



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

First Sunday of Christmas

December 29, 2024, 8:30 AM, Livestreaming
WE ENTER GOD'S GATES WITH PRAISE

WELCOME WITH MUSIC AND IMAGES

GATHERING MUSIC AND PHOTOS: Mark Holden - Photographer & Curator
Celebrating Pastor-Adrienne Dillard

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE: (**Please stand in body or in spirit*)

Dave & Janice Anderson

One: Good news! Unspeakable joy!

Many: A great light has burst forth overcoming the darkness.

One: Come let us see what the Lord has done! Glory to God in the highest!

Many: And on earth peace and goodwill to all.

One: We light the Christ candle rejoicing that a Savior is born.

Many: A savior is born, indeed. Joy to the world!

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

*PRAISE AND WORSHIP:

Liturgist – Ellie Leuliette

OPENING HYMN:

Joy To The World

Red Hymnal 246

*OPENING PRAYER: (all praying): **Loving God may we be found and may we find a place called home, a place where faith holds us and grace renews us; where forgiveness longs for us to be who you will us to be. May we find a place called home where we are accepted as we are, where we are taken in and loved unconditionally. A place called home where we belong and our souls fit and our questions are allowed and our anger is heard and our needs are recognized and our pain is held and our names are known. May this be that place, O God, this community, this group of travelers and doubters and companions on the way. This home where your place is our place and place isn't a building, but a way of being together in relationship held together by love. Loving God, Homecoming God may we make this a home to all who still yet seek a place of grace-filled sanctuary and gracious welcome So be it. Amen**

OUR STORY OF FAITH IN WORD AND SONG

FIRST LESSON: *Isaiah 11: 1-4a* (NIV)

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

²The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—

³and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;

⁴but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

CAROL:

O Little Town Of Bethlehem vs 1,3

Red Hymnal 230

SECOND LESSON: *Luke 1: 26-38* (NIV)

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^[a] the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

³⁸ "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

CAROL:

What Child Is This vs. 1,2

Red Hymnal 219

THIRD LESSON: *Matthew 1: 18-23* (NIV)

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

CAROL:

It Came Upon A Midnight Clear vs. 2,4

Red Hymnal 218

FOURTH LESSON: *I Samuel 2: 18-20, 26* (NIV)

¹⁸ But Samuel was ministering before the Lord—a boy wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹ Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. ²⁰ Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the Lord give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the Lord." Then they would go home.

²⁶ And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with people.

Luke 2: 48-52 (NIV)

⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

CAROL:

Hark The Herald Angels Sing vs. 1,3

Red Hymnal 240

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

THE MESSAGE:

“Growing In Favor”

Pastor Adrienne Dillard

WE GIVE THANKS

OFFERTORY REMINDERS

THE OFFERTORY: Today’s **Yellow Hat** mission offering supports 12/29/24 **Love Thy Neighbor Fund.**

MUSICAL REFLECTION (ALL SINGING):

Red Hymnal 219

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come peasant, king to own him; the king of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him. This, this is Christ the King whom shepherds guard and angels sing, haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION:

Pastor Linda Ray

Communion Server – Ellie Leuliette

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 of heaven and earth. You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through our prophets. In the fullness of time you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to be our Savior, and at his birth the angels sang glory to you in the highest and peace to your people on earth. 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: Holy are you and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. AS Mary and Joseph went from Galilee to Bethlehem and there found no room, so Jesus went from Galilee to Jerusalem and was despised and rejected. As in the poverty of a stable Jesus was born, so by the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

(Lifting the bread) As your Word became flesh, born of woman on that night long ago, so 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:

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 Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever.

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: *Go Tell It On the Mountain* Red Hymnal 251

SERVING IN WORSHIP TODAY

Liturgist: Ellie Leuliette

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

Communion Server – Ellie Leuliette

Musicians: Jin Kyung Seo

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
Jin Kyung Seo, Organist/Accompanist	jinksblue@gmail.com	

ANNOUNCEMENTS - THIS WEEK AT ST. PAUL'S

Sunday 12/29	Worship Services 8:30AM Livestreaming 11AM, Adult & Children's Bible Study 9:45AM
Monday 12/30	
Tuesday 12/31	
Wednesday 01/01	New Year's Day
Thursday 01/02	Prayer and Praise Team 10 AM
Friday 01/03	
Saturday 01/04	AA Mtg 7PM

COFFEE 'N CHAT: will be held January 11th, Saturday, at St. Paul's Fellowship Hall from 11AM-1PM. This invitation is extended to all the ladies of St. Paul's to come and share ideas for a Women's Retreat and the Women's Ministries.

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:

61 Pledges, Total Pledge Amount: \$213,685. 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: January 1 – Alice Mullins; January 2 – Helen Downes, Marcia Wheeler; January 3 – Vickie Bush, Mike Kennedy, Joyce Nelson; January 4 – Cindra Holland

ANNIVERSARIES: N/A

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, 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..

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: _____