



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 , CCLI 11305346 and Streaming Lic. 21184487

Baptism of Our Lord Sunday
Human Trafficking Awareness Sunday

January 11, 2026, 11:00 AM Service, with Livestreaming and ASL

WE ENTER GOD'S GATES WITH PRAISE
WELCOME WITH MUSIC AND IMAGES

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

**(please stand in body or spirit)*

GATHERING WORDS:

Liturgist – Carole Harmon

One: Come! Let us follow Jesus to the edge of the Jordan River to be baptized.

Many: We come to be cleansed and made whole.

One: Come! Let us witness John's confusion and Jesus' insistence that John baptize God Incarnate.

Many: We come to join Jesus in choosing life in the kingdom of God.

One: Come! Let us hear God declare the truth of Jesus' identity and the truth of our identity as baptized people.

Many: We come to remember and embody who we are as beloved children of God.

One: Come! Let us worship God who leads us into the baptismal waters and salvation life.

Many: We come to worship God who empowers us through divine presence to live together as the family of God.

*OPENING HYMN:

This Is The Spirit's Entry Now

Red Hymnal 608

*OPENING PRAYER (all praying): **Eternal God, at the baptism of Jesus, you revealed him to be your Son, and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Keep all who are born of water and the Spirit faithful to their calling as your people; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

WORDS FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS:

Step By Step

Green Hymnal 3004

O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you. O God you are my God and I will ever praise you. I will seek you in the morning, and I will learn to walk in your ways; and step by step you'll lead me and I will follow you all of my days.

Susie Cate shares a blessing with our children!

FIRST LESSON: *Isaiah 42:1-9* (CEB)

But here is my servant, the one I uphold;
my chosen, who brings me delight.

I've put my spirit upon him;
he will bring justice to the nations.

² He won't cry out or shout aloud
or make his voice heard in public.

³ He won't break a bruised reed;
he won't extinguish a faint wick,
but he will surely bring justice.

⁴ He won't be extinguished or broken

until he has established justice in the land.
The coastlands await his teaching.
⁵ God the LORD says—
the one who created the heavens,
the one who stretched them out,
the one who spread out the earth and its offspring,
the one who gave breath to its people
and life to those who walk on it—

⁶ I, the LORD, have called you for a good reason.
I will grasp your hand and guard you,
and give you as a covenant to the people,
as a light to the nations,

⁷ to open blind eyes, to lead the prisoners from prison,
and those who sit in darkness from the dungeon.

⁸ I am the LORD;
that is my name;
I don't hand out my glory to others
or my praise to idols.

⁹ The things announced in the past—look—they've already happened,
but I'm declaring new things.
Before they even appear,
I tell you about them.

HYMN OF PREPARATION:

Baptized In Water

Black Hymnal 2248

* GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew 3:13-17* (CEB)

At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River so that John would baptize him. ¹⁴ John tried to stop him and said, "I need to be baptized by you, yet you come to me?"

¹⁵ Jesus answered, "Allow me to be baptized now. This is necessary to fulfill all righteousness."

So John agreed to baptize Jesus. ¹⁶ When Jesus was baptized, he immediately came up out of the water. Heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and resting on him. ¹⁷ A voice from heaven said, "This is my Son whom I dearly love; I find happiness in him."

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

THE MESSAGE:

"Baptism Is Special"

Pastor Linda Ray

BAPTISMAL COVENANT IV

Red Hymnal, 50

You are invited to remember that you are baptized and be thankful, coming to the front as you feel led to look at the water, touch the water, pause for a time of prayer at the kneeling rail and remember.

WE GIVE THANKS

OFFERTORY PRAYER: God of bold visions for our world, you love all peoples and nations, seeking a world where everyone flourishes in just and righteous lives. Use us and our gifts for the newness you declare possible. Make this newness spring forth in and through us. Amen

THE OFFERTORY: Today's **Yellow Hat** mission offering supports **Our Daily Bread (Sue Holden)**.

CHORAL ANTHEM:

Carol Of The Star

Chancel Choir

*THE DOXOLOGY:

Red Hymnal 95

GATHERING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

INVITATION TO COMMUNION:

Pastor Linda Ray

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 a right and joyous thing to lift our hearts and hands to you, God of Light and Love, in thanksgiving for the gift of your grace. We know we are not alone because you have chosen to reveal your presence in our world. As we consider the lilies of the field, we are amazed by your intricate creativity. As we discover our interconnectedness with all living things we are filled with awe and wonder at the beauty of your dance of life. Before we knew the unsearchable riches of your child Jesus, we walked in shadows and cloud. But now as you reveal radiance to the world, 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:

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 are holy and the full epiphany of your glory is Jesus Christ. In Jesus You were seen in the life of a child. In Jesus You were seen in the life of a youth you stayed behind in the temple and worried his earthly parents. In Jesus You offered to us countless treasures; radiant with life and grace.

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:

ALL: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!

Reader 2: Presence of God, open our eyes that we might recognize your presence with us in the lives of everyone we meet, in all the places we visit, in all the words shared, in every action taken, may we see your epiphany and worship you, Jesus, may we adore you, most Holy Spirit, may we appreciate you, Creator God, Holy Trinity, now and forever.

ALL: AMEN. AMEN. AMEN.

Reader 2: Now in celebration of God's epiphany in Jesus Christ, may we join in prayer saying together:

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 partake of the bread and then the cup while remaining in their seats.)

PRAYER AFTER RECEIVING

WE GO IN THE SPIRIT!

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY AND SERVICE

SENDING HYMN:

At The Font We Start Our Journey

Black Hymnal 2114

POSTLUDE

SERVING IN WORSHIP TODAY

Liturgist: Carole Harmon
 Audio/Video: Charlii Miller, John Littell, John Cate, Carlotta Cline, Garrett Ray
 Communion Officiant/Server: Kris Elliott
 Ushers: John & Patti Harmer, June Stemmler, John Harmon, Denis Shaffer, Laura Widger, Ryan & Brett Vitsorek
 Greeters: Laura Widger, Brook Ellis
 Minister of Music: Duane Dillard
 Director of Music: Dr. Kathleen Shannon, Organist/Accompanist: Jin Kyung Seo

CONTACT INFORMATION

Rev. Linda Driver Ray, Pastor	PastorLinda@stpaulsodessa.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	
Dr. Kathleen Shannon, Director of Music	kathleenmshannon@gmail.com	

ANNOUNCEMENTS - THIS WEEK AT ST. PAUL'S:

Sunday 1/11	Worship Services 8:30AM and 11AM with Livestreaming and ASL, Adult & Children's Bible Study 9:45AM, Choir Practice 9:45AM
Monday 1/12	Adult Bible Study 10AM, Finance Committee Mtg 6:30 PM
Tuesday 1/13	ODB, Adult Bible Study 6:30PM
Wednesday 1/14	Deep Roots Food Donations Due 4:15 PM, TOPS 5 PM, Handbell Choir 6 PM
Thursday 1/15	Prayer and Praise Team 10 AM, MCC Rehearsal, 7 PM
Friday 1/16	
Saturday 1/17	St. Paul's Book Club 10AM, UMM UD Basketball Game 2PM, AA Mtg 7PM

FROM THE MISSION/OUTREACH TEAM: Dear St. Paul's family, Thank you, once again, for the outpouring of generosity from our church for the adopt-a-family mission! We assisted in providing gifts for 10 families in the MOT area making their Christmases just a little merrier this year. Your love and sense of compassion is overwhelming and amazing! Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy 2026! With love, The Mission/Outreach Team

STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES TO DATE: Per Alice Mullins/Treasurer 59 pledges \$196,972.

Packets and extra cards are still available in Fellowship Hall. Please **return your financial pledge card in a sealed envelope, addressed to Alice Mullins, Treasurer** and put it in the collection basket or put them in the locked black box on the wall at the side, back door, or put them in the black box on the wall at the top of the steps to the church office marked 'TREASURER/FINANCIAL' or you can give them directly to Alice Mullins (only Alice). This is so we maintain your privacy and the safety of your financial information.

The Time and Talent and the Prayer and Worship cards can be put in the collection plate or given to Pastor Linda.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MONTHLY & YTD BUDGET TOTALS/MELISSA BROOKS CHAIR:

November Income \$ 23,473
 November Expense (\$25,211)

YTD Income \$ 295,323
 YTD Expense (\$282,944)

November Yellow Hat:
 Congo Partnership \$ 2978
 Pay It Forward Foundation \$221
 Adopt-A-Family \$823.86
 United Methodist Student Day \$381.86

Mosaic of Delaware \$ 351.14

Total: \$2,075.68

ATTENTION BOOKIES OF ST. PAUL'S!! After the chat meeting of women and discussing with the Nurture Committee, we've decided to start a **Book Club**. **We will meet every other month starting in January 17, 2026 @10AM.** Our first meeting will include author FAYE GREEN who is a past member of our church. Her latest book is called THE FINEST COTTON. This 2025 fiction novel is about a grandmother named Lucille Cotton and her opinionated talking cat, which causes her grandchildren to react to her travels and escapades.

Faye will be joining us in January to discuss her book and how she started writing. I am taking orders for the book and picking them up from Faye the last week in November. The books are \$15 and I will have them at church the weekend after Thanksgiving. This should give everyone plenty of time to read it before we meet with her. As Please feel free to ask friends to join us. Contact Nadine Johnson at Nadine.faye.johnson@gmail.com or call 973-600-7976 if you would like to order a book.

UMM DATES TO REMEMBER: Family Outing Saturday January 17, 2026 2:00PM at the University of Delaware Basketball game. Please contact Mark Holden, at 802-279-8100 or mark@maholden.com.
Next UMM Breakfast is February 28, 2026.

JOY GROUP SAVE THE DATE!

We have booked yet another JOY event at Sight & Sound in Lancaster!! We will be going to see "JOSHUA" on **Thursday, May 21, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.** At this point, 50 seats have been reserved. There is no payment due until after the 1st of the year, but if you are contemplating attending the show, and if you might consider purchasing ticket(s) as a Christmas gift, please let us know so we can put your name on the list. Contact Karen Ellis at iluvbrmuda@gmail.com or Nadine Johnson at nadine.faye.johnson@gmail.com with questions or to sign up for what promises to be another amazing show!!

BIRTHDAYS: January 11 – Jennifer Reed; January 12 – Andrew Widger; January 17 – Michael Lynn Whitehead

FLOWERS FOR WORSHIP: If you are interested in honoring a loved one with flowers at the altar on a particular Sunday, please use the **Flowers Sign-up Chart** and **complete the card with instructions on the Narthex bulletin board. You can email Bonnie at anytime to see if slots are taken on the chart, bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org.**

You can also still call Bonnie or email the church office at 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, (or a plant), and then bring it to the church on Saturday or before the 8:30 am (9am in summer) service on Sunday morning.

Our designated florist is Elana's in Middletown, 302-285-0800, please call them early in the week to set up your flower delivery for Saturday to St. Paul's. There will be NO delivery charge.

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.

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

PRAYERS FOR: Carolyn Akin, Jonathan Brooks, John Guy, Levi Schrum and family, Nancy- sister of Alice Rizzo, Ethan Porter, George, Dylan Green, Kevin Quiveors – Al Calbazana's brother-in-law, Scott, Mindie, and Bo Pleasanton, Norman Parks, David Sheats, Amanda Brantlund who is going through cancer treatment, Terry Sweeney, Michael Whitehead who is doing better but still grateful for prayers, Angela Christian's mother, Kathy Golden, Georgiana Fennemore, Blain Shoun, Skip Bason, Cindra Holland's mother, who is currently hospitalized and seriously ill, for Jessica Schrum and family, as her father, John Carmichael, begins his cancer treatment journey and her mom, Sandra, his caretaker, Chris Foote, Danny Skeans, Dave Koski, Deena Greenwood, Leah Elliott & Phil Elliott in their health struggles, Alice Mullins' sister Sue Austin who has been ill, Jeanne Buckworth, Lauren – granddaughter to a friend of Sue Haberstroh recovering from surgery after a bad

car accident, Giancarlo and family - the great-grandson baby of Carole & John Harmon who needs prayers with his continuing critical health struggles, Dave Sydnor, Bruce Vanmeter – cousin to Beth O’Grady, on his recovery after heart transplant surgery, Elayne Guy, all those Church members families and friends currently fighting illnesses, Jordan Ingram, son of Allen & Mary Ingram, as he suffers through breakthrough seizures and medication adjustments, for Dave Corby as he recovers from his surgery, the family of Linda Sydnor as they deal with health issues, Shirley Walker on the recent passing of her son, Patricia Bower on the death of her brother and her health issues, Sharan Duren on her health issues, Alyssa Chapas, recently diagnosed with breast cancer, who is the daughter to long-time friend of Don Mueller, Alice Mullins’ brother recently diagnosed with Parkinson’s.

Upcoming Yellow Hat Schedule for January 2026

1/4/26 Friends of Zoar (Steve Johnson)

1/11/26 Our Daily Bread (Sue Holden)

1/18/26 Red Cross

1/25/26 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 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

- TOPS Meeting – Wednesdays 5:00 PM. Beginning in December
- St. Paul's Prayer and Praise Group Ministry – Thursdays 10 AM @Carole Harmon's Home
- St. Paul's Handbell Rehearsal – Wednesdays 6PM
- St. Paul's Choir Rehearsal –Sundays @9:45AM
- 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 6:30PM
- Friends of Zoar Meeting – 2nd Thursday 6PM

Sunday Adult Bible Study will resume 9/14/2025, 9:45AM

Children's Sunday School will resume 9/14/2025, 9:45AM

Adult Bible Study - Monday's 10AM

Flowers for Worship

If you are interested in honoring a loved one with flowers at the altar on a particular Sunday, please use the **Flowers sign-up chart and form with instructions on the Narthex bulletin board.**

You can also still call Bonnie or email the church office at 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 , (or a plant) and then bring it to the church on Saturday or before the 8:30 am service on Sunday morning.

Our designated florist is Elana's in Middletown, 302-285-0800, please call them early in the week to set up your flower delivery for Saturday to St. Paul's. There will be NO delivery charge.

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 at 484-432-4673.

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

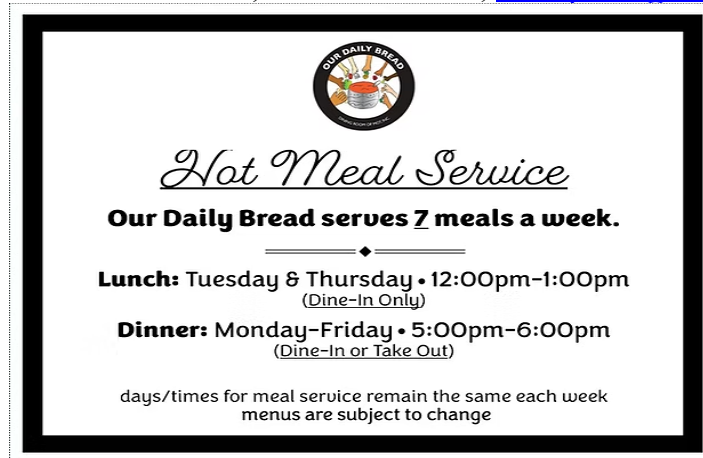
Deep Roots

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 the second Wednesday of every 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 iluvbr-muda@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.ourdailybreadmot.com/volunteer>. Contact Sue Holden, Missions Co-Chair, at 802-324-6167, susieq2951@aol.com.



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 our pantry is bare and needs these items:

- **pasta/pasta sauce**
- **canned items like Chef Boyardee, beef stew, Spam, chicken, tuna**
- **canned fruit**
- **peanut butter and jelly**
- **any boxed items like mac'n cheese, stuffing, mashed potatoes**

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

Chef Boyardee, beef stew, Spam ,pancake mix/syrup, snacks - cookies, crackers etc. Toiletries are stocked for now.

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.