatical Fund to cover these additional operations costs in 2014. Please also consider offering to preach one Sunday (a sign-up sheet will be on the black countertop soon) or serve on the expanded Pastoral Care team. Your gifts, however you choose to make them, will be a blessing to us all.

Below are the plans for Pastor's Sabbatical, along with the additional expenses St Paul will incur to support it. Pastor Terri will leave be on leave May, June, July and half of August – using three weeks of her vacation time in addition to her renewal leave.

INTERIM PASTORAL SUPPLY (QUARTER-TIME)

HONORARIA: \$1,200 for pulpit supply and occasional pastoral emergency response.

This covers pulpit supply on the first and third Sundays of the month (\$150 x 8 – May, June, July, August) and occasional pastoral emergencies that cannot be handled by the St Paul Care team. Several local ordained UCC clergy will be on call to officiate at funerals (Honorarium to be paid by family).

TRAVEL EXPENSES: \$200+/- Mileage to and from pastoral emergencies for the Interim Sabbatical Pastor.

PASTOR'S ITINERARY AND EXPENSES (partially covered by continuing education funds and by a generous gift from a member of the congregation)

May – Pastor has been gifted with a member's cottage in Michigan to spend the first month of her sabbatical in retreat and study of 21st Century Progressive Evangelism **\$100** for books.

June – Pastor will spend the month in Boston reconnecting with family. No funding requested.

July – Pastor may drive to Colorado to visit relatives and see the countryside along the way (tentative-no funding requested).

August – Network of Biblical Storytellers trip to Asheville, NC with Rev. Penny Lowes **\$1,200 (a gift has been made to cover the cost of this trip).**

NOBS Festival Gathering registration (\$350)

3 nights lodging and meals while attending the NOBS Festival Gathering in NC (\$350)

4 nights hotel while traveling (shared) (\$200)

Meals while traveling (\$40 a day x 4) (\$160)

Gas and tolls shared (\$140)

Total funding still needed: \$1,400-\$1,500 approximately

SEVEN LIES ABOUT CHRISTIANITY by Stephen Mattson

Christianity is great, but not everything we say or believe about it is necessarily true. Here are the most common stereotypes that Christians have about Christianity that are wrong:

You're Always Happy

There's an unhealthy expectation within many faith communities that we're always supposed to be joyful, as if being anything other than a smiling, peaceful, and jolly spiritual cheerleader is detrimental to Christianity.

"Being a good witness" is often the Christian way of saying, "act the part." But while contentment and happiness is a spiritual virtue, it should never come at the expense of honesty, transparency, and truthfulness. We shouldn't pretend to be happy and use the facade of joy as an evangelism tool.

God desires reconciliation and renewal, and this often means confronting broken relationships and dealing with sin within our lives. Asking for forgiveness, admitting addiction, confronting abuse, seeking justice, requesting help, and serving others often makes you the opposite of happy — and that's OK.

There's a season for everything, and some of life's most important, loving, and holy moments are times of trial, sorrow, and sadness — so let's stop trying to turn Christianity into something it was never meant to be.

Your Problems Will Disappear

Some people use Christianity as a form of escapism, a crutch, and a way to avoid the pain, suffering, and struggles of life. But at the center of Jesus' life and teaching is (again) the concept of truth. Christianity isn't about ignoring reality but embracing it, engaging the real world and all the baggage that comes with it.

In many ways, following Jesus causes us to accept — and confront — the facts, whether they are good or bad. We shouldn't hide or pretend or ignore difficulties, but address them.

A faith in Christ requires honesty and bravery, and it demands sacrifice, service, and heartbreak. The New Testament shows us that Jesus' disciples faced even more problems when they decided to follow him: persecution, poverty, and ultimately martyrdom.

No, our problems won't disappear, but a relationship with God is worth the accompanying struggles that may come with it.

You'll Be "Blessed"

If you're seeking wealth, prosperity, comfort, and security, Christianity isn't the place to go.

Contrary to our consumer tendencies, Jesus' teachings continually instruct believers to sacrifice and be willing to give everything away for the sake of loving others. The disciples of Jesus lived a dangerous and hard life that continually relied on the hospitality and generosity of others. They often ended up in jail or were even killed because of their faith.

Some of the most holy and righteous people I know have lives that are extremely rough and filled with all sorts of trouble. Disease, sickness, poverty, crime, abuse, and a litany of other horrible things happen to good people — even Christians who passionately love God.

Does this mean that they don't trust God enough or aren't being good Christians? No! Our faith isn't a pathway toward gaining an array of physical, financial, or social blessings — it's not a formula for worldly success, so let's stop treating it like one.

Missions and Ministry Is Fun and Rewarding

Don't get me wrong, it often is rewarding, but from the time we're in Sunday school throughout high school and college, and even as adults, we're told that "missions" and "ministry" and "evangelism" is fun, exciting, and rewarding. We go on exotic mission trips, work at car washes to raise money for local charities, and spend a day volunteering at the homeless shelter. Most of us then have the luxury of going home, back to our "regular" lives.

Missions and ministry is hard work. There's a reason the burnout rate is absurdly high for people whose primary vocation is ministry-related. Pastors and missionaries are considered high-risk candidates within the medical community because of their susceptibility to addiction, stress, and abuse. It's not an easy life.

Being a full-time missionary and minister requires constant service, with very little recognition and plenty of conflict. Combine this with long hours, low pay, and hardly any respectability, and it's an existence that few can handle.

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But within our churches and Christian institutions, we glorify the idea of serving others without presenting an accurate or truthful picture of what it really looks like or requires from us. Instead of telling the horror stories of relational conflict, emotional pain, and physical turmoil, we're fed stories of revival, spiritual renewal, and miraculous wonders. That's great, but in many cases it gives us false expectations of what ministry honestly looks like.

We need to start portraying ministry accurately instead of marketing it as some sort of superficial fun-filled adventure. And for those already within ministry, we need to give them all the support and encouragement they deserve.

All Your Questions Will Be Answered

Christianity is full of doubt, uncertainty, nuance, and complexity. There are very few clear answers, and the ones that exist are debated among hundreds of theologians. For those seeking resolutions to life's deepest questions and mysteries, Christianity will provide some clarity, but ultimately it leaves much to the imagination.

As believers, we need to start accepting the fact that we don't know everything. When we try to turn the Bible into a set of answers to all of the world's challenges and questions, we end up manipulating the message of Christ and forming it into our own agendas just to appease our curiosity or quell the objections of others.

The Christian Community Is Great

Many people leave the Christian faith not because they hate Jesus, but because they hate the people who represent him. Christians hurt people. They fight, argue, yell, scream, and do horrible things.

Nobody knows this better than Christians themselves, who routinely suffer through denominational splits, church infighting, community gossip, and an avalanche of interpersonal conflicts.

Christians aren't better than anyone else. The divorce rates, crime rates, and other "moral" comparative data show little difference between them and the rest of the world. So let's stop pretending Christians have the market corner on what's right and wrong.

We need to start listening and talking with others instead of self-righteously judging and convicting others. There's a reason why you can't look across a mall and point out who's a Christian and who isn't — because there's no noticeable difference.

It Makes You Better Than Others

This is the hardest truth for Christians to swallow, that they aren't any better than anyone else. In fact, Jesus continually tried to instill the virtues of humility and humbleness throughout his ministry, repeatedly trying to teach his followers that everyone was loved by God, regardless of social, financial, or spiritual status.

When we see ourselves as superior, we become like the Pharisees, who craved power and control and authority. But God, the ruler of the world, made himself nothing, and died on a cross for the sake of others — for the sake of those who were in the process of murdering him! Are we willing to become nothing for the sake of others, even for those we dislike?

The problem with romanticizing Christianity is that we turn our faith into a product, using various selling points to make it look more attractive. It's not that the above headlines are entirely false, it's just that Christians publicize them as being entirely true. This creates false expectations and idols, and inevitably leads to disappointment and sense of failure.

Instead of promoting Christianity as a set of benefits, we need to promote Christ. In the end, when everything else fails and falls short, Jesus will remain faithful through it all. We can trust him above any form of religion we attempt to turn Christianity into.

Stephen Mattson has contributed for Relevant Magazine and the Burnside Writer's Collective, and studied Youth Ministry at the Moody Bible Institute. He is now on staff at Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minn. Follow him on Twitter @mikta. <http://sojo.net/blogs/2013/12/03/seven-lies-about-christianity-which-christians-believe>



January 2014
REGIER

If you are not able to attend church, a recording of the service is available. Please call the office and Maria will make a copy and leave it for you on the black countertop. We can also mail you a copy if you are unable to pick it up. You will need a CD player to listen to it.