



St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Odessa  
*Reaching Up Reaching In Reaching Out*  
Pastor Linda Ray, 406 Main Street, Odessa, DE 302-378-2420  
[www.stpaulsodessa.org](http://www.stpaulsodessa.org), CCLI 11305346 and Streaming Lic. 21184487

## Third Sunday After Epiphany

January 26, 2025, 11 AM Service  
WELCOME WITH MUSIC AND IMAGES

Mark Holden & June Stemmler, Photographer & Curator, Gail Garner – ASL Interpreter

MUSICAL REFLECTION: *Go Tell It On the Mountain* Handbell Choir

GREETING

GATHERING WORDS: Liturgist – Charlotte Miller

One: Children of God, we gather to worship, to sing and proclaim with joy the good works God is doing in our midst.

**Many: We gather to worship, as is our custom.**

One: We also gather today to pray for our families, our community, and our world. To name the challenges that press in around us, to lament the suffering in our world, to declare our trust in God in the midst of hardship.

**Many: We gather to worship, as is our custom.**

One: We, like those in Nazareth, gather to hear and receive the Word of God proclaimed among us. To encounter the life-giving message of God's love redeems us to be bearers of love and freedom in this world.

**Many: We gather to worship, as is our custom.**

One: Children of God, listen. Pay attention. Ready your hearts. God is here. Jesus has come among us. The Spirit brings the Word to life in our midst. Are you ready?

**Many: We gather to worship, as is our custom.**

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

\*OPENING HYMN: *O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing* vs. 1-5 Red Hymnal 57

\*OPENING PRAYER (all praying): **We thank you, O God, for calling us into your church to be your people. "We have gathered, God of grace and wisdom, because we have heard your call. You have reached out to us in Jesus Christ; you have touched us with your Spirit, and we have turned toward you, seeking to love as we have been loved. We call upon your holy name: empower us to worship and serve you, walking gently on this earth, through the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

WORDS FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS: *Peace For The Children* vs. 1 Green Hymnal 3125

*Peace for the children, peace, peace. Peace for the children we pray. Following the path of one of peace, we work for healing, we work for peace. Peace for the children we pray.*

Brian McNelis shares a blessing with our children!

FIRST LESSON: *Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6,8-10* (CEB)

When the seventh month came and the people of Israel were settled in their towns, all the people gathered together in the area in front of the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Instruction scroll from Moses, according to which the Lord had instructed Israel.

2 So on the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Instruction before the assembly. This assembly was made up of both men and women and anyone who could understand what they heard. 3 Facing

the area in front of the Water Gate, he read it aloud, from early morning until the middle of the day. He read it in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand, and everyone listened attentively to the Instruction scroll.

5 Standing above all of the people, Ezra the scribe opened the scroll in the sight of all of the people. And as he opened it, all of the people stood up. 6 Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all of the people answered, "Amen! Amen!" while raising their hands. Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

8 They read aloud from the scroll, the Instruction from God, explaining and interpreting it so the people could understand what they heard.

9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all of the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Don't mourn or weep." They said this[a] because all the people wept when they heard the words of the Instruction.

10 "Go, eat rich food, and drink something sweet," he said to them, "and send portions of this to any who have nothing ready! This day is holy to our LORD. Don't be sad, because the joy from the LORD is your strength!"

HYMN OF PREPARATION:

*Thy Word*

Red Hymnal 601

\*GOSPEL LESSON: *Luke 4:14-21* (CEB)

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the whole countryside. 15 He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. 16 Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. 17 The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me.  
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,  
to proclaim release to the prisoners  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to liberate the oppressed,  
19 and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.[]

20 He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. 21 He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

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

THE MESSAGE:

"Jesus' Mission Statement"

Pastor Linda Ray

### **WE GIVE THANKS**

OFFERTORY PRAYER: God of our ancestors, Caretaker of our future, thank you for your faithful love. May the gifts we bring before you this day honor the many ways you bless this church. And may our offering reflect our commitment to lead lives of love, as we continue Jesus' mission to ring good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. In your holy name, we pray. Amen

THE OFFERTORY: Today's **Yellow Hat** mission offering supports the **Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge (Cathy Blanco, Melanie Blanco)**.

MUSICAL REFLECTION:

*Cold, The Winter*

Chancel Choir

\*THE DOXOLOGY:

Red Hymnal 95

GATHERING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION: God, we do not understand Jesus, the prophet. We do not want to get our hands dirty with the poor, the oppressed, the prisoners. Forgive us for being insulated and isolated. Open our hearts to the poor and help us to love them as you love them, working to bring in the good news of the reign of God. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION:

Pastor Linda Ray  
Officiant Server –Charlotte Miller

Reader 1: The Lord be with you.

**ALL: And also with you.**

Reader 1: Lift up your hearts.

**ALL: We lift them up to the Lord.**

Reader 1: 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. Before the mountains were brought forth, or you had formed the earth, from everlasting to everlasting, you alone are God. 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. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast, You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

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

Reader 2: You sent Jesus to us, the light of the world. Jesus promised that those who followed him would never walk in darkness, but would have the light of life. The light of his life shone on all people, revealing the truth of your love. Jesus fed the hungry, cured the sick, ate with sinners, and proclaimed your truth.

(Lifting the bread) Before Jesus was betrayed, he gathered with his friends for a meal. Taking the bread, Jesus gave thanks to you and broke it. He gave it to his friends, saying, "Take and eat. I am with you now and forever. Let this meal feed you. Remember me as you eat."

Reader 1: (Lifting the cup) When the supper was over, Jesus took the cup, blessed it, and shared it with his followers, saying, "This is the cup of the new covenant, given for the forgiveness of sins. It is a gift for you and for all people. It is my love offered for you. Drink of this and remember 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!**

Reader 2: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup that they may be for us the living presence of Jesus Christ, light of the world, our hope for all creation. Make us one with Jesus, and one with each other, as we walk in the light, singing your praises. Through Jesus Christ, light of the world, and through the Holy Spirit, radiance divine, all praise is yours, eternal God, now and forever, world without end.

**ALL: AMEN. AMEN. AMEN.**

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.**

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

PRAYER AFTER RECEIVING

**WE GO IN THE SPIRIT!**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY AND SERVICE

SENDING HYMN:

*To God Be The Glory*

Red Hymnal 98

POSTLUDE

**SERVING IN WORSHIP TODAY**

Liturgist: Charlotte Miller

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

Communion Officiant/Server: Charlotte Miller

Ushers: John & Patti Harmer, June Stemmler, John Harmon, Denis Shaffer, Laura Widger

Director of Music – Dr. Kathleen Shannon & Organist/Accompanist: Jin Kyung Seo

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Rev. Linda Driver Ray, Pastor	<a href="mailto:lindaray@vaumc.org">lindaray@vaumc.org</a>	(540) 207-1787
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Duane Dillard, Minister of Music	<a href="mailto:duanedillard@gmail.com">duanedillard@gmail.com</a>	(443) 593-2470
Jin Kyung Seo, Organist/Accompanist	<a href="mailto:jinksblue@gmail.com">jinksblue@gmail.com</a>	
Dr. Kathleen Shannon/Director of Music	<a href="mailto:kathleenshannon@gmail.com">kathleenshannon@gmail.com</a>	

**ANNOUNCEMENTS - THIS WEEK AT ST. PAUL'S:**

<b>Sunday 01/26</b>	<b>Worship Services 8:30AM ASL &amp; Livestreaming and 11AM, Adult &amp; Children's Bible Study 9:45AM</b>
<b>Monday 01/27</b>	<b>Adult Bible Series 9AM, Nurture Team 1 PM</b>
<b>Tuesday 01/28</b>	<b>ODB, Cub Scouts 6PM, Health Ministries Team 2 PM, Leadership Team 6:30 PM</b>
<b>Wednesday 01/29</b>	<b>TOPS Mtg 5:45PM, Bell 6PM &amp; Choir 7PM Rehearsals</b>
<b>Thursday 01/30</b>	<b>10AM Prayer and Praise Group</b>
<b>Friday 01/31</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Saturday 02/01</b>	<b>AA Mtg 7PM</b>

**atTAcK ADDICTION PRESENTATION RESCHEDULE DATE:** Mark your calendars for February 2nd at 3PM at St. Paul's for a presentation about addictions brought to you through the Health Ministries Committee and the atTAcK Addictions organization. You will receive addiction education in recognizing signs, talking about this with young children to help to prevent misuse of drugs and how to give a dose of Narcan to reverse an overdose. You must attend in person to receive a Narcan dose. Overdose deaths are still happening and rising in our community. Administering Narcan can save a life! Everyone is welcome to attend and this is open to the public.

**FINANCE CHAIR NEWS:** Thank you to all! Your generous contributions enabled us to end the year with a balanced budget! Melissa Brooks/Chair

**FINANCE/TREASURER-ALICE MULLINS NEWS:** Stewardship pledge totals to date, for the 2025 Budget:

**71 Pledges, Total Pledge Amount: \$231,217**

**Thank you to all who have so generously pledged so far!**

**BIRTHDAYS:** January 30 – Lois Loder; February 1 – Sarah Mullen; February 2 – Jackson Wills

**ANNIVERSARIES:** January 29 – Hap & Barbara Bonham

**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 Valeski in the Church Office with your request at [bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org](mailto:bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org).

**Please be sure to let Bonnie know you want to remove your request. Thank you**

**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, 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, Bev Moore and family, Angela Christian’s mother, Kathy Golden, Sue Austin, 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, Justin Marusa – cousin to Cindra Holland, having surgery for lung cancer in January, Skip Bason, Kenzel Messick’s brother Lem – for back surgery and recovery to go well, family of a teaching colleague of Pastor Patti’s, Rev. Cindy & David Koski recovering from recent falls, Ellie Leuliette & Dick Leuliette, Nikolai Gregors. Karen Kolf – sister to Alice Mullins. Jay and Laura, Rebecca Roberts - sister-in-law to Gail Garner going through chemotherapy and other therapies for leukemia, Joe Stemmler, Karen Ellis’ friend John who had surgery on 1/7 and still in a coma, and also Karen’s friend Julie who had a stroke recently, Indira – mother of friend of John Harmon, struggling with lung cancer and treatment setbacks, Linda Sydnor’s family on the death of Linda’s mother, family and friends of Richard Rizzo who passed away on January 17

**Upcoming Yellow Hat Schedule for January 2025**

1/05/25 Friends of Zoar (Steve Johnson)

1/12/25 Our Daily Bread (Sue Holden)

1/19/25 American Red Cross L.A. Fire Relief

1/26/25 Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge (Cathy Blanco, Melanie Blanco)

**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**  
United Methodist Church of Odessa  
*Reaching Up, Reaching In, Reaching Out*

**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

- Boy Scouts –Mondays 7-8:30 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 – 1<sup>st</sup> Monday 6:30 PM
- SPRC Meeting – 4th Thursday 6:30 PM
- Leadership Meeting – 3rd Tuesday 6:30 PM
- Reconciling Ministries – TBD

**Adult Sunday Bible Study 9:45AM**

**Children's Sunday School 9:45AM.**

**Adult Bible Series Mondays 9AM**

### **Flowers for Worship**

If you are interested in honoring a loved one with flowers at the altar on a particular Sunday, please call Bonnie or email the church office at [bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org](mailto:bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org) so we make sure the information is added in the bulletin and reserved for you. You can have a florist create a bouquet or you can create your own, and then bring it to the church on Saturday or before the 8:30 am service on Sunday morning.

### **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 Nancee Bleistine, [nbleistine@yahoo.com](mailto:nbleistine@yahoo.com) or 609-217-1924.

### **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](http://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](mailto:iluvbrmuda@gmail.com) and Nadine Johnson at [nadine.faye.johnson@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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.