



# ST PAUL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

March 2015



**LET THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDITATIONS OF MY HEART  
BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT,  
O GOD, MY ROCK AND SALVATION.” (Psalm 19:4)**

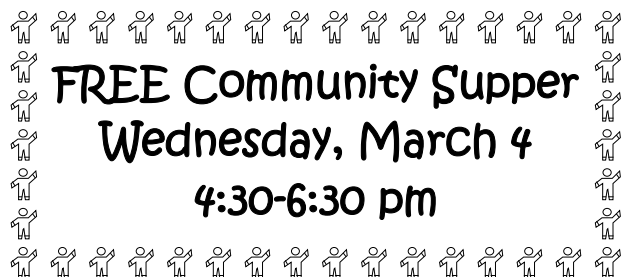
The Pastor's Study

How many times have you heard a preacher say this verse aloud before he or she begins her sermon? It is not something I do very often, but I assure you that it is always my prayer I write my sermon meditation each week and prepare to stand before you to lead worship. Truly, we would all do well to pray these words each and every day before and during all our interactions – with others or even within ourselves to silence that relentlessly self-critical voice we all have.

Last night during the Bible study I have with some of our Warming Center Guests, one beautiful young woman shared about a time in her life that was so horrific, she tried to end her life by slicing open her arms with glass she had broken out of a window. What stopped her? She heard her mother’s voice say – “If you take your life you will go straight to hell! God will condemn you for taking the life he gave you.” And so the fear of that eternal torment stopped her. She spoke somberly, yet unemotionally, and it was so clear that this was not only a terrible one time experience, but something she wrestled with frequently. She spoke a bit longer and several others in the group affirmed her decision and our time was nearly up. It is often difficult to decide when to challenge another’s belief, but before we closed in prayer I asked her this question: “Was it only your fear of hellfire that stopped you from taking your life?” I didn’t give her the chance to answer, but continued: “What if there is no place of eternal damnation? What if hell doesn’t exist? What then? Because the God I have come to know created us each one in LOVE and would never abandon us – here on earth or in whatever exists beyond. Never forget that you are a beloved child of God. Can you let that be the reason you choose to live.” As I spoke those words, her eyes never left mine even as the tears rolled silently down her cheeks. Sitting behind her, her husband lifted her head, his own eyes filled with tears and mouthed the words, “thank you.”

Now tonight is another night and I might get a whole slew of arguments about the existence of hell, but last night, I have no doubt that the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart in that moment was fully acceptable to God. And that the blessing was palpably real for everyone at that table – especially me. How I thank God for those moments in ministry.

**Continued on Page 3**

 **FREE Community Supper**  
**Wednesday, March 4**  
**4:30-6:30 pm**



### **March Birthdays**

- 1 Herman Wolgast (90!!!!)**
- 15 Erwin Regier**
- 23 Tommy Council**
- 26 Kelly Stephens**

## NOTES FROM THE CONSISTORY



We held our February Consistory meeting and for the first time in a while, we didn't have anybody new join it.

Financials continue to be reviewed. We have a few big insurance bills that will need to get paid.

The new circuit breaker box is installed and everything is working. The lobby fan motor is back working again as well. We continue to monitor and try to get things fixed as they appear. Please let Gary or myself know if you see something not working by dropping a note in our mailbox outside of the church office.

We continue to look at renting space throughout the Educational Building in an effort to bring in some additional funding.

Community Dinners have been going really well. The food has been outstanding. Thank you to Barbara Stephens and her helpers for putting on such wonderful suppers.

The New Beginnings workshops will be starting shortly. We are still looking to hold a Wednesday evening workshop for people that cannot meet on Sunday afternoon. Please sign up if you can.

The Warming Center is currently going on. We have some great help and with the exception of some bathroom issues, things are running somewhat smoothly.

We had a nice Ash Wednesday service with a delicious small supper beforehand.

The Good Friday Service will be held at The United Methodist Church of Warren on Chicago Rd.

Our Rummage Sale will be March 21. The room is looking full and we should have a great sale.

***Peace, Hope & Love, Erich Regier***

**1ST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH  
Joyful Noisy Offering  
Don't Forget Your Change!!!**



### March

- | 1 Cindy Weiler
- | 8 Darcy Sufnar
- | 15 Dick Schuster
- | 22 Gail Popyk
- | 29 Brent Grawburg



## The Pastor's Study

### Continued from Page 1

In the book Holy Adventure: 41 Days of Audacious Living, Bruce Epperly offers an alternative vision to Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Life. In it he charts a variety of biblical affirmations and encourages folks to repeat several times daily the ones that resonate (...) especially when we begin to doubt our giftedness and self-worth or our acceptability before God. Here are several he has found spiritually transformative, based on biblical wisdom:

I am created in God's image. (Genesis 1:27)

Wherever I am, God is with me. (Psalm 139:7)

I am awesomely and wonderfully created. (Psalm 139:14)

I give light and seasoning to the world around me. (Matthew 5:13-16)

I am the light of the world; I give like to those around me. (Matthew 5:14)

I see Christ in the least of these. (Matthew 25:40)

God's light shines in and through me. (John 1:9)

I am open to God's transformation. (Romans 12:2)

The good work God has begun in my life, God will bring to fulfillment. (Philippians 1:6)

I am guided by the mind of Christ. (Philippians 2:5)

I work out my wholeness with awe and energy. (Philippians 2:12)

I shine like a star in the sky. (Philippians 2:15)

I focus on the positive in life. (Philippians 4:8)

I can do all things with Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

God will supply all my needs. (Philippians 4:19)

Christ is in me, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:28)

May we remember these affirmations when we are in the midst of our own struggles. May we be willing to share them with others when we are given a glimpse of theirs.

With love in Christ, Pastor Terri



Mable Adamson

Esther Hornyak

Joan Pinegar

Susan Schlemmer

Edith Anthony

Ruth MacRae

Anne Pyciak

Dorothy Zink

Marilyn Dopp

Virginia Park

Mae St Clair



Dear Members of St. Paul UCC,

It seems that I've been relying on inspirational excerpts I've come across lately in order to convey a message to you. This month won't be much different. I have a beautiful passage from Marianne Williamson I'd like to share. Recently, I've discovered a little of who she is. I hope you enjoy.



"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."  
- *Former Renaissance Unity speaker/pastor in Warren MI, Marianne Williamson*

This truly speaks volume to me. In my own life, I've run into many times of feeling unworthy, especially towards God. This allowed me to justify my foolishness. I can almost guarantee I'm not alone in this. Now, as life has progressed while incarcerated, my sense of worth has increased substantially.

I know that there is divine purpose in living and I'll encounter this purpose as I continue to grow. This place has the intention of causing feelings of unworthiness. Yet, this is the place where I've gained the most fortitude in my life thus far. This results in worth. One of the greatest things I've learned is that everyone has worth. Although we all may not be walking in it, there is worth. And on this path, when my perspective is in right standing, there are multiple blessings and lessons. Once again I must say, I am very excited for life.

Let us share in this excitement and welcome the many more things to come!

*Sincerely, Brandon*

If you would like to write to Brandon or send him a card, his address is:

**Ebel, #752523  
Thumb Correctional Facility  
3225 John Conley Drive  
Lapeer, MI 48446**



Despite the snow on the ground, bitter cold temperatures, and the wind chill, the first day of spring (Fri, March 20) is not too far away. Remember to turn your clocks ahead one hour on March 8.

If you would like to supply altar flowers in honor or memory of a loved one, please sign up on the altar flower chart on the black countertop.



**HOME BOUND**

Anne Pyciak  
 Edith Anthony  
 Virginia Park  
 Margaret Kelly  
 Marilyn Dopp  
 Mable Adamson  
 Esther Hornyak  
 Susan Schlemmer  
 Mae St. Clair  
 Joan Pinegar  
 Dorothy Zink  
 Residents of Evangelical Home  
 & Other Residences

**CANCER**

Bonnie Fagon  
 Barbara Delmoral  
 Shirley (Anne)  
 Jean  
 Donna  
 Eugene Hardy  
 Lynn  
 Tom (Lisa)  
 Carol  
 Linda  
 Anna (Bonnie M)  
 Nancy (Barb M)  
 Lillian (Barb M)  
 Ruthie Howell (Pastor)  
 Howard Dubois  
 Karen (Barb M)  
 Sherry Schact  
 Irene  
 Marian (Bendik) Yaeger

**PLEASE PRAY FOR**

Tommy Council (Mable's grandson)  
 Brandon Ebel & Family  
 Peggy McDevitt  
 Eden Gibbs (Kathleen R)  
 Lilianna (kidney transplant-14 years old)  
 Margaret (Barb M)  
 Reva Brezin-Prosnitz (ongoing kidney problems & permanent dialysis)  
 Dick Weiler  
 Rev. Gene McCornack  
 Dan Steeves  
 SPUCC Community Supper  
 City of Detroit Water Shut Off's  
 Those Serving our Country  
 Washington Decision Makers  
 Michigan's People & Economy  
 People Who Seek/Need a Church  
 Safety for People of the World  
 People in Seminary and In Discernment  
 PFLAG  
 Ruth Ellis Center  
 The Warming Center  
 Sacred Conversation on Race



We continually strive to keep our prayer lists updated. We are familiar with most of the people on our lists, but not all. Many people on our cancer list are our members' friends or family members. If you know someone on our lists, please take a moment and let Barb Stephens or Cindy Weiler know how they are doing. Thank you for your help.

New additions will be lifted up during our community prayer time in worship and at Monday morning prayer. Each Monday, updated copies will be available on the black countertop. Emergency requests will continue to be called down the prayer chain as they are received. The names on our HOME BOUND and CANCER lists will be ongoing. The names on our PLEASE PRAY FOR list will remain on for a month. If a name is removed and you would like it to continue on the list, please let Maria know.

## St. Paul UCC Joins the 21<sup>st</sup> Century With Lenten Services via Conference Call

We will gather weekly by telephone for a 20 minute conference call at 12:00 noon eastern time on **WEDNESDAYS** during the month of **MARCH** for a brief Lenten reflection, scripture and prayer. Whether you are at home, traveling or are able to take a few moments at work during your lunch break, we invite you to join us for this innovative worship experience.



### Call-In Directions

Dial the following number at 12:00 Noon EST

**712/775-7031**

When prompted enter the following Meeting ID on your touch tone telephone

**886-804-622**

When asked to introduce yourself, state your name

### **IMPORTANT**

You may use either your home phone or your cell phone, but long distance charges by each caller's carrier will apply. (Most cell phones have unlimited long distance, but check to see if your home phone does.)



## SPRING RUMMAGE SALE SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2015

8 am - 9 am

Early Bird Sale

\$1 admission

9 am - 3 pm

Free Admission

2 pm - 3 pm

Stuff a Bag for \$2

Donuts & Coffee/Homemade Soup & Bread  
Lunch/Bake Sale/Carry Outs

## Experience the Journey

*Fr. Richard Rohr*

The Bible is a record of Jewish and early Christian experience of God's gradual self-revelation. The Great Mystery can only be absorbed in small doses. But it is always based on someone's *experience*. The book did not fall from heaven in a Glad Bag. It was written by people listening to God. The Hebrew Scriptures (otherwise known as the Old Testament) were written by the people of Israel, God's "Chosen People" over maybe as much as a thousand years. It was not so much that God loved Israel more than all the other peoples of the earth, but somehow they were a people who were slowly trained in *how to listen to and to hear* God speaking--through very secular and political events of their history. And although God called and used individuals, it was always the whole of Israel that God was liberating and loving. Our exclusively anthropocentric and individualized notion of salvation comes much later, and is a major loss and regression.

In the stories of the Hebrew people we see Yahweh gradually revealing the God Self to be the hope and promise of Israel. Their history became an illustration of how God works on earth, leading them forward into an ever-greater unity and maturity as a community of faith--but finally for the salvation of all the nations (Isaiah 45)!

Then why, you may well be wondering, has the Bible seemingly caused so much strife and division in the world? Indeed, the Scriptures are both the best book in the world and the worst book in the world. They are the worst when they are used for bullying and self-satisfaction. They are the best when they are used for the healing of the world and for the transformation of the self. It all depends on how we read them and how we use them. *The "who" that you bring to the Bible will determine "how" you understand it and how you use it.*

The Bible was written in faith and it can be understood only in faith. In other words, it cannot be read cynically (liberals) nor literally (conservatives), which are merely two different forms of rationalism to keep ourselves in control. Our faith is not in the *words* of the Bible. Our faith is in the Triune God who is very subtly and slowly revealing the Divine Mystery in space and time--and yes through words and stories, parables and biographies.

The Bible is not an answer book, so we can somehow "know" God as an intellectual exercise. It is only in walking the journey of faith, hope, and love itself that we come to know the real answers. As the Spanish poet Antonio Machado wrote, *"No hay camino, se hace camino al andar"* ("There is no road, the road is made by walking.")! Thus Biblical answers are not usually direct answers. They are hardly ever "head" answers. They are most often "heart," "gut," and "soul" answers. They are first of all meaning and vitality. For what we really seek and what we deeply need--and all that God finally promises us--*is meaning and life*, and that is not at all the same as giving answers! In fact, too-quick answers normally destroy depth, meaning, inner vitality, deep purpose, and very often, compassion and patience too.

Adapted from *The Great Themes of Scripture: Old Testament*, pp. 1-5 (published by Franciscan Media)

We thank you all for the cards, telephone calls and prayers offered by the members of our church family during this challenging time. It is through these and other types of assistance that we have been able to get through one of life's most difficult periods. You have truly shown us the love of Christ, and we are grateful.

***Gail and Steve Popyk***





*Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.*

C S Lewis

### **SCHEDULE & SIGN-UP FOR SMALL GROUP GATHERINGS**

You are invited to participate in our six-session small group gatherings. It is important to remember that the small group discussions are NOT meant to SOLVE PROBLEMS. That kind of conversation will only lead to small incremental progress and will not get St Paul UCC where we need to go. Instead, the goal is to engage in conversation that realistically describes the conditions of our ministry, neighborhood, and community needs in order to discover our strengths and build upon them.

A Wednesday evening group will be offered beginning with Session 2, if at least 8 folks commit to attend, otherwise all three groups will meet on Sunday after worship (see schedule below). Because each session will include prayer and a brief devotion, on the Sundays we gather, Morning Worship will be shortened to 45 minutes, so we can begin each session at 11:00 am and end before 1:00 pm. The first week may be a little longer, since we will watch a video and share a light brunch together, before moving into our smaller groups for ease of discussion. You must attend this first session to receive the 80 page assessment report, which you will be encouraged to read in preparation for Session 2.

There is a sign-up sheet on the black countertop for the Wednesday evening group ONLY. Please let us know as soon as you are able if that group is your preference; otherwise we encourage you to attend one of the Sunday gatherings. Once you are in a particular group, we ask that you stay with that group for continuity of discussion. If missing a week is unavoidable, you will be provided with discussion summary notes before the next session.

Sun, Mar 8 <sup>th</sup>	Session 1: "Vitality and Discipleship"
Sun, Mar 22 <sup>nd</sup> or Wed, Mar 25 <sup>th</sup>	Session 2: "Interpreting the New Beginnings Assessment Report"
Sun, Apr 12 <sup>th</sup> or Wed, Apr 15 <sup>th</sup>	Session 3: "Examining Our Community"
Sun, Apr 26 <sup>th</sup> or Wed, Apr 29 <sup>th</sup>	Session 4: "Our Church in God's Mission"
Sun, May 17 <sup>th</sup> or Wed, May 20 <sup>th</sup>	Session 5: "Discovering Our Options"
Sun, May 31 <sup>st</sup> or Wed, June 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Session 6: "Navigating Change"



## Spring Rummage, Soup & Bake Sale Saturday, March 21, 2015

Guess what, it's the famous Rummage, Soup & Bake Sale this month! March 21<sup>st</sup> is the sale date; **SUNDAY, MARCH 15<sup>th</sup>** is "chain game" day (move rummage into the dining room).

We are in need of unwanted "treasures" for the sale. We also are planning a table for special "treasures."

Here's the schedule for the week:

Sunday, March 15	11:00 am	Chain Gang - Set up tables & racks in large dining room
Monday, March 16	9:00 am	Sorting
Tuesday, March 17	9:00 am	Sorting
Wednesday, March 18	9:00 am	Sorting and soup making
Thursday, March 19	9:00 am	Sorting (if needed)
	6:00 pm	Prepare the bread for baking
Friday, March 20	Very early	Bread baking
Saturday, March 21	8:00 am-3:00 pm	
<b>RUMMAGE SALE</b>		Arrive early to prepare for "early bird" sale

Don't forget to bake for the sale. Please mark the dates on the calendar and as always, WE WILL NEED YOUR HELP!!!!

*Blessings, Betty*

***Please Note:***

This year, we will be offering soup to our customers FIRST. Last year, we filled so many prior orders, we could only offer one quart to each customer. You may buy lunch the day of the rummage sale. After Easter, we will again make soup available to church people and prior orders. Bread will be available to all at both times.

On March 8 and 15, there will be a form in the bulletin that allows you to update your personal information before a new directory is printed in April. The form must be completed and returned to the office prior to March 22. You may drop it off in the basket on the black countertop or place it in the offering plate on Sunday morning. If you have any questions, please contact Maria in the church office.



## COVENANT

## ONA COVENANT NEWS

We haven't even had our first meeting of the year yet, given everyone's jam-packed schedules, but through a "virtual" meeting our team did vote to participate in our first scheduled activity of 2015. Once again, we will participate in Ferndale Pride. Pride is a family-friendly event which enables the LGBTQ community to demonstrate its creativity and positive nature in an atmosphere of joyousness and fun. Encompassing a 5K run, a street fair, art shows, special events, and well known entertainment figures, Pride offers a positive day of enjoyment for the entire family.

Once again, St. Paul will have a booth in the street fair. We are partnering with the First Congregational Church of Rochester in this effort, and possibly with Trinity St. Mark's, both of which partnered with us last year. We offer small, fun give-aways (if you got a temporary rainbow tattoo at the barbecue, you saw one of them) and tell passersby about the extravagant welcome of the United Church of Christ. Each of the three churches participating in our booth will also have material specific to our own congregations. This type of activity can take a few years to bring about results, but is one of the best ways to demonstrate our commitment to the LGBTQ community.

Pride is Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup> and takes place on W. 9 Mile Road in Ferndale from noon to 8:00 p.m. Members of the ONA Team will staff the booth, talking with folks who walk by and giving away our information and small gifts. We are always open to help with this activity from other members of the congregation – shifts are short (generally no more than two hours) and you have the opportunity to check out the rest of the fair, which is fun in itself. Alternatively, congregation members can simply attend Pride, which is free of charge. Want to show your own pride in St. Paul? If we have enough people interested, we may be able to place another order of the t-shirts that Beth DeVlaminck designed – check out the one hanging by the Fireside Room. I haven't checked with Beth yet on this, so no guarantees, but the t-shirt she designed is very cool and shows your pride in St. Paul. So even if you can't commit to working a shift at the booth, please check with me (Gail) and I will see if we have enough orders for another round of t-shirts. And if you can work the booth, I can promise you even more fun.....please just let know.

***Shirene Cece-Clements, Gail Popyk  
Team Co-Facilitators***

## CREATIVITY WANTED

Wanted: creative ideas for the ONA bulletin board in the educational wing lobby and/or for the ONA page of the church website. Ideas should be vibrant and illustrate the extravagant welcome of the United Church of Christ to all individuals, including but not limited to the LGBTQ community. Suggested ideas include current copies of newspaper and magazine articles and entries from social media, presuming these are not copyrighted. Information concerning the fight for social and legal equality are desirable but not required. Colorful or eye-catching nature a plus. No experience needed. Posting of items will be carried out by members of the ONA Team.



### ***One Great Hour of Sharing—Sunday, March 15, 2015***

For almost 70 years, the UCC has been making a difference, together—and glorifying God—through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering which funds relief and development all over the world and in the U.S. Together, we can achieve a fair balance, bringing about a world that God intended it to be.