

St. Paul United Methodist Church
201 Levitt Parkway
Willingboro, NJ 08046



If you no longer wish to receive The Epistle,
please notify the church office at 609-877-7034 or
stpumc@verizon.net.

Lent is the name given by the church to encompass the 40 days (plus seven Sundays) leading up to the resurrection of Jesus. The word itself comes from Old English and means, simply, "spring." Traditionally, Lent is a time for penitence—a time to consider our misdeeds and to seek God's forgiveness for them. Often people "give up" something during Lent: a particular food, perhaps, or some activity. But each year the Society of St. Andrew offers you the opportunity to do something extra during Lent: take on the spiritual discipline of daily Scripture reading, reflection, and prayer. In the booklet, you'll find readings for each day of the Lenten season, from Ash Wednesday (February 14) through Easter (April 1).

The theme of this year's booklet is Renewal. The booklet will be available at the Welcome Center beginning Sunday, February 11th. There is no cost.



St. Paul United Methodist Church

*"An intentionally diverse faith community
Committed to the way of Jesus Christ"*

Saint Paul United Methodist Church strives to continue to be a caring and diverse community of Believers who celebrate and proclaim the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ through Worship, Christian Education, Fellowship and Service.

February 2018

Everyone has a story...Everyone has a perspective... Everyone has a voice!

Join the conversation at our community forum on **Faith and Race** with Rev. Jack Johnson and Pastor G on February 21st at 10 am or February 22nd at 7 pm. Come and share in a supportive and judgment free zone. Light refreshments will be served.

How have your experiences shaped your faith? How has your faith shaped your experiences? What can we collectively do make a difference?



Ash Wednesday

February 14th

Worship with imposition of ashes

10 am or 7 pm

Saturday, February 17th 5-6:30 pm

Ridgway Hall

\$10/adult & \$5/children

Tickets available from any UMM member



Stories are an integral part of our historical existence and in particular, the Christian experience. The Bible itself is a composite of stories spanning over a period of over 1500 years, filled with prophecy, narrative encounters, personal and poetic messages, all inspired by a Universal God. In Deuteronomy 11, the children of Israel were commanded to keep God's written commandments and share the word of God with their children so that their days and the days of their children would be multiplied in the land that God gave them. In Mark 5, Jesus delivers a man from a legion of demons and all he asks in return is for the man to go home and share his story about the goodness and mercy of what God had done for him.



I recently sat in our Adult Sunday school class and listened intently as a member shared an experience they encountered with racism during their early formative years. I was amazed at the story and how much courage this person faced. It gave me a greater appreciation for the meaning of her existence, and the gift that she is in the eyes of God and within our church community. As your pastor, I hear countless such stories--people who escaped war, people who overcame tremendous hardships, people who are still struggling with issues--and each story told reminds me of how fortunate I am. Each story makes me feel richer and appreciate how faithful God is.

If you've ever sat in a meeting with me, you'll probably notice that I am frequently exploring ways to integrate connection and dialogue between our senior members and our youth. I think that in churches like ours we have such a wonderfully unique opportunity to share our gifts and resources with the next generation. We have seniors who have overcome so many life challenges, endured many obstacles, and have been favored with long life beyond many friends and relatives. We have a plethora of stories to share and sadly, many of those stories remain embedded in only the confines of our minds. Perhaps we think that the youth today are preoccupied with other things and have no interest in hearing--perhaps we think that our stories don't bear any significance. Well, I strongly beg to differ! I believe that we all have the propensity to bless our future generations with the inspired words of our life stories and especially those stories that proclaim the goodness and mercy of God.

All of this serves as a springboard for a new initiative I would like to introduce to St. Paul entitled "Our Collective Story". In recognition of African American History Month, I am inviting and encouraging the members of St. Paul to share

What stories you might ask? Stories of triumph...stories of defeat...and even stories that perhaps are not yet completed. While this initiative is being launched during African American History Month, it is an invitation for us all. I strongly encourage people of all nationalities and backgrounds to share stories of how you've encountered, experienced and overcome oppression and most importantly how God has been faithful to you during the process! We will be supplying you with a brief outline and guide and can help offer some clarity. (See below) We hope that you will share!

In addition, on Wednesday, February 21st at 11 am and Thursday evening February 22 at 7pm, in lieu of our regularly scheduled Bible studies, we will be hosting two community forums, that will invite the community to come together, share our stories focused on oppression and racial injustice and discuss how our faith in God has helped and can still help in times like these.

I hope that you will give prayerful attention to these and other ways we can together serve in our efforts to spread the good news and be our brother's and sister's keeper. I love you and am praying for you! Please keep the faith!

Pastor G

Pastor G invites you to write your story about your culture, your race and your faith. The stories will be compiled into a book, **Our Collective Story**, which we will share when completed.

Consider these questions as you think about what to write.

- * Have you ever encountered racial or any other form of discrimination?
- * Have you ever witnessed oppression or the oppression of others?
- * Have you ever remained silent?
- * Have you ever taken a stand?
- * Have you ever prayed?
- * How did your faith support you?
- * What has your belief taught you?



Submit your story to the church office. Neatly handwritten or typed (in Word if using the computer, emailed or on flash drive), please.

CHURCH Anniversary PREPARATIONS

Celebrating 60 years! 2019 will mark the 60th anniversary of St Paul and Team Vital is leading the way for a year-long celebration. Every good party, however, needs great planning. Over the next few months, planning meetings will be held

to discuss the types of activities and celebrations we would like to have. If you would like to participate in the Planning Committee, please sign up at the Welcome Center or call the church office. Please contact Jennifer Irizarry (609-239-0352) if you have any questions. Many hands are needed to make this a success!

URGENT NEED! The Sunday School department has an immediate need for 2 teachers for the Elementary class. The material is simple to teach and offers lots of options. You do not need teaching experience to help. You would start immediately, with some training (including Safe Sanctuary—see article below), and would finish out our Sunday School year until May, with the possibility of taking over next year. If 2 people volunteer, you can work out an alternating teaching schedule. Please contact Jennifer Irizarry (609-239-0352) or Cile Grant (609-871-3672) if you can help.



Cile Grant, Education Chairperson, will hold training **Safe Sanctuary Training** in February for adults who wish to work with the children and youth of the church (Sunday school, nursery, youth group, etc.). This includes a background check, which is a simple and quick process, paid for by the church. Please contact Cile at (609-871-3672 or rcg22@drexel.edu) to schedule your training. She is also available if you need a refresher.

Growing Gracefully will meet on Monday, February 26th at 10 am. Representatives from the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (aka RSVP) will discuss various informational programs such Chronic Disease Management, Learning for Everyone (LIFE) and State Health Insurance Program (SHIP). Invite friends and neighbors to learn more about these programs. Please call the church office (609-877-7034) if you plan to attend so we have enough materials.



St. Paul Youth are busy and active! They have gone bowling, made health kits for UMCOR, sold church t-shirts, and escaped from the illusionist Escape room in Cherry Hill. In January, they met with other youth from Church of the Good Shepherd UMC and Delran UMC for a 'meet & greet' gathering.

The young people will attend the Mid-Winter Advance at Keswick the weekend of February 16th-18th where they will experience worship, workshops, good food and meeting with other youth groups.

Officers for 2018 were elected at the January meeting: President-Tiana Smith, Vice President-Ryan Grab, Treasurer-Alice Gaye and Secretary/ Council Representative-Gabrielle Irizarry

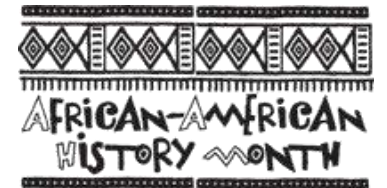
This month, the youth will meet during church instead of in the evening on February 11th. This is something new that we are trying to increase the amount of youth involved in the group and to decrease the difficulties that parents may have getting youth to the evening meetings. The youth will leave worship after the youth choir sings, and the meeting will last until 12:30 pm.

How you can you help the youth?

- Get to know the youth members
- Get certified with Safe Sanctuary (all adults volunteering with youth group must have a background check through Safe Sanctuary)
- Help during a monthly youth meeting
- Volunteer to drive or chaperone the youth during an activity
- Provide information on service projects, volunteer opportunities, and mission projects the youth could participate in

Questions? Ask Laura Fisher, UMYF Leader (856-824-0350)

To celebrate **Black History Month**, the Senior Choir will offer anthems highlighting 4 African American composers: Mark Miller, Charles Tindley, Robert Ray and Cleavant Derricks. A short biography of each composer will be included in the bulletin.



In the event inclement weather necessitates cancellation of our worship service or other important activities, the Calling Post calling system will be used to notify church members. Always use your judgment if the weather is 'iffy'. We want you to be safe. Please be sure the church office has your best contact phone number.



Fellowship Time

Fellowship Time in Ridgeway Hall will be after worship on the 1st & 3rd Sundays. Birthdays of the month will be celebrated on the 1st Sunday. Please assist the hostesses by bringing a small snack item either Sunday. If you are willing to sponsor or purchase a birthday cake, please contact Evelyn Carson (609-877-6497). Will you host Fellowship Time one Sunday? If so, the sign-up sheet (January - June) is on the bulletin board in Ridgeway Hall.

The **Flower Chart** is up in the hallway outside of the sanctuary with plenty of opportunities to honor or remember someone special or a special occasion by sponsoring the altar flowers. The cost is \$13 per urn; dedication forms and payment envelopes are by the chart.



Altar Flowers

United Methodist Women Circles



PM Circle – Monday, February 12 at 7 pm

GIGS Circle – Saturday, February 17 at 1 pm

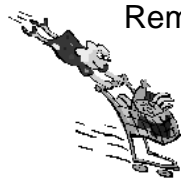
HOPE Circle – Monday, Feb 19 at 12:30 pm

JOY Circle – Tuesday, February 20 at 11:30 am

The **United Methodist Men** will meet for breakfast in Ridgeway Hall on Sunday, February 25th at 7:30 am. All men are invited.



UMM Breakfast



Remember to buy your **Shop Rite Cards**. This is an easy way to support St. Paul while doing your grocery shopping. Cards are available every Sunday in Ridgeway Hall in \$20 or \$50 amounts, payable in check or cash. Cards have no expiration date and make a nice gift for someone!