



MARCH, 2025

The Epistle

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

A Word from Rev. Ron

"Do not be daunted by the enormity of
the world's grief. Do justly now, love mercy now,
walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete
the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."

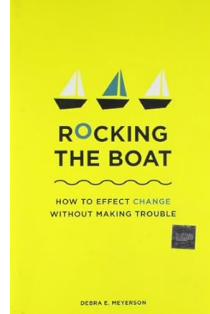
-The Talmud

Do not be fettered by too many rules at first.
Try different things and see what answers best.
Look for the ideal, but put it into the actual.
Everything which succeeds is not the production
of a scheme, of rules and regulations, made
beforehand, but of a mind observing and adapting
itself to wants and events.

-Florence Nightingale

Years ago I heard a metaphor from a "leadership"
speaker that to lead today is akin to surfing. You
don't plan the perfect wave that you can ride all the
way in. Rather, you spend time preparing yourself,
learning basics, and seeking to be attentive to the
possibilities around you. Knowing how to read the
ocean's tides allows you to see the wave when it
comes, and knowing and honing surfing skills allows
you to ride it to the beach.

Debra Meyerson, in chapter six ("Leveraging Small
Wins") of her book *Rocking the Boat: How to Effect
Change Without Making Trouble*, talks about one
approach to leading change as the pursuit of "small
wins." Like the surfing metaphor above, small wins
rely on "skillful improvisation rather than brilliant
strategy"(119), leveraging the learned skills,
alertness, and flexibility of a leader or community to
respond to new opportunities around them.



Pursuing change through "small wins"
allows leaders, communities, or other
change agents to live their values while
also "effecting change without directly
confronting the system in an open and
aggressive manner"(103). Meyerson
shares that small wins...

- are powerful because they are doable - they encourage people to act by doing what they can now;
- generate hope, self-efficacy, and confidence;
- minimize anxiety and risk; and
- can bring about significant learning.

I have some thoughts on this in relation to our life
together in the church.

1, Do what you can.

I have, of course, heard before about small wins as
part of leading change. My wife Lynn often says it.
Jack Shitama regularly says, and I regularly re-quote
him, that "all change is loss," thus all change leads to
some sense of grief. So, celebrating small wins
allows change to move forward, helping people to
feel positive about the gaining momentum and
assisting in working through the myriad emotions that
can accompany change. And I've heard the quote
attributed to Mother Theresa, as well, that "not all of
us can do great things, but we can do small things
with great love."

The lesson for me is to do what we can when
opportunity presents itself. Something else I've heard
and learned may be of use here, and that is "perfect
is the enemy of done." Which is to say that if we
won't start something if we don't think we can do it
"right" or "perfectly," well, we may never start at all.
Better to start and get something that is "good
enough" than to never make the effort at all. We
won't always, perhaps ever, get it perfectly right; and
there will always be someone who may criticize what
we've done. But that's the key, we've **done**
something.

Theodore Roosevelt expressed something very close
to this when he wrote, in *History as Literature*, that:
(see next page)

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

2, Consider your vision.

Meyerson takes the concept of small wins a step further than I have heard before, in a way that I find incredibly helpful. She goes on to talk about "blurry vision."

...visions that are too clear and specific can be overly constraining. Blurry visions of the future allow people to be flexible and take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves... [they are] visions that are sufficiently ambiguous to allow for strategic flexibility. (106)

One way to think of this is that the church's vision is Jesus and if we are honest, that vision is a bit blurry, because how Jesus looks in the year 30 might be different from how Jesus looks in the year 1825 or 2025. Not that Jesus changes, but the ways in which we see Jesus certainly do.

When Jesus sent the disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations," he only gives a few express instructions on how to do this: "baptizing them," and "teaching them." That is to say, "welcome and initiate others into the community" and "teach them." While The United Methodist Church is not wrong to have as its core mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," I've heard some church members chafe at it because "making disciples" sounded to them like "making widgets." Discipleship is more dynamic than what a Henry Ford assembly line could generate; the processes of welcoming, initiating, and teaching needing to adjust not just across the centuries and generations, but sometimes even between radically different individuals.

In addition, we also hold a vision for our local church, St. Paul's. Perhaps we can learn that if we are able to allow that vision to be a bit blurry, we might be able to take advantage of new opportunities that present themselves around us, reaching new people in ways we might never have anticipated but for which we find we have been preparing ourselves all along.

See you in Church!



What's Coming In Worship

The season of Lent continues through the celebration of Palm Sunday, April 13. On Sunday, April 20, we will celebrate the highest of holy days in the Christian Church, *Easter Sunday*. The following week we will mark what has become a beloved celebration of many in our church, "Holy Humor Sunday."



AMAZING GRACE AN INTERGENERATIONAL EASTER EVENT

Come join the discovery and fun of St. Paul's FREE Amazing Grace Easter event on Palm Sunday, April 13th 9 am – 11 am in Brummet Hall. This will be a time of interactive celebration, remembrance, prayer and praise in the form of family/group conversations, crafts and food. Everyone is welcome!



This fall we will be starting a new curriculum for our Kids' Sunday School! These classes will be more interactive and varied in activities with hands-on learning experiences that appeal to kids and volunteers alike! **We are now accepting volunteers for the fall.** Training for this new form of learning will be in August! Watch for more information to come!



Mother/Daughter Tea Party

Sat. May 3rd, 2 - 4 pm
in Brummet Hall

All women and girls are welcome to join us for this fun all-ages event! Invite your mom, daughter, grandmother, grand-daughter, aunt, niece, friend or neighbor. We will have activities for all ages including a story time, games, crafts, a speaker and more alongside finger foods and drinks. Plan to enjoy this time of fellowship to get closer to your loved ones and meet new friends! **Please register on our website by April 25th. Space is limited!**

Save the date for our next
Family Worship Service
Sunday, June 29th at 9:30 am



Shared Youth Ministry Update: [Belong - Believe - Serve](#)

March events: Here's a quick look at what we experienced together.

- **March 2 – Flandrau Science Center & Planetarium Visit:** Our youth explored hands-on science exhibits, tested their reaction times, worked together on problem-solving activities, and connected science to real life while enjoying time together.
- **March 9 – Movie Night at Christ Church UM:** Students shared pizza, popcorn, and drinks while watching Overcomer (2019), reflecting on identity, perseverance, and how faith helps us grow through life's challenges.
- **March 23 – Echo the Story & Summer Plans at St. Paul's UMC:** We had a thoughtful session on the story of Jacob and Esau, where students reflected on fairness and forgiveness through journal writing, followed by fun activities like ping pong and foosball. We also introduced exciting plans for Camping 101 in May and a mission trip in June—youth were excited and eager to participate!
- **March 30 – Confirmation Class & Sabino Canyon Hike:** We look forward to combining Confirmation Session #3 with a short educational hike led by Phillip Bentley at Sabino Canyon. Students will enjoy time in nature while exploring their faith and learning about God's creation.



Upcoming in April: We have a full and meaningful month ahead, and we hope your youth will join us!

- **April 6 – Lenten Reflection & Prayer Night:** As we approach Easter, students will reflect on Jesus' journey to the cross through scripture, discussion, and meaningful activities.
- **April 13 – "CLUE IRL" at St. Mark's UMC:** A live-action mystery game where youth team up to solve a whodunit challenge—figuring out who did it, where, and with what.
- **April 12 & 19 – Easter Praise Band Rehearsals:** Youth from all churches are invited to join the Desert Skies praise band for the April 20 Easter Sunday service at 9:00 AM.
- **April 18 – Good Friday Service Project (TBD):** We're working with Gospel Rescue Mission to plan a special service opportunity for youth to give back during Holy Week. Details coming soon.
- **April 27 – Confirmation Class #4 & Pool Gathering:** We'll begin with Confirmation Class #4, led by Pastor Brooke Wilkerson, from 2:00 to 4:00 PM. After class, we'll head to Highland Vista Park for a fun pool gathering from 4:00 to 6:00 PM—a time to relax, swim, and enjoy community. The park also has a volleyball court for extra fun and games!
- **Late April – Parent-Youth Gathering:** We plan to meet again for fellowship and connection following our first gathering in March. More details are coming soon!
- ➡ We will also continue implementing **Echo the Story during Sunday School classes** throughout April, including new stories and reflections as students explore faith engaging and thoughtfully.

Want to join us? Do you have teaching skills to share with our youth? Reach out to us to learn more about ways to get involved!



PETS NEED PRAYERS TOO

St. Paul's 2025 Pet Blessing Invitation

Greetings from the Pet Ministry Team! We are hosting a Pet Blessing April 27th at 2:00 PM and YOU are invited! Please bring your leashed or crated pet (or a picture of your pet) to the St Paul's UMC Courtyard (just outside Brummet Hall). Shirley Maddox and Kristin Rhodes will give Blessings to each animal companion, and we will have a small bag of treats for your pet.

The Pet Ministry is made up of a team of caring people just like you. Our Mission is to serve animals and the people who love them, both in our congregation and community, in order to engage in the ministry of showing God's love inclusively to all people. Visitors and new members are always welcome if interested in taking part in this ministry. If so, please email St. Paul's UMC at spumc@stpaulsumctucson.net.

Services the Pet Ministry offers include providing dog and cat food in the Food Pantry for our community, Card and Prayer Ministry for people who are celebrating a pet's birthday or the arrival of a new animal companion, or experiencing the loss or illness of their pet.

If Pet Ministry has touched your life, please let us know. We welcome input for reaching out to the community, too. You are always welcome to contact us at spumc@stpaulsumctucson.net.



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