Greetings, Beautiful People of St. Paul’s!

Many thanks to Jo and Wayne for yet another wonderful and very meaningful Celtic Christmas Service yesterday! They worked hard to make that happen at a very busy time for them, and they moved us another step deeper into the Advent and Christmas journey for this year. It turns out to have been a fitting final in-person service for 2021.

There is so much to catch up on here as we make the shift from in-person worship to Zoom-only starting on Christmas Eve through the month of January. The decisions involved in doing that were taken very seriously. This seems a necessary precaution in light of the convergence of several factors related to the Covid pandemic. There simply is no road map or instruction manual for how to sort through information that is emerging and changing almost as quickly as the virus is mutating.

We will have time to live into this plan and talk more about it. For now, thank you very much for your support of this plan that is probably not anyone’s preference. That said, I am grateful that we have Zoom to turn to in this time.

This week is quite packed with important services and activities.

At 11:00am today, December 21, we will celebrate Wayne Lockard’s amazing life. The service will be offered as hybrid, with in-person participation in the Sanctuary or participation via the Zoom information that was printed in last week’s Tidbits:
Later in the day, at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary, we will offer the Annual Blues Christmas and Community Homeless Memorial Service. This is a collaboration with The Shepherd’s Staff, Access Carroll, the Circle of Caring Homelessness Board, Carroll County Citizens Services, Human Services Programs of Carroll County, Westminster United Methodist Church, and Westminster Church of the Brethren. The service will also be available on Zoom using the same link as Sunday mornings. (See below.)

The Christmas Eve Service at 7:00pm on Friday, December 24, will originate in the Sanctuary with people with roles to play in the service. All others are invited to join by Zoom using the usual Sunday Zoom information. A bulletin outline for that service is provided below. Please prepare as you wish for Communion and Candle-lighting.

On Christmas Day, Georgia and I and a number of volunteers will prepare and serve a community lunch at noon in Fellowship Hall using social distancing and taking other stringent Covid precautions.

And on Sunday, December 26, at 10:00am, we will gather using the usual Sunday morning Zoom link for our Sunday Gathering. The focus scripture is listed at the end of the Christmas Eve bulletin below. We will also make provisions for our monthly healing service that day.

From last week: As a congregation, we have taken pandemic restrictions very seriously from the start, suspending in-person activities between March, 2020, and July 4, 2021. We have required masking by all people in the building, reinforced cleaning regimens, and increased our capacity for sanitizing. Some activities have required proof of vaccination. And across the board, we have done all of this together, in ways that reflect cooperation and love for each other.

As was the case during the previous period of shutdown, outside groups (e.g., AA, NA, Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, Reiki, the HSP Day Program, etc.) that use the building have been granted permission to exercise their own discretion about meeting in-person. These groups continue to be considered “essential.” The requirement that all people in the building wear masks will remain in effect this time around.

Church Council and most other church meetings have been on Zoom since the start of the pandemic and the expectation is that church functions will utilize Zoom during this suspension period. Meal and More will be
considered as a special circumstance in decision-making, and meals will continue in-person in Fellowship Hall for now, with additional efforts to reinforce precautions such as social distancing, masking, and sanitizing.

**UPDATED! Important upcoming dates – pending COVID precautions:**

December 21 (Winter Solstice): 11:00am – Wayne Lockard: A Celebration of a Life; 7:00pm – Blues Christmas and Community Homeless Memorial Service.

December 24: Christmas Eve Service at 7:00PM originating in the Sanctuary with limited attendance and broadcast on Zoom and Facebook Live. Including Communion and Candle-lighting.

December 25: Community Christmas Lunch

December 26: 10:00 Sunday Gathering via Zoom, with healing.

**UPDATED! Covid-19 Precautions**

We will revert to Zoom-only worship starting on Christmas Eve, December 24, and continuing through January. Please get vaccinated and boosted; doing so saves lives. We continue to follow CDC guidelines about masking. Carroll County’s transmission rate seems to be trending higher but that cannot be confirmed because of problems with the state Health Department computer systems. Numbers around the country are rising, with the overwhelming majority of new cases, hospitalizations, and deaths occurring among unvaccinated people. There is concerning evidence of a winter surge in many states at this point, and the emergence of the omicron variant raises many new questions. **Accordingly, masks are required for everyone in the building regardless of vaccination status.** (Note that there are a couple of people with legitimate medical complications who are granted exemptions from masking according to the official guidelines.) We will continue to encourage social distancing and frequent sanitizing. Even as we carefully experiment with changes in the presentation of music on Sunday mornings, we will continue to refrain from congregational singing and physically emphatic praying for now. Use of the building by outside groups will be left to their discretion. A Task Force of Church Council will continue to monitor Covid metrics and provide related guidance for future decision-making.

The current **Prayer List** is included with the **Bulletin** below, along with the **Birthday and Anniversary** lists.
Let us continue in prayer for Sarah Ramsland, Minister of Community Connections, as she continues to immerse herself in ongoing Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). Sarah continues to serve as a chaplain in Frederick. As Sarah finds her way in this ministry, she continues to make a difference in people’s lives, even saving some along the way. This portion of ministerial formation promises to be as formative and rewarding as it is demanding and exhausting. In addition, Sarah is also overseeing the piloting of a Central Atlantic Conference Antiracism Audit Tool with a congregation in DC. (She and I both serve on the CAC Racial Justice Leadership Team.)

As always, please do be in touch with me if I can be helpful to you. Email usually works very well at pastor@stpauls-ucc.org. I routinely check that many times throughout each day. The office phone is 410-848-5975 and I check that usually a couple of times per week. My cellular phone number is in the church directory.

In the midst of all that is happening, may we each be sure to make and take time to think about what this season means for us and for the world. May we all know Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Happy Holidays!

Take good care...

Marty

**Recurring ZOOM EVENTS:**

1. **Sunday Worship, 10:00am. WE WILL GATHER ON ZOOM.** TO PARTICIPATE VIA ZOOM, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING SIGN-IN INFORMATION.

   To access the Gathering with video images and computer audio, click this link or paste it into your browser: [https://zoom.us/j/96602277459](https://zoom.us/j/96602277459)

   To access the Gathering with phone only, dial: 1 301 715 8592, then, when prompted, enter the Meeting ID as: **966 0227 7459**, and enter # when prompted to enter a password.

2. **Seekers, 8:45 am**

   A special Zoom Seekers series is being planned for the month of January. More information will be available soon. Please consider
reconnecting with Seekers or connecting if you have not before. More information will be forthcoming. There is NO SEEKERS SESSION ON DECEMBER 26.

3. For information about Children’s Sunday School for elementary students, contact Laura Russell at christianed@stpauls-ucc.org.

4. Zoom Sunday Preschool – contact Laura Russell at christianed@stpauls-ucc.org. The 4:30pm Sunday Afternoon Preschool Zoom will continue.

FROM THE SPUCC ONLINE PRESENCE TEAM: Please make sure you are following us on Facebook and on our Instagram and YouTube pages!

Follow: https://www.facebook.com/StPaulsUCCWestminster/

Follow: https://www.instagram.com/stpaulsuccwestminster/

Subscribe: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvo0A3_eM1q5zzGuPhN9qvq

If there's anything you'd like us to share on social media, please send it to stpaulswestminster@gmail.com

LITURGIST SIGN-UP: Would you like to contribute to our hybrid worship services? Please use this link to sign up: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040f45aca723a3fc1-stpauls6

Contact Lisa Macurak at lamacurak@gmail.com, if you have any questions.

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS: If you would, please keep making your financial contributions. A collection plate will be available in the Usher Area of the Sanctuary each Sunday. You may also make your contribution by mail (17 Bond Street, Westminster, Maryland 21157), or in the Parish House front door mail slot, or by way of our website (www.stpauls-ucc.org) by clicking the “Online Giving” button, then the general operating line at the bottom of the page. There, you can also set up recurring donations if you'd like. Thank you very much!

COVID VACCINATION INFORMATION: From Maggie Kunz and the Carroll County Health Department:
COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, and now it is easier to get one than ever.

To register, go to:

https://cchd.maryland.gov/registration-links/

Here is the link to our page of covid holiday tips, which connects with our pages for vaccination and testing resources.

https://cchd.maryland.gov/healthy-holiday-tips/

People are always welcome to contact me directly for information or assistance. Work is maggie.kunz@maryland.gov or 410-876-4924.

Thank you, Maggie, for all of your great work!

**ANTI-RACIST CONGREGATION LEADERSHIP TEAM:** Work continues on many commitments in our Anti-Racist Congregation Covenant. The banner facing Main Street has been torn by the wind. A process is being developed for everyone to be involved in creating a new banner that will be a public display of our commitment to antiracism, hopefully with a more inclusive focus relative to all People of Color. At this point, plans are being considered to have gatherings of the Leadership Team after church on the third Sundays of every month. Stay tuned for more information.

The Visual Renewal sub-group also continues its work of addressing issues with the building that have implications for race and general aesthetics. You might have noticed Post-It notes around the building as we prepare to order directional signs and maps to help people navigate the building. The plan is for signs to include English, Spanish, and possible Braille as well.

**ANTI-RACIST PEN PAL PROGRAM:** From Katie: Our congregation has adopted nearly a dozen pen pals so far via Abolition Apostles. If you are interested in corresponding with incarcerated people, please email katiemarinello20@gmail.com with how many pen pals you can commit to. More can be learned at this SPUCC orientation replay or the Abolition Apostles website.
**QUECHUA BENEFIT:**

We still have **additional Covid masks for sale** for donations of $10. The masks are comfortable, fashionable, and great for double-masking. Contact Jacki Reiff or email me (pastor@stpauls-ucc.org) and I will coordinate with Jacki.

**A NOTE FROM SUSIE WARNER:**

Dear Friends of St. Paul’s,

It was a lovely surprise to receive over 40 cards from my church friends for my birthday. I was born into the church. My parents became members in the early 1900’s. I remember sitting in rocking chairs for Sunday School. At age 14, I started teaching a class, and by age 17 I kept the first class during church hour service. I was confirmed and baptized and never left the church. I have met countless people who have come and gone during my time at St. Paul’s. I have kept busy, from keeping children in the nursery to working in the kitchen. I have served on many committees. One was in the kitchen and was called the “Caring Group”. I have also served on the Consistory twice. My husband passed away in 1979 just before Christmas. My greatest time was in 1980 when I received a call from Rev. Charles Hambrick-Stowe asking if I could come into the church office to answer phones and fold bulletins on Monday’s and Thursday’s. At this time there were no computers, answering machines, electric staplers or folding machines; everything was done by hand and with a typewriter. It took 2 days a week just to do the bulletins. On January 8, 1980, I started volunteering in the office 2 days a week and some weeks I volunteered for the entire week. I was able to do this up until Covid came. Those years were the most rewarding with so many memories that were made and will be missed. So many of you made a 97-year-old feel very happy by remembering my birthday.

Thank You,

Susie Warner

**COMMUNITY SERVICE UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**UPDATED! A MEAL and MORE:** From Georgia: I cannot believe this year is about to end. Even though we had a rough start to 2021, we are ending the year knowing that AMaM has served so many…in MANY ways. None of this, however, would have happened without the involvement of many people in many ways. Here is a list of those that I personally thank from the bottom of my heart.

Donors:
• Ann, Pat, Maggie, Jim, Grace, Bill, Patti, and Margie who made mac and cheese the first Thursday of each month;
• Judy and Ed, Marjorie and Fred, Cathy and Brian who made bbq/chili for the fourth Thursday of each month (except November when they graciously made turkey stuffing instead);
• Janet who makes cornbread for the chili;
• Marty who coordinates the fourth Thursday meals and helps out otherwise
• My dear friend Mary (from A.A. Co.) who donates $$ for AMaM and Care4People;
• Pastor Sam who donates farm-fresh veggies during the summer. He also collects the veggie scraps for compost;
• Eric and Tina from Infinite Love Project who donated $$;
• Bob who donates Bullock’s fried chicken from time to time;
• Westminster Rescue Mission who makes food donations whenever possible;
• Janet who collects and delivers bread/goodies from BJs on a regular basis;
• Carol who delivers gently used clothes and other necessities for our guests;
• Clarence who donated a turkey for future use;
• From Bob Bullock, by way of The Roaring Run Lions Club of Finksburg, I was blessed with a Random Act of Kindness gift;
• Linda Kirkpatrick who regularly provides homemade baked goods; and,
• Others that have made private donations.

Volunteers:

• Bill, Coy, David, Mary Ellen, Sharon, Tom, Sally, Karen, Kasey, Ed, Diane, Bob and Faith.

This mission would not be working as wonderfully as it does without our donors and volunteers. God Bless each and every one of you!

Editor’s Note: Very special thanks to Georgia, who has truly put her heart and soul into this effort for years now, building a program that is good for guests, contributors, workers, our community, and the whole world. Thank you, Georgia!

CARE4PEOPLE: From Georgia: With the weather turning colder, our most needed items for the Cold Weather Shelter are twin-sized fleece blankets, sweatshirts, sweatpants, women’s leggings, warm socks, warm gloves, and thermal tops and bottoms and we always have a need for men’s boxers and boxer briefs.

Any donations may be left at the Donation Location marked, "for Diane and MaryEllen."

NAMI PEER TO PEER SUPPORT GROUP: NAMI Peer-to-Peer is a free, eight-session educational program for adults with mental health conditions
who are looking to better understand themselves and their recovery. This virtual class will run over Zoom on Sundays 4-6 pm starting January 23.

For more information, questions, or to sign up please contact Jamie O'Marr at greymaiden@gmail.com

**BENEVOLENCE RESOURCE:** If you are looking to make charitable donations to organizations, you might find these links helpful:

Access Carroll (free medical, dental, and mental health services for uninsured and underinsured people in Westminster and Carroll County) [http://www.accesscarroll.org/how-your-donations-help/](http://www.accesscarroll.org/how-your-donations-help/)

Care4People (described above)

CarrollBaby Diaper Initiative (described below)

Carroll Food Sunday (food/grocery support for families and individuals in need) [https://ccfoodsonday.org/how-to-help/](https://ccfoodsonday.org/how-to-help/)

Green Valley Samaritans (Shura Wallin and Rev. Randy Mayer (UCC), rescuing people crossing the Arizona desert, providing various types of support for immigrants) [https://www.qvs-samaritans.org/donate.html](https://www.qvs-samaritans.org/donate.html)

Heifer International (providing livestock to give a “hand up” to families in need around the world) Gift catalog at [https://www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/index.html](https://www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/index.html)

Human Services Programs of Carroll County (shelter and housing services, fuel and energy assistance, financial support, job training, etc.) [https://hspinc.org/give/](https://hspinc.org/give/)

On Our Own (drop-in center for people dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues) [http://www.onourownofcarrollcounty.org/](http://www.onourownofcarrollcounty.org/)


Shepherd’s Staff (a wide array of support for individuals and families in need, filling gaps in the service delivery system, back-to-school bags,
Christmas stockings, etc.)  https://www.shepstaff.org/giving/ways-to-give/donate-online/

UCC Open and Affirming Coalition (working toward the goal of all UCC churches becoming Open and Affirming for LGBTQIA+ people)  https://openandaffirming.org/about/donate/donationpage/

UCC Mental Health Network (sponsoring the W.I.S.E. congregation program, reducing stigma, providing for mental health and substance abuse needs in churches)  https://www.mhn-ucc.org/donate/

Westminster Rescue Mission/Addiction Healing Center (residential substance abuse services for men and women, food and household goods for families and individuals in need)  https://addictionhealingctr.org/donate/

**HABITAT FOR HUMANITY ReSTORE – Volunteers Wanted:** The energy at Habitat for Humanity is ablaze as we steadily make ready our ReStore to open in the Spring. We hope you will join our excitement and consider becoming a Core Volunteer. We are looking for key volunteers able to work in the store on an ongoing basis. You will work side-by-side with staff to ensure we have a friendly, clean, safe, well-stocked store.

Sales from the ReStore will go directly towards building more homes for our neighbors in need. We are about to build our 10th and 11th homes shortly after the ReStore opens. You just cannot comprehend the absolute joy on a new homeowner’s face when the keys to their home are handed over. Our goal is to be able to see that reaction over, and over again. The success of the ReStore will be a big component in helping that happen.

So how can you become a Core Volunteer? It’s actually pretty easy. Agree to come and work with us, once a month, twice a month, once a week or more! We are looking for dedicated community members who can volunteer on a recurring work schedule.

We would love to have you come and help with the success of our ReStore, which will directly help us build more homes in our community. Be a part of this exciting venture. Contact Michele Cesar Turner at mturner@cchabitat.org to get added to our schedule.

**LITTLE FREE PANTRY:** In collaboration with the Coalition Against Prejudice, a Little Free Pantry has been placed on the alley next to the parking lot exit. It is intended to provide constant access to non-perishable food and other necessary items. The Little Free Pantry is already benefiting
the community. Folks have taken what they need and others have given what they can.

The pantry was filled to the brim when it opened; Jim, Maggie, and Tony (custodians of the Donation Location) brought the excess food there and have been restocking the shelves. Erin and Ben also check the pantry frequently, as do members of the Coalition Against Prejudice.

If you have canned or non-perishable food you would like to donate, you can bring it straight to the pantry. If there is no room on the shelves, you can leave it at the Donation Location, if you have a church key. Or you can call the office at 410-848-5975 to make arrangements to drop off your items. Otherwise, you can leave donations on the porch of the Parish House facing Bond Street. If you leave donations on the porch, please email or call Jim and we’ll put things away (kunz.jim@gmail.com).

**COMMUNITY FOOD DISTRIBUTION:** Carroll County Food Sunday has now re-opened and is operating for normal business hours on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Please click this link for more details: [https://ccfoodsunday.org/](https://ccfoodsunday.org/)  Food is being distributed at the following sites: Immanuel Lutheran in Manchester, NESAP in Hampstead, Crossroads on Sullivan Road in Westminster, Westminster Rescue Mission in Westminster, St. John Catholic in Westminster, St James Lutheran in Union Bridge, St Paul United Methodist Church in New Windsor, Wesley Freedom United Methodist in Eldersburg.

Brenda Meadows also sent the following update: *The pantry at St. Mary’s Lutheran Church in Silver Run is open the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month from 5pm-6pm. It is currently solely operating as a drive-through. Folks receive milk, eggs, meat, bread, cereal, dried and canned goods including items like peanut butter and soups. Items change each pantry and are subject to change. All are welcome.*

*Also, we provide food for those with emergency needs at Shepherd’s Staff. Folks should call 410-857-5944 for an appointment to pick up food.*

If you know of anyone able to help connect Brenda with “free milk” options, please email her at brenda.meadows@shepstaff.org.

**CARROLLBABY DIAPER INITIATIVE:** Please send in monetary donations via check or electronic transaction at [www.stpauls-ucc.org](http://www.stpauls-ucc.org). Tom uses several discount cards to significantly lower the price of needed items and use your donations to their highest potential! Please email Tom Templeton
with questions at sharonandtomtempleton@gmail.com or go to www.carrollbaby.org. Thank you, Tom!

**YOGA CLASSES!** From Tom: Saturday classes are led by Syeda Khan and are “chair” yoga appropriate for all levels of student, from beginners to advanced! Fees are $5.00 per session and students should dress accordingly and, if possible, bring their own mats. If you don’t have a mat, there are some available for your use! **Masks are required.**

Students can get details from Tom Templeton at 410-236-4851 or at sharonandtomtempleton@gmail.com and should enter from the Green Street ramp or by the entry from the parking lot and class will be from 11:00-12:00! See you there-Namaste!

**REIKI SESSIONS** are available in the room next to the Chapel. Contact Renee Deiaco at rdeiaco@hotmail.com if you are interested.

**PRESENCE CLASSES**

Mary Jackson is offering virtual classes this February based on her newly published book: **PRESENCE Recognizing the Divine in Your Everyday Life**

Go to PRESENCE-Recognizing the Divine Everyday and click on "classes" to see the details. Classes will be offered for 6 weeks, once a week, with a choice of daytime or evenings. Consider forming a group of friends or family who would like to explore a deeper experience of their spiritual path and come together, or come for yourself. This might be a cold winter coming up, but what a great time for personal growth and development!