



St. Paul's UMC of Odessa
Reaching Up Reaching In Reaching Out
Pastor Linda Ray, 406 Main Street, Odessa, DE 302-378-2420
www.stpaulsodessa.org, CCLI 11305346 and Streaming Lic. 21184487

Third Sunday of Advent

December 15, 2024, 8:30 AM ASL & Livestreaming
WE ENTER GOD'S GATES WITH PRAISE

WELCOME WITH MUSIC AND IMAGES

GATHERING MUSIC AND PHOTOS: Mark Holden - Photographer & Curator, Gail Garner, ASL Interpreter

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: Sharan Duren, Amber Duren, Jeff Mills

One: No matter what troubles overwhelm us today, Isaiah reminds us that in all of our preparation and passionate pursuit of God's coming kingdom, we must not forget that God's salvation has come and is coming.

Many: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). With joy you will remember that God's salvation is already present among us.

One: Faced with the troubles and the suffering of the world, we choose to live in joyful presence to God and one another.

Many: We will not turn away from the pain and the hurt in our world, and we will not stop rejoicing in God, whose salvation fills us to overflowing that God's love might flow through us and flood our troubled world with hope, peace, and joy.

Reader Two: We light this candle of joy as a sign of our commitment to be present to ourselves, our friends, our families, and our neighbors.

Many: As we are present with each other we might also share in the glorious joy of God's salvation together.

All Singing: O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

(*Please stand in body or in spirit)

Liturgist – Brian McNelis

*PRAISE AND WORSHIP:

Sanctuary

Black Hymnal 2164

*OPENING PRAYER: (all praying): **God of love and joy, thank you for your presence in our lives. During this time of worship, draw us closer to you and to one another. May we grow in our love for you and for our neighbor. May we lay aside our worries, trusting that you hear what lies in our hearts. May we dwell in your peace and be guided by the one who is to come, your Son, Jesus Christ. In your holy name we pray. Amen**

WORDS FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS:

Awesome God

Black Hymnal 2040

Brian McNelis shares a blessing with our children!

PASS THE PEACE: (safely share words and signs of blessing)

I Love You With The Love Of The Lord

Words and Music by Jim Golbert. CCLI Song #10130

I love you with the love of the Lord, yes, I love you with the love of the Lord. I can see in you the glory of my King, and I love you with the love of the Lord.

FIRST LESSON: *Zephaniah 4:13-20* (CEB)

Rejoice, Daughter Zion! Shout, Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem.

¹⁵ The Lord has removed your judgment;

he has turned away your enemy.

The Lord, the king of Israel, is in your midst;

- you will no longer fear evil.
- ¹⁶ On that day, it will be said to Jerusalem:
 Don't fear, Zion.
 Don't let your hands fall.
- ¹⁷ The Lord your God is in your midst—a warrior bringing victory.
 He will create calm with his love;
 he will rejoice over you with singing.
- ¹⁸ I will remove from you those worried about the appointed feasts.
 They have been a burden for her, a reproach.
- ¹⁹ Watch what I am about to do to all your oppressors at that time.
 I will deliver the lame;
 I will gather the outcast.
 I will change their shame into praise and fame throughout the earth.
- ²⁰ At that time, I will bring all of you back,
 at the time when I gather you.
 I will give you fame and praise among all the neighboring peoples
 when I restore your possessions and you can see them—says the Lord.

*GOSPEL LESSON: *Luke 7:18-28* (CEB)

John's disciples informed him about all these things. John called two of his disciples ¹⁹ and sent them to the Lord. They were to ask him, "Are you the one who is coming, or should we look for someone else?"

²⁰ When they reached Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you. He asks, 'Are you the one who is coming, or should we look for someone else?'"

²¹ Right then, Jesus healed many of their diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and he gave sight to a number of blind people. ²² Then he replied to John's disciples, "Go, report to John what you have seen and heard. *Those who were blind are able to see. Those who were crippled now walk. People with skin diseases are cleansed. Those who were deaf now hear. Those who were dead are raised up. And good news is preached to the poor.* ²³ Happy is anyone who doesn't stumble along the way because of me."

²⁴ After John's messengers were gone, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John. "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A stalk blowing in the wind? ²⁵ What did you go out to see? A man dressed up in refined clothes? Look, those who dress in fashionable clothes and live in luxury are in royal palaces. ²⁶ What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷ He is the one of whom it's written: *Look, I'm sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you.* ²⁸ I tell you that no greater human being has ever been born than John. Yet whoever is least in God's kingdom is greater than he."

One: May this story inspire us all. **ALL: To walk in the way that leads to life.**

HYMN OF PREPARATION: *More Love to Thee, O Christ* Red Hymnal 453

THE MESSAGE: "The Word Made Flesh—Rock Of Ages" Pastor Linda Ray

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (*You may speak aloud your joys and concerns.*)

WE GIVE THANKS

OFFERTORY REMINDERS

THE OFFERTORY: Today's **Yellow Hat** mission offering supports **Neighborhood House**.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (all praying): **Merciful God, it can be hard to follow your ways. We want to hold on to what we have. We want to mind our own business and ignore the needs of others. We want to follow the ways of the world and not your ways. Remind us that you offer us forgiveness and bring healing and redemption into our lives. Help us turn to you once again that we may receive the good news of your endless love and grace. Amen**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION:

Pastor Linda Ray
Communion Server – Brian McNelis
Communion Setting 2257-a

Reader 2 (singing) :The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

Reader 2: Lift up your hearts.

ALL: We lift them up to the Lord.

Reader 2: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

ALL: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Reader 1: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, Creator and ruler of the universe. You are our song! We rejoice and sing to you with gladness, for you have renewed us by your love, restoring the fortunes of the lost, gathering up the broken and despised, and giving them a home in glory. Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with choirs of angels with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and with all the faithful of every time and place and join their unending hymn:

Communion Setting 2257-b

ALL: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest!

Reader 2: You are holy O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Through Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, you have made us children of Abraham and Sarah, calling us to live with faithfulness, justice, and compassion.

(Lifting the bread) On the night in which Jesus gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Reader 1: (Lifting the cup) When the supper was over, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to the disciples, and said: “Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ’s offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Communion Setting 2257-c

ALL: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again! Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest!

Reader 2: Pour out your blessing upon this bread, O God. Wheat grown in the fields, and touched by yeast, becomes life-giving food. This bread is transformed by your love into the living presence of Jesus. Pour out your blessing upon this cup, juice from grapes grown in the sun. May we drink deeply of the forgiveness Jesus offers. Send your Spirit on this community, gathered her around your table. Guard our hearts and minds by the power of Christ Jesus. Speak to our anxieties with the peace that passes understanding and let our gentleness and joy be a sign of Christ’s gracious presence. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever.

Communion Setting 2257-d

ALL: Amen. Amen. Amen. Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest!

Reader 2: Let us join our hearts and voices in the prayer that God continues to teach us:

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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory Forever. AMEN.

COMMUNION SONG:

To Know You More

Black Hymnal 2161

(The congregation will come forward to partake of the bread and cup.)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY AND SERVICE

CLOSING MUSIC:

SERVING IN WORSHIP TODAY

Liturgist: Brian McNelis

Audio/Video: Charlii Miller, John Littell, John Cate, Carlotta Cline, Garrett Ray

Communion Server - Brian McNelis

Musicians: Duane Dillard – Minister of Music

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|----------------|
| Rev. Linda Driver Ray, Pastor | lindaray@vaumc.org | (540) 207-1787 |
| Bonnie Valeski, Admin. Asst. | bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org | (302) 378-2420 |
| Alice Mullins, Financial/Treasurer | stpodessa@stpaulsodessa.org | (302) 293-9956 |
| Duane Dillard, Minister of Music | duanedillard@gmail.com | (443) 593-2470 |
| Thomas Maloney, Director of Music | thomaseamaloney@gmail.com | (914) 450-0095 |
| Jin Kyung Seo, Organist/Accompanist | jinksblue@gmail.com | |

ANNOUNCEMENTS - THIS WEEK AT ST. PAUL'S

Sunday 12/15 Worship Services 8:30AM Livestreaming and ASL and 11AM, Adult & Children's Bible Study 9:45AM, Fellowship after the 11AM service to say farewell to Ann Raymond, Dingo & Dessert 3PM, Christmas Caroling 4:30 PM

Monday 12/16 Adult Bible Study 9AM

Tuesday 12/17 Cub Scouts 6PM, Leadership Mtg. 6:30 PM

Wednesday 12/18 4:30 ASL, TOPS Mtg 5:45 PM, Bells Rehearsal 6PM, Choir Rehearsal 7PM.

Thursday 12/19 Prayer and Praise Team 10 AM

Friday 12/20 Youth Group Christmas Party 7-9PM

Saturday 12/21 AA Mtg 7PM

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE: Will be held December 22, Sunday, at St. Paul's UMC with the MOT Ministerial Alliance at 3PM. Everyone is encouraged to attend when celebrating the season isn't a happy time for you. Blue Christmas recognizes those feelings and helps you to move toward joy.

DINGO & DESSERT: Sunday, December 15 at St. Paul's UMC 3-5PM. Play Dingo and enjoy desserts! Please bring one to share!

PLEASE BE AWARE!! The outside back steps are continuing to be a work in progress. For your safety, please do not cross or disturb the taped off areas.

FINANCE CHAIR NEWS: Finances through November 30, 2024, Melissa Brooks, Finance Chair

| | Actual YTD | Budget |
|----------|------------|-----------|
| Revenue | \$320,831 | \$268,524 |
| Expenses | \$299,902 | \$290,333 |

FINANCE/TREASURER-ALICE MULLINS NEWS: Stewardship pledge totals through December 3, 2024, for the 2025 Budget:

55 Pledges, Total Pledge Amount: \$201,869 Thank you to all who have so generously pledged so far!

COMPASSIONATE CARD MINISTRY: As our Compassionate Card Ministry reorganizes, we are extending an invitation to anyone who would like to become a part of this ministry. We meet during the year to make the beautiful cards you receive; it is always fun! It is through our dedicated members that we can keep this ministry going. At this time, we need additional members who can help us to make the cards and be our writers and

senders of these cards. For more information, please contact Jen Rodriguez at 302-932-2458, or Ellie Leuliette at 484-432-4673. Everyone is welcomed and appreciated!

FROM THE TREASURER: If there is a need for reimbursement, the **Committee Chairperson will need to complete a Disbursement Voucher**, list the account number, attach any receipts, and submit within 14 days; this is the best practice for auditing purposes. Once completed, place the Disbursement Voucher with receipts directly into the Treasurer/Financial black box which is hanging on the wall, on the landing leading up the stairs, to the church office. Disbursement Voucher forms are located in the mail bin outside the church office. Billing and reimbursement checks are sent out Tuesdays of each week. Thanks so much, Alice Mullins, Treasurer.

BIRTHDAYS: December 5- June Anderson, Kim Halladay, Keith Sydnor; December 16 – Priscilla Ashley, Ryan Vitsorek; December 17 – Vickie Spence; December 19 – Frank Fitzwater, Jared Reed; December 20 – Zachary Blum; December 22 – Greg Wills

ANNIVERSARIES: December 22 – Cheryl & Jeffrey Martin

PRAYER REQUEST BOX is available in the Narthex along with the prayer request cards. Just complete the form, fold, and drop in the box on the corner shelf located at the second set of doors into Fellowship Hall. You can also email Bonnie in the Church Office at bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org.

PRAYERS FOR: David & Dorothy Dudgeon, Carolyn Akin, Jonathan Brooks, John Guy, Levi Schrum and family, Marilyn Hendershot, Dennis Downes, Jeffrey & Cheryl Martin, Nancy- sister of Alice Rizzo, Ethan Porter, George, Dylan Green, Kevin Quiveors – Al Calbazana’s brother-in-law, John Littell, and Brenda Shaffer’s nephew, Scott, Mindie, and Bo Pleasanton, Norman Parks, David Sheats, Amanda Branlund, who is going through cancer treatment, Terry Sweeney, Michael Whitehead who is doing better but still grateful for prayers, Barbara Apigian, Dan & Bev Moore and family, Angela Christian’s mother, Kathy Golden, Sue Austin, the passing of Frank Hartenstein - Beth O’Grady’s father, Georgiana Fennemore, Michael Stanley, Phil Elliott, Phil’s parents, Faye Taylor’s nephew Matthew Smith, Bob, Ken, Wells, nephew of Steve Johnson - Matthew, Henry Spencer, June Stemmler, Blain Shoun, Sue Holden, Justin Marusa – cousin to Cindra Holland, having surgery for lung cancer in January, Karen Ellis’ friend Ellen who is having severe eye problems, also Karen Ellis’ friend Cindy who needs prayers for healing and pain management after surgery, Skip Bason, Laura Sebastiano for relief from headaches, Kenzel Messick’s brother Lem – for back surgery and recovery to go well, family of a teaching colleague of Pastor Patti’s, the passing of the niece of Janet & Charlii Miller, Rev. Cindy & David Koski recovering from recent falls, passing of Stephen Faulkner, Dawn Buckworth’s brother in his travels to support friends Andy & Jo Ellen Counterman on the sudden loss of their son Caleb, Ellie Leuliette & Dick Leuliette, Nikolai Gregors.

YELLOW HAT COLLECTIONS FOR DECEMBER 2024

12/01/24 Charity Waters (Carlotta Cline)

12/08/24 El Ayudante Child, Yesprin

12/15/24 Neighborhood House

12/22/24 Youth Group

12/29/24 Love Thy Neighbor

Please make sure ALL checks are made payable to St. Paul’s UMC, including checks for the Yellow Hat missions, writing the organization’s name on the memo line.

All donations are collected, recorded, entered in the system, and deposited into the Church’s operating account on a weekly basis. Also, on a weekly basis, a check is mailed to the specified yellow hat organization for the total amount collected.

It is very important that donations be placed in the offering plate, yellow hat or mailed to St. Paul’s UMC. You are also welcome to drop off donations in the black box on the wall just inside the side door to the Church, making sure it is secured in an envelope with your name on the front. This is to guarantee acknowledgement of your donations when the yearly contribution statement is sent for tax purposes.

Thank you all for your continued support for St. Paul’s as we are growing in our faith through generosity. Alice Mullins, Treasurer



St. Paul's Mission Statement

Reaching Up to praise God in vibrant worship

God calls us to live out our discipleship grounded in Christ's awakening us to the glory and majesty of God in all creation, and we respond together by worshiping God with our gratitude and praise. Standing or lifting our hands high are both ancient postures of worship, and so our dance of discipleship involves reaching up with our hearts, souls, and bodies, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalms 100:4-5 (NRSV)

Reaching In to deepen our spiritual walk with Christ

Christ accepts us as we are, and then calls us to follow him and learn from him, growing in our spiritual walk-through practices the church calls spiritual disciplines: prayer, fasting, meditation, studying God's Word, individually and with others. As we grow in the knowledge of God, we discover more about the extraordinary plans God has for our lives.

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

John 8:31-32 (NRSV)

Reaching Out with acts of love and compassion

Here's where it all comes together! Assured of God's eternal love, strengthened by the grace and knowledge of Christ, we are ready for the Holy Spirit to kindle a fire in our lives, gifting us for the labor of love God has prepared for us to accomplish. Having fallen in love with God, we love and serve our neighbors.

"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Matthew 25:40 (NRSV)

MISSIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

WEEKLY GATHERINGS – CHURCH BUILDING

OFFICE HOURS Tuesday -Thursday, 9 AM-2 PM

- Cub Scouts –Tuesdays 6-8 PM
- TOPS Meeting – Wednesdays 5:45 PM.
- St. Paul's Prayer and Praise Group Ministry – Thursdays 10 AM @Carole Harmon's Home
- St. Paul's Handbell Rehearsal – Wednesdays 6 PM.
- St. Paul's Choir Rehearsal – Wednesdays 7 PM
- AA Meeting – Saturdays 7 PM

MONTHLY GATHERINGS

- Finance Meeting – 2nd Monday 6:30 PM
- Trustees Meeting – 1st Monday 6:30 PM
- SPRC Meeting – 4th Thursday 6:30 PM
- Leadership Meeting – 3rd Tuesday 6:30 PM
- Reconciling Ministries – TBD

Adult Bible Study will resume Sunday, September 15, 2024 at 9:45AM.

Bible Study for all will again be held on Mondays, at 9AM.

Children's Sunday School will resume Sunday, September 15, 2024 at 9:45AM.

Flowers for Worship

If you are interested in honoring a loved one with flowers at the altar on a particular Sunday, we are asking you to contact Alicia Blackwell, from Wildflowers by Alicia to place your order. Alicia can be reached at (302) 593-9884. Also, please email the church office at bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org so we make sure the information is added in the bulletin.

Compassionate Card Ministry

The Compassionate Card Ministry is made up of 20 dedicated members of our congregation who create hand-made cards and encouraging messages to those in our directory, within our congregation, those on our prayer lists and others who are brought to our attention. Our purpose is to spread kindness and love to others through uplifting and personalized sentiments on hand-made cards. If you are not in our directory and would like to be added to our list, or if you know someone who would benefit from the blessing of a card, please contact Ellie Leuliette.

Prayer and Praise Group Ministry

Carole Harmon hosts a prayer circle, currently Thursday mornings at 10 AM - in person. Please contact Carole if you are interested in joining the group or have a special prayer request. You can also find prayer request cards and box on the corner shelf in the Narthex.

VANCO: Manage Your Giving Online

Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions and view your complete online giving history from anywhere you have access to the Internet. Simply follow these easy steps:

- 1) Visit the church website at www.stpaulsodessa.org and click on the VANCO Online Giving button to the left of the screen.
- 3) Click on the Link to Online Giving thru VANCO button, then
- 4) Follow the onscreen instructions to create an online profile and to schedule your RECURRING CONTRIBUTIONS.

Love Thy Neighbor Fund

Our "Love Thy Neighbor Fund" was created to help those in need in the MOT community. This fund may support a time in someone's life when he/she may need a little kindness and generosity to help endure and survive a challenging situation. If you can donate, please make checks payable to St. Paul's UMC and then write in the memo area it is for "Love Thy Neighbor Fund." Please note, this fund is SEPARATE from the Yellow Hat. Thank you, Love Thy Neighbor Committee

Deep Roots

Nadine Johnson & Karen Ellis continue to work with the "Deep Roots" mission. This group works with families who are disconnected through homelessness and provides transitional shelter and other services to families in need. They need your help as they continue to contact members of the church to help with making meals once a month feeding approximately 50+ individuals. Here's hoping you will be able to help us with this very important and necessary mission. Thanks so much! Contact Karen Ellis at iluvbrmuda@gmail.com and Nadine Johnson at nadine.faye.johnson@gmail.com

Our Daily Bread Food Donations

214 N Broad St, Middletown, DE 19709

Volunteers Needed – day and evening hours and different areas of need, filling bags, handing out meals, etc.

Volunteer Opportunities can be found at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10COE4FAEA82CA3F5CF8-volunteer>.

Contact Sue Holden, Missions Co-Chair, at 802-324-6167, susieq2951@aol.com, with any questions. Also, find information and volunteer sign-up forms on the website,

<https://www.ourdailybreadmot.com>. **On-line Training Coming Soon!**

ODB is most thankful to all who donate either monetarily or in kind. Your generosity helps ODB feed those in our community who are facing food insecurity. Listed below are the items needed to stuff our side bags and other items that are needed on a regular basis. Donations can be dropped off on Tuesday from 9:15 to 11:30AM

- Individual bottles of water
- Individual bags of salty snacks
- Individual packets of sweet snacks
- Individual fruit cups and/or applesauce
- Fresh fruit (apples, bananas, oranges)
- Boxes of breakfast cereal
- Boxes of mashed potatoes
- White bread
- Baked beans (large cans)
- Gallon size zip-loc bags
- Lg black garbage bags
- Cans of soup

Thank you for any and all kindness!

Neighborhood House

Neighborhood House really appreciates St. Paul's ongoing support in so many ways. At this point, we are low on some items in the food pantry. These items are especially needed right now in our food pantry, though all donations are gladly accepted with the inventory being low now.

Currently we are really low on personal hygiene products as well as some food items:

- 1. Bottled water**
- 2. Toilet paper, Toothpaste, Soap, Shampoo & conditioner**
- 3. Peanut butter & jelly (medium size)**
- 4. Pasta sauce**
- 5. Tuna/Tuna Helper**
- 6. Hamburger Helper**

These non-perishables are needed to keep our pantry stocked:

Chef Boyardee, beef stew, Spam ,pancake mix/syrup, snacks - cookies, crackers etc.

ADDITIONALLY, THERE IS ALWAYS A NEED FOR ADULT SIZED DISPOSABLE DIAPERS AS WELL AS FOR BABIES/CHILDREN IN SIZES 4, 5, AND 6, AND WIPES. WE HAVE NUMEROUS MOMS WITH BABIES AND TODDLERS WHO TAKE THEIR MONEY FOR FOOD AND BILLS TO BUY THEM.

Donations can be left inside the Church. We look forward to another great year working together to feed the hungry. Thanks to all, Marilyn Hendershot, Family Services Specialist, Neighborhood House, Inc.

JOYS & CONCERNS: If you know someone, you'd like to add to our prayer list, please email the church office or visit the church website (www.stpaulsodessa.org) to complete a prayer request. **There is also a Prayer Box in the Narthex in which you can drop your completed request.** Please email the office when someone can be taken OFF the list. If you or a loved one needs a pastoral visit, please call or email the church office to schedule.



St. Paul's United Methodist Church
406 Main Street – Post Office Box 253 – Odessa, Delaware 19730

October 27, 2024

Dear St. Paul's Family,

As we gather together in this blessed season, I am reminded of the profound invitation we find throughout Scripture: "Come to the table." This invitation is not merely a call to share a meal, but a divine invitation to partake in community, fellowship, and the grace of God.

In Luke 14:16-24, Jesus tells the parable of a great banquet where the host invites many to come. When the invited guests make excuses, the host opens the invitation wider, urging others to join him at the table. This story reflects our church's mission: to create a welcoming space for all, regardless of background or circumstance. It reminds us that God's love is inclusive and abundant.

As we reflect on this theme, I encourage you to consider how you can respond to this invitation. Coming to the table means engaging with one another, sharing our gifts, and contributing to the life of our church community. It means opening our hearts to those who may feel excluded and extending our hands to those in need.

Stewardship and Generosity

Our church thrives because of the generous hearts of our members. This year, we invite you to consider how you can support St. Paul's through your time, talents, and treasures. Your contributions enable us to continue our mission of service, outreach, and worship, ensuring that all are welcomed to the table.

We will be hosting a stewardship campaign over the next few weeks, and I encourage each of you to pray and reflect on how you can participate. Whether it is through financial giving, volunteering your time, or sharing your talents, every act of stewardship is a vital part of our church community.

Our expected and unexpected non-recurring expenditures this year along with a proposed aggressive budget for 2025 requires everyone to strongly consider increasing your financial commitment to St. Paul's UMC. **Accordingly, we are asking you to carefully (prayerfully) consider a 10% increase in total giving in 2024 for the 2025 program year.** We believe this will place us in a much stronger financial position for the coming year.

Join With Us

Let us gather in unity, love, and purpose. We will have opportunities to celebrate our community with a special service on Stewardship Sunday, November 17th, where we will reflect on our commitments and our collective mission. I hope you will join us as we come to the table together.

In closing, let us remember that our table is set wide enough for everyone. Together, we can create a space where all are invited to experience God's love and grace. Thank you for being an essential part of our St. Paul's family.

With blessings and gratitude,

Steve Johnson
Chair - Stewardship Committee
St. Paul's United Methodist Church



ST. PAUL'S
United Methodist Church of Odessa
Reaching Up, Reaching In, Reaching Out

“Come to the Table”

I pledge my support as a vital member or friend of St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Odessa with my prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

My/our commitment to **prayer** is to pray for our Church and other needs ___ times each month.

My/our commitment to **presence** this year is to attend worship service ___ times each month.

I/we make a financial **pledge** of \$ ___ to the 2025 **General Budget** (Jan. 1-Dec. 31).

I/we will contribute this pledge to the **General Budget**:

\$ ___ weekly (52 contributions), or

\$ ___ semi-monthly (24 contributions), or

\$ ___ monthly (12 contributions),

\$ ___ as follows: _____

Annual giving estimates can be adjusted at any time. They may be placed in the offering plates in worship, mailed to the church office, or through online bank or credit card payments – see

stpaulsodessa.org

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

“Come to the Table”

TIME AND TALENT SURVEY

I feel God calling me to serve in these areas: Please mark each category of interest where you are willing to volunteer your time and talents at St. Paul's this year. A separate survey should be used for each individual in your household including children and youth.

Administration

___ Leadership Team Co-chair

___ Leadership Team Member

___ Auditor

___ Bookkeeper/Treasurer

___ Computer Consultant

___ Finance Team, Chair

___ Finance Team, member

___ Counter

___ Lay Leader

___ Lay Leadership Team (Nominations)

___ Lay Servant

___ Membership Team

___ SPRC (Staff-Parish), chair

___ SPRC (Staff-Parish), member

___ Stewardship Team

___ Trustees, chair

___ Trustees, member

___ Maintenance Team

___ Yardwork

PROGRAM

___ Nurture Team, co-chair

___ Prayer Ministry participant

___ Compassionate Card Ministry

___ JOY (Just Older Youth)

___ Fellowship Time Coordinator

___ Green Church Team

___ Bible Studies

___ Congregational Care

___ Deaf Ministries

___ ASL Interpreter

___ Photographer

___ Reconciling Ministry Team

___ Health Ministries Team

___ Safe Church Team

___ United Methodist Men, member

___ United Methodist Women, member

___ United Methodist Youth, Member

___ Outreach Team, co-chair

___ Neighborhood House

___ Deep Roots

___ Our Daily Bread

___ Friendship House

___ Youth Mission Trip

___ Wawa Food Distribution

___ Yellow Hat Offerings

___ Scouts

___ Witness Team, co-chair

___ Worship and Arts Team

___ Acolyte

___ Altar Guild

___ Greeter

___ Usher

___ Lay Reader

___ Communion Assistant

___ Drama

___ Praise Team Member

___ Choir Member

___ Handbell Choir Member

___ Instrumentalist—Which instrument: _____

___ Worship Tech Assistant

___ Website

___ Adult Bible Study, leader

___ Adult Bible Study, participant

___ Children's Sunday School, teacher

___ Children's Sunday School, participant

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____