

ST. PAULS ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, March 16, 2025

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Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda

March 16, 2025

Opening Devotional.....Senior Pastor Matt Fitzgerald

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

Approval of 2024 Annual Congregational Meeting minutes.....Karen Lyons, Secretary

Motion // Discussion // Vote

Vote to approve 08/11/2024 Special Congregational Meeting Minutes.....Karen Lyons, Secretary

Motion // Discussion // Vote

Vote to approve 10/20/2024 Special Congregational Meeting Minutes.....Karen Lyons, Secretary

Motion // Discussion // Vote

Remarks.....Senior Pastor Matt Fitzgerald

Financial report and vote on the 2025 budget.....Allen Heinemann, Treasurer

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.....Associate Pastor Jeff Carlson

Members of St. Pauls have a voice and vote. Friends of the congregation have a voice.

President's Report

St Pauls United Church of Christ
March 16, 2025

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.

Our community continues to respond 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:

- Accelerating the growth of St Pauls, with our attendance growing by an average of 20% per year for the last three years, driven by increased engagement with longstanding church members, our investment in families with children and expanded new member classes.
- The financial strength of our Congregation. Thank you all for your generosity!
 - Another strong, successful annual pledge drive, led by Jack Lyons. We exceeded \$1m in pledges for the first time, with 265 total pledges – a resounding record on both fronts!
 - A successful conclusion to Phase II of our Capital Campaign to Expand and Elevate our Openness, with over \$3.1m pledged.
- Successful reinvigoration of St Pauls' governance and Church ministries, including a successful update to our by-laws. We successfully expanded our Nominating committee and placed over 40 church members within updated, enlivened ministries that support the work of our church in a meaningful way. We are already seeing the benefits of this new structure, with more effective ministry operations and increased engagement amongst church members.
- The continued expansion of our Children's ministry, with a robust Sunday School, Children's Choirs, Bible-off-Broadway and mission trips. St Pauls is a safe, loving place for all, and especially for families with children.
- We confirmed and energized our engagement and support of Lighthouse Church, with an updated and renewed covenant and the establishment of a joint committee between the two congregations.
- Continued support of our six migrant families, and the initiation of a Migrant Taskforce to discern St Pauls' role in supporting future migrant efforts. Thank you especially to David Brown, who has been St Pauls' lay leader in supporting these efforts.

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 especially grateful for Pastor Matt, who has been a strong partner to me throughout my time as Congregational President and continues to impress me with his bold leadership, thoughtful management and steady care for our Congregation. Thank you Matt for your continued dedication to St Pauls and for shepherding our Congregation as we make a bold impact on our City.

This is my final annual meeting as Congregational President. I'm very proud of what we've accomplished together and grateful for the patience, grace and support each of you has shown to me these past four years. It's been my pleasure to serve and I'm excited to support Lydia as she steps into the role. There's so much good to come!

I remain dedicated to St Pauls and to each of you. Let's go forth and act boldly on our faith, together!

Yours in service,

Ben

Introducing St. Pauls' Incoming President, Lydia Murray!



I am excited to join St. Pauls Church Council to serve as President. **Why did I agree to take on this role? The answer is simple: I love this church.** As a daughter and granddaughter of pastors, it was important for me to find a loving church home for our family. When my husband Tom and I were looking for a church community to join over 20 years ago, here were the things that drew us to St. Pauls:

- **Inspiring Preaching:** When we first attended worship services, we found the senior pastor Tom Henry's approach to the gospel both inviting and challenging. That continues to be a part of the culture that Matt, Jeff, and Liz employ each Sunday with their outstanding preaching skills.
- **Uplifting Music:** We loved the tag line of the church was "To make a joyful noise in the city." The music culture in the church is rich and always uplifts our spirits.
- **Active mission work to serving others:** When we decided to try out the church and attend the New Members class, part of our class experience was to cook a meal together at the homeless shelter started by St. Pauls and other churches in the neighborhood. What an amazing place that puts their mission into action, even with people who were only thinking about joining the church. The Shelter service has been an important part of my St. Pauls experience, even allowing me the opportunity to serve as an Interim Executive Director of the organization during a leadership transition.
- **A Robust Children's Program and Church Home for our Kids:** Best of all, this place has been a loving church community to our two sons. Our two sons - 21-year-old Colin and 16-year-old Zack - were baptized at St. Pauls, attended Sunday school, were confirmed, played in the intergenerational orchestra, traveled all around the country with the Summer mission trip, and participated in the annual Bible Off Broadway musical theater event (starting as goldfish or angels and now growing into bigger roles like the role of St. Paul in this year's performance).

The friends and relationships with church members across generations in this community has deeply enriched our family.

Why else did I decide to take on the role? Because St. Pauls' future is bright. Thanks to the leadership by the Church Council, the Pastors, and the Capital Campaign Committee, we are in an incredibly strong position to continue to grow and share the good news of what loving Christian fellowship looks like with our friends and neighbors. One of my charges will be to develop an updated strategic plan and vision for the church, and that has been made easier by standing on the shoulders of past church leaders. With an improved physical and accessible facility, the possibilities for St. Pauls are exciting.

What should you expect from me? My best effort to be a servant leader. I accepted this role because I get the privilege to serve you – this incredible congregation of St. Pauls. I promise I will work to be a good steward – organizationally, spiritually and financially – of the church. I am deeply honored to serve as your next President. Together, we will continue to build on the strong foundation of our past, embrace the opportunities of the present, and look forward to a future filled with hope and promise. Thank you for entrusting me with this responsibility. Let us move forward with faith, love, and a shared commitment to St Pauls mission.

2024 Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes

St. Pauls UCC | Annual Meeting | March 3, 2024

Call to Order

President Ben Emmrich called the meeting to order at 11:25 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.

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

He encouraged everyone to use the Church Center app and upload pictures to go with their individual profiles.

We will hold a special meeting on June 2nd to:

- Review updated Bylaws that are currently being drafted.
- Vote on a new committee structure that is intended to increase congregational engagement and build relationships among members
- Elect members to serve on the new committees
- Discuss progress with the Capital Campaign

Ben thanked Matt, Jeff, and Liz, the church staff, and the Council for all they do for St. Pauls

Remarks

Matt Fitzgerald, Senior Pastor

Matt welcomed the members from Lighthouse Church in attendance.

Matt will be traveling to Scotland on a grant from the Lilly Foundation to meet with a group of Pastors. The Lilly Endowment Fund provides funding to help pastors “live well into their call.”

Questions to keep asking: How to invite new people from outside the church?
 How to make new connections within the church?

Approval of 2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

Sally Fletcher made a motion to approve the March 2023 annual Meeting minutes. Carrie Brueggers seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Minutes were approved.

Financial Report – Sally Fletcher

- There were budget surpluses in 2021 and 2022.
- We had shortfall in 2023 in operating income.
- 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 loan, and spending that was 6% lower than budgeted.
- The proposed budget for 2024 is balanced.
- Spending of money coming from bequests is limited to 5% of the operating budget in any one year
- We have applied for another Employee Retention Credit of \$160,000. We haven’t received a response yet.
- Sally explained the Knaphurst Funds can be used for building upgrades.
- The proposed 2024 budget includes a 60% cut to our donation to OCM Illinois Conference. IL Conference hasn’t been sufficiently responsive. The \$12,000 remaining
- in the proposed budget is on par with the level of giving from other churches in the area.

Kurt Hansen moved to accept the budget as presented. Kevin seconded the motion.

There was discussion about ways in which we could work with and support the Conference as individuals and as a Church.

Nancy Bingaman made a motion to add to restore the budget line to the Illinois Conference by adding \$18,000 to that line item and pay for the resulting deficit from St. Pauls reserves. Lynn Dykstra Davis seconded the motion.

During the discussion, it was recommended that a study group be assembled to dig deeper into the spending for the Illinois Conference.

The counted vote on the motion results:

online: votes from those attending virtually: 1 yay 5 nay
in-person 6 yay 71 nay

The motion did not carry.

Discussion turned back to the whole proposed budget.

Kurt Hansen moved to accept the 2024 budget as presented. Kevin seconded the motion.

By voice vote in the room and virtual votes, the motion carried.

Ben made a motion to update and renew our Covenant with Lighthouse Church.

Philip seconded the motion.

Discussion: As part of that renewal a committee with members from both churches has been created that will be in place for the duration of the Covenant (ending March 2027)
More details are included in the Annual Meeting packet.

Char Damron called the Question. Carrie Brueggers seconded it.

The motion to renew our Covenant with Lighthouse Church carried.

“Expanding Our Openness” Capital Campaign update:

Members of the Capital Campaign Committee shared progress to date. We will defer a vote until our special meeting in June 2024 because we are waiting for more information from Bulley and Andrews and Larry Kearns.

Nancy Godinez, chair of the Nominating Committee brought the following names forward for election to Church Council:

- Allen Heinemann, Treasure, 2-year term
- Renea Bradshaw, Vice-President, 2-year term
- Todd Coe, At-large Council Member, 3-year term

Elected by unanimous vote with many thanks for being willing to serve!

Nancy Godinez, chair of the Nominating Committee, brought the following names forward for election to the Nominating Committee 2024

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

Elected by unanimous vote with many thanks for being willing to serve!

Ben adjourned the meeting at 12:10 PM.

Matt led the Congregation in the Lord’s Prayer

2024 Special Congregational Meeting Minutes

August 11, 2024

Special Meeting of St. Pauls United Church of Christ August 11, 2024

President Ben Emmrich called the meeting to order at 11:23 AM.

Ben welcomed everyone, both in person and virtually. He gave a special thanks to all the members of the Nominating Task Force who did a great job filling the slate of members for the Ministries that were created for the proposed new governance structure.

It was established that a quorum was present.

Pastor Matt opened the meeting with prayer.

Ben read the Six Pillars of our 2020 Vision as a context for doing the work of the Church.

Ben thanked Jen Kew for all the contributions she makes to the life of St. Pauls.

Ben introduced Rick Peterson, Chair of the Bylaws Revision Task Force.

Rick thanked the Task Force members:

- Nathan Clark
- Matt Fitzgerald
- Annie Johnson
- Jen Kew
- Kevin O'Brien

Rick also thanked those who attended the information session about the Bylaws on August 4. Rick reviewed our Core Values and Mission statement as context for understanding the proposed amendments to the current Bylaws.

A document containing the complete 2024 Revised Bylaws of Saint Pauls United Church of Christ and a document containing highlights of the proposed amendments were both available for congregation review.

Todd Coe made a motion to approve the revision of the 2024 Bylaws as presented by the Bylaws Task Force.

David (Baker? Brown? Burnett?) seconded the motion.

During discussion it was clarified that the Annual Terms will begin March 2025.

Larry Simpson made a motion to amend section 5.1.b of the Bylaws revision proposed by the Bylaws Task Force to say:

“In such instances, the Chair shall serve their full two-year term AS CHAIR and the number of members of the Standing Ministry shall be increased to ten (10) during that one year.”

David (Baker? Brown? Burnett?) seconded Larry's motion.

The motion re: section 5.1b passed.

The motion to approve the revision of the 2024 Bylaws as presented by the Bylaws Task Force passed.

Jim Brandt made a motion to elect the slate of Ministry members presented by the Nominating Task Force.

Breanna Coe seconded the motion.

The motion passed.

Congregation members are asked to upload a photo of themselves to the Church Center Directory.

Pastor Jeff led the congregation in the Lord's Prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 11:54.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Lyons, Secretary

2024 Special Congregational Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2024

Congregational Meeting, Phase II Endorsement Vote Minutes October 20, 2024

Members in Attendance: Quorum

Members Present by Phone or Zoom: 36 people Members Absent:

Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:30 a.m.

Matt Fitzgerald, Senior Pastor, opened with a prayer.

A quorum was present

Ben Emmrich, President, reviewed St. Pauls five strategic pillars

Pillar 1: Grow towards each other, grow toward God together

Pillar 2: Increase diversity in our partnerships and congregation

Pillar 3: Live our faith boldly in ages of injustice

Pillar 4: Use our building for service and mission

Pillar 5: Tend to our finances faithfully

Ben thanked Karen Johnson, for her leadership and dedication to the Expand and Elevate Our Openness during her Presidency.

Ben made a motion to proceed with the Phase II construction in 2025 using raised capital funds, with an estimated \$900,432 balance to be paid from the St. Pauls investment funds, not to exceed \$975,000. And secure a bridge loan until all pledged funds, 2.2 million dollars are received in 2026.

After a few clarifying questions, Kirk Hansen called for a vote on the questions. Philip Cendeno-Smedley seconded. The motion passed unanimously both in person and online.

Ben thanked the Capital Campaign committee for all of their hard work and dedication to the project.

Andrew Broderick, Chair of the Nominating Committee, made a motion to install Greg Basil as Vice President of the Church Council until March of 2026, to replace Renae Bradshaw, who needs to step away for personal reasons. Winnie Kearns seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously both in person and online.

Nathan Chamberlin, Chair of the Invitation and Communication Ministry asked people to complete their Church Center registrations and to add their photos to the directory.

Jeff Carlson, Associate Pastor, closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Wrap up

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 am.

Senior Pastor Matt Fitzgerald Annual Report

Dear Saint Pauls,

As we look toward our 182nd year as a church, I am full of hope and gratitude for Saint Pauls.

Worship attendance continues to trend upward, regularly matching or increasing our 2024 numbers, and our pre-pandemic attendance. Once again, Bible off Broadway rallied dozens and dozens of young children and galvanized our Sunday School program. A huge thank you to all who made that production such a wonderful celebration, and a marker, both in form and content, of what makes Saint Pauls unique. Our recent New Member classes brought us many remarkable new siblings. On many Sundays the choir stalls could barely hold another singer. These numbers are meaningful because they tell the story of an energized and vibrant church. An energized and vibrant inclusive, forward-thinking, Christ-loving, immigrant-embracing, LGBTQ affirming church. And the world needs our sort of church these days. Perhaps now more than ever.

When the story of 2024 is told, it will begin with the story of our ongoing commitment to migrant families; in particular our commitment to the five we housed in the summer, and the family we housed until February of this year. 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, especially our growing ranks of interpreters, and Geoff Gist, our member, whose gifts as an attorney have helped our migrant friends immeasurably.

An equally spectacular chapter will be devoted to the successful conclusion of our Campaign to Expand and Elevate our Openness. Thanks to the pandemic, this fundraising effort took longer than anticipated, and the project's costs grew more than we had hoped. On the other hand, we raised much more money than we thought possible! Indeed, with Jana O'Brien at the helm, we more than doubled the amount professional fundraisers thought we could raise. You did this because you value inclusivity, and remain committed to being a church for all people. I cannot wait for the work to begin! Listen for the joyful sound of jackhammers in the city next month!

The success of the Capital Campaign makes the outcome of our 2025 Annual Giving Campaign even more remarkable. Thanks to Jack Lyons, his team, and your incredible generosity, we just wrapped up the most successful Annual Campaign in Saint Pauls history! Jack has done a remarkable job leading our Giving efforts over the past three years. We owe him such gratitude.

Church polity and governance have never been the most exciting part of any tale. And yet, the changes we adopted one year ago, are resulting in truly exciting growth for Saint Pauls. Our governance changes were made in hope of increasing engagement, and helping church members drawing closer to

one another. I am so glad to report that I witness both of these happening at Saint Pauls. Our members know each other better than they did one year ago. We are becoming better at folding new members into the fold, and at identifying gifts and skills within the congregation.

As I look ahead, I see real challenges and great opportunities before us. How must we change in order to remain one of the few thriving progressive churches in Chicago? What can we do to close the gap that remains between our lean budget totals and our remarkably generous giving totals? 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 God’s guidance, and from my great respect for our congregation, and our church leaders. I work hard, and sometimes I work long hours, but being a pastor is easy when you serve a church full of energized and devoted members. I thank God for each of you, and for all of you together.

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, Vincenzo, Maddy, Aubraea, Erin, Danielle, Liz, and Jeff runs deep. Our President Ben Emmrich concludes his tenure today. Ben served us for four years and two terms. He has been a nimble and bold leader, precisely the man we needed “for such a time as this.” Ben came in to the presidency at the height of the pandemic, when all felt uncertain. His focus on our strategic pillars, his confidence, and his faithfulness are all essential to our current health. He led the effort 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. I am personally going to miss the bond I’ve formed with Ben, and I am going to miss him as our congregation’s President. He has given Saint Pauls such excellent leadership. Our Secretary, Karen Lyons wraps up her service this morning. During her two terms, she asked great questions, led our personnel policy overhaul, took careful notes, and worked tirelessly to help improve communication on the Church Council. 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 thirteen years, my work as Senior Pastor feels fresh and life-giving. The joy I find serving Saint Pauls only grows.

God is good!

Matt

Church Buildings and Grounds Annual Report

Church Buildings & Grounds Ministry Report | Prepared by Ron Koepke
March 16, 2025

Committee Members:

Norma Borcharding

Andrew Broderick

Rob Castle

Matt Fitzgerald

Cindi Huber

Jeff Johnson

Eric Moulten

Rick Peterson

Gerald Wilk

Support Staff:

Fernando Diaz

Maddy Lockhart

The committee has been developing a Facilities Project Planning Document to maintain proper recordkeeping of all of St. Pauls work around the building, parsonage, and grounds. This will help us in planning for future projects. Thanks to my great committee!

Completed projects include:

- Successfully completed semi annual maintenance of HVAC system
- Major repair to kitchen exhaust system completed
- Ran two new 20-amp service outlets from boiler room to kitchen
- Completed successful fire inspection (our system will need to be replaced in future)
- Completed tuck-pointing for entire entry of side walls/landing at Fullerton entrance
- Updated basement showers with highly efficient shower heads and curtains
- Sanded and refinished Kemper and main court area entry doors
- Water make-up tank construction complete and will now be installed early April, 2025
- Replaced water pump on boiler number two
- Rewired induction motor and replaced contactor on boiler number one
- Replaced ice machine in kitchen
- Completed painting of staircase to sanctuary balcony and upstairs landing
- Completed painting of former migrant housing rooms and staircase
- Completed gutter seam repair and tuck pointing on Orchard side of church
- Along with the green team, relocated plants from the Orchard Street to Fullerton
- Replaced light fixtures with new compatible LED ballast and LED lights in confirmation room next to social hall
- Replaced Fullerton Street electronic signage
- Painted parsonage
- Replaced old commercial kitchen faucets
- Painted yellow parking lines and numbers in parking lot
- Repaired damaged ceiling in pastor's bathroom, painted and installed new vanity and faucet
- Plastered and painted main floor – north bathroom

Some of the Plans for 2025 include:

- Replacement of the parsonage front porch
- Replacement of motor/pulleys on HVAC system above sanctuary
- Replacement of vacuum pump components in boiler room
- Cut-out and replace the water make-up tank in boiler room
- Placement of Saint Pauls House-stained glass window in stairway next to pastor's office

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 projects, but should be aware that our operating budget will need to significantly increase if that fund were to be completely depleted.

Giving and Finance Ministry Annual Report

St. Pauls United Church of Christ | Report for the Congregational Meeting March 16, 2025

2024 Highlights

- We received pledges from 250 households, indicating an intent to give \$975,000 in pledged income. At year's end, we received 92% of the budgeted pledged amount, a shortfall of \$95,258.
- We budgeted and received an estate gift from Hazel Vespa, 4% of which we can use in 2024, totaling \$83,083. The balance was credited to our investment account with United Church Funds.
- St. Pauls made an Employee Retention Credit Claim and budgeted a credit of \$167,826; we have not received it yet, but have received reassurance from the agent who submitted the application that it will be processed.
- Use of church facilities, inclusive of Little Lights, the summer camp program, and parking fees was 79% of the budgeted amount, primarily due to Little Lights expenses exceeding revenue.
- Total operating income of \$1,254,925 was 76% of budget.
- Total operating expenses were 97% of budget. Savings in salaries, benefits and taxes; financial administration; office expenses; worship and congregational life; invitational outreach; youth and children's ministries; and activism and advocacy were offset by greater than budgeted expenses related to building operations and improvement; and music.
- We ended this year with an operational deficit of \$358,107 vs. a budgeted deficit of \$38. Our operational deficit would have been \$190,281 had we received the Employee Retention Credit.

	Actual	Budget	Budget Variance	% of Budget
Income				
Non-Recurring Income	83,083	83,083	0	100%
Giving	1,053,542	1,148,800	95,258	92%
Use of Church	118,300	150,000	31,700	79%
Total Income (excludes temporarily restricted funds)	1,254,925	1,661,688	406,763	76%
Expenses				
Salaries, Benefits & Taxes	1,115,158	1,153,300	38,142	97%
Financial Administration	103,520	111,400	7,880	93%
Office Expenses	48,637	49,800	1,163	98%
Building Operations - Utilities & Maintenance	137,837	137,600	237	100%
Building Improvement & Preservation	38,711	35,500	3,211	109%
Worship & Congregational Life	15,988	19,000	3,012	84%
Invitational Outreach	6,320	9,000	2,680	70%
Youth and Children's Ministries	19,405	20,850	1,445	93%
Music	85,372	82,850	2,522	103%
Activism & Advocacy	42,084	42,350	266	99%
Total Expenses	1,613,032	1,661,650	48,618	97%
Net Operating Income	358,107	38	358,069	

Restricted / Designated Funds

The balance in Designated (Restricted) Funds as of December 31, 2024 was \$2,424,663, an increase of \$1,201,048, primarily representing gifts to the Expand and Elevate our Openness (Capital Campaign) fund.

Designated Funds	Beginning Balance	YTD Change	Current Balance
Building Preservation - Frances H. Knaphurst	312,959	-58,808	254,152
Christian Education - Erna Knaphurst	31,392	0	31,392
Colleen Henry Writing Center	9,661	144	9,805
Expand & Elevate Our Openness Funds	538,063	1,194,252	1,732,316
Grauer Fund (Faith & Public Issues, Adult Education)	37,736	0	37,736
Historic Preservation - Archives	9,785	-6,212	3,573
Little Lights Scholarship Fund	0	49	49
Lueder Altar Fund	6,721	0	6,721
Memorial Garden Fund	5,239	-1,491	3,749
Migrant Housing Project (Refugee Fund)	32,780	-23,021	9,759
Migrant Housing Project - Legal Fund	0	14,073	14,073
Music - Sam Hill Fund	-101	199	98
Music - Sexton Fund	4,997	8,412	13,409
Needy Relief Fund	13,478	-2,580	10,898
Prepaid Annual Fund Donations	0	94,563	94,563
Sarah's Sibs Meal Fund	2,811	0	2,811
Staff Development - Francis H. Knaphurst	198,930	-13,790	185,140
Stephen Ministry	0	5	5
Sunday CEP Supper Fund	2,500	0	2,500
Thomssen Fund - Elderly	11,346	-238	11,108
Work Project Fund (Mission Trips)	5,319	-4,512	808
Total	1,223,615	1,201,048	2,424,663

Investment Funds

In 2024, global stock markets saw substantial growth with periods of volatility, driven by technology and healthcare sectors. Bond markets benefited from declining interest rates. Overall, stocks performed well while bond returns improved from depressed levels in 2023.

Since 2013, United Church Funds has managed St. Pauls' investments. They offer 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.

The St. Pauls Giving and Finance Ministry monitors our portfolio monthly and we will schedule our next annual review with Matt Wagner, VP Institutional Relationships, this spring. St. Pauls' investment account grew to \$3,273,933. This performance is inclusive of \$198,996 in market gains and \$7,020 in net disbursements. Our holdings are 5% in cash and fixed income funds and 95% in a Balanced Fund account. The Balanced Fund's return in 2024 was 9.26%, reflecting 62.2% equity exposure, 37.0% fixed income exposure, and 0.8% in cash and equivalents.

The separate Capital Campaign fund ended 2024 with a balance of \$1,134,419. We will use these funds for Phase 2 of the Campaign to Expand and Elevate our Openness. This fund is invested 100% in the United Church Funds' Cash & Equivalent Fund.

St. Pauls maintains two checking accounts at Chase bank; at year end, our balance was \$525,542.

2025 Budget

Council approved a 2025 budget that includes a deficit of \$172,718. Despite a substantial growth in pledged gifts, growth of expenses is greater. Construction related to the Capital Campaign limits increased use of our facilities by outside organizations through most of the year. We will develop strategies to increase facility use and revenue in 2026 after construction concludes.

Income: Our annual giving campaign resulted in 265 pledges totaling \$1,029,200 plus \$131,000 in matching funds, a record level. We budgeted \$1,050,000 because we anticipate receiving additional pledges throughout the year. 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. 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 Giving and Finance Ministry developed an Investment Policy that the Church Council approved in 2024, which includes these tenets. We anticipate an 8% increase in income from Use of Building and Grounds. Chicago Public Schools paid its past due invoices and is now in good standing. Little Lights increased tuition fees; further growth is limited by construction associated with Phase 2 of the Campaign to Expand and Elevate our Openness.

As noted above, St. Pauls made an Employee Retention Credit Claim and expects to receive \$167,826. We budgeted this amount in 2024 but have not received. This Claim is similar to the Paycheck Protection Program credits we received in 2021 and 2022 – although the application was more complicated and we retained an agent who receives a commission based on the IRS payment. Thus, we need to look for continued Increases in giving and revenue from use of church assets. Larry Damron is leading a task force to explore increased revenue from church assets.

Expenses: Total expenses are budgeted to increase 6% from 2024. Staff and Administrative expenses continue to be our largest expense category. Council approved a 3% compensation increase, though individuals' increases will vary. Health insurance premium increases were relatively modest this year. We will incur CPA Fees in 2025 for the review of our 2023 books.

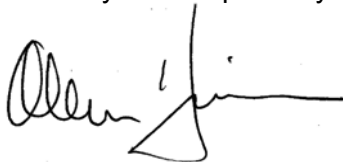
We renewed contracts with third party providers for Gas and Electric that kept those expenses in check in 2024. We believe it prudent to renew in 12-month intervals. There were substantial increases in building improvements, preservation, and operations lines, reflecting a commitment to preventive maintenance.

Worship and music budgets increased modestly. The invitational Outreach budget more than doubled to support our ambitious outreach goals to neighbors.

Modest budget cuts are evident in our Outreach category. There is no change to funding of Our Church's Wider Mission (OWCM) from the 2024 level. 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 in 2024. We believe our continuing commitment of \$12,000 is justified because we are supporting the mission of the Illinois Conference by supporting Lighthouse UCC directly with rent-free space. The amount we distribute in other Annual Grants increased by 8%.

Giving and Finance Ministry Members are Sonya Brizzolara, Larry Damron, Sally Fletcher, Justin Hartanov, Allen Heinemann, Jack Lyons (Giving Chair), Will Ritchie, Toby Rogers, and Bob Wild.

Faithfully and respectfully submitted,



Allen Heinemann, Treasurer

SPUCC - FY2025 Budget: March 4, 2025

Budget	2024				2025		
	Actual	Budget	\$ vs budget	% vs. budget	Budget	\$ vs '24A	% vs '24A
INCOME							
4000 Net Assets Released from Restriction						0	
4000.1 Non-Recurring Income					167,000		
4395 Excess Planned Giving/Bequest to Investment Account	393,702					(393,702)	
4400 Investment Income (used for operating - 4%)					95,600	95,600	
4950 Investment Income/Expense						0	
4951 Dividend Income	44,984					(44,984)	
4955 Unrealized Gains/Losses	245,838					(245,838)	
4957 Stock Settlement Difference	(873)					873	
Total 4950 Investment Income/Expense	289,949	0			262,600	(27,349)	
4991 Estate Giving - Bequests, etc.	83,083	83,083	0	100%		(83,083)	0%
Total 4000.1 Non-Recurring Income	766,735	83,083	683,652	923%	429,600	(337,135)	56%
Non-recurring Income (Giving, Inv. and Bequest)	83,083	83,083	0	100%	95,600	12,517	115%
4000.5 Giving							
4010 Pledged Giving	839,931	975,000	(135,069)	86%	1,050,000	210,069	125%
4010.5 Identified Giving	185,400	150,000	35,400	124%	80,000	(105,400)	43%
Match contribution	0				131,000	131,000	
4020 Open Offering	11,248	18,000	(6,752)	62%	12,271	1,023	109%
4030 Easter Offering	6,307		6,307		6,880	573	109%
4050 In Memoriam	1,931	5,800	(3,869)	33%	2,106	176	109%
MISC GIVING	8,725		8,725			(8,725)	0%
Total 4000.5 Giving	1,053,542	1,148,800	(95,258)	92%	1,282,257	228,715	122%
4300 Use of Church							
4181 Summer Camp Income	29,720	23,000	6,720	129%	20,000	(9,720)	
4182 Summer Camp Expense	(543)					543	
Total 4181 Summer Camp Income	29,177	23,000	6,177	127%	20,000	(9,177)	69%
4183 Little Lights Income	0				21,000	21,000	
4183.2 Little Lights Tuition & Fees	202,702					(202,702)	0%
4183.4 Little Lights Donations/Fundraisers	1,742					(1,742)	0%
4184 Little Lights Expense	(41)					41	0%

SPUCC - FY2025 Budget: March 4, 2025

Budget	2024				2025		
	Actual	Budget	\$ vs budget	% vs. budget	Budget	\$ vs '24A	% vs '24A
4184.1 LL Salary/wages	(140,449)					140,449	0%
4184.2 LL Taxes	(7,455)					7,455	0%
4184.3 LL Benefits	(34,888)				(34,775)	113	100%
4184.4 LL Curriculum Supplies	(361)					361	0%
4184.6 LL General Supplies	(1,073)					1,073	0%
4184.8 LL Special Events	(180)					180	0%
Total 4184 Little Lights Expense	(184,447)				(34,775)	149,672	19%
Total 4183 Little Lights Income	19,997	60,000	(40,003)	33%	55,775	35,778	279%
4310 Rental and Event Income	10,205	10,000	205	102%	10,000	(205)	98%
4320 Parking	58,922	57,000	1,922	103%	42,360	(16,562)	72%
Total 4300 Use of Church	118,300	150,000	(31,700)	79%	128,135	9,835	108%
4900 Designated Funds Income (Temp Restricted)	1,529,376					(1,529,376)	
Unapplied Cash Payment Income	(4,925)		(4,925)			4,925	
Uncategorized Income	25,492		25,492			(25,492)	
Total Income	3,488,519	1,381,883	2,106,636	252%	1,839,992	1,365,357	
Total Income (ex. 4900 Designated Funds)	1,959,143	1,381,883	577,261	142%	1,839,992	(119,152)	
Total Income (ex. 4900 and non-recurring)	1,275,492	1,381,883	(106,391)	92%	1,577,392	301,900	124%

EXPENSES

5000 Staff & Administration							
5100 Salaries, Wages & Taxes (excluding housing)	789,023	880,000	(90,977)	90%	816,294	27,271	103%
NEW EOY Staff Bonuses					3,600	3,600	
5110 Salaries - Pastoral	303,880	0	303,880		312,997	9,116	103%
5120 Salaries - Office & Maintenance	447,736	0	447,736		461,168	13,432	103%
5310 Housing	99,138	0	99,138		102,113	2,974	103%
5210 Payroll Tax - FICA	37,407	0	37,407		38,529	1,122	103%
Total 5100 Salaries, Wages & Taxes (including housing)	888,162	880,000	8,162	101%	918,406	30,245	103%

SPUCC - FY2025 Budget: March 4, 2025

Budget	2024				2025		
	Actual	Budget	\$ vs budget	% vs. budget	Budget	\$ vs '24A	% vs '24A
5200 Employee Benefits							
5220 Health (Medical/Dental/Vision) Insurance	132,802	156,000	(23,198)	85%	162,000	29,198	122%
5230 Pension Contribution	94,560	107,000	(12,440)	88%	97,397	2,837	103%
5240 Life & Disability Insurance	5,265	0	5,265		6,205	940	118%
Total 5200 Employee Benefits	232,627	263,000	(30,373)	88%	265,602	32,975	114%
5250 Workers Compensation	8,176	10,000	(1,824)	82%	10,000	1,824	122%
5300 Housing/Travel							
5320 Travel	554	300	254	185%	300	(254)	54%
Total 5300 Housing/Travel	554	300	254	185%	300	(254)	54%
Total Salaries, Benefits and Other	1,129,519	1,153,300	(23,781)	98%	1,194,308	64,790	106%
5500 Financial Administration							
5400 Annual Giving Campaign	765	800	(35)	96%	1,000	235	131%
5510 Audit	4,254	15,500	(11,246)	27%	5,000	746	118%
5520 Accounting/Bookkeeping	41,123	41,200	(77)	100%	42,000	877	102%
5550 Legal Fees	0	500	(500)	0%			
5600 Business Insurance	0	52,600	(52,600)	0%	58,531	58,531	
5610 General Liability	56,826		56,826			(56,826)	0%
Total 5600 Business Insurance	56,826	52,600	4,226		58,531	1,705	103%
5900 Bank/Vanco/Square Fees	160	800	(640)	20%	800	640	499%
5910 Bank Service Charges	271	0	271			(271)	0%
5920 Online Donation Fees	12	0	12			(12)	0%
Melio Service Fees	66	0	66			(66)	0%
Total 5900 Bank/Vanco/Square Fees	509				800	291	
Total 5500 Financial Administration	103,478	111,400	(7,922)	93%	107,331	3,853	104%
5700 Office Expenses							
5340 Staff Development & Training	267	0	267		1,000	733	374%
5530 Payroll Service	5,574	9,600	(4,026)		6,000	426	108%
5910 Bank Service Charges	271						
5535 Background Checks	280	1,200	(920)	23%	1,200	920	429%
5710 Office Supplies	17,402	15,800	1,602	110%	15,800	(1,602)	91%
5715 Dues & Subscriptions	7,581	4,800	2,781	158%	4,800	(2,781)	63%

SPUCC - FY2025 Budget: March 4, 2025

Budget	2024				2025		
	Actual	Budget	\$ vs budget	% vs. budget	Budget	\$ vs '24A	% vs '24A
5720 Postage and Delivery	6,895	5,400	1,495	128%	8,000	1,105	116%
5740 Computer Support	9,229	12,000	(2,772)	77%	12,000	2,772	130%
5800 Communications	163	0	163		3,800	3,637	2330%
5820 Advertising	844	1,000	(156)	84%	1,000	156	119%
Total 5800 Communications	871				1,000	129	115%
Total 5700 Office Expenses	49,376	49,800	(1,565)	99%	54,600	5,495	111%
Total 5000 Staff & Administration	1,282,373	1,314,500	(32,127)	98%	1,356,239	73,867	106%
6000 Bldg Oper - Utilities & Maint						0	
6100 Orchard Utilities	155	0	155			(155)	0%
5730 Phone/Internet	13,566	14,100	(534)	96%	14,100	534	104%
6110 Gas	30,575	36,000	(5,425)	85%	36,000	5,425	118%
6120 Electric	47,115	39,000	8,115	121%	39,000	(8,115)	83%
6130 Water	3,338	4,000	(662)	83%	4,000	662	120%
Total 6100 Orchard Utilities	94,748	93,100	1,648	102%	93,100	(1,648)	98%
6150 Kemper Utilities	0	12,000	(12,000)	0%	12,000	(12,000)	
6152 Phone/Internet (Kemper)	2,953	0	2,953			2,697	
6154 Gas (Kemper)	2,280	0	2,280			2,280	
6156 Electric (Kemper)	2,361	0	2,361			2,361	
6158 Water (Kemper)	3,060	0	3,060			2,830	
Total 6150 Kemper Utilities	10,655	12,000	(1,345)	89%	12,000	(1,832)	113%
6200 Contract Maintenance	0	24,000	(24,000)	0%		0	
6220 HVAC Maint Contract	13,072	0	13,072		10,000	(3,072)	77%
6230 HVAC Chemical Contract	12,124				8,000	(4,124)	
6260 Music Maintenance			0		4,000	4,000	
6270 Other Maintenance	1,874	0	1,874		8,100	6,226	432%
Total 6200 Contract Maintenance	27,070	24,000	3,070	113%	26,100	(970)	96%

SPUCC - FY2025 Budget: March 4, 2025

Budget	2024				2025		
	Actual	Budget	\$ vs budget	% vs. budget	Budget	\$ vs '24A	% vs '24A
6400 Maintenance Supplies	142	5,500	(5,358)	3%	1,000	(5,358)	
6410 Janitorial Supplies	3,711	0	3,711		4,500	3,590	
6420 Electrical Supplies	15	0	15		1,000	15	
Total 6400 Maintenance Supplies	3,869	5,500	(1,631)	70%	6,500	2,631	168%
6500 Snow Removal	1,375	3,000	(1,625)	46%	3,000	1,625	218%
Total 6000 Bldg Oper - Utilities & Maint	137,717	137,600	117	100%	140,700	2,983	102%
6300 Building Improvement & Preservation							
6310 HVAC Repairs	7,940	9,000	(1,060)	88%	12,000	4,060	151%
6320 Electrical Repairs	1,553	1,000	553	155%	3,000	1,447	193%
6330 Plumbing Repairs	0	1,000	(1,000)	0%	1,000	1,000	
6340 Interior Carpentry/Painting	472	1,000	(528)	47%	6,500	6,028	1376%
6350 Building/Equip Repairs/Supplies	10,067	10,000	67	101%	20,000	9,933	199%
6360 Kemper Maintenance	10,266	8,000	2,266	128%	8,000	(2,266)	78%
6430 Landscape Maintenance	7,449	5,000	2,449	149%	8,000	551	107%
7115 Sound System Maintenance	861	500	361	172%	500	(361)	58%
Total 6300 Building Improvement & Preservation	38,608	35,500	3,108	109%	59,000	20,392	153%
7000 Worship & Program							
7100 Worship Expense	252	0	252			(252)	0%
7110 Worship	4,134	5,000	(866)	83%	5,000	866	121%
7145 Choir Meals - Christmas & Easter	1,042	1,100	(58)	95%	1,100	58	106%
7150 Membership Development	1,185	1,800	(615)	66%	2,300	1,115	194%
7170 Congregational Life & Fellowship	6,538	7,500	(962)	87%	7,500	962	115%
7175 Congregational Care/Stephen Min	2,373	2,500	(127)	95%	2,500	127	105%
7180 Connectors	361	600	(239)	60%	600	600	166%
7195 Young Adult Social Group Exp	104	500	(396)	21%	750	646	723%
Total 7100 Worship Expense	15,988	19,000	(3,012)	84%	19,750	3,762	124%
7160 Invitational Efforts	152		152		7,000	6,848	4606%
7161 Cookies with Santa Expense	206	2,000	(1,794)	10%	2,000	1,794	973%
7162 Easter Egg Hunt Expense	68	500	(432)	14%	600	532	881%
7166 Oktoberfest Income	(6,922)		(6,922)			(6,922)	
7168 Oktoberfest Expense	12,817	6,500	6,317	197%	6,500	6,317	
Total 7166 Oktoberfest Expense / (Income)	5,894	6,500	(606)	91%	6,500	606	110%

SPUCC - FY2025 Budget: March 4, 2025

Budget	2024				2025		
	Actual	Budget	\$ vs budget	% vs. budget	Budget	\$ vs '24A	% vs '24A
Total 7160 Invitational Efforts	6,320	9,000	(2,680)	70%	16,100	9,780	255%
7200 Youth and Children's Ministries	339	0	339			(339)	0%
7210 Youth Ministry Events	209	1,000	(791)	21%	2,000	1,791	957%
7220 High School	545	350	195	156%	500	(45)	92%
7225 Confirmation	1,705	600	1,105	284%	1,800	95	106%
7228 Vacation Bible School	0	450	(450)	0%		0	
7230 Crafts/Supplies	71	500	(430)	14%	500	430	709%
7240 Bible Off Broadway	1,476	1,500	(24)	98%	1,500	24	102%
7250 Curriculum Materials	(64)	1,500	(1,564)	-4%	1,000	1,064	-1564%
7280 Teacher Training	464	250	214	186%	400	(64)	86%
7285 Childcare	14,575	14,200	375	103%	14,200	(375)	97%
7290 Program Equipment	26	500	(474)	5%	250	224	966%
7295 Misc Education	60	0	60		100	40	167%
Total 7200 Youth and Children's Ministries	19,405	20,850	(1,445)	93%	22,250	2,845	115%
7300 Music							
7305 Chancel Choir Section Leaders	29,395	30,600	(1,205)	96%	32,670	3,275	111%
7310 Youth Choir Directors	900	1,000	(100)	90%	800	(100)	89%
7315 St. Arbucks Trio	41,613	42,600	(987)	98%	44,800	3,187	108%
7320 Instrumentalist/Music Substitut	11,335	6,650	4,685	170%	8,450	(2,885)	75%
7330 Chancel Choir Music	1,725	1,500	225	115%	2,500	775	145%
7340 Youth Choir Music	393	250	143	157%	250	(143)	64%
7345 Intergenerational Orchestra Mus	0	250	(250)	0%	250	250	
7350 Organ Maintenance	11		11			(11)	0%
Total 7300 Music	85,372	82,850	2,522	103%	89,720	4,348	105%
Total 7000 Worship & Program	127,085	131,700	(4,615)	96%	147,820	20,735	116%
8100 Activism & Advocacy							
8101 Outreach	421	0	421			(421)	0%
8110 Our Church's Wider Mission	12,000	12,000	0	100%	12,000	0	100%
8130 Pastoral Outreach	57	0	57			(57)	0%
8740 Green Team	46	300	(254)	15%	300	254	648%
8750 SPARC	0	50	(50)	0%	50	50	
Total 8101 Outreach	12,524	12,350	174	101%	12,350	(174)	99%
8200 Benevolence	0	0	0		2,000	2,000	
8210 Annual Grants	29,500	30,000	(500)	98%	32,000	2,500	108%
Total 8200 Benevolence	29,500	30,000	(500)	98%	34,000	4,500	115%

SPUCC - FY2025 Budget: March 4, 2025

Budget	2024				2025		
	Actual	Budget	\$ vs budget	% vs. budget	Budget	\$ vs '24A	% vs '24A
Total 8100 Activism & Advocacy	42,024	42,350	(326)	99%	46,350	4,326	110%
Unapplied Cash Bill Payment Expense	25,770					(3,152)	
Uncategorized Expense	489					129	
Total Expenses	1,654,066	1,661,650	(7,584)	100%	1,750,109	96,044	106%
Net Operating Income	(378,574)	(279,767)	(98,807)	135%	(172,718)	205,856	46%

Giving Report

St. Pauls Giving Report
Prepared by Jack Lyons
March 13, 2024

Giving Committee Members

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

Giving Moment Speakers

Monty Kehl	Tara Stephenson
Steve Garrett	Peg Wander
Christina Cedeno	Sharon Collins
Nathan Chamberlain	Jack Lyons

Thanks to everyone who made the 2025 Annual Pledge Drive, ***Embrace Nurture Inspire***, a huge success.

Because of your generosity, as of March 15, 2025 we have received 265 pledges in the amount of \$1,029,000. This is an increase of \$99,000 from March 2024 pledges received. The Match Contribution is not included in these numbers. The large increase in pledging could not have been accomplished without the generosity of the many members who contributed \$131,000 to sponsor the Match Contribution, which seemed to encourage so many members to either increase their pledges substantially, pledge for the first time, or begin pledging again..

Thank you to each Giving Committee Member for your thoughtful and creative work. In the many meetings we had, you provided ideas about theme, design of the pledge card, letters to the members, planning and execution. Thank you for your help connecting with individual members in so many ways, including via the phonathon.

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

Thanks to each of our pastors, who supported the 2025 Pledge Campaign with ideas, encouragement, phone calls, and prayer.

Last, but not least, I want to thank Claire Higgins and Aubraea Cleveland for all they have done and all they are still doing to provide administrative support to the Giving Committee and to the Pledge Campaign. They go above and beyond with their creativity, attention to detail, and dependability.

With gratitude, appreciation and celebration!

Jack Lyons (Chair)

Capital Campaign

“The Campaign to Expand and Elevate Our Openness” **Annual Report to the St. Pauls Congregation** **February 25, 2025**

October 20, 2024 will go down in Saint Pauls’ history as the date that our congregation delivered on its eight-year commitment to make Saint Pauls fully accessible and more welcoming. This milestone moment was accomplished after Saint Pauls 1) raised a total of \$5.1 million to fund Phase I and II of the project – a Saint Pauls fundraising record – with \$3.4 million remaining to put toward Phase II, and 2) gained the congregation’s endorsement to proceed with Phase II construction in 2025 to install a five-stop elevator and convert our courtyard into an open-air gathering plaza.

Approval: The motion approved unanimously by the Congregation at the October 20 Special Meeting of the Congregation read:

The Congregation moves to endorse the final recommended 2024 Phase II Capital Construction Plan as set forth by the Capital Campaign Committee, with construction to move forward in early 2025 and said construction funded by the following: 1) the existing >\$1.1 million campaign cash on hand, 2) a bridge line of credit from UCF’s Cornerstone Fund to be repaid as the remaining >\$2.2 million pledged capital funds are paid through 2026, and 3) withdrawing up to \$950,000 from the St. Pauls Investment Fund to cover the balance of construction costs.

Campaign: The steps taken to accomplish Phase II of the congregation’s long-planned, ambitious, and historic goal included:

- A First Quarter 2024 Phase II campaign fundraising launch. The effort was kicked off on February 4 with a post-Bible Off Broadway all-congregation brunch in the gym featuring an informational overview and the campaign fundraising video.
- Distribution of detailed campaign information packets and pledge solicitations to current and former members and friends.
- Gatherings and one-on-one outreach efforts to encourage pledging among current and former members, friends, church neighbors, and neighborhood organizations.
- Distribution of short weekly videos that highlighted the range of faith-based, social, growth-driving, educational, and safety benefits of the Phase II construction.
- An anonymous Capital Campaign pledge match challenge that generated over \$100,000 in new campaign pledges in just one week, which will be matched dollar for dollar by that generous donor household.

Phase II Construction Process: With the congregation’s go-ahead in hand, the project team has 1) secured City of Chicago building permits, 2) requested a curb cut near the courtyard access ramp, 3) completed the process of applying for a Phase II bridge line of credit from the UCF’s Cornerstone Fund, as was secured in Phase I, enabling us to pay contractors as pledge fulfillments come in through 2026, 4) completed a contract with general contractor Bulley & Andrews, and 5) completed site testing, solicited bids, and approved one contractor’s submission for the required pre-construction asbestos abatement in the north end of the building.

The Phase II construction process begins in March and will continue through November, with the planned schedule as follows:

"CAMPAIGN TO EXPAND AND ELEVATE OUR OPENNESS"		
PHASE II CONSTRUCTION GENERAL WORK PLAN/APPROXIMATE TIMETABLE*		
MONTH OF 2025	INTERIOR WORK	EXTERIOR WORK
January – March	Equipment and materials procurement Pre-construction asbestos abatement	
April	Interior site preparation North stairwell partial removal	Site preparation Current site demolition
May	Elevator shaft preparation Roof preparation for elevator top Masonry and roofing Elevator installation	Install tree bases Electrical Ramp construction Handrail installation
June	North interior structural steel and deck work	
July	North stairwell construction North interior frame-out	Pour and finish plaza base Landscape bed preparation
August		Install plaza pavers Install plaza steps
September		Plantings Asphalt patching, finishing Final site clean-up
October	Interior flooring, tile, millwork, painting, and finishing	(Exterior complete)
November	(Project completion if any delays in planned schedule)	
*IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER: <i>As with any construction project of any size, timetables are approximations and subject to change/delay.</i>		

Building Use: Communication and preparations related to the building use implications of the Phase II construction have been ongoing. The Little Lights leadership has been fully informed of the construction plan and is implementing their plans for classroom/ equipment relocation as needed. Pastor Matt met with Lighthouse Church leaders in late December and included an update in his discussion. Choir music and robes have been relocated from the top floor Choir Room to the Social Hall. Access to the north end of the church complex will be available through the Fullerton Parkway entrance during the initial phases of Phase II. The existing lift will remain operational throughout Phase II.

Pledging Continues: Since the October Phase II approval, over \$15,000 in new pledges and donations have been received by the church. The signage around the construction site also will include the donation QR code so that interested neighborhood passers-by can contribute to the project. We encourage our recent new church members to add their support via a three-year campaign pledge, and our longer-term members and friends are encouraged to invite their friends and loved ones to contribute in honor of a birthday or anniversary or in memory of a loved one.

It Takes a Village: We express deep gratitude to the devoted members of the Phase I and Phase II Capital Campaign Committee and Building Task Force, whose members since 2016 included Nate Combs, Char Damron, Greg Decker, Deon Fayhee, Sally Fletcher, Lorne Frank (St. Pauls Owner's Rep), Marcia Frank, Karen Johnson, Larry Kearns (Architect), Monty Kehl, Jack Lyons, Tara Magner, Chuck Mize, Tom Murray, Frank Mynard, Linda Patton, Steve Patton, Toby Rogers, Craig Wilbanks, Sr. Pastor Matt Fitzgerald, and Campaign Co-Chairs Jana O'Brien and Wayne Parman. We thank the church staff for their cooperation in construction preparation. We thank the Council for their leadership and guidance. We thank the many who penned over 400 donor thank you notes expressing gratitude for campaign contributions. And, most of all, we thank our generous donors who have made this bold project possible.

We join our congregation and visitors in the sense of excitement and anticipation as we take this giant step forward in making Saint Pauls a more welcoming and accessible building complex. Current and future generations will benefit from this momentous effort.

With gratitude,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Jana' and the signature on the right is 'Wayne'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jana O'Brien and Wayne Parman
Capital Campaign Co-Chairs

Nominating Committee Report for 2025

SLATE OF NEW COUNCIL, MINISTRY AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESIDENT

Lydia Murray - 2 years

SECRETARY

Annie Johnson - 2 years

AT-LARGE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Nancy Godinez - 3 years

Creighton Hartanov - 3 years

INVITATION AND COMMUNICATION MINISTRY

Derek De Haan - 2 years

Chris McGuire - 2 years

Jana O'Brien - 2 years

WORSHIP AND FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY

Jim Alrutz - 3 years

YOUTH EDUCATION MINISTRY

Kristin Lane - 2 years

Stacy O'Connell - 1 year

NOMINATING COMMITTEE (to be voted on by the Congregation)

Jan Bail - 2 years

NOMINATING COMMITTEE (as appointed by the President)

Shannon Banjavcic - 2 years

Deon Fayhee - 2 years

Julian Jarzebowski - 2 years

Pastor Jeff Carlson Annual Report

Jeff Carlson

Associate Pastor

2024 Annual Report

2024 got off to a great start with Bible Off Broadway. This year's theme was the Parables of Jesus. Over 65 youth and adults participated. After that service, the gym was filled to capacity for a presentation on the Expand and Elevate Our Openness capital campaign, of which the second phase of the project has now begun!

In 2024 we trained and commissioned four new Stephen Ministers, Carrie Bruggers, Mollie McGrath, Mercedes Ridao and Jack Lyons. They experienced 50 hours of training, led by our Stephen Leader team of Marti Pechnyo, Barb Kaiser, Rick Peterson, Joe JaQuay and yours truly. We are thrilled to also have a new Stephen Leader on board, Nadia Jiménez.

We continued in relationship with UCAN, not just in financial support. We participated in their MLK Day event, laying groundwork for some collaboration on the 2025 event. UCAN staff came to present on their current work, especially in violence interruption. Additional justice presentations were led by One Northside on homelessness and LiveFree Illinois on a proposed Clean Slate Initiative for the previously incarcerated.

I led several Bible studies: Ecclesiastes; the Gospel of Mark - especially for Lent, culminating in a dramatic presentation by Mark Huddle; Revelation and going into Advent with 1 Thessalonians. Matt and I also led a C.S. Lewis in a year book group, reading the Chronicles of Narnia along with selected theological works by Lewis.

St. Pauls participated once again in the Pride Parade, although our numbers were smaller due to size restrictions implemented by the city. I used my piano skills to play for Taizé services in Lent and Advent, a Senior Lunch in November and a Christmas Carol singalong in December.

Our St. Pauls archive team has been reinvigorated, led by Barb Arsenault. I hosted a St. Pauls history presentation at Food for the Soul and we began work on highlighting women's history at St. Pauls.

We were thrilled to welcome some of our Spanish-speaking friends into church membership and with some bilingual baptisms. I am studying Spanish to improve my communication with them as their pastor. Part of that was a month of sabbatical studying in Spain. I'm grateful for that opportunity to get a jump start and I continue on-line classes three times a week.

Finally, it has been great to begin work with two of our new standing ministries: Activism & Advocacy and Care & Connections. The increased involvement of new members in these ministries is really a joyful and hopeful thing and new ideas and energy are percolating from all of our new ministry teams. I'm thrilled and grateful to God for all of the good things that are happening at St. Pauls, both spiritually and physically. God is good and it is such a joy to be in ministry with all of you at St. Pauls.

Pastor Liz Nickerson Annual Report

Liz Nickerson, Associate Pastor
St. Pauls UCC, Chicago

“The Eternal’s purposes will last to the end of time; the thoughts of God’s heart *will awaken and stir* all generations.” Psalm 33:11

At the start of each council meeting we repeat the strategic pillars of St. Pauls. Those pillars reflect the theme of Psalm 33 verse 11 above and they state that:

- God is calling us to...
 - Grow towards each other
 - Grow toward God together
 - Increase diversity in our Partnerships and our Congregation
 - Live our faith boldly in an age of injustice
 - Use our building for service and mission
 - Tend our finances faithfully

These pillars are reflected in everything we do at St. Pauls. Our church continues to grow and thrive because we have an eternal purpose and work at this purpose as a community. Which of these pillars resonates most with you? This year we have new ministry teams that were created when we made changes to the bylaws. The teams are doing marvelous work and people serve terms of 1-3 years. Every member is welcome to serve a term on these teams. But even if you are not currently on a team we can’t do the work of the church without your involvement. Besides 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 world needs a church like St. Pauls now more than ever. 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. So invite your friends and neighbors and help us spread the message of God’s love for all people!

In my role as an associate pastor, my worship duties include: 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 to the Maundy Thursday service on April 10 at 7:30 PM to experience it. There will be a labyrinth walk at 7 PM in the gym prior to the service, so if you have never done that, it is a refreshing walking meditation that takes about 20 minutes. You will have another opportunity to walk the labyrinth on May 3, World Labyrinth Day when we will walk as one at 1:00 PM. People all over the world will walk labyrinths at 1:00 PM in their time zone creating a continuous wave of peace throughout the world. In addition to worship, I have also engaged in pastoral care meetings with members and non-members, for counsel and prayer in coffee shops, hospitals, and nursing facilities.

I also serve as the pastoral liaison to the Children and Youth Ministry team, the Communications team, the Young Adult ministry, Little Lights, the Moms’ group, and the Livestream team. The children’s ministry at St. Pauls is growing. BOB was a huge success so special thanks to Jana O’Brien, Pastor

Jeff Carlson, and the entire BOB team!! We have wonderful Sunday school teachers this year, but we can always use more, so reach out if you have this gift. This year we are building service projects into the curriculum and developing an ongoing relationship with Belmont Village Retirement Home.. We are also focusing on building a stronger community among our families and had our first Family fondue night with over 50 people involved. It was a huge success! Special thanks to Youth ministry chair Molly McGrath for all of her work. Our confirmation program is strong and I attended a wonderful confirmation retreat in February with them as we joined confirmands from all over IL and WI at Stronghold camp. 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 Little Lights board President Tom Clancy and myself. The chapel theme comes from our Sunday school curriculum. 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..

I started a weekday moms group in 2025 to supplement the Sunday group. This new group is made up primarily of moms whose children attend the Little Lights early learning program and many are becoming members of St. Pauls and having their children baptized! These are great groups and all are welcome.

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.

God's purposes will last to the end of time; the thoughts of God's heart *will awaken and stir* all generations! I am grateful to be serving as a pastor at St. Pauls! I look forward to the future 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

Activism and Advocacy Ministry

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

CHAIR: Katie Alrutz

Activism and Advocacy Ministry (Katie Alrutz)

The following benevolence grants were awarded in 2024:

- Lincoln Park Community Services \$2,500
 - The Night Ministry \$2,500
 - Three Angels Children's Relief, Haiti \$2,734 from Advent market
 - The Resurrection Project \$4,000
 - Refugee One \$5,000
 - UCAN \$5,000
 - Migrant Legal Fund: \$5,000 + \$12,000 from Christmas Offering?
 - UCC Hurricane Helene Relief \$500
 - Middle East Children's Alliance \$750
 - United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees: \$750
- TOTAL \$40,734

Historic Relationships funded in 2024:

- 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:

- 120 UCAN Gift Train holiday wishlists, valued at roughly \$6,000 total
- TOTAL O&B GRANTS AND DONATIONS FOR 2023 \$44,234

As noted above, this year our Christmas Eve offering of \$12,000 was designated for the Migrant Legal Fund and proceeds from the Advent Market of \$2,734 went to the Three Angels Children's Relief in Haiti.

Our congregation has focused the bulk of its advocacy and activism energy in the following areas during 2024:

- Refugee and Migrant support
- Environmental activism and green education
- Social justice and racial equity
- Anti Violence and support of UCAN

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 have been appointed as liaisons to connect with our grantees and organize practical volunteer opportunities in the coming year.

SPUCC Migrant Housing Program (David Brown)

In 2024, St. Pauls has continued their support of six migrant families under the leadership of David Brown, with the support and participation of countless volunteers. The new federal administration has presented difficulties such as loss of medical insurance coverage and fears of increased attention from ICE and other authorities. Here are some of the efforts St. Paul's has made to support these families in the past year:

- Continued legal support with assistance from Geoff Gist
- Continued support from mentors and sponsors from St. Pauls to navigate educational and medical issues.
- 'Know Your Rights' training to equip each family with an understanding of their rights if detained or confronted by authorities.

In the coming year, the ministry hopes to continue building funds to support legal assistance, provide education and childcare opportunities over the summer, and continue supporting the families in seeking affordable medical care.

GREEN TEAM (Barb Kaiser)

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. In light of planned construction, the Green Team led the congregation in re-locating existing bulbs and vines to the Fullerton side of the church campus so that no material went to waste.

SPARC (Cindy Zinn Ball)

SPARC has continued their focus on racial justice and social awareness at St. Pauls. In February, Cindy Ball stepped down from leadership and the members of the group will continue to communicate with each other to raise awareness for causes and issues in the community.

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.

Sharing the Table of Jesus

On communion Sundays in 2024 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 2024 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 my first year as the leader of the Activism and Advocacy ministry, and I am very excited to continue deepening and realizing St. Paul's commitment to social justice.

Submitted with faith and gratitude,

Katie Alrutz
March 2025

Care and Connection Ministry

2024 Annual Report

The purpose of the Care & Connection Ministry is to bring members and friends together to care for each other and to encourage fellowship be extended to members and friends of all durations as well as the wider community. Ministry responsibilities include supporting and coordinating ministries of groups who extend care and support within the congregation, onboarding new church members and providing enhanced opportunities to grow closer to one another. The best of this ministry occurs when we experience and share the love of God in these encounters and relationships.

The Care & Connection Standing Ministry members are Jenny Benefield (chair), Pastor Jeff Carlson (pastoral liaison), Greg Clemons, Lisa Donofrio, David Faulkner, Deon Fayhee, Bobbi Gannello, Irem Metin, Patricia Reider and Tom Stephenson. Thanks to our ministry members/participants/leaders, new member sponsors, other volunteers, pastors and staff who answer God's call and make this ministry possible. Our church is richly blessed by various components of our Care & Connection Ministry as well as an amazing array of other groups and ministries that also provide care, connection and fellowship. Ultimately every member of our church is part of this ministry.

If you are not already involved in at least one small group, we invite you to join us. Join what appeals to you or reach out if you would like to pursue other ideas. Check your weekly church email/worship bulletin for further information.

Connectors

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

Ongoing care includes:

- Praying for those on church prayer list and other needs in church family
- Maintaining communication with many individuals via multiple means including notes/cards, visits, calls
- Providing food short-term as needed and able
- Helping with errands and chores as needed and able
- Assigning Connectors for 1:1 support to certain individuals
- Serving as gatekeeper (curb service on Sundays for persons with mobility issues)
- Assisting with transportation needs
- Birthday postcards with development new card design
- Involving congregation in greeting card writing during Coffee Hour
- Assisting with memorial service receptions as requested
- Continuing to assist with coordination Emergency Contact Form & Cards
- Providing 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

- 9/29 Medical Fair: AED Demonstration, Blood Pressure Checks, Practitioner Order for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) Discussion, Vaccinations
- 10/8 35 College Care Packages assembled & mailed to St. Pauls college freshmen and designated UCAN students
- Assisted 11/3 with Senior Luncheon organized by Sue Finkle

Drivers/Transportation Assistance

Occasionally volunteers are needed to drive or ride with individuals needing assistance for various reasons. A list of volunteers is available when driving requests are received.

There is a continued need for more drivers. If anyone is interested please reach out.

Flower Visitors (Consider the Lilies)

This caring team delivers altar flowers to members and friends who need to know St. Pauls is thinking of them and to persons in the community. Team members sign up for approximately one Sunday every three months. Thanks to Jan Bail for coordinating this team that includes Nancy Curotto, Ashleigh Darin, David Faulkner, Bobbi Gannello, Jennifer Gourley, Nancy Heffernan, Barb Kaiser, Monty Kehl, Rebecca Kravec, Linda Loving, Kristin Mack, Lydia Murray, Linda Nitzsche, Jess Parman, Pauline Taylor, Peg Wander, Amber Watters and Craig Wilbanks.

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. This brings joy and feelings of love to recipients and is uplifting to the deliverer as well.

Greeting Team

Greeters arrive at 9:30 a.m. and meet with ushers in the Narthex for quick announcements and a prayer. They then stand at the church doors and welcome attendees, greeting them with a smile, warm welcome and cheerfulness. Beginning December 2024, greeters will be scheduled by Worship & Adult Faith Formation Ministry.

Moms' Group

This group is for moms with newborns through 10 years and meets after worship on the second Sunday of each month. 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. Additionally this group has begun to have social events together for fun and further bonding. In January of 2025 a weekday group has started on the last Thursday of each month, so there is a weekend and weekday group each month!

New Member Sponsors

New member classes were offered by pastors throughout the year and joining Sundays (2/25, 4/21, 9/8 & 11/17) followed. As much as possible, new members were matched with sponsors who help welcome them to the congregation and assist with their integration into the life of the church. Sponsors play an integral role in helping new members transition into the body of Christ at St. Pauls.

Oktoberfest

St. Pauls 2024 Oktoberfest was held Saturday, September 28th. Despite the potential risk of rain, we rolled the dice and hosted our event outside. Thankfully, the skies cleared, and we had near perfect weather throughout the afternoon and evening. Many thanks go to the Oktoberfest planning committee, our church staff, and 110 volunteers who helped to make our block party such a fun and welcoming event. Special thanks as always go to Lorne and Marcia Frank who coordinate this event year to year. Once again, acclaimed children's entertainer and recording artist, Laura Doherty, performed a 90-minute family concert. Later, everyone's favorite oompah band, Die Musikmeisters, took the stage for the 10th year. As usual, delicious, authentic German food and local Oktoberfest beers were served up in typical St. Pauls fashion. While the questionable morning weather might have impacted our overall crowd size, we still managed to welcome hundreds of members, neighbors and friends to St. Pauls.

Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministers have continued to be available for members going through a tough time. Extensively trained in compassionate Christian caregiving, Stephen Ministers are matched confidentially with someone in our congregation who is going through a crisis, such as the death of a loved one, a diagnosis, a divorce, a job loss, etc. They meet with the individual once a week for an hour to offer support through listening, companionship and prayer. St. Pauls Stephen Ministers include John Balevic, Mary Brown, Pastor Jeff Carlson, Kristy Combs, Deon Fayhee, Doug Heyboer, Bea Jaji, Joe JaQuay, Nadia Jimenez, Annie Johnson, Barb Kaiser, Karen Lyons, Marti Pechnyo, Rick Peterson, Mike Stensaas 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

New Stephen Ministry training was provided during the last quarter of 2024. Carrie Bruggers, Jack Lyons, Molly McGrath and Mercedes Ridaao completed this training and are now commissioned as Stephen Ministers. Thanks to each of these individuals for pursuing this training and ministry. Thanks to Jeff Carlson, Joe JaQuay, Barbara Kaiser, Marti Pechnyo and Rick Peterson for leading this training.

Nadia Jimenez began Stephen Leader training to join the Leadership team. She will assist with coordinating activities of other team members.

Stephen Ministers receive ongoing education related to their role. On May 19 education related to hospice care was provided and the congregation was invited as well.

St. Pauls Social

This team hosts and assists others with a variety of social and fellowship events for adults. These provide opportunities to get to know others, form relationships and have fun. Team leader is Jen Luerksen and team members include Pastor Jeff Carlson, Rick Peterson, Wendy Love, Karen Lyons, Jan Fraccaro, Doug Clark, Andrea Koepke and Bobbi Gannello. 2024 events included:

- 2/9 "Whiskey Tasting" at St. Pauls
- 6/30 "Pride Cookout" at St. Pauls
- 8/18 "Ravinia Festival" gathering for concert
- 9/25 "Courtyard Picnic" at St. Pauls
- 11/1 "Wine Tasting" at St. Pauls
- Monthly "Food for the Soul Lunch Group" 2/27, 3/26, 4/23, 5/28, 6/25, 7/23, 8/27, 9/24, 10/22, 11/19, 12/16. Gatherings have included much fellowship and a variety of topics including Labyrinth Walk, exploration of topics from prayer to St. Pauls history to book discussion and a Christmas Party/Sing Along.

St. Pauls Young Adults

This group has continued to provide opportunities for faith, fun and fellowship for folks in their twenties and thirties. There are 27 people on their GroupMe app. All in this age group are welcomed. The Young Adult board of four members meets monthly to pray for each other and plan events with Pastor Liz Nickerson as their staff liaison. This group endeavors to sit together on Sunday mornings. Events include brunch after worship on the second Sunday of each month, weekly pickleball, social, and service events.

World Labyrinth Day

Our ministry coordinated St. Pauls participation in World Labyrinth Day which takes place the first Saturday of May annually. Thousands of people participate in meditation and prayer for world peace and a celebration of the labyrinth experience. Founded in 2009 by The Labyrinth Society (TLS), participants "Walk as One at 1" in their time zone, creating a rolling wave of peaceful energy passing from one time zone to the next. We plan to continue to engage in this activity annually.

Submitted by Jenny Benefield, Chair Care & Connection Ministry

Invitation and Communication Ministry

Quarterly Report: Communications Ministry

Prepared by: Nathan Chamberlain

Introduction

The Communications Ministry has made significant strides in our first few months together. As a new ministry formed with 2024 bylaws revisions, we have been creating and refining our strategy to around internal and external engagement and advancing new communication tools. Our focus has been on increasing Church Center adoption, explaining how the church is funded, and implementing a new SMS communication plan.

Key Initiatives and Progress

1. Church Center Adoption

- Developed and discussed action plans to encourage app adoption.
- Addressed concerns about accessibility for older adults and emphasized inclusivity.
- Integrated promotion into church communications, including bulletin announcements and Friday emails.
- Hosted a Picture Push initiative to encourage updated member photos.
- Organized a photo booth after Dec. 15 worship for professional portraits.

2. Facebook Strategy & Community Engagement

- Confirmed St. Pauls Together as an internal community group that needs a strategy to be successful.
- For external social media, we identified key elements for a Facebook presence and are preparing a strategy for other channels.

3. Text Messaging Communication Rollout

- Finalizing the technology and automation approach needed for
- Defined SMS as a one-way communication tool for important updates.
- Initiated limited text opt-ins to members 18 and older.

4. Internal Organization & Process Improvements

- Planning ongoing efforts in data cleanup to improve contact management, communications preferences, and gathering member volunteer preferences.
- Developed an explainer document for the Capital Campaign vote.
- Provided an explainer document for the Annual Giving Campaign

Conclusion

The Communications Ministry has laid a strong foundation, community engagement, and technological integration. With clear action plans and dedicated volunteers, we are well-positioned to enhance how we connect with and serve the congregation in the coming months.

Worship and Faith Formation Ministry

Worship & Faith Formation Ministry
Annual Report
Carrie Bruggers, Chair

First of all, a big thank you to the members of this ministry: Elaine Filus, David Baker, Liz Kurman, Tara Stephenson, Clark Bauer, Bea Jaji, Kevin O'Brien, and Marcia Knudson along with Kurt Hansen and Matt Fitzgerald.

- Ongoing work of coordinating signups on Church Center for scripture readers, ushers, greeters, and communion services. And working on encouraging church members to sign up.
- Book groups for 2025: C.S. Lewis in a year finished in January. The book *God, Human, Animal, Machine: Technology, Metaphor, and the Search for Meaning* by Meghan O'Gieblyn, was suggested and there was a group who read this and met in the beginning of this year with Matt. Liz Nickerson has suggested putting together a study group for adults who have come back to church after a long absence and the book that might be used is *To Begin At The Beginning*. No dates/signup set for this yet.
- Lectio Divina (aka small groups) started up this month to run through Lent.
- Adult Faith Formation: Our pastoral team is working on providing a faith formation class/exercise about once a month. Dates and topics to come.
- Looking ahead: We are looking into the possibilities of an adult mission/service trip and also other spiritual development opportunities such as weekend retreats.

This ministry had a slightly later start in the fall. We are working to grow together as members of St. Pauls, as we dream and plan. I would also like to give special thanks to our pastors, Matt, Jeff, and Liz. Also HUGE thanks to all the members of the various choirs, choir directors, Kevin Dzierzawaski, the jazz trio, acolytes, liturgists, ushers, greeters, communion servers, and the entire congregation.

Submitted by Carrie Bruggers
Chair of Worship & Faith Formation Ministry

Youth and Education Ministry

The purpose of Youth Ministry is to teach our youth how to love God and love their neighbor by following Jesus. By equipping our youth to follow Jesus, we will build the future of SPUCC by inspiring and directing community connections and deepening their faith. We will create building blocks of faith and help youth in partnership with their families along their faith journey.

These building blocks include:

- meaningful Sunday school lessons
- social events
- service opportunities
- community building events
- intergenerational opportunities with the wider SPUCC community

Through Pastor Liz, Youth Ministry works closely with the Children's Education team; and together with our incredible church community, we are continuing to ensure that St Pauls grows as the loving, supportive space our kids need to explore and grow their faith. We can also see the bonds between our kids growing as they are given more opportunities to interact with their "church friends" through our choirs, BOB, social and service events.

Since September, when our ministry first convened, we have been creating opportunities along the lines of our building blocks to engage our youth in activities that add to and complement their Sunday school and church service experience. To date, those are as follows:

Service Opportunities

- On Sunday, January 19 our 4-6 graders made sack lunches for LPCS after Sunday school, in honor of MLK Day
- Upcoming on April 16, our youth will join seniors at Belmont Village for an afternoon of board games and socializing in the residents' common hall

We hope to form even stronger connections with Belmont Village, and hopefully make this a regular opportunity for youth to engage with the residents. Already the youth visits for caroling at Christmas, and we are hoping to personally invite our neighbors to BOB next year as well.

Community Building/Intergenerational

- On Friday, February 21 we had an evening of fondue and fellowship in the social hall. Church family of all ages was in attendance, with approximately 70 people in total! Kids had a great time being active in the gym, coloring and crafting in the youth lounge, and playing ping pong. Adults, meanwhile, were able to socialize and enjoy a relaxing evening of fellowship. One of our parents in attendance summed it up perfectly afterwards:

"I love how St Paul is a home to our kids, they play ping pong, pickleball, etc while fully taking for granted the amazing space & people that allow them to enjoy a good time with friends."

We are looking forward to making evenings like these a regular event, so our Church Family can have one night a month to kick back, build connections, and strengthen our St Pauls community starting from our youngest members on up!

In the coming year, we are excited to continue creating events that grow youth engagement and keep our kids excited to be a part of this incredible faith community. They need it, and so do we.

With gratitude,
Molly McGrath

Little Lights Annual Report

Little Lights Early Childhood Education Program is an important part of the ministry of St. Pauls. We partner with parents, seeking to provide a caring, nourishing class experience and meaningful faith formation in our program where children can play, learn, and shine. Together we want to create a community where we learn that we are all loved by God and we are all called to love God, each other, and ourselves.

As of 2024, we are celebrating 10 years in operation as a program of St. Pauls. Now, more than ever, we are proud to report true integration of Little Lights participants within our St. Pauls community. With opportunities for new parents and beyond, we are playing a role in building this from the ground up. The next generation of St. Pauls is already well in the making!

We are fortunate to have a solid team working together to nurture the children of St. Pauls. Pastor Liz takes the lead and helps connect and support families. Youth Ministry leader, Molly McGrath, is spearheading new opportunities for children and parents to get together and get to know each other. Danielle Mayfield coordinates our Orange Curriculum lessons for the teachers and keeps things running smoothly in our Church School classrooms.

The president of our Board, Tom Clancy, is not only a Little Lights parent, but he has also taken on the role of leading our KinderChapel Singers, which rehearse weekly during classes, as well as on Sunday before worship. Furthermore, he volunteers as a Sunday School teacher. We are grateful for his service and commitment to these kids, and for all of our staff/volunteers. This is exactly the kind of multifaceted contributions we need to thrive as an all-encompassing church.

Updates:

77 children registered for Church School

44 children registered for Little Lights

New Offerings:

- Transitioning toward using Church Center and using more of its features/resources for cohesiveness and simplicity
- Integrating KinderChapel singers and Little Lights students
- Inviting Little Lights families to “Food for the Soul” lunch and providing childcare for intergenerational socialization
- Junior Kindergarten afternoon class
 - This new option is geared toward older four year olds who are already enrolled in PreK and would like to supplement their day while preparing for Kindergarten, and five year olds who have missed the traditional September 1st Kindergarten cut off.
 - Our JK curriculum focuses on early literacy and pre-reading concepts, early math skills, socialization with same aged peers, and an emphasis on fine arts. Our play-based curriculum provides opportunities for hands-on learning through daily literacy activities, a music and movement program, literature based mixed media art projects, and exposure to early math and science concepts.

Children's Ministry Team

Liz Nickerson*
Molly McGrath*
Erin Fitzgerald*
Danielle Mayfield*

Youth Education Ministry*

Kelly Martin
Tim Reed

Sunday School Teachers

Mary Brown*
Tom Clancy*
Ann Ferroni
Jan Fraccaro
Jennifer Gourley*
Creighton Hartanov
Jennifer Heiney
Molly McGrath
Maegan Kaiser
Mercedes Ridaao
Will Ritchie
Lisa Rowley
Philip Smedley*
Holly Stovall
Tahra Workman-Mandell

Confirmation Teachers

Bob Ball
Sue Finkle*
Peg Wander

Little Lights Board

Associate Pastor: Liz Nickerson
Church Liaison: Wayne Parman
President: Tom Clancy
Vice President: Kate Albright
Secretary: Angi Miller
Event Planner: Lauren Sloan
Member: Jennifer Fromm

Little Lights Teachers

Erin Fitzgerald
Iris Gonzalez
Kelly Herndon
Aimee Holper
Danielle Mayfield
Suzanne Slaughter
Substitute: Karen Hallman

Youth Events & Highlights:

Children’s Chapel (weekly)	Bible Off Broadway: Heartfelt gratitude to Jana O’Brien
Stay & Play (weekly): Special thanks to Dodd Brown	<i>Valentine’s Party (LL)</i>
Board Meeting (monthly)	Easter Egg Hunt
Open Gym (monthly)	<i>Spring Sing (LL)</i>
Moms’ Group (monthly)	<i>Spring Fling Family Dance (LL)</i>
Family Potluck (quarterly)	Pancake Church
	Youth Mission Trip: Tulsa
	June-August - Summer Camp: half day (6 weeks) 47 total campers
	Halloween Party
	<i>“How Sweet the Sound” KinderChapel</i>
	<i>Christmas Concert (LL)</i>
	<i>“Readings & Carols” KinderChapel</i>

Donations/Fundraisers:

Easter Cookie Decorating Kit	\$570
Halloween Bake Sale & Toy Raffle	\$295
Cards for a Cause Card Boxes	\$407
Youth Mission Trip Pecan Pies	\$540
Cookies with Santa	\$313.60

Goals:

Continue to build relationships across groups. Increase class offerings, raise tuition in accordance with standard rates and neighboring programs. With Phase II Construction in the works, it’s hard to predict how it will impact our enrollment and flow for the upcoming year. “Children are a gift from the Lord” and we have a vision for their future. With time, patience, and effort, it will come to be.

Erin Fitzgerald
Director of Children’s Education



UCC Representative Annual Report

2024 – 2025 Report of the United Church of Christ (UCC)

By Rick Peterson, St Pauls Representative to the Chicago Metropolitan Association and the Illinois Conference of the UCC

2024 Illinois Conference Meeting

On October 31 – November 2, 2024, the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ held its 2024 Annual Celebration/Meeting at the First Congregational Church of Western Springs. The theme was “Embrace God’s Imagination.” In addition to worship services and educational workshops, during the business meeting, the Illinois Conference considered two controversial matters:

Revised Constitution and Bylaws – After several years of discussion, the Illinois Conference unanimously adopted a revised Constitution and bylaws, with minimal and civil discussion (unlike previous attempts to modify the Illinois conference governing structure). These documents will become effective after the 2025 Illinois Conference Annual Meeting, where they may also be amended. During 2025, the Conference Council is charged with developing the specific implementation plans to allow the new structure to function.

The new Constitution, among other things, simplifies the conference governance structure, reduces the size of the Conference Council from 45 to 19 (and changes its name to Board of Directors), and establishes a Ministry Council to which the 4 standing ministry teams of the Conference will report (instead of the Board). The four ongoing ministry teams are the Community and Vitality Team, the Justice and Witness Team, the Church Connections Team and the Wider Engagement Team (within the UCC and with ecumenical partners).

Illinois Conference Camps – The Illinois Conference UCC operates two camps: Pilgrim Park, founded in 1946, in Princeton, IL; and Tower Hill, founded in 1923, in Sawyer, MI, with Lake Michigan access. Tower Hill is co-owned with the Community Renewal Society. These two camps are beloved by many, but have faced increasing challenges in recent years, including retaining staff and serving enough campers to be financially viable (which was especially an issue during the COVID pandemic).

In typical UCC fashion, a named committee was charged with reviewing the situation. The “Camp Forward” group, a diverse group of clergy and laypersons from around the Conference, gathered information, met with respected leaders of the “camp community,” and developed recommendations for considered by the Conference. These recommendations were:

- That each camp should ultimately function as its own Not-for-Profit entity, but with a relationship to the Illinois Conference;
- That, to insure success over time, the Illinois Conference should make an incrementally reduced investment in each camp each year through 2029 (a total of \$300K); and
- That new committees and timelines should be established to unwind the financial business of the camps and to oversee the creation of new legal entities for the camps, with a goal of completion by January 1, 2026.

After considerable fruitful discussion, all three of these recommendations were adopted.

The Illinois Conference also adopted a \$1.23 M budget as proposed by the Finance Committee, which include reducing the percentage of money provided to the national setting to 20% of OCWM [Our

Church's Wider Mission] contributions (was about 35% ten years ago) and also including costs for a new Conference Minister search (former Conference Minister, Rev. Molly Carlson, tendered her resignation in the summer) and for the Illinois Conference and its delegates to attend and participate in the UCC General Synod 35.

UCC General Synod 35

The UCC will hold General Synod 25 on July 11-15, 2025, in Kansas City, MO. The theme of General Synod 25 is "Into the Deep," citing Luke 5:4. Delegates from each of the Conferences and the UCC Board attend the General Synod at which the "business of the church" is conducted. UCC congregations are strongly encouraged to study Resolutions and Pronouncements adopted at General Synod, but are not bound by them; the list of the submitted resolutions to be considered by Synod 35 has not yet been released. During General Synod 34 in 2023, delegates narrowly voted to change the UCC bylaws so that General Synod gatherings will occur every three years instead of every two years, so General Synod 36 will meet in 2028.

Current UCC Actions regarding plans of the Trump II

In the national setting, the UCC Office of Public Policy and Advocacy in Washington DC has been very active in raising the prophetic voice of the UCC on Capital Hill. It has been providing the faith community with the tools to stay informed and take action during the first period of the Trump II administration, "countering Project 25 with Love." It also provides model letters and phone scripts for individuals to consider using with their Senators and Representatives.

<https://www.ucc.org/first100days/> [This site is updated on at least a weekly basis.]

The UCC Office of Public Policy and Advocacy, following the actions of the UCC General Synods over time, have identified the following policy priorities for 2025:

- Immigration;
- Environmental Justice;
- LGBTQ rights/Reproductive Justice;
- Protecting Human Needs funding and program;
- Addressing war and conflict abroad; and
- U.S. Militarization.

("Going deeper in 2025: Programs, Projects, Plans from UCC National Ministries," JPAN Net, January 14, 2025)

In addition, specifically as UCC relates to environmental issues, the UCC Climate Action Assembly has established a "Climate Hope Affiliates" program to follow-up on the Climate Hope Voter pledge cards campaign from last fall. In this affiliate program, members of congregations will meet with Members of Congress and local media periodically to share views and advocate for environmental justice in the workings of Congress. St Pauls' Green Team has requested information about becoming one of these Climate Hope Affiliates.

Future of the UCC

As of 2022, the UCC had 4603 congregations and 712,296 members in the US, showing a decline from previous years, including a net loss of 286,000 members and 551 congregations between 2012 and

2022. In 2022, the average UCC church size was 153 members and average worship attendance was 52. Nearly half (49%) of all UCC congregations had fewer than 100 members.

At General Synod 32 in 2023, the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson was elected to be the UCC's first female and immigrant President and General Minister. In her nomination speech, Thompson said the "hope springs forth" within the UCC, with the denomination being "the place where we have seen the Spirit of God poured forth among us in many ways. Here is where we honor the resilience of those who came before us, who took risks and oftentimes did more with less than we currently have. And here is the place we identify as now, as we ponder the call of God to be salt and light to the world."

In her compelling recently re-published book, *How We Learn to Be Brave*, Mariann Edgard Budde, Episcopal Bishop of Washington recounts a discussion with colleagues regarding the future of her denomination. She said "*If this ship is going down, I'm going down with it – but not without doing everything I can to keep that from happening.*" (pg. 77)

Personally, I feel the same way about the UCC. While the UCC denomination becomes smaller in numbers, it stands for the things in which I believe and speaks when the voice of progressive Christianity is necessary and urgent – and I hope and pray that St Pauls UCC is similarly supportive.