



St. Paul United Church of Christ

# THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

November 2020



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**For an electronic version of THE EPISTLE, please visit our website at:**  
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## **Worship Opportunities**

### **Sundays:**

**9:15 AM - Sunday  
School**

**10:30 AM Traditional  
Worship in Sanctuary**

## **Desolation and Gratitude**

THANKSGIVING is coming! For Christians this usually prompts the question, "For what am I grateful this year?" In 2020—a year we'll remember (and probably not so fondly for sure!)—this question has a whole new meaning. As Thanksgiving, and the "holidays" in general approach, it's always a good time to do some soul searching. This year it's more important than ever, and paradoxically, it may be a year for which finding gratitude won't be so easy. The reasons for that are obvious and the list is long, so I won't bore you with a list of 2020...um, "difficulties" (I wanted to say "disasters!") about which you are already very aware!

So how does one find gratitude in a time of turmoil, struggle, and suffering? It is not easy, and at times probably feels downright impossible. This is especially true when the suffering and the struggles just seem to keep coming, piling one on top of another, no end in sight. "GRATEFUL!" you say??... "I'm lucky just to get out of bed some mornings and not immediately stick my head into a hole in the ground!"

Of course we have all heard the platitudes of people trying to help in times of struggle and disorientation...

- Don't worry, God never gives us more than we can handle.
- It'll be OK, time heals all wounds!
- Remember every cloud has a silver lining...Everything happens for a reason.
- When God closes a door, he opens a window.
- What doesn't kill us makes us stronger...This too shall pass.
- Everything always works out in the end.
- And my all-time favorite--If it happens it must be God's will!

Now, don't feel bad if you've ever said one of these, because I have used them too!—though I try more and more not to. The thing about platitudes is that they are not helpful, and can actually be hurtful, even when they contain a grain of truth (which some do!). They don't help the suffering; they are mainly offered to help the helpless feeling of those trying to help the suffering...which, in its own way, is a very agonizing form of suffering! In other words, we offer platitudes more for ourselves than anybody else, if we're being honest. So no, we don't find gratitude from platitude in times of pain, especially when that pain is desolating or dislocating/disorienting (totally life-changing).

And sometimes we don't even find it from scripture. We usually offer "helpful" scripture verses to people who are hurting as a kind of anchor—something to hold onto, something solid and immovable—when the world seems to be turning upside down or just plain blowing apart. But again, chiefly, it's when our world is threatened.

But here's the thing: sometimes our world—your world, my world—does turn upside down, and NO anchor is going to stop the shaking and the flipping and the blowing apart. This year, depending on who you are, and upon all of the life circumstances you carried with you into (or thrust upon you by) 2020, your world may truly be turning upside down and inside out. I can think of plenty of examples of people for whom this is definitely true...e.g., those affected by discrimination and social unrest, people who cannot pay their rent because Covid-19 took their job away, first responders and medical workers who are worked to a frazzle and have just seen too much suffering that they cannot take any more, people whose

## Ponderings From The Pastor (continued)

businesses and livelihood were torched or looted in a riot, people who lost a loved one to the pandemic, people in the path of one (or two, or more) hurricanes and wildfires...the list goes on.

And even if you're still hanging on by a thread (hopefully one made of titanium alloy!), you can still feel the disorienting effect of pain and suffering, of so much rapid, ongoing change and trauma.

So... gratitude...Thanksgiving...Really???

Really...and there are several things that might just help (note: I say "might"! ). Number ONE is humor—sometimes it's either laugh or cry, ya know? We can usually find some humor in just about any situation, especially when we look at ourselves (not humor at the expense or mockery of others). Find a way to laugh, or at least find a wry smile, at your own expense, as you carve the turkey. Put some whipped cream from the pumpkin pie on your nose and make someone else laugh. It's infectious (more so even than a virus). Number TWO: honesty—with yourself and with others; tell yourself and others when you just cannot "take it anymore" and need to hide or be alone. It's OK to do that. It's OK not to be festive and not to celebrate, if that feels out of reach...and it's OK to let that be known, no matter what anybody tells you. Number THREE: reflect / contemplate, what's really behind my pain? How "hurt" am I? Do I feel utterly lost? Am I truly disoriented, truly trudging through a desolate wasteland?...or just temporarily knocked out of whack or off-center? Do I need some help, or do I still have at least one foot on the ground? Sit with your pain and try to see it a little objectively, from the "outside" (which is very different than dwelling upon it). Try to learn from it. Pain is almost always a reliable (if unpleasant) teacher. And, accept this: understanding may not lessen the pain much, but it can help make it a little more bearable. Number FOUR: be compassionate...i.e, in your own suffering, try sharing in the pain of some else who's hurting...not so much to lessen yours, but to hear and understand theirs. Why? Because healing happens most reliably in community...God has just made us that way. So give at least a little of yourself away (but only if you can). Give a little of yourself, your funny bone, your honesty, your listening (instead of platitudes). Together, some healing will very probably happen. And Number FIVE (probably number one, really): TRUST. Trust God, even when trust is hard, or when it seems impossible. And don't think it has to be "holy" or all wrapped up in a pretty "presentable" prayer package with a neat little ribbon. It probably won't be, and if it is, you likely forgot or skipped #2. That trust might sound like a prayer...but just (or more) likely it will sound like a cry, a SOB, a deep sigh, a shout of anger, even a cuss word or two (or three)...or it'll sound like a plea, for mercy, for help, for guidance, for RELIEF... for love, for PRESENCE. It may even be wordless, soundless, and come in broad daylight, or in the depths of the night. Trust God, even when ever fiber of your being says not to...even when your soul is screaming "My God, MY GOD...WHY have you FORGOTTEN me??" And if those words sound familiar, they are the words Jesus croaked out—probably in a barely discernible, pain-soaked whisper—from his cross, in the midst of his own most UTTER desolation.

And we know how that turned out...and what God did with it!

Trust God...because only God is bigger than 2020...bigger than our trials and suffering, and present ALWAYS WITHIN those trials and our suffering. Even when that suffering is unto death, or those trials seem unending, God is there, closer than our breath, WITHIN our breath, and carrying us to the next moment, the next laugh, the next cry, the next defeat...and perhaps the next victory, Nothing else is promised, except PRESENCE.

And if you understand what divinity really is, and what God's love is really like...well...then that's enough. Ya know?

Pressing Onward, As Best I Can!,

*Pastor Barry*

## FACEBOOK PAGE

We started a new Facebook Page. Here is the new link!

<https://www.facebook.com/St-Paul-UCC-North-College-Hill-OH-116458329993166>

### From the Council President

Dear St. Paul Family,

Here we go again, and in the interest of transparency, I am writing to let you know that the Executive Team has the authority (per the By-Laws, Article II, Section 9) to use funds available without approval of the Congregation, as the funds needed are budgeted expenditures, i.e. payroll and bills. Funds are needed from our reserve accounts to cover unmet operating expenses through January 2021. The Endowment Committee will meet and any questions about the decision should be directed to Jan Apro as the Committee Chairman.

Additionally we want you to know that we have cut back our expenses but are a bit behind on our pledges. In order to have our bills current by the end of the year, our pledges for the year need to be fulfilled as much as possible by Christmas.

If you choose to use our online giving, here is the link, <https://ca4b2388.churchtrac.com/give>. Once in the system, you can input your envelope number and it records directly to your record. If you have questions, please let us know. All financial help at this time is much needed and appreciated.

Prayerfully Yours,  
Judith

### ST. PAUL EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Fabulous Fall is here and with it comes some exciting things for the St. Paul Early Learning Center. The end of October held our Halloween Celebrations. The children always enjoy dressing up in costumes for this special day!

October was our first CHAPEL CHAT! Once a month, the children will spend some time in the sanctuary learning about God and the Bible. Pastor Barry and Mrs. Staudigel will lead the children through worship songs, Bible stories, and some "chapel chat."

The month of November will be partly dedicated to Dad! Mid month, the children will celebrate Donuts with Dad! They will prepare songs, a possible craft, and some time with the special man in his/her life.

Our cookie dough fundraiser was a huge success! Our grand total in profit came to \$2024.44. Thanks to everyone who placed an order and supported the preschool.

Great NEWS! WE were approved for a Covid and Ratio Support Grant. This grant will aid us in purchasing many necessities. It is encouraging to know that The Ohio Job and Family Services values early education.

This month we spotlight Mrs. Staudigel and Ms. Trish. These two ladies teach the Pre-K class. I (Mrs. Staudigel) am so happy to be back at St. Paul as the Director and Pre-K lead teacher. I enjoy teaching through play, providing parent education, and supporting teachers. Ms. Trish is excited to start her teaching career here at St. Paul. Ms. Trish enjoys teaching the children new board games.

November is a great time to remember that there is ALWAYS something to be thankful for! A huge thanks to all of you for allowing us to be a part of the St. Paul UCC family!

Judy Staudigel and Staff





11/1 Patrick Woods  
11/2 Logan Bierkan  
11/4 William Mayer  
11/8 Jeremy Overholts  
11/9 Margaret Maybury

11/12 Mike Bartholomew  
11/13 Chelsey Davis  
11/14 Laura Bierkan  
11/15 Dot Kahle  
11/19 Steve Fassnacht

11/19 Albert Mueller  
11/21 Margie Fassnacht  
11/24 Jim Gorsler  
Amber Hancock  
11/25 Gerald Stegman  
11/30 Adele Yung



12/6 Melissa Holmes  
Debra Nungester  
12/11 Stephen Rogers  
Trecy Webb  
12/14 Lynda Stagman

12/18 Janet Lerch  
12/20 Cheryl Bartholomew  
12/23 Terry DuPriest  
12/26 Jesse McIlhaney

12/29 Lois Bates  
Louise Pitcher  
12/30 Vickie Bryant  
Brian Tobergta

## *Please Continue to Remember in Prayer:*

Our servicemen and women  
Peggy Adams  
Chad Willcocks  
Kathy Aker  
John Allen  
Alice Graber  
Tony Mancini  
Gay D. Smith  
Barbara Williamson  
Elaine Sloan  
Nancy Lanza  
James Stokes  
Howard Seaman

Lindsay Pitcher  
June Ward  
Kim Caudell  
Clara Kemplin  
Rhonda Lahmann  
Owen Erickson  
Marlene Sheward  
Bodde Scudder  
Bob Harbaum  
Greg Rice  
Barb Nuckols  
Jesse McIlhaney  
Ann Way  
Carol Schroer

Stan Wernz  
Charleigh Waltz and parents  
Barb Bruewer  
Kostas Vasiliou  
Harper Manning  
Scott Ober  
Deborah Ehler  
Larry Estes  
Cathy Criswell  
Lin Theders  
Rick Davis  
Rev. Virginia Duffy Family  
Bob Dickman Family

## *Please Continue to Remember in Prayer our HomeBound:*

Doris Dunn  
Ruth Meissner  
Anne Timme

Mary Heineke  
Albert Mueller  
Sharon Wagner


John & Melitta Marx  
Gay Steinhauer

Please keep the office informed on the status of those you have placed on the prayer list.

# November 2020

THE EPISTLE

November 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Scouts 6:30 PM	3 SPELC - No School ELECTION DAY Dinner 5-6:30 PM Carry Out Only	4	5	6 AA-8PM	7 AA-8PM
8	9 Donuts w/Dad Scouts 6:30 PM	10 Donuts w/Dad Dinner 5-6:30 PM Carry Out Only	11 Donuts w/Dad Exec Mtg-5:30 PM	12 Donuts w/Dad	13 Donuts w/Dad AA-8PM	14 AA-8PM
15	16 Nurture Mtg 5:30 PM Scouts 6:30 PM Council Mtg. 7 PM	17 Dinner 5-6:30 PM Carry Out Only	18 Epistle Articles Due	19	20 AA-8PM	21 AA-8PM
22 Re-Gather Thanksgiving Sunday Ingathering Food Decorate After Worship	23 Scouts 6:30 PM	24 Dinner 5-6:30 PM Carry Out Only	25 SPELC/Head Start No School	26 Thanksgiving Day Office Closed 	27 Office Closed SPY Lock-In 6 pm AA-8PM	28 AA-8PM
29 First Sunday Advent	30 Scouts 6:30 PM				FH-Fellowship Hall SPELC -St. Paul Early Learning Center	



*In Loving Memory*

## GIFTS TO THE CHURCH

**In Memory of Eleanor Reed**

David Bryson

Barbara &amp; Thomas Jerney

American Legions Auxiliary Wesley Werner

**In Memory of Rev. Virginia Duffy**

Erma Amrein

Betty &amp; Ron Bollinger

Joann Ernst

Virginia &amp; Joe Gutzwiller

Dot Kahle

Joyce &amp; Phillip Unger

Linda Woods

**SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR PASTORS**  
Joan Allen and Barry Bordenkircher

A special thank you to Pastor Barry and to Pastor Joan for Pastor Appreciation Month in October. Vickie and Tom Bryant and Linda Woods did lots of sprucing up in the Pastor Courtyard. They trimmed the tree and bushes, power washed the brick walls, thinned out the existing perennials and panted new ones. They finished up by decorating with mums, pumpkins, gourds and then added welcome mats at each of the door entries.

Thank you Joan and Barry! Special thanks to Vickie, Tom and Linda for taking the time to clean out and spruce up the Pastor's courtyard!



**From Joan and Barry:**  
A huge thank you to Linda, Tom and Vickie for all their hard work on making this area heartwarming and fun!

It is truly appreciated!



## St. Paul UCC Coat Drive

Share the Warmth Coat Drive!!



The homeless and less fortunate need our help this fall and winter more than ever. These Veterans, children, moms, dads, brothers, sisters, etc. have suffered along with some of us from this unusual year and are in great need of not only coats, etc, but also new socks and underwear. Any size, any color, we love them all!

The donations will be used in the NCH community, The Mary Magdalene House, and our sister church, Camp Washington UCC. The Mary Magdalene House works with the homeless to provide a place to shower and receive warm clothes. Camp Washington UCC is requesting new socks and underwear in lieu of toys this year since the need is so great.

**Deadline is December 6th**

Luke 3:11 And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise"

Together We

Can Help

Donate New or Clean, Gently  
Used Coats and Jackets,  
Mittens, Gloves, Hats and  
Scarves



New Socks and Underwear  
are also needed



Drop-Off Box

St. Paul UCC

6997 Hamilton Ave.

Mon – Fri 9:00 - 1:00

Cincinnati, OH 45231

If unable to drop off please call

513-931-2205

To make arrangements for pick-up

## SCOUTING NEWS

The Scouts have been meeting both in person and virtually. It is a challenging time for us to continue moving forward, as it is with so many things.

We held a virtual Court of Honor for the youth. Seven ranks and almost 40 merit badges were awarded to our scouts. Two special awards, Council Venturing Leadership Awards were presented to two of our young adults, Miciah Thacker and Samuel Mikes, who are members of our Crew 150.

Miciah just completed her Summit Project at Sharon Woods. She raised \$1000.00 towards the purchase of 6 trees and 6 bushes. Members of the crew and the troop participated in the planting of these trees and bushes. The Summit Award is the highest award that can be earned by a Venture Scout.

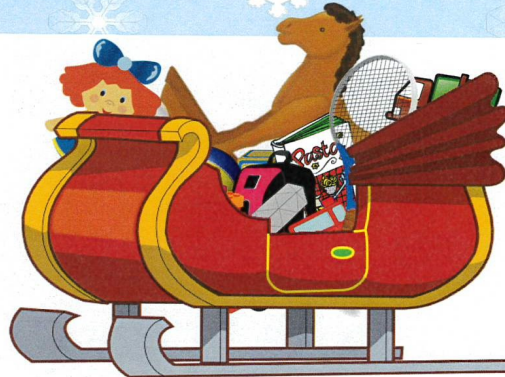
Miciah has also just become the first Life Scout within the Girls Troop. She still have some merit badges to complete, but she is on the path to become the first EAGLE Scout with the Girls Troop 1150.

We have some amazing youth here at the Scout programs at St. Paul. I (Anne Zimmer) personally, and the rest of our leaders are very proud of all of our youth and what they are accomplishing in all they do with the units as youth and leaders to others youth.



## ST. PAUL TOY DRIVE

# Toy Drive



### St. Paul United Church of Christ

Is collecting new, unwrapped toys for children 10 and under.

All gifts will stay in the NCH community.

Donations may be dropped off at the church office

Mon – Fri 9:00 – 1:00 by **Fri, Dec.11<sup>th</sup>**

6997 Hamilton Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45231

If you are unable to drop them off, please call and we will gladly pick them up.

513-931-2205

**It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you.** Mother Teresa



### DECEMBER EPISTLE DEADLINE



The Epistle deadline for the December edition is Wednesday, Nov. 21, 2020. Please submit the information either by email to Anne or drop it in the Epistle box in the main office. There is also a

### COMMUNITY DINNER

Our weekly community dinners have resumed as CARRY OUT only.  
Tuesday's 5:00-6:30 PM

It will be carry out for awhile until we are allowed to have bigger groups of people indoors. Stay tuned for updates.