



FEBRUARY 2025

The Epistle

A newsletter for the community of
St. Paul's United Methodist Church



A story of another church's experience is rattling around in my head this week, tumbling through my thoughts on a Thursday morning, sabotaging my sabbath rest on Saturday. It's the story of a pretty bold move of a pastor in Watford, England, who felt his church was experiencing a bit of apathy in its worship of Jesus; a story told by artist Matt Redman, in a 2004 interview with Crosswalk.com:

“There was a dynamic missing, so the pastor did a pretty brave thing,” [Redman] recalls. “He decided to get rid of the sound system and band for a season, and we gathered together with just our voices. His point was that we’d lost our way in worship, and the way to get back to the heart would be to strip everything away.”

Reminding his church family to be producers in worship, not just consumers, the pastor, Mike Pilavachi, asked, “When you come through the doors on a Sunday, what are you bringing as your offering to God?”

Matt says the question initially led to some embarrassing silence, but eventually people broke into a cappella songs and heartfelt prayers, encountering God in a fresh way.

“Before long, we reintroduced the musicians and sound system, as we’d gained a new perspective that worship is all about Jesus, and He commands a response in the depths of our souls no matter what the circumstance and setting.

[Matt’s song,] *‘The Heart of Worship’* simply describes what occurred.”

*When the music fades, all is stripped away,
and I simply come
Longing just to bring something that’s of worth
that will bless your heart...
I’m coming back to the heart of worship,
and it’s all about You, Jesus*

Redman remembers writing the song quickly in his bedroom soon after the church’s journey together, with no grand intentions, by any means, for it to become an international anthem. He viewed the words simply as his personal, subjective response to what he was learning about worship. But when Matt shared “The Heart of Worship” with Pilavachi, the pastor suggested making a few small adjustments to the lyrics so any member of the church could relate to it as well.

From a 2017 article, originally posted in 2004, at Crosswalk.com. Retrieved 1/21/24 via www.crosswalk.com/church/worship/song-story-matt-redmans-the-heart-of-worship-1253122.html

What do we bring to, and how do we keep Jesus centered, in our weekly worship? From my own perspective, our current series – *“Growing With Grace”* – is my attempt to share from a deep place of my heart and journey some of the surprising ways God has led me toward experiencing, and sharing, greater grace. This is my effort to share with, and about, Jesus as only I can.

I hope, however you connect to St. Paul’s, that you are seeking to come to the heart of what it means to worship and live as a Christian: it’s all about Jesus.

See you in Church!



What's Coming In Worship

Current Worship series:

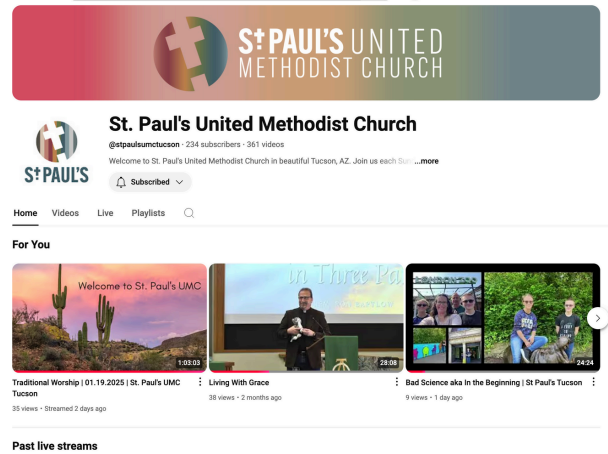
Through March 2, we will continue our current worship series with Rev. Ron: "Growing With Grace." In this series, Ron is sharing seven key stories and lessons that have contributed to his ongoing growth as a disciple of Christ. Sermons to come include:

Growing with Grace

- 2/2: "God Was in This Place" (Genesis 28:10-19) Learning to recognize God's presence in the daily mundane.
- 2/9: "To See God!" (Matthew 5:8) Learning to love God with a pure heart.
- 2/23: "Holiness and Grace" (Luke 15:11-32) Learning to expect more of one's self and give more grace to others.
- 3/2: "He will not leave us orphaned" (John 14) Learning to trust God even in the shadow of death.

In addition to the full worship services as they are streamed on Sunday mornings, our YouTube channel has videos of each week's sermon. Visit us at:

<https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulsumctucson>



And for this series, Rev. Ron invites your feedback. Share your thoughts at:

<https://stpaulsumctucson.org/growing-with-grace/>



Anniversary Celebration - Sunday, February 16 9:30am

We are celebrating 65 years of ministry in east Tucson! We encourage every one who considers St. Paul's UMC their church home to join us on Sunday, February 16, at 9:30am for a special Anniversary Celebration Service. Our bishop, Bishop Carlo Rapanut, and our district superintendent, Rev. Matthew Ashley, will join Rev. Ron and our worship leaders to lead a celebrative service featuring a variety of our musical groups.

After worship, grab your "passport" and take a journey for refreshments across our campus!

We will have special treats in different locations of the building, each highlighting a different era as well as current ministries of the church, including but not limited to:

- Celebrate Children's Ministries, our Preschool, and the 1960s & 1970s in the A-Frame;
- Celebrate Youth Ministries, missions, and the 1980s & 1990s in Brummett Hall;
- Celebrate Upward Basketball, other ministries, and the decades of the 2000s in the Life Center.



LENT

The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025. We will host an Ash Wednesday service at 12noon, and Christ Church will host one in the evening. More information about these services and our Lenten ministries will be in our next, March Epistle.

Financial Report Summaries

2024 Year End

Our year end financials for 2024 were a good news, bad news kind of situation. The good news is that while we did end the year in a deficit, it was about a tenth of what we had anticipated. The bad news is that we spent much of the year under-staffed, and while we saved a great deal on personnel costs we overspent, primarily due to costs of facility maintenance and upkeep. In addition, our deferred maintenance needs continue to grow (for example, our nursery and pastor's office currently lack working heat).

We thank you for your continued faithful stewardship. Your elected volunteer leadership and church staff will continue to take seriously our responsibilities to be wise stewards of the resources you share toward the fulfillment of St. Paul's UMC's mission and vision.

At year end our operational cash reserve is \$144,218. In addition, there are \$201,117 in designated funds (meaning their use is restricted), and our mortgage balance is \$225,543.

2024 BUDGET:

Income from Offerings: \$ 586,694

Other Income: \$ 96,000

Total Income: \$ 682,694

Budgeted Expenses: \$ 752,842

Projected (Deficit): (\$ 70,148)

2024 ACTUALS:

Income from Offerings: \$ 630,623

Other Income: \$ 119,595

Total Income: \$ 750,218

Actual Expenses: \$ 759,055

Actual (Deficit): (\$ 8,836)

2025 Budget

In November, our Church Council leaders reviewed expense budget requests and actual spending from the last few years, reviewed a rough draft of anticipated giving for 2025, and set a budget for the new year. A one-sheet of the full budget will be available at our January Leadership Retreat. To the right is a summary of our 2025 Budget.

Income from Offerings: \$ 609,000

Other Income: \$ 103,000

Anticipated Income: \$ 712,000

Budgeted Expenses: \$ 802,159

Projected (Deficit): (\$ 90,159)



Major Gifts Campaign

On Sunday, February 16, 2025, we will launch a short-term major gifts campaign: "Retire the Debt & Re-Floor the Gym." We will be asking the 200 households who make St. Paul's their home church, as well as the additional 600 households that regularly utilize our gym for basketball and exercise, to help us reach our twin goals of eliminating our debt and funding a new sports floor for the Life Center gym. Watch for more information that Sunday and in the weeks that follow.

Family Ministries

Our Family Ministries Director has been working hard planning out new events for this year!

Here are some updates for Family Ministries and events that are planned for the upcoming year.



Family Board Game Night

Our Upper Elementary kids have started a Sunday School Curriculum based around different board games. Family Ministries invites the congregation to join us in a **Family Game Night** on Feb 15 at 5pm. Please RSVP so we make sure to have enough pizza!

Mother/Daughter Tea

This spring intergenerational event will include a tribute to the mother/daughter/granddaughter relationship complete with a garden party high tea, games, and crafts. Mothers who don't have a local daughter to attend with can submit their name and be paired with a "daughter" or "granddaughter" who also wants to attend by has no local mother. Meet new friends and expand current relationships with this fun all ages event.



Children's Bulletins

Have you seen the new children's bulletins for Sunday Morning services? If your child (or you) would like to check out the new children's bulletins, check with an usher. These bulletins have different activities and coloring spaces

Vacation Bible School

True North - March 10-14, 2025

Join us as we take on the ultimate Alaskan adventure where northern lights glow over majestic mountains, racing rivers, and glistening glaciers. As kids trek the tundra (ages 3 years to 5th grade), they'll explore how easy it is to lose sight of what's true in our world today. Pointing them toward Jesus, True North will show them that he is a faithful friend we can always trust. He is our True North! Register your family today!



LOTS A PASTA

THE ENTIRE MONTH OF

FEBRUARY

Help ICS Food Banks collect:

- ***5,000 packages of pasta and mac & cheese***
- ***5,000 cans of pasta sauce***



Shared Youth Ministry Update – December & January

Belong - Believe - Serve

In September 2024, we officially launched this Shared Youth Ministry, bringing together youth *from Christ Church UM, Desert Skies UMC, and St. Paul's UMC*. Our efforts have focused on building community through our core values of *Belonging, Faith Formation, and Service*.

Sunday Evening Youth Group Events

December 1: Starting Advent

We started Advent by exploring traditions like Las Posadas and Christingle. We reflected on Wesleyan principles, encouraging youth to focus on growth during this season.

December 8: Serving with Love

Youth reflected on Matthew 5:16 and worked on the "Adopt a Grandparent" service project, creating crafts, bracelets, and letters to bring joy and share God's love during Advent.

December 15: Youth Christmas Party

The event included making personal pizzas, a White Elephant gift game, decorating students as Christmas trees, and ending with s'mores around a warm fire.

December 22: "Adopting a Grandparent"

We visited the adopted elder at Fellowship Square, sharing handmade gifts and a Christmas letter. Students listened to his story, felt inspired, and planned to stay in touch through calls, letters, and another visit in February.

January 2025 so far:

On January 12th, we started the year with connection and fun. We had optional basketball and dodgeball games, and students shared their hopes for the rest of the school year. We have planned a few outdoor activities, including a hike and board games. We also have been working on preparations for the confirmation classes, including getting the confirmands' imprinted Bibles ready. The first class, led by Pastor Ron and focused on *The Bible and Our Jewish Roots*, is scheduled for January 26.



December 29: Bonfire and Fellowship

Youth and leaders gathered at Desert Skies' bonfire area for reflection on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Jeremiah 29:11, enjoying s'mores, fellowship, and learning pickleball.

A Journey of Growth: What's Next for our Shared Youth Ministry

Upcoming Events/Sunday School/Confirmation Classes

In February 2025, we have been planning events for the youth group, including:

- **February 2:** The Wesley Cup, which is a district-wide youth event featuring games, fellowship, and faith-filled activities, bringing youth together for fun and spiritual growth.
- **February 9:** Service project, continuation, following up to Adopting a Grandparent.
- **February 16:** Round1 Bowling & Arcade Park: this was a suggestion from our students and leaders.
- **February 23:** Pickleball and Outdoor volleyball at Desert Skies.
- **March 2:** Flandrau Science Center and Planetarium, focused on the Exhibits for hands-on activities.

Sunday School: We are looking for a curriculum to update Sunday school content and plan to launch it simultaneously in the second week of February at each church. The most promising option so far is **Echo 36: The Story**, starting with sessions 1-6 (for six Sundays) from the Cokesbury store. We will evaluate it and consider purchasing additional lessons if it meets our expectations.

Confirmation classes:

Session 1 (Sunday, January 26, 2025): The Bible and our Jewish Roots

Session 2 (Sunday, February 16, 2025): The United Methodist Church: History, Heritage, Theological emphases, social commitments

Session 3 (Sunday, March 30, 2025): What is a Christian? Faith and Identity

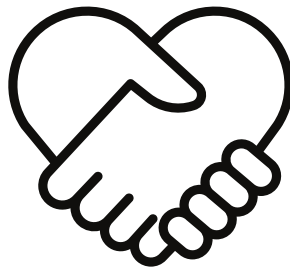
Session 4 (Sunday, April 27, 2025): "Live Your Commitment" – e.g. the vows of membership

Confirmation Sunday:

Sunday, May 18, 2025 – each youth confirmed in their home church on the same Sunday morning

Youth Sunday School - Teaching/ Volunteering Opportunity.

Here at St. Paul's, we plan to start Sunday School classes on the second Sunday of February. If you believe you have the talent, gift, or calling to serve as a Sunday School teacher for our youth, we would love to have you join us! This role can be flexible, with a commitment as little as once a month, and we will plan six weeks in advance. Please let us know if you would like to be part of this crucial and traditional way of carrying out the faith formation component with our youth.



Volunteers Needed!

Want to share your gifts by volunteering? There are many ways to share your gifts here at St. Paul's, ranging from serving on committees and reading on Sunday mornings to keeping our history files up to date and being an usher at a worship service. **We especially need help with our A/V team on Sunday mornings.** If you would like to share your gifts, please let Megan in the office know and she will get you all set up!

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Leave us a review on Google!



**We will be bringing the birthday list back starting in 2025!
If you would like your birthday listed, please let the office
know. (and don't worry...we only list the month and day)**

