



# **ST. PAULS ANNUAL MEETING**

Sunday, March 3, 2024

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# Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda

March 3, 2024

**Opening Devotional.....**Senior Pastor Matt Fitzgerald

**Call to order & remarks.....**Ben Emmrich, President of the Congregation

**Approval of 2023 Congregational Meeting minutes.....** Karen Lyons, Secretary

## **Motion // Discussion // Vote**

**Remarks.....**Senior Pastor Matt Fitzgerald

**Vote to approve 2023 congregational meeting minutes.....**Karen Lyons, Secretary

## **Motion // Discussion // Vote**

**Financial report and vote on the 2024 budget.....**Sally Fletcher, Treasurer

## **Motion // Discussion // Vote**

**Vote on updated covenant with Lighthouse Church.....**Ben Emmrich, members of the CRG

## **Motion // Discussion // Vote**

**“Expanding our Openness” Capital Campaign update...Jana O’Brien, Lorne Frank, Wayne Parman**

**Nominating Committee report and election.....**Nancy Godinez, Chair

## **Motion // Discussion // Vote**

**Adjournment, The Lord’s Prayer.....**Senior Pastor Matt Fitzgerald

*Members of St. Pauls have a voice and vote.*

*Friends of the congregation have a voice.*

Please mark your calendar:

*Special Congregational meeting after service on*

**Sunday, June 2nd**

# President's Report

**President's Annual Report  
St Pauls United Church of Christ  
March 1, 2024**

Members and Friends of St Pauls,

St. Pauls United Church of Christ is a community called by God to action – for each other, for our faith and for our City.

**In the last year, our community has responded forcefully to this call!**

I am happy to report that St Pauls continues in its strong tradition of thoughtful leadership and stewardship, acting forcefully on the six pillars of St Pauls' Strategic Plan:

1. God is calling us to grow towards each other
2. God is calling us to grow toward God together
3. Increasing diversity in our Partnerships and our Congregation
4. Living our faith in an age of injustice
5. Using our building for service and mission
6. Tending our finances faithfully

My highlights of the past year include:

- Welcoming a total of six migrant families to our church, allowing them the safe space and support to begin the next chapter of their lives in Chicago. Thank you especially to David Brown, who has been St Pauls' lay leader in supporting these migrant families.
- The financial resiliency of our Congregation:
  - Another strong, successful annual pledge drive, led by Jack Lyons. We received over \$930k in pledges (a \$55k increase from last year) and increased "giving units" (meaning, households that give to St Pauls) to 245. Thank you all for your generosity!
  - Ended 2023 with a budget deficit of just over \$150k, driven by lower than expected use of church revenue, distributions from a planned gift being pushed to 2024.
- Continued St Pauls' governance improvements, including kicking off our five year by-laws review and a reinvigorated Church Committee structure. I'm confident that this new structure will lead to increased lay member engagement and more productive committee work. Expect both of these governance items to be finalized in our special Congregational meeting on June 2nd.
- The continued revitalization of our Children's ministry, with a robust Sunday School, Children's Choirs, Bible-off-Broadway and upcoming Summer Camp. It's a joy to see more families with children at St Pauls.
- The successful launch of our "Expanding our Openness" capital campaign, with the goal of installing an elevator entrance suite and new, welcoming courtyard. We've made great strides so far, reaching over \$2m toward our target of \$3.6m.

Our strength as a congregation comes from the power of the people within it. Please consider the ways you could lean in in 2024, including:

- Commit to serve on a Church Committee or Ministry
- Download the Church Center App, make sure that your information is updated and that your profile has a photo
- Pledge to our Capital Campaign

Each of these efforts support the strategic pillars of our Congregation, while also drawing our congregation together and serving our Chicago community. We commit to continuing this work in 2024.

In my third year as Congregational President, I've relied heavily on many of you for counsel and support. Thank you especially to Pastors Matt, Jeff and Liz, our dedicated staff, the members of the Church Council and to all the volunteer members that serve our Ministries. St Pauls is strong because of each of you.

I'm excited for what lies ahead in the life of our Church, and I commit to working alongside each of you as we make a joyful sound in our city.

Yours in service,

Ben

# 2023 Congregational Meeting Minutes

Annual Meeting  
St Pauls UCC  
March 12, 2023

## Call to Order

President Ben Emmrich called the meeting to order at 11:27 AM

## Opening Devotional

Pastor Matt led us in an opening prayer.

## Remarks

### Ben Emmrich, President of the Congregation

Ben welcomed everyone attending in person and virtually.

He characterized the Annual Meeting as a time to:

- report on the progress that the church has made as it emerges from the pandemic.
- chart a path forward.

Ben reminded us of the importance of being rooted in the 6 pillars of our 2020 Strategic Plan.

- He noted 3 areas of investment during the previous year:

### 1. Staff

- We welcomed Pastor Liz and already appreciate the gifts and heart she brings to St. Pauls
- We are grateful for our Staff - We invested significantly in our staff. The work of the HR Task Force revealed places where salaries needed to be adjusted. We enrolled 3 employees in our benefits plan.

### 2. Finances

- Thank you to Jack Lyons and the Giving Campaign Committee
- Thank you to everyone who responded to the Giving Campaign
  - the number of pledge units increased from 170 to 240
- We ended the year with a \$300,00.00 surplus that was driven by non-recurring revenue from the estates of:
  - Marilyn Parson
  - Hazel Vespa
  - Lucille Rossburger
  - Nina Witka

### 3. Growing connections within the church

- Activities such as Bible Off Broadway, Sunday School, and Little Lights have promoted connection

### **Two calls to action:**

1. Thank you to Karen Johnson for her leadership of the Building Accessibility Task Force. Please attend the after-worship meetings being held on
  - 3/26
  - 4/16
2. Get involved – join a Ministry!

- Ben thanked Matt, Jeff, and Liz, the church staff, and the Council.

with special thanks for all the good work done by Wendy Love and Kirsten Simonton, who are leaving the Council.

### **Approval of 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes**

Rick Peterson made a motion to approve the March 2022 Annual Meeting minutes. Kurt Hansen seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Minutes were approved by a unanimous voice and electronic vote.

In **Matt's opening remarks** he mentioned the symbolism in the architectural detail of the Vines and Branches throughout the sanctuary – Scripture - I am the vine and you are the branches. Matt thanked Sally for all her work regarding managing the church's finances and budgets. Matt reiterated that all our employees now have health insurance.

### **Financial Report – Sally Fletcher**

- SPUCC finances are managed on an on-going basis by the Treasurer, the Bookkeeper, the Finance Committee, supported by monthly staff reports.
- The 2022 budget surplus of \$300,00 surplus was the result of several factors: the estate gifts mentioned in Ben's remarks, the forgiveness of the PPP loans, and the fact that 2022 spending was 6% lower than budgeted.
- The budget being proposed for 2023 is for \$1.6M – that is a 20% increase over the spending in 2022.
- We expect to draw 4% from the investment account to help balance the budget.
- The budget being presented for 2023 projects a \$23,000 deficit.
- The largest expense increase over 2022 is for staff. We added 3 employees to our benefits plan.

Sally and Nate Combs, Facilities Ministry, addressed the question about the \$10,000 line item for the High school space.

The history: the space used for High school gatherings was eliminated as part of Phase 1 of the Capital Campaign, the creation of the accessible bathroom suite and the ramps to access the Chancel. A new space is needed for youth to gather. The preliminary thoughts include making a space near the Social Hall that will be attractive as a teen hang-out. Planning will continue through the spring. The Facilities Ministry is seeking input from kids, families, and other volunteers.

Kurt Hansen moved to accept the 2023 budget as proposed. Dave seconded the motion.

Members of the Congregation thanked Sally and the Finance Committee for all the effort put into taking advantage of available monies, finding areas for saving, for tending our finances faithfully.

Ben called for a vote on the motion made by Kurt Hansen and seconded by Dave to approve the 2023 Budget as presented.

The motion passed unanimously by voice and electronic vote.

Many thanks to Sally for her leadership.

Ben encouraged everyone to read the Facilities Report Included in the Annual Meeting packet and bring additional questions forward.

Nancy Voigts Godinez from the Nominating Committee presented the following names for election at this meeting:

- Ben Emmrich, President, 2-year term
- Karen Lyons, Secretary, 2-year term
- Jenny Benefield, Care and Connection Ministry Chair, 3-year term
- Annie Johnson, At Large Council Member, 3-year term
- Rick Peterson, Representative to the Chicago Metropolitan Association and Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ, 1-year term
- Nancy Voigts Godinez, Nominating Committee 2024
- Deon Fayhee, Nominating Committee 2024
- Creighton Hartanov, Nominating Committee 2024

Carrie Brueggers moved to approve the nominees as presented by the Nominating Committee.

Jen Luerssen seconded the motion.

Discussion:

As UCC Representative, Rick Petersen intends to highlight the historic connections and covenantal ties between St. Pauls and the UCC.

It was noted that St. Pauls budgeted a \$30,000 contribution to the UCC.

Ben offered comments in support of Rick's remarks.

There will be a summer Synod in 2023. There will be a new General Minister.

Ben asked for a vote to approve the nominees as presented by the Nominating Committee. The voice and electronic vote was unanimous.

#### **Additional Discussion:**

Pastor Liz explained the 89% increase in spending for Children and Youth Ministries.

The 2023 budget is best compared to the 2019 budget because programming was cut back during the Pandemic and the budget numbers were drastically reduced each of those years.

The new Sunday School curriculum is expensive because it is comprehensive. It has components for families, videos, newsletter information, as well as the material for use in Sunday School. The Children and Youth Ministry seeks to extend Sunday Morning programming— family ministry is more impactful than kids' ministry, so the plan is to equip parents to engage in faith discussion with their families during the week.

Compassion Camp will be held this summer— it is a combination of VBS and summer camp.

The Children and Youth Ministry is gathering data to guide program planning by conducting surveys of families with children in all age groups, as well as young adults and seniors.

The Little Lights program for fall is already almost full.

4 Little Lights families intend to join St. Pauls.

The goal of the relationship between Little Lights and St. Pauls is to build community.

The Children and Youth Ministry wants to revive events and traditions that have not been in recent use.

There was discussion about programming for Seniors and other cohorts in church.

Ben encouraged everyone to raise concerns or offer ideas to prompt new programming.

Current programs for Seniors include:

- Retirement Group, meets once a month
- Connectors – which reaches out on an On-going basis to seniors and those who have a hard time getting out.
- Caregivers Group, meets twice a month

The plan is to bring back the “First Wednesday Lunch,” perhaps in a different format.

Matt shared research that says the number one predictor of whether young adults go back to church after leaving home or going to college is the number of adults in their church who knew their names in high school.

We are encouraged to ask ourselves about the number of high school kids we currently know.

Making changes to worship times and traditions is an organic process. Members may reach out to the Pastors with ideas or concerns.

Those topics will be brought to Council for discussion.

Discussion about “hybrid church”

We have 50-75 computers in attendance each week representing approximately 75 to 110 people.

Members who have moved away are participating online. Sunday School teachers can hear the music and sermon at their convenience. Continuing hybrid church is value-added for St. Pauls.

Ben reiterated the 2 calls to action: attend Building Accessibility Task Force meetings and join a ministry.

Pastor Matt closed the meeting with gratitude for the opportunity to work with Jeff, Liz and a clergy coach. He gave special thanks to Kurt, Ramiro, Fernando, Maddy, Claire, Erin, Danielle, Louis, and Kevin.

Pastor Liz led the congregation in the Lord’s Prayer.

Meeting adjourned at 12:37 PM

Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Lyons, Secretary

St. Pauls Special Meeting  
Sunday, June 11, 2023

Pastor Liz led the congregation in an opening prayer.

Ben called the meeting to order at 11:11 AM

Ben Emmrich provided context for the current discussion about the Capital Campaign by sharing a timeline of key moments leading up to this meeting.

- 2016 – 2018    A period of discernment focused on openness and accessibility.
- 2019            Larry Kearns was chosen as the architect for the project and Bulley and Andrews was selected as our contractor
- 02/2021        Phase 1, the accessible bathroom suite was completed. It was financed by the funds that had been raised between 2019 and 2020.

The rest of the Expanding our Openness Capital Campaign will cost approximately \$3.6M to:

- build an elevator that stops at every level of the building, with a short ramp in one spot.
- build an open and accessible courtyard on the Orchard Street side of the church.

The decision to bring Phase 2 to the Congregation for a vote was a result of a long, thoughtful, process. The plans that have been developed leading up to this point will be the plans we are voting to fund. Everyone is encouraged to review the plans and pictures and ask questions.

**Ben made the following motion:**

**The wider Congregation endorses the rejuvenation of the campaign to secure St Pauls legacy for the next 100 years. This campaign will expand SPUCC's openness by moving forward with the building renovation plans as envisioned before the pandemic.**

**The rejuvenation of the campaign will have four components:**

- **The-establishment of a Campaign Task Force, to be chaired by Jana O'Brien**
- **Initiate a fundraising effort with a target of \$3.6 M**
- **Initiate any necessary updates or adjustments to the architectural plans, construction budgets and /or timelines. In addition, confirm impact to ongoing facility and/or staff costs and related deferred maintenance.**
- **The Campaign Task Force will present its progress quarterly to the Church Council and the fundraising effort will conclude by the end of 2024**

**Rick Peterson seconded the motion.**

Questions and discussion from people attending in person and virtually.

- Reason for the Courtyard Plaza and the cost of its construction
  - We expect that the Courtyard Plaza will be more inviting - people will find it easier to come in and it will be easier for us to reach out.
  - The cost of the plaza is approximately \$1.2M of the 3.6M or 30% of the budget.
  - The cost of making the changes to the courtyard that are necessary to make the elevator accessible is approximately \$400K.
  - Rick Peterson would support debt financing if it was needed to go forward with the project.
  - Our intention is to raise the whole amount. If it turns out that the Capital campaign does not raise the entire amount, the next step would be for the Campaign Task Force and the Council to work together to discern a path forward. One path forward could be debt financing.
  - Curb cuts will be included in the project.
  - The fundraising part of the project will be completed by the end of 2024.
  - Pledges may be paid over 3 years.
  - Several contingencies have been built into the construction budget to anticipate cost increases.
  - Please bring questions and suggestions about the details of the plan to the Capital Campaign Committee. Everyone is encouraged to participate.

**Jana O'Brien called the question and Carrie Brueggers seconded.  
The motion passed.**

Matt thanked the Human Resources Task Force members, Jim Alrutz, Jen Luerssen, Eric Simonton, and Karen Lyons for their hard work. He noted that the Task Force is officially finished.

Ben asked for those who participated in any part of the Expanding Our Openness project to stand. Ben invited those who intend to pledge to stand (no dollar amount specified)

Jeff led the congregation in its traditional closing, praying The Lord's Prayer together.

Ben called the meeting to a close at 11:36 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Karen Lyons

# Senior Pastor Matt Fitzgerald Annual Report

Dear Saint Pauls,

As we look toward our 181st year as a church, I am full of hope and gratitude for Saint Pauls.

Worship attendance remains on the rise, regularly matching or increasing our 2019 numbers. Bible off Broadway rallied dozens and dozens of young children and galvanized our Sunday School program. A huge thank you to Jana O'Brien, Pastor Jeff, Kecia Waldschmidt, the many others who made that production such a wonderful celebration of our past and future. Our recent New Member classes brought us many remarkable new siblings. Thanks to Jack Lyons, his Giving Team, and your generosity, our pledge total neared all time high. In many weeks, the choir stalls could barely hold another singer! These numbers are meaningful because they tell the story of a resurgent, vibrant church.

We are called to make a joyful sound in the city, here and now; here at the corner of Fullerton and Orchard, and now in 2024. Yet, our *here and now* is always shaped by our *there and then*.

When the story of 2023 is told, it will be the story of our commitment to house migrant families; five over the course of the summer, and one right now. We did this here and now because we have never lost touch with our there and then. Saint Pauls was an immigrant church. Saint Pauls is a home to migrant families. Rather than becoming paralyzed by abstract political questions, we followed Jesus and made room in the inn. Endless thanks to David Brown and his faithful team of volunteers.

Our here and now is shaped by our then and there. And sometimes the two exist at once. After our first full year since Tom Henry's death, our worship is still imbued with his creativity. Our welcome continues to reflect his inclusive hospitality. Our character still carries his good humor, and our pews remain full of people he loved and served. In many different ways, Tom is still with us. I continue to thank God for giving Saint Pauls such a faithful pastor, and for giving me such a gifted friend and predecessor.

Rev. Liz Nickerson has been part of our pastoral team for nearly a year and a half. Jeff and I remain delighted to have Liz as a colleague. We are blessed by good pastors at Saint Pauls, and I am grateful for such excellent coworkers.

As I look ahead, I see real challenges and great opportunities before us. We remain determined to make our building accessible. Our campaign to expand and elevate our openness is off to a terrific start, and needs all of us to participate. 2024 will find us hard at work, discerning the best way to make our building reflect our spirit. We will answer other pressing questions in the year ahead. How can we re-engage our love of service? What is the best way to work with UCAN and Lincoln

Park Community Services? How can we best meet the needs of our hungry and housing insecure neighbors? Can Little Lights continue to grow? What shape will efforts to engage our members take? How must we change in order to remain one of the few thriving progressive churches in Chicago? Can we find a way to invite the world to church without sacrificing our “think for yourself” liberalism?

I know that God will guide us to the right answers.

My confidence comes from my strong faith in Her guidance, and from my great respect for our church leaders. Saint Pauls remains blessed by a remarkable staff, and a gifted, dedicated group of lay-leaders. In the United Church of Christ, a congregation needs both in order to thrive. My gratitude for Kurt, Kevin, Brendan, Fernando, Ramiro, David, Maddy, Aubraea, Erin, Danielle, Liz, and Jeff runs deep. Our President Ben Emmrich enters his fourth year today. Ben championed our mice to house migrant families. He makes big decisions well because he is a gifted listener. We are blessed by his dedication, and knack for seeing what’s coming over the horizon. Our Treasurer, Sally Fletcher wraps up her service this morning. During her term, she has solved budget woes, assembled a terrific committee and worked tirelessly to help the staff and congregation better understand our financial position.. We owe her a huge thanks! Of course strong lay-leaders are the reflection of a generous and faithful congregation. Thank you, all of you, for being Saint Pauls! After nearly twelve years, my work as Senior Pastor feels fresh and life-giving. The joy I find serving Saint Pauls only grows.

God is good!

Christ is Risen!

Matt

# Facilities Ministry

## Facilities Ministry

The last year has been busy for St Pauls' facilities maintenance and improvements, with much thanks to Fernando, Maddy, and everybody else who has helped improve the quality of our building.

Completed projects include:

- Boiler Rehaul and Maintenance
- High School Classroom lounge updating
- Added camera and intercom system to Orchard Entrance ADA ramp door.
- Plaster and paint repairs in the Parsonage
- Structural repairs in Parsonage basement
- Oscar Mayer room floor, wall and ceiling finish repairs.

Our main plan for 2024 is to complete the repairs to our exterior envelope identified in our 2016 envelope study, with tuckpointing and limestone repairs on all four sides of our building. These repairs will hopefully be coordinated with any possible exterior work coming out of the Capital Campaign towards the end of this year.

Large projects we had planned for this year are:

- Tuckpointing and Limestone repair on our building envelope
- Increasing the base-annual Parsonage repair budget, and planning a 1-time porch replacement project to remove all of the sagging and rotting timbers and replace with new structural porch materials and composite material boards.
- Sanctuary Lighting design + updating – PLACED ON HOLD
- Plaster/paint repair in the Chapel, hallways, and main entrance to Saint Pauls – PLACED ON HOLD until after the Capital Campaign is over, unless emergency repairs are needed.
- Refurbishment and display of Stained Glass rescued from Paul's House – PLACED ON HOLD until after the Capital Campaign. Potential display site in the Parlor.
- Budget planning and future expense coordination with the Capital Campaign committee, in regards to ongoing elevator maintenance costs, landscaping and outdoor furniture costs, and additional facility impact.

Our operating fund has been running at an annual deficit, compared to actual costs, which we have had the luxury of doing by using the generous Knaphurst fund. We will continue to use the Knaphurst Fund for our large Parsonage and Tuckpointing projects, but should be aware that our operating budget would need to significantly increase if that fund were to be completely depleted.

# Finance Ministry

## St. Pauls United Church of Christ Ministry of Finance and Giving Report for the Congregational Meeting 3-3-2024

### 2023 Highlights:

- We received pledges from 240 households, indicating an intent to give \$ 874,985 in pledge income. At year's end, we received more than expectations by 1%
- Variance in operating expenses was only 1% despite the midyear addition of the expenses In the Activism and Advocacy Category for Lighthouse Church and The Migrant Housing Project (MHP). Both were one-time, non-recurring expenses. The Lighthouse Church provision was to honor an agreement made at our 2019 Annual Meeting.
- Building Operations expenses were supplemented by using Restricted / Designated Funds
- Ending 2023 with \$ 150,452 deficit mainly due to shortfall in operating income: Missed expectations for planned giving due in part to a retirement account withholding of \$ 3,132 for tax (filing for refund in 2024) and distributions from the estate of Hazel Vespa pushed to this year. Moreover, income from the usage of our building and grounds was \$ 55,000 (40%) less than expected.
  - We reduced rent accordingly when lessee stopped using rooms
  - CPS was \$18.5k in arrears in the parking fees at year's end (Now paid in full)
  - Little Lights and Summer Camp fell short of net income expectations by 36%

2023 Budget vs. Actual	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	% Difference
Operating Income:		\$	-10%
	\$ 400,000	358,17	-1%
Non-Recurring Income	1,070,000	8	-40%
Giving	137,650	1,060,606	
Use of Church Building Proceeds		82,095	
Total Operating Income	\$ 1,607,650	\$ 1,500,880	-7%

<b>Operating Expenses:</b>		<b>1,237,705</b>	<b>-1%</b>
	<b>1,252</b>	<b>166,875</b>	<b>-6%</b>
Staff and Administration	,915	18,745	1%
Building Operations	177,5	76,254	-6%
Worship/Congregational Life	00	7,770	-20%
Music	18,500	16,462 \$	-30%
Invitational Outreach	81,225	127,541	95%
Youth & Children's Ministries	9,750		
Activism and Advocacy	23,950		
	65,250		
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,629,090</b>	<b>\$ 1,651,352</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Income Higher or (Lower) than Expenses</b>	<b>\$(21,440)</b>	<b>\$ (150,472)</b>	<b>86%</b>

### Restricted / Designated Funds:

There were expenses of \$225,999 from the designated/restricted funds in 2023:

Building Fund \$ 90,798

Migrant Housing Project (MPH) \$ 51,331 in addition the \$ 25K from the operating budget Music Funds \$ 39,466

Staff Development \$ 16,818 – HR audit and Consulting

Expanding our Openness \$ 15,971

Needy Relief \$ 5,070

Other restricted funds \$ 6,545

The balance in Designated/Restricted Funds as of 12/31/2023 was \$ 1,233,161.

### Investment Funds:

In 2023, global stock markets saw moderate growth with periods of volatility, driven by technology and healthcare sectors. Bond markets faced challenges due to rising interest rates, impacting prices. Overall, stocks performed modestly while bonds encountered headwinds amid changing interest rates.

Since 2013, United Church Funds (UCF) has managed St. Pauls' investments. UCF offers a range of professionally managed, diversified and socially responsible investment funds exclusively to United Church of Christ Churches and ministries. For more information: [www.ucfunds.org](http://www.ucfunds.org).

The St Pauls Finance Committee monitors our portfolio monthly and our next annual review with Matt Wagner, VP Institutional Relationships at UCF, is scheduled for March 18th. St. Pauls' main investment account grew by 7.1% in 2023, ending at \$2,950,278. This performance is inclusive of \$328,320 in market gains, or 11.2%, and \$115,000 in net disbursements. Our holdings are about 4% in cash and fixed income funds and 96% in a Balanced Fund account.

The separate Capital Campaign fund ended 2023 with a balance of \$227,446. This will be used as Phase 2 of the Campaign to Expand and Elevate our Openness continues. This fund is invested 100% in the UC Funds Cash & Equivalent Fund that had a 2023 annual return of 4.88%.

## **2024 Budget**

The 2024 budget is essentially a balanced budget, projecting a \$ 37 surplus at year end.

Income: We are employing best practices with regards to use of unrestricted planned gifts and use of Investment earnings. Specifically, we are limiting the unrestricted planned gifts used for operating expenses to 5% of the *operating expenses*. Excess funds received will be reflected on line 10 of the income statement. Use of investment funds will be limited to 4% of the average of the last five years ending balances to offset ebbs and flows in the market. The Finance Committee developed an Investment Policy that will be reviewed and hopefully approved by the Church Council on 2/26/24, which includes these tenants. We anticipate an increase in income from Use of Building and Grounds: CPS paid their past due invoices and is now in our good standing. Little Lights is adding an afternoon session and summer camp will be two weeks longer than 2023.

St Pauls made an Employee Retention Credit (ERC) Claim and will net \$ 167,826 in 2024. ERC is like the PPE Credits we received in 2021 and 2022 – although much more complicated computations. *It is highly unlikely that there will be another similar program. That means we need to look for continued Increases in giving and revenue from our Church assets.* Larry Damron is heading a task force in 2024 to address Revenue from church assets.

Expenses: Staff and Administrative expenses continue to be our largest expense category. Most staff will receive 3 - 3.5% increases. Two staff members are receiving more substantial increases as directed by the Executive Committee to bring their current salaries up to comparable market rates. Thankfully the health insurance premium increases were more modest this year. The premium increases for our building, liability, inland marine coverages were not as modest. (48%) We will also incur CPA Fees in 2024: for the review of our 2022 books in 2024 and the cost of every third-year audit of the 2023 books in 2024. In 2024 we will look to use the designated for Staff Development rather than operating expenses but will cap it at \$ 6K.

We recently renewed our contracts with third party providers for Gas and Electric that kept those expenses in check in 2023. We think it prudent to only renew in 12-month intervals. There were slight increases in other building improvements, preservation, and operations lines. There were no increases in the Worship and Congregational Life budgets.

Some of our musicians received their first increases since 2015 in March 2023 and the 2024 budget reflects the twelve months at the same rates. Worship and Congregational life budgets stayed the same as 2023 and we will encourage members to bring snacks for coffee hour in 2024. The invitational Outreach budget increased by nearly 16% to support our loftier outreach goals as did our Youth and Children's Ministries budget.

Budget cuts are evident in our Activism and Advocacy category, most notably in OWCM 'Our Church's Wider Mission'. This is the contribution we make each year to the Illinois Conference of the UCC. In keeping with decisions made by several comparable churches, we reduced our contribution

by 60%. While this was primarily a budgetary decision, we feel it is justified in part because we are supporting the mission of the Illinois Conference by supporting Lighthouse UCC directly with rent-free space. Additionally, we reduced the amount we distribute in other Annual Grants by 11%.

**Finance Committee (meets third Monday of Month):**

Hannah Basil Bryant Ron Koepke  
Sonya Brizzolara Jack Lyons (Giving Chair)  
Larry Damron Toby Rogers  
Sally Fletcher (chair) Bob Wild

Faithfully and respectfully submitted,

**Sally Fletcher**

Sally Fletcher, Treasurer

# 2024 Budget Proposal

	HISTORICAL						
	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	% Incr 2023 Actual
<b>Operating Income:</b>							
Non-Recurring Income	\$ 147,917	\$ 96,000	\$ 328,930	\$ 565,450	\$ 358,178	\$ 362,887	1.3%
Giving	1,039,969	1,021,289	1,027,729	991,873	1,060,606	1,148,800	8.3%
Use of Church Proceeds	150,116	7,155	100,936	97,449	82,095	150,000	82.7%
<b>Total Operating Income</b>	<b>\$ 1,338,002</b>	<b>\$1,124,444</b>	<b>\$ 1,457,596</b>	<b>\$1,654,772</b>	<b>\$ 1,500,880</b>	<b>\$ 1,661,687</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
<b>Operating Expenses:</b>							
Staff and Administration	\$ 1,046,464	\$ 975,973	\$ 1,026,775	\$1,012,543	\$ 1,237,705	\$ 1,314,500	6.2%
Building Operations	176,961	142,746	147,653	178,738	166,875	173,100	3.7%
Worship/Congregational Life	15,706	9,650	12,584	11,619	18,745	19,000	\$ (0)
Music	62,562	50,561	65,372	67,690	76,254	82,850	8.7%
Invitational Outreach	11,684	0	975	8,159	7,770	9,000	15.8%
Youth & Children's Ministries	31,738	14,053	5,961	13,234	16,462	20,850	26.7%
Activism and Advocacy	78,860	67,827	66,382	64,762	127,541	42,350	-66.8%
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,423,975</b>	<b>\$1,260,810</b>	<b>\$ 1,325,703</b>	<b>\$1,356,745</b>	<b>\$ 1,651,352</b>	<b>\$ 1,661,650</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
<b>Income Higher or (Lower) than Expenses</b>	<b>(85,973)</b>	<b>(136,366)</b>	<b>131,893</b>	<b>\$ 298,027</b>	<b>(150,472)</b>	<b>\$ 37</b>	

# Giving Report

## **St. Paul's Giving Report**

**Prepared by Jack Lyons**

**February 16, 2024**

### **Giving Committee Members**

Carrie Bruggers	Nathan Chamberlain
Lauren Cherney	Linda Loving
Steve Garrett	Wayne Parman
Will Shirey	Jack Lyons (Chair)

### **Giving Moment Speakers**

Brian Hafner	Lindy McGuire
Lauren Cherney	Renae Bradshaw
Karen Johnson	Ben Emmrich
Jack Lyons	Nathan Chamberlain

Thanks to everyone who made the 2024 Annual Giving Drive, Bold Gratitude, a huge success..

Because of your generosity, we received 245 pledges in the amount of \$930,000, an increase of \$55,000 from 2023.

This could not have been accomplished without the thoughtful and creative work of the committee members listed above. They provided ideas about theme, design of the pledge card, letters to the members, planning, execution, and connecting with individual members.

I want to give a special thanks to the Giving Moment Speakers listed above for delivering inspiring talks during October, November, and December.

Barb Kaiser, Michael Sanders, Jeff Wagner, Ron Koepka, and Mark Pellegrino supported the Committee Members with follow-up campaigns of phone calls, texts and emails to the congregation in both December and January, completing the 2024 Annual Giving Campaign by January 15<sup>th</sup>.

Thanks to each of our pastors, who supported the Campaign with ideas, encouragement, phone calls, and prayer.

Last, but not least, I want to thank Claire Higgins for all that she has done and is doing to provide administrative support for the Giving Campaign. She goes above and beyond with her creativity, attention to detail, and dependability.

With gratitude and celebration!

Jack Lyons ( Chair)

# Updated Covenant with Lighthouse Church

## Covenant of Fellowship

St. Pauls United Church of Christ and Lighthouse Church of Chicago

In the pursuit of ensuring everyone has a place in the Lord's house and ample room at the Lord's table, Lighthouse Church of Chicago ("Lighthouse") and St. Pauls United Church of Christ ("St. Pauls") forge a covenant ("Covenant") effective \_\_\_\_\_. This Covenant is subject to congregational approval by both our decision-making bodies.

### Mission Statement

Lighthouse and St. Pauls aim to partner in faith while prayerfully supporting our independent congregational ministries. Bound by the blood of Christ, we acknowledge that our unique differences glorify God and create spaces for individuals to come to Christ as they are. Our mission is to sustain these spaces within both congregations.

### A Covenant of Shared Values

#### 1. Our Shared Journey:

Embarking on a three-year journey to conclude at the end of March 2027, the partnership will be revisited and celebrated annually through the Congregational Relations Group, detailed below.

#### 2. Congregational Relations Group:

The Congregational Relations Group ("CRG"), composed of three members from each congregation, including at least one church council member from both St. Pauls and Lighthouse Church convenes 3-5 times a year. Addressing common interests, we plan opportunities to strengthen bonds between our churches and members.

#### 3. Inter-Congregational Standard Operating Procedure:

The CRG will craft and maintain an Inter-Congregational Standard Operating Procedure ("ISOP") to establish a baseline understanding and respect each other's boundaries. This document shall be revised annually by the CRG.

#### 4. Facility Usage as an Act of Hospitality:

Lighthouse's Sunday service is from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm, with fellowship extending from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. St. Pauls chapel and parlor are reserved for sacred fellowship during this time. St. Pauls may request Lighthouse's understanding in exceptional circumstances to reclaim space. Lighthouse may request additional use of St. Pauls facilities in accordance with St. Pauls building use policies and any guidance within the ISOP.

## 5. Communication of Understanding:

Housekeeping details, administrative matters, and requests from Lighthouse beyond this covenant's parameters will be communicated to the CRG and St. Pauls executive leadership. Both churches' staff, boards, and committees commit to open, honest, and timely communication.

## 6. Our Covenant of Mutual Commitments

As sibling churches in Christ, we covenant to:

- Worship together twice a year. Lighthouse will join St Pauls for worship one time annually and a delegation from St Pauls will join Lighthouse for worship one time annually.
- Share at least two social events annually.
- Lift each other up in prayer, recognizing our shared faith.

As congregants we strive to engage in reciprocal visits, exploring each other's churches, websites, ministries and people, fostering unity.

This Covenant is sealed with understanding and is subject to congregational approval by both St. Pauls United Church of Christ congregation and Lighthouse Church of Chicago executive leadership.

In Unity,

[Authorized Representative, St. Pauls UCC] Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[Authorized Representative, Lighthouse Church] Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Inter-Congregational Standard Operating Procedures

Lighthouse Church of Chicago and St. Pauls United Church of Christ

The Inter-Congregational Standard Operating Procedures (ISOP) for administrative guidelines outlined herein may be modified without joint congregational approval. However, the Congregational Relations Group (CRG) shall review this document annually and whenever needed to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.

Goals of our covenant:

Goal of SPUCC:

Recognizing that the face of the American church is evolving towards a predominantly non-white demographic and that an increasing number of people are identifying as LGBTQ+. The commitment to Lighthouse represents an investment in shaping the future of the church. Our objective in this partnership is to expand the Lord's Kingdom and create fertile ground for the growth of a new church.

## Goal of Lighthouse:

### 1. Commitment to Communication

The strength of our covenant is intricately tied to the quality of our communication. It is imperative that the lay leadership of both congregations actively supports our pastors in fostering effective communication.

2. Racial justice and multiracial collaboration are at the heart of Lighthouse Church. We will, therefore, continue to provide concrete, meaningful, and relational opportunities to St Pauls to join us in the ways we distinctly pursue intersectional justice for Black LGBTQ+ people, a community that experiences compounded marginality. Navigating race and sexuality is critical to The Church's relevance in the future.

## CRG Chairs:

- Each congregation will appoint one (1) individual from their respective bodies to serve as Co-Chair to the CRG. These individuals must maintain independence from either church executive leadership.
- The Co-Chairs will be responsible for organizing all CRG meetings.
- These Co-Chairs may be added on any action items relevant to the relationship between the two congregations and will be tasked with ensuring that open action items are addressed within their respective congregations.
- Monthly, the Co-Chairs will connect with each other before the SPUCC council meeting to confirm that no outstanding items need to be added to the Council's agenda.
- In the event that action items remain unresolved, the Co-Chairs will escalate the issues to the executive leadership of their respective bodies and the broader CRG.

## 2. Facilities

### Shared Responsibilities

Shared Facilities is a central point of the covenant between our two churches. To ensure smooth operations, Lighthouse Church agrees to the following:

- Lighthouse will take responsibility for the setup and breakdown of furniture and other items.
- Lighthouse shall adhere to St Pauls safe church policies and other tenant guidelines.
- Custodial Harmony:
- A designated person or group from Lighthouse will collaborate with St Pauls maintenance staff to share in the custodial duties related to their use of the sacred space.
- Financial Consideration with Understanding:
- If Lighthouse's presence incurs increased maintenance fees for St Pauls, we will collaboratively address these expenses.

St Pauls shall ensure a safe, welcoming and worshipful space and agrees to the following:

- Ensuring clean, cleared and conditioned space for worship and fellowship
- Educating St Pauls Congregants and guests to respect Lighthouse worship and fellowship time.
- Address any facilities concerns in a timely fashion.

- Provide as much notice as possible if availability changes for a special event or facilities project.
- Continue to support Lighthouse efforts to decorate and update art.

### 3. Financial Matters with Collaborative Understanding:

Any financial matters arising from the agreement, including increased maintenance fees or insurance claims, will be approached with a spirit of mutual support by the respective church leadership.

### 4. Congregational Harmony:

Let us, with open hearts, cooperate in a spirit of fellowship, understanding that administrative guidelines may need periodic adjustment to ensure the continued blossoming of our collaborative relationship.

This Standard Operating Procedure is subject to review and modification by the Congregational Relations Group.

In Unity,

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
[Authorized Representative, St Pauls UCC]

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
[Authorized Representative, Lighthouse Church]

# Capital Campaign

## Saint Pauls “Expand and Elevate Our Openness” Capital Campaign

### Annual Report to the Congregation

#### Prepared for the March 3, 2024 Congregational Meeting

Prepared by Jana O’Brien and Wayne Parman, Capital Campaign Co-Chairs

*Phase II Committee Members: Nate Combs, Char Damron, Deon Fayhee, Sally Fletcher, Lorne Frank, Karen Johnson, Larry Kearns, Monty Kehl, Jack Lyons, Tara Magner, Chuck Mize, Tom Murray, Frank Mynard, Steve Patton, Craig Wilbanks, and Jana O’Brien and Wayne Parman, co-chairs. Pastoral Liaison: Pastor Matt Fitzgerald. Capital Campaign Coordinators: Claire Higgins and Melissa Miller Furgeson.*

The fundraising campaign for the “Expand and Elevate Our Openness” Capital Campaign was launched during worship on Sunday, January 21, followed by a post-Bible Off Broadway all-congregation brunch on February 4. Nearly 300 attendees joyfully gathered for the meal and debut of the campaign video in the church gym.

This campaign is the result of over seven years of careful planning and discernment on the part of the Saint Pauls congregation, from strategic planning through architect vetting through design development and many stages of Council, special task force, and congregational review, endorsement, and final plan approval.

Phase I of the project was completed during the church’s COVID-forced shutdown in 2020-21, which yielded the church’s new accessible washroom suite, chancel side access ramp, sanctuary side lobby, and upgraded and capacity-expanded church electrical system. The benefits of these improvements have been many, including Mary Stainton and Deon Fayhee’s memorable roles as God and the “Rich Fool” in Bible Off Broadway 2024.

Phase II will complete the plan with the installation of a six-stop elevator, a reconfigured north-end stairwell and skylight, and a courtyard gathering plaza with a new north end entry access ramp to the new elevator lobby.

During the past few months, we have met with Alderman Timmy Knudsen and gained his verbal endorsement for the project. With the Alderman’s encouragement, we also have begun the multi-month approval and permitting process with the City of Chicago in hopes of being able to begin the Phase II work this summer, assuming the fundraising goal is reached. Lorne Frank is again serving as our Saint Pauls Owner’s Rep, and Bulley & Andrews will again be our general contractors, as they were for Phase I.

The campaign fundraising goal is \$3.6 million – making this total campaign effort the largest in recent Saint Pauls history since the rebuilding of the sanctuary after the devastating 1955 fire. As of 2/22/24, we are well on our way to achieving our bold campaign goal with pledges-to-date totaling \$1.98 million, or 55% of our goal. Adding in the \$200,000 in remaining unspent Phase I pledges puts us at nearly \$2.28 million, or over 60% of our goal. We still have much work to do and are exploring a range of sources of funds, internal and external.

To that end, we ask every Saint Pauls current and past member or friend to prayerfully make a pledge to this bold campaign at the most generous level affordable. Pledges can be paid over three years, from 2024-26, in increments of the donating household’s choice. We want 100% participation so that all persons whose lives have been touched by our church can see their names displayed in the new construction donor acknowledgement area. By doing so, all in our generation will have been a part of Saint Pauls living out its promise that, “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you will be welcome here.”

With deep appreciation for our committee, campaign coordinators, and the generous congregation,



Jana O’Brien



Wayne Parman

# Nominating Committee Report for 2024

The following names will be submitted for election at the annual meeting:

## **Church Council:**

- Allen Heinemann, *Treasurer (2 year term)*
- Todd Coe, *At-large Council Member (3 year term)*

## **Nominating Committee for 2024**

- Nancy Voigts Godinez
- Creighton Hartanov
- Deon Fayhee
- Andrew Broderick
- Marcia Opp
- Leslie Chamberlain

# Pastor Jeff Carlson Annual Report

Annual Report to the Congregation  
Jeff Carlson, Associate Pastor  
March 3, 2024

Some Ministry Highlights from 2023:

January

- Rehearsals began for a post-pandemic reboot of Bible Off Broadway. Director Jana O'Brien led a team including Carrie Bruggers, Kecia Waldshmidt, Breanna Coe, Philip Smedley, Sue Finkle and Joe JaQuay in bringing the story of Noah's Ark to life.
- We began a connection with Live Free Illinois, an organization that mobilizes Black churches around public safety and transforming the criminal justice system. This remains a developing relationship tended by me and members of SPARC.
- St. Pauls members attended a candidate forum sponsored by the Community Renewal Society on Martin Luther King Day. We were the largest group in attendance!
- Wednesday Bible Study began Philippians.

February

- Bible off Broadway production of Noah's Ark included 65 children and youth.
- Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited* book discussion.

March

- Throughout the spring I worked on the logistics for the youth mission trip with the new UCC program "Be the Neighbor" to Tucson with a focus on immigration.
- Kevin Dzierzawski led an organ tour after worship of our magnificent Aeolian Skinner.
- Bible Study on Holy Week Themes
- Pastors led Lent Soup Suppers: The God of Television: Leaning Toward the Light with Joe Pera
- Worked with Liz on Lent Taizé.

April

- Ministry Fair on Palm Sunday to highlight ways members can serve through our various ministries.
- Began taking a turn at leading the Little Lights chapel - starting off with a palms processional - Hosannah!
- Silent Supper moved to the sanctuary as the lack of a lift made the chapel inaccessible.
- Rebuilding Together - 20 volunteers, led by Gerald Wilk, worked at refurbishing a home in Englewood.
- New Wednesday study of Leviticus. A first for this, and the group rose to the challenge of this obscure book!
- Worked with Connectors to plan a reception to celebrate the installation of Liz Nickerson. Hurrah!

May

- We welcomed our first long-distance member, Nancy Barnett who worships with us on-line every Sunday from Georgia.
- SPARC continued its focus on reparations with a viewing of the film *The Big Payback*.

June

- A dozen from St. Pauls walked in the annual Pride Parade, meeting back at the church for a BBQ.

#### July

- Joe and I hosted an in-person gathering of the Stephen Ministry after months of virtual meetings. I serve as the pastor who connects Stephen Ministers with their Care Receivers. We welcomed a new Stephen Leader, John Balevic, who joins Marti Pechnyo, Barb Kaiser, Rick Peterson and Joe JaQuay in leadership of this ministry.

#### August

- SPARK hosted a showing of the movie *The Doctrine of Discovery* along with a presentation by co-director Steve Newcomb.
- Jewish Feminist Bible scholar Tamar Kamionkowski joined the Wednesday Bible Study to talk about her work on Leviticus and contemporary Jewish approaches to the book.

#### September

- I began half of a sabbatical, taking 6 weeks of Spanish classes with the Instituto Cervantes.

#### October

- Reformation Sunday was also UCAN Sunday, to celebrate our relationship with them. Guest preacher was Fred Long.
- Bible Study on Ecclesiastes.

#### November

- I worked on a review of the Migrant Housing Project through feedback from key volunteers and staff. The consensus was that this was a fantastic undertaking on the part of St. Pauls and should be continued, but on a more manageable scale, which is what's now happening.
- We had a prayer service for peace, using music from Taizé and placed a peace candle on the altar to remind us to keep praying and remembering.

#### December

- Playing the piano for Advent Taizé, Solstice Service and a Christmas sing-along with Food for the Soul was a joy.

I continued to work with Outreach and Benevolence and St. Pauls Social, whose reports you will see elsewhere.

Finally, I officiated at six memorials and funerals. Five of those were members whom we continue to miss at St. Pauls: Dolores Pifer, Darlene Braun, Petrine Ashley, Michael Tommin and Karen Rieck. But, as we say at our baptisms, we remain inseparably bound together.

I am grateful to God for the privilege to be a pastor at St. Pauls and for the good ministry, growth and spirit of hope in following Jesus that we experienced together in 2023!

# Pastor Liz Nickerson Annual Report

Liz Nickerson, Associate Pastor  
St. Pauls UCC, Chicago

“Commit your actions to the LORD, and your plans will succeed.” Proverbs 16:3

Can you feel it? St. Pauls is coming back alive post-pandemic. We have more people in worship each Sunday and more people getting involved in our programs. The energy is palpable and if you have yet to join in, other than attending worship, there are lots of ways for you to get involved, so jump in! Reach out to a pastor if you want to discuss where your gifts can contribute the most to our ministries. We need your involvement and are strengthened by your participation. The quote above from the book of Proverbs is evident at St. Pauls. Love lives here, as we seek to follow Jesus, welcome all people, and share God's love by making a difference in Chicago and our world.

I continue preaching once a month, presiding over communion, baptizing children, and participating in funerals. I lead the Advent and Lenten Taize services, so if you haven't come to one yet, please come! This forty-minute contemplative service, without a sermon, incorporates ten minutes of meditative silence, and candle lighting, and it will restore your soul! Come March 12 at 7:00 PM to experience it. I have also engaged in pastoral care meetings with members and non-members, for counsel and prayer in coffee shops, hospitals, and nursing facilities.

The children's ministry at St. Pauls is rebuilding and moving forward. BOB was a huge success so special thanks to Jana O'Brien, Pastor Jeff Carlson, and the entire BOB team!! We have four wonderful new Sunday school teachers this year, but we can always use more, so reach out if you have this gift. After cutting back one classroom we had to add it back in because the Sunday school classrooms were too big! Our new curriculum includes weekly activities for parents to do at home with their kids. Each week in the children and family eblasts there are prayers for families to say together at dinner time and bedtime. There are questions for parents to discuss at dinner that relate to the lesson for each Sunday and an educational video to watch if desired. There is also a free app called Parentcue that puts all of this with easy access on one's phone. This year we are also planning an overnight retreat called Superstart in Naperville for 4-6 graders and hope to build retreats back into the rhythm of Sunday school. The key focus for Sunday school is for kids to learn to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength, and to love their neighbor as themselves.

Little Lights continues to grow and we have a weekly chapel led by one of the pastors. The chapel theme comes from our Sunday school curriculum. Once again we had a very

successful Halloween party, Little Lights art walk/Christmas sing-along, and Cookies with Santa event. Open gyms once a month began last winter and have been well received this year as well. Community building is happening through a recent potluck dinner, Christmas cookie exchange, and Valentine's Day party. The Little Lights board meets monthly. Our goal is to continue to integrate Little Lights and St. Pauls children's ministry with many combined events and develop age-appropriate service projects for families to participate in. Summer camp, this year will combine elements of Vacation Bible School with regular camp. It will be focused on younger children from ages 2-5 and offered a week longer than last year.

Lay leader Sue Finkle and I took our confirmands to a retreat with students from all over Illinois at Stronghold Retreat Center in Oregon, IL in February. It was a powerful time as students were challenged to think about how they could positively change the world and they also ended up writing letters to their congresspeople. The retreat got great reviews from the students, so we will go back this fall and plan to make this an annual confirmation event. You can learn more about the retreat in my sermon from 2/25 which is on our website.

I started a moms group this fall and we have been meeting monthly since October. It is a great group and all are welcome. The series we are exploring is called *Breathing Room* and it focuses on helping busy moms add margin to their lives, so that they can slow down and enjoy what they're doing rather than racing through their days.

I also serve as the pastoral liaison for Food for the Soul and the Live Stream/Digital Ministry Team. Food for the Soul is forging meaningful connections for adults at a monthly lunch. Come the 4th Tuesday of the month and join us. The live stream team has lots of great ideas and is constantly improving the live stream experience. They would love for others to join the team and help stream services. If you have an interest in this area, they can easily train you, so please reach out.

When we commit our actions to the LORD, our plans will succeed! I look forward to the future at St. Pauls and you are an important part of that future! So reach out if God is calling you to help with one of these important ministries! With gratitude, Pastor Liz

# Care and Connections Ministry

Responding to God's love, St. Pauls Care & Connection Ministry extends Christian care both within & outside the congregation. Goals include helping connect members and friends to each other, promote sense of community and Christian fellowship, integrate new members and sustain involvement of long-term members and friends.

Thanks to our team members/leaders, greeters, new member sponsors, other volunteers, pastors and staff who answer God's call and make this ministry possible. If you are not already a member of at least one small group, we invite you to join us. Check your weekly church email/worship bulletin for further information.

## New Member Sponsors

New member classes are offered by pastors throughout the year and joining Sundays follow. Starting 9/17 new members were matched 1:1 with sponsors. Specific suggestions were developed for sponsors to use as they support new members.

- 9/17 Three new members with one sponsor/family unit
- 12/10 Ten new members with one sponsor/family unit

## Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministers have received special training to provide high-quality, one-to-one, Christ-centered care to members experiencing life difficulties. They provide confidential emotional and spiritual care to individuals facing a challenging situation or crisis. St. Pauls Stephen Ministers include Marti Pechnyo, John Balevic, Mary Brown, Pastor Jeff Carlson, Kristy Combs, Deon Fayhee, Doug Heyboer, Bea Jaji, Joe JaQuay, Annie Johnson, Barb Kaiser, Karen Lyons, Rick Peterson, Mike Stensass and Peg Wander. Their ministry includes:

- Communicating with congregation encouraging those in need of support through a tough time to reach out to ministry leaders
- Maintaining contact with matched care receiver weekly or as needed via Zoom, phone and other means
- Being available following worship to pray with anyone who wishes
- Serving as worship leaders occasionally
- Offering valuable support to each other, identifying and highlighting needs within the congregation
- Providing grief booklets to members and friends

Leaders hope to offer training session in 2024.

## Connectors

Connectors reach out in Christian love to provide spiritual networking, compassion and support to members and friends of the church. Members include Larry Damron, Barb Kaiser, Jenny Benefield, Jan Bail, Marcia Volk, Marcia Opp, Gretchen Althen, Cres Roewer, Doug Roewer, Mead Gifford, Doug Clark, Jeff Wagner, Mary Frances Winking, Lisa Rowley, Dodd Brown, Ninon Freeman, Lorri Gunn-Wirsum, David Faulkner, Bobbi Gannello, Lisa Donofrio, David Fowlkes and Pam Woll.

2023 ongoing care included:

- Maintaining communication with many individuals via multiple means including notes/cards, visits as able and needed, phone calls
- Providing food short-term as needed and able
- Helping with errands as needed and able
- Assigning Connectors for 1:1 support to certain individuals as needed
- Serving as gatekeeper
- Assisting with transportation needs (need more volunteers)
- Birthday postcards with development new card design
- Greeting cards often out during Coffee Hour inviting involvement congregation
- Lisa Donofrio assumed role Funeral Reception Coordinator early 2023
- Communication improved for Connectors via Church Center group email
- Continuing to assist with coordination Emergency Contact Form & Cards
- Occasional AED Training
- Special Projects
  - Palm Sunday: Easter lilies/treats delivered to those homebound/in need with 16 deliveries and 3 out of town baskets mailed
  - 10/1/2023 Medical Fair: AED Demonstration, Blood Pressure Checks, Five Wishes Discussion, Vaccinations (agency to give was no show)
  - 10/8 College Care Packages - 33 boxes assembled & mailed to St. Pauls college freshmen and designated UCAN students
  - Assisted with Senior Luncheon organized by Sue Finkle and others

## Flower Visitors (Consider the Lilies)

This caring team was re-established in August 2023 with volunteers recruited to deliver altar flowers to members and friends in need. The kick-off Sunday included special introduction of this renewed ministry to the congregation. Thanks to Jan Bail for rejuvenating and coordinating this team that includes Amber Watters, Ashleigh Darin, Barb Kaiser, Bobbi Gannello, Craig Wilbanks, David Faulkner, Jennifer Gourley, Jess Parman, Kristin Mack, Linda Loving, Linda Nitzsche, Lydia Murray, Monty Kehl, Nancy Curotto, Nancy Heffernan, Pauline Taylor, Peg Wander and Rebecca Kravec.

Flowers have been delivered to members/friends with death in the family, those who are sick or homebound, upon the birth of a new baby and similar life experiences. As this ministry was re-established, a church member suggested that the church again honor newborns by placing a rose on altar and announcing in bulletin. This suggestion has been coordinated with church staff.

## St. Pauls Social

This team hosts and assists others with a variety of social and fellowship events for adults.

Team leader is Jen Luerssen and team members include Pastor Jeff Carlson, Rick Peterson, Wendy Love, Karen Lyons, Jan Fraccaro, Doug Clark, Andrea Koepke and Bobbi Gannello.

2023 events included:

- 2/17 “Musical Potluck Party” at St. Pauls
- 3/31 “Be A Kid Again Game Night” at St. Pauls
- 5/20 “Bird Watching” at Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary
- 6/16 “St. Pauls Social at the Symphony” at Millennium Park
- 6/25 “Pride Cookout” at St. Pauls Courtyard
- 7/14 “St. Pauls Social Transit Hike” along the Fox River Trail
- 8/9 “Grant Park Music Festival” at Jay Pritzker Pavilion
- Monthly “Food for the Soul Lunch Group” started May 2023 and has included Devotion/Reflection 5/23 & 6/27, Hymn Sing 8/22, Poetry Sharing 9/26, Discussion of Ecclesiastes 3 10/24, Discussion of grave injustices of indigenous North Americans, 11/23 and Christmas Carol Sing 12/19

## Oktoberfest

St. Pauls 2023 Oktoberfest was held Saturday, September 23. Many thanks to Coordinator Lorne Frank and over 100 volunteers who helped make our block party possible and a smashing success! This year our neighbors at Lincoln Common sponsored the children’s entertainment, and acclaimed children’s entertainer and recording artist, Laura Doherty, performed for 90 minutes. Later, everyone’s favorite oompah band, Die Musikmeisters, took the stage for the 8th year. As usual, delicious, authentic German food and local Oktoberfest beers were served up in typical St. Pauls fashion. Well over 600 guests enjoyed the day’s activities: a bouncy house, pumpkin painting, face painting, games and dancing.

## St. Pauls Young Adults

This is a group for faith, fun, and fellowship for folks in their twenties and thirties. Anyone in this age range is invited to meet new people and make meaningful connections. This group is trying to sit together on Sunday mornings on the pulpit side in the middle of the sanctuary. Events include brunch after worship on the second Sunday of each month, pickleball and beach volleyball. There is a Young Adult board of four members that plans events with Pastor Liz Nickerson as their staff liaison. They now have 25 people on their GroupMe app. and are looking forward to growing in 2024.

## Moms' Group

This group is for moms with newborns through 10 years and meets after worship on the second Sunday of each month. This year they have followed a devotional called Breathing Room which focuses on making space for rest and reflection amid the challenges of motherhood. Each month has a theme to explore to help participants become the best moms possible, support each other and form a tight-knit community. Powerful discussions happen and women are connecting to others that they have seen in worship but do not know well. Each meeting ends with prayer where members are grouped into twos, share prayer concerns and pray for each Other.

## Greeting Team

Greeters began to be utilized again in 2023 as individuals were available. A document to guide greeters was developed with sign-up placed in Church Center. There is a need for more greeters and someone to coordinate this group.

## Other

The St. Pauls Caregivers' Group is an informal support group of people who are responsible for the care of parents, partners, friends or children with illnesses or disabilities. This group has

been coordinated by Pam Woll for quite some time. An announcement about this group was added to the weekly email/bulletin June 2023 to promote awareness of availability.

Our church is richly blessed by all of the above, as well as an amazing array of other groups and ministries that also provide care, connection and fellowship. Join what appeals to you or reach out if you would like to pursue other ideas. Ultimately every member of our church is part of this ministry.

Submitted by Jenny Benefield, Chair Care & Connection Ministry

# Activism and Advocacy Ministry

## ACTIVISM AND ADVOCACY MINISTRY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT CHAIR: JENNIFER KEW

### OUTREACH & BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE: (Jennifer Kew)

The following benevolence grants were awarded in 2023:

- Lincoln Park Community Services \$5,000
- The Night Ministry \$2,500
- Three Angels Children's Relief, Haiti \$6,000
- The Resurrection Project \$2,650 from Advent market
- Refugee One \$5,000
- RIP Medical Debt Relief \$1,662
- UCAN \$5,000 + \$9,5000 Christmas offering
- Be the Neighbor, Tucson \$1,200
- Nuevos Vecinos/New Neighbors \$3,000
- UCC Maui Fire Relief \$1,000
- Chicago Books to Women in Prison \$250
- UCC Ukraine Relief Fund \$1,000

**TOTAL \$43,762**

Historic Relationships funded in 2023:

- Chicago Theological Seminary \$1,500
- Chicago Renewal Society \$1,500
- Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches \$250
- LGBTQ – RAN Network \$250

**TOTAL \$3,500**

Specific Need/In Kind Donations sponsored by O&B in 2023:

- Scholarships for 2 refugee youth to participate in St Pauls Mission Trip –\$1,000
- 120 UCAN Gift Train holiday wishlists, valued at roughly \$6,000 total

**TOTAL O&B GRANTS AND DONATIONS FOR 2023 \$54,262**

As noted above, this year our Christmas Eve offering of \$9,500 was designated for UCAN and proceeds from the Advent Market of \$2,650 went to the Resurrection Project.

Our congregation has focused the bulk of its advocacy and activism energy in the following areas during 2023:

- Refugee and Migrant support
- Environmental activism and green education
- Social justice and racial equity
- Anti Violence and support of UCAN
- Supporting individuals in need of food and laundry support

O&B would like to foster a deeper connection between the St Pauls community and the organizations we support financially, so members of the committee offered informational Mission Moments in September and October of 2023 during Sunday worship services.

#### SPUCC Migrant Housing Program (David Brown)

In the summer of 2024, as buses and airplanes transported thousands of Venezuelan migrants from Texas to Chicago, our city was in crisis with more and more families living on the streets outside of police stations.

In May 2024, the Saint Pauls church council took action and voted to bring in up to four Venezuelan families from the local police station and provide housing and support for a period of up to three months. With pastoral and administrative staff, church members, volunteers and a dedicated project manager, four families with 16 individuals moved into St. Pauls on June 1. The individual, private rooms were constructed by volunteers over a weekend using donated stage sets from Steppenwolf Theater.

The Migrant Housing Program started with an allocated budget of \$25,000 from the church treasury and, consistent with Saint Pauls history of taking action when people in our community are in need, once again this church stepped up to make a difference. And our work continues into 2024 helping more than 30 individuals realize the hope of a new life that was unimaginable for them just 9 months ago.

Within days of the council decision, the congregation jumped into action and responded to calls for donations and wish list items so and volunteers furnished each of the four rooms with beds, bedding, rugs, lamps and many other items to make our guests feel at home.

Immediately upon moving the families into the church, teams of St Pauls volunteers were separated into dedicated teams of expertise, and we immediately provided the following services:

- Meals made and delivered.
- Groceries purchased while taking families shopping
- Education with ESL
- Transportation
- Medical/Health screenings and appointments
- Legal assistance to start the asylum process
- Jobs
- Money management and budgeting

With the goal of finding apartments for each of the four families to move into by September 1, we started the search process and also initiated a new fundraising campaign. More than \$80,000 of additional funding, was secured through donations from the congregation, as well as others outside of the Saint Pauls community. This funding allowed us to continue the support of the four families through the summer and when it came to negotiate leases for their apartments approximately \$40,000 was allocated as rent support structured on a sliding scale over a 12 month lease. Our families faced difficulties securing leases, because they had no formal work authorization or history of income or cash. Each of the four landlords required a personal guarantee for each lease and four members of the St. Pauls Church Council agreed to be personal guarantors on these leases for the first 12 months of the leases.

Once the apartment leases were secured, the Migrant Housing project secured donations of furniture and household items for each of the families from St Pauls members and friends. On move-in days in September and October a rented U-Haul truck traveled throughout the city, picking up couches, furniture, and household items so each family moved into a relatively furnished apartment.

In September once the school year began each of the children in our sponsored families started on day one attending a CPS school that was selected by the education team and all children were registered in bilingual schools relatively close to their homes.

The support of each of the families has continued since then, with the assistance of continued volunteers, program manager and the Faith Community Initiative who has dedicated a case manager.

#### Current Status

- All family members are healthy and happy while adjusting to their new lives in Chicago
- The goal continues to be independence and self-sufficiency by fall and this will be challenging but achievable
- The main concern of all families is finding work on a regular basis at a wage that will allow them to support their families with rents increasing to full market soon
- Legal process - the following applications have been submitted thanks to the volunteer legal efforts by Geoff Gist and Karen Fisher: Asylum, Temporary Work Permits, ITIN (temporary SSN #s) and plans to assist them filing tax returns in April

#### Plan for 2024

- Existing funds in the account will cover the continued sliding scale rent support, grocery allowance, CTA assistance and miscellaneous expenses
- The New family at the church will be supported by a \$10,000 donation to FCI made by a non-member friend of David Brown
- New members and baptisms - planned by at least two families
- Asylum applications and other legal process continues
- Jobs/work authorization
- Family share of rent payments increase
- Work to renew leases and find new apts for 2 families

The Migrant Housing Project continues to need support and volunteers. More information about opportunities will be shared with the congregation in 2024.

#### GREEN TEAM (Rick Peterson and Ninon Freeman)

St Pauls established the Green Team in 2020 to help the congregation plan and take actions to implement our calling “to care for God’s creation.” Indeed, at our 2022 annual meeting, the Congregation authorized the Green Team to take steps to apply to the UCC for St Pauls to be recognized as an official “Creation Justice” church. This process is on-going.

The Green Team has taken seriously its task of keeping the congregation informed of environmental and climate change issues. In addition to its weekly Creation Corner in the worship bulletin and the bulletin board outside the social hall, the Green Team has encouraged our pastoral staff to regularly refer to environmental justice concerns in their sermons and prayers.

The Green Team has also continued supporting and planning a number of projects. Pollinator gardens have been planted and are being maintained at the entrance to the parking lot on Kemper and the Memorial Garden at the Orchard entrance. Throughout the spring, summer and fall, Green Team members cleared and cleaned church grounds.

On an occasional basis, the Green Team has been featuring recipes with less or no animal protein, introducing more sustainable recipes to the Congregation. We are continuously monitoring the possibility of St. Pauls

building becoming solar powered. This possibility has been hastened by changes in Federal and state laws; however, it is a long-term project requiring extensive coordination with other church entities. Ninon Freeman and Rick Peterson continue to coordinate Green Team activities.

#### SPARC (Cindy Zinn Ball)

Much of SPARC's focus in 2023 continued to be on the topic of Reparations. In May, Kirk Chernansky offered a viewing and led an in-depth discussion of the documentary *The Big Payback* about Evanston's reparations program and the ongoing push in the US House of Representatives to pass HR 40, a bill to study and develop reparations proposals for African Americans. The event was well-attended and led to a second gathering in June to continue the conversation. Concurrently, the UCC in the national setting was considering a resolution of witness in support of HR 40 to be presented at General Synod in the summer. Rick Peterson wrote a letter to the UCC on our behalf in support of this resolution, which was subsequently presented and adopted at General Synod. In December, Julia Ehrhardt attended the 3rd Annual National Symposium for State and Local Reparations in Evanston to learn and report back on the progress achieved and challenges ahead in furthering reparations. We have concluded that SPARC's role is to be allies and use our voice as we deem appropriate to advance reparations, but that in the coming election year our energies are best directed elsewhere.

Our other major effort in 2023 was the August presentation of *An Evening on the Doctrine of Discovery*. Steve Schwartzberg invited guest speaker Steven Newcomb, Indigenous lawyer and scholar, to share his film *The Doctrine of Discovery: Unmasking the Domination Code*. Newcomb's work lays out how 15th century Vatican documents led to law systems in the US and Canada that are still used against Indigenous Nations and Peoples today. Both men shared their years of research and activism regarding these laws and their impact. The event drew attendees from throughout and beyond St. Pauls for an informative and impactful program. In follow-up, Steve S. will share his book *Arguments over Genocide* this March to both St. Pauls and Lighthouse.

When the Hamas-Israel conflict erupted, SPARC members Pat Ruch and Julia Ehrhardt worked with the pastorate to create and hold a peace vigil service. The Peace candle from that service remains on the altar as the need for prayer continues.

We're maintaining our friendship with Pilgrim Baptist Church through annual activities. They joined us once again at Oktoberfest, and some of us attended their annual December Gospel concert/fundraiser for the National Museum of Gospel Music. We look forward to continuing these interactions in the years ahead.

We also continue to share insights, issues, and opportunities to act for racial justice in our weekly Join the Movement section of the bulletin.

#### UCC Lay Delegate (Rick Peterson)

Please see Rick Peterson's separate report as the St Pauls Representative to the United Church of Christ that follows this report.

#### Community Engagement Program (Jennifer Kew)

During 2023 teams of St Pauls volunteers participated in preparing meals for Lincoln Park Community Services shelters, migrants and refugees staying in District 18 Police Station. St Pauls volunteers also donated hygiene items and provided laundry services to individuals staying in District 18 Police Station prior to our decision to house four families onsite at St Pauls.

#### Rebuilding Together (Gerald Wilk)

St Pauls members and friends participated in a day of service event on Chicago's West Side on 4/29. Gerald Wilk organized a crew of electricians and plumbers to transform a home in need of repair in one day.

### Sharing the table of Jesus

On communion Sundays in 2023 the St Pauls community collected food in the Narthex that we donated to the Common Pantry, a food pantry, that was founded in 1967 to combat hunger and food insecurity in northern neighborhoods of Chicago.

Throughout 2023 St Pauls attendance and participation in volunteer and outreach activities has continued to grow, demonstrating the strength and engagement of our congregation; we are committed to living our faith in an age of injustice. Our St Pauls community is working to respond to current needs in our city and abroad and to shape the world around us through educational programs, volunteering activities, and financial support. This is the final year of my three-year term as the Activism and Advocacy Ministry Chair and I am grateful to everyone in the St Pauls community who has contributed to our activism and advocacy work over the past three years as leaders, volunteers, and donors. We are building a strong faith community together through beautiful individual acts!

Submitted with faith and gratitude,  
Jennifer Kew  
February 2024

**ST PAULS REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**  
**ST PAULS LAY DELEGATE: RICK PETERSON**

2023 saw the return of face-to-face meetings of United Church of Christ (UCC) bodies after several years of zoom meetings occasioned by COVID. This return to the “new normal” was greeted warmly but with fewer participating churches and resources. On occasion, 2023 UCC meetings took on the nature of “pep rallies” to help keep spirits and optimism high, despite reduced memberships and resources.

At St Pauls, we attempted to notify the Congregation of these meetings and to explain how they affected the current life of the church. Specifically, St Pauls had representation at the following UCC meetings:

May 6, 2023 – **Chicago Metropolitan Association (CMA) Spring Meeting** –Bryn Mawr Community Church, Chicago.

First face-to-face meeting in several years, so it evolved into a “getting to know you” assembly. St Pauls Members in attendance were the largest group of any of the CMA churches.

June 30- July 4, 2023 – **UCC 34<sup>th</sup> General Synod** – “*Making All Things New*” – Indianapolis, IN

At this every-other-year meeting of the elected national decision-making body of the UCC, the business of the denomination was considered, new denominational officers were elected and resolutions were adopted for consideration by local churches. Of special note was the election of Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson as the new General Minister and President of the UCC; she is the 10<sup>th</sup> President of the UCC, the first female, the first immigrant, and the second person of African descent to serve in this capacity. In addition, the UCC acknowledged that there were five (as opposed to four) streams of denominations that created the UCC. The Afro-Christian Convention was added to the Congregational and Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Churches as denominations that joined together to form the UCC in the 1950s. Further, the General Synod, in a very close vote, determined to change the cycle of General Synods from every two years to every three years. However, the 2025 General Synod will be held in Kansas City, MO, as previously agreed upon.

Nineteen resolutions were considered, including one supporting considering reparations for African Americans about which SPARC sent a letter of support. Other resolutions dealt with access to abortion services, encouragement of plant-based life-styles, and a call for UCC churches to be “White Supremacy-Free Zones.” While UCC resolutions are not binding on the local church, congregations are strongly encouraged to study and consider them.

September 30, 2023 – **CMA Fall Meeting** – “*Making All Things New*” – Northfield Community Church

After a worship service led in part by former St Pauls Pastor Rev. Carol Munro, the assembled group heard a report from Illinois Conference Minister Rev. Molly Carlson and discussed proposed changes to the Illinois Conference governance structure. The governance issue will be reviewed more in 2024 and is proposed to be considered and voted on at the 2024 Illinois Conference Annual Celebration/Meeting. It will be controversial.

November 3-4, 2023 – **Illinois Conference Annual Celebration/Meeting** – “*Repentance, Rekindling, Renewal*” – Yorkville Congregational Church

Attendees had the opportunity to hear from and meet the new UCC General Minister and President Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson. She is delightful. Workshops were held on future of the UCC, the fifth stream of the UCC, and antiracism and challenges for the Illinois Conference.

Considerable energy and passion were expended on the proposal for a new governance structure for the Illinois Conference.

There was also frank discussion about the status of the Illinois Conference, where a number of churches are on the verge of closing, where one-third of the churches are in pastoral transition, and in which twenty percent of the churches provide no support to the UCC through Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM). [NOTE: OCWM describes the work UCC does beyond the local church – through Conferences, the national setting and UCC-related institutions.] Further, the Illinois Conference now has half of the staff that it did 10 years ago, and the same level of need (or probably higher) of local churches exists.

In her October 9, 2023 written report to the Conference, Conference Minister Rev. Molly Carlson was candid, and this candidness was amplified during discussions at the meeting. She writes:

*I am aware that there is a deep level of distrust in this Conference that both pre-dates my tenure [summer 2020] and continues to this day. ... There are a lot of people that you don’t know well. The familiar (if dysfunctional) ways of doing things have changed. ... There are a lot of differing opinions on the best way forward. I see and hear these concerns all the time and I am bringing my best wisdom, experience, research and commitment to making things better.*

*I would ask as we move forward, we try some new behaviors. First, I hope we can treat each other with the assumption that we both have the best interests of this Conference at heart. I also hope that we can share our truth with each other in love – including problem solving, sharing opinions and working together towards solutions. Finally, I hope we can approach our work collaboratively with the understanding that we are ALL “the Conference”...*

In light of participating in these events, involvement with the UCC in 2023 was thought-provoking and honestly sobering. While many UCC churches in the Illinois Conference continue to perform remarkable good works in their communities, they often lack sufficient resources and have a weakened denominational support system to assist them. There are a lot of great people, passionate and highly motivated, but minimal support.

The future of the UCC and the denomination is unclear – and prayers are necessary.

# Little Lights Annual Report

What a positive and successful year for our Little Lights program! We had a total of 48 enrolled students for 23-24. I am proud to share that for the first time, we had a waitlist for our two year old classes. Word is spreading and people are recommending our program to their friends and neighbors!

Our efforts to integrate the Little Lights families into church activities have been fruitful. With a more intentional and substantial tuition discount for church members, we welcomed several families as they joined St. Pauls and have become active members of our community. This includes 6 new St. Paul member LL students (4 newly joined families), bringing our total to 8 LL students who are church members.

With committed, invested, and dedicated board members and teachers, our foundation is strong. We are eternally grateful to all of the people listed below.

## Little Lights Board

Associate Pastor: Liz Nickerson

Church Liaison: Wayne Parman

President: Thomas Clancy

Vice President: Kate Albright

Secretary: Angi Miller

Marketing/Social Chair: Jamie Herndon

Event Planner: Lauren Sloan

## Little Lights Teachers

4 year olds: Aimee Holper & Suzanne Slaughter

3 year olds: Danielle Mayfield & Kelly Herndon

2 year olds: Erin Fitzgerald & Iris Gonzalez

Substitute: Katie Beck

## New Elements Introduced

- **Chapel Time:** Little Lights Students meet together in the Chapel weekly. Teachers and Pastors rotate leading lessons (stories and songs).
- **Little Lights Library:** A space inside the LL Office has been designated with a selection of books that children can check out and return.

❖ Children's Ministry Team: Pastor Liz, Erin Fitzgerald, Danielle Mayfield

Our Youth & Family Programs have been steadily building in momentum and numbers.

Sunday School Participants: 95 children registered through December 2023

We are grateful to our caring Sunday School Teachers: Mary Brown, Nancy Bingaman, Leslie Chamberlain, Mary Frances Winking, Philip Smedley, Bobbi Gannello, Creighton Hartanov, Thomas Clancy, Jennifer Heiney, Jennifer Gourley, Barb Kaiser, Molly McGrath, Ben Lytal and our Confirmation Teachers Sue Finkle, Bob Ball, and Peg Wander. And with Pastor Matt and David Burnett leading the high school class, our youth are in the very best hands!

#### New Elements Introduced

- **Orange Curriculum:** Sunday School lessons include monthly themes, virtues, memory bible verses, and bottom lines focusing on the phases of child development.
- **Parent Cue:** User-friendly take-home activities are shared digitally to help develop spiritual habits and build the connection between church and home.
- **Moms Group:** A monthly support group for mothers using the Breathing Room Series

#### **Accomplishments & Notes**

- Positive Income: Little Lights continued to earn a profit at a steady pace
- Additional Staff: We hired a new LL Substitute Teacher to help as needed
- Dual Branding: Each Little Lights Student received a T-shirt in the fall. It lists both Little Lights and St. Pauls on the front of it, a deliberate intent to unite the program within the church, making it one in the same. Children participate in Spirit Days to wear their shirts with pride.
- With additional class options planned for 24-25, we will have the capacity to host up to 60 students, including newly offered Junior Kindergarten afternoon classes
- Extended Programs: Early Bird Drop Off, Enrichment and Lunch Bunch options
- LL Teachers completed CDC Developmental Milestones Training
- LL Alumni Page created on Facebook to keep families informed about future family events so they can stay involved once their children age out of the program.
- POLO: Parents of Little Ones integrating Little Lights events with church events
- Stay and Play: This free, drop-in playgroup continues on Fridays, creating a welcoming and inviting atmosphere, offering a safe space for socialization and encouraging people to come to St. Pauls. Thanks to the services of Dodd Brown who graciously volunteers his time at the accessible door to help caregivers with strollers enter/exit the building.
- Ongoing Communication
  - Social Media: Facebook & Instagram
  - Weekly & Monthly Meetings: Youth Ministry, Teachers, LL Board
  - Weekly Newsletters: Youth & Family and Little Lights
  - Little Lights website: [littlelightslp.org](http://littlelightslp.org)

- New Church Center Groups: Little Lights, Moms Group, Kinderchapel Singers, Children's Choir, Paul's People, Bible Off Broadway

## **Completed Events**

January - Monthly POLO Open Gym Starts (3rd Saturday of the month)

February - Bible Off Broadway Performance: "Noah and the Ark"

- LL Open House

March - Parents Night Out Fundraiser with Chef Molly McGrath

- LL Spring Sing, Parent-Teacher Conferences

April - Easter Egg Hunt, Pancake Breakfast with Mission Trip Volunteers

May - LL Family Dance

June - LL Picnic & Race at Oz Park

- Youth Mission Trip: Tucson, Arizona

July - Compassion Camp: ages 2-5, 4 total weeks

- 31 total campers, including 3 children of our former migrant guest families

August - LL Welcome Days

September - Back to School Playdate, Ministry Fair

- Oktoberfest: Laura Doherty (music for kids & families), hair braiders sponsored by Lincoln Common, & Face Painter

October - Halloween Party

- Moms Group commences, led by Pastor Liz

November - LL Fall Parent-Teacher Conferences

December - LL Christmas & Art Show, Cookies with Santa, Cookie Swap

## **Fundraisers**

Parent Night Out (Youth Mission Trip) \$456

Cards for a Cause \$325

Halloween Bake Sale & Raffle \$500

Pecan Pies: \$420

Art Show & Cookies with Santa \$1,421.55

## **Goals**

1. Finalize and share an updated business plan for Little Lights with help from Nathan Chamberlain, member of St. Pauls, and graduate of DePaul University (MBA).
2. Approximately half of our current students are returning for the upcoming year. As our retention numbers stay high and/or increase, we will plan on adding another class and expanding with the evolving needs.
3. Reach a younger age group by adding a parent-tot class.
4. Revitalize youth groups by age with opportunities for bonding with peers and offering service experiences.

5. Keep everyone connected by exploring the Church Center app group messaging and other useful tools it may offer.
6. Improve gym play area: update mesh fencing, improve stair safety, and get a new, functioning curtain for the stage.
7. Establish a scholarship fund specifically for tuition assistance.
8. Find meaningful ways for youth to get involved and stay involved in our journey of faith.

By building interest in our programs from the surrounding neighborhood and encouraging more families to join the St. Pauls community, we will slowly build the next generation together. It is a privilege to be a part of our St. Pauls family as we help each other learn and grow.

Erin Fitzgerald  
Director of Children's Education

# Initial Report of the Bylaws Review Task Force

## Initial Report of the Bylaws Review Task Force (Rick Peterson)

Section 11.5 of the Bylaws of St Pauls United Church of Christ provides that there should be a review of St Pauls bylaws every five years and that the President of the Congregation should designate the chair of a task force for this project. Ben Emmrich has asked me to chair this group – and several members have agreed to assist (see below).

A number of proposed bylaw amendments have been received, including some substantive changes to the governance structure which will necessitate a Special Congregational Meeting, tentatively scheduled for Sunday, June 2, after worship. At this special June congregational meeting, we will discuss and hopefully adopt the proposed bylaw amendments, then hear and vote on the recommendations of Nominating Committee which will populate the governance structure, effective immediately. So they can be thoroughly vetted by the Congregation, the Bylaws Review Task Force plans to complete its deliberations by May 1 and will conduct an informational Q and A for the congregation if desired.

A summary of the major proposed bylaw amendments include:

- Include St Pauls-modified United Church of Canada “Statement of Faith,” in lieu of the longer UCC Statement of Faith;
- Explicitly permit congregational voting by electronic means in addition to in-person voting at all congregational meetings, except those held to elect a Senior Pastor or to disaffiliate with the UCC;
- Add two new Church Standing Ministries – the Youth Education Ministry, the Invitation and Communication Ministry, and substantially re-configure the current Worship, Formation and Education Ministry to the Worship and Faith Formation Ministry; and

[If this amendment were adopted, St Pauls would have seven Standing Ministries – the Giving and Finance Ministry, the Church Building Ministry; the Youth Education Ministry; the Worship and Faith Formation Ministry; the Activism and Advocacy Ministry; the Care and Connection Ministry and the Invitation and Communication Ministry. Any current groups that report to these Standing Ministries would continue as needed and without change]

- Establish term limits and rolling terms for members of all Standing Ministries.

Please let members of the Bylaws Review Task Force if you have comments. They are:

Rick Peterson, Chair  
Nathan Chamberlain  
Annie Johnson  
Jennifer Kew  
Kevin O’Brien