

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER, 2025

The Epistle

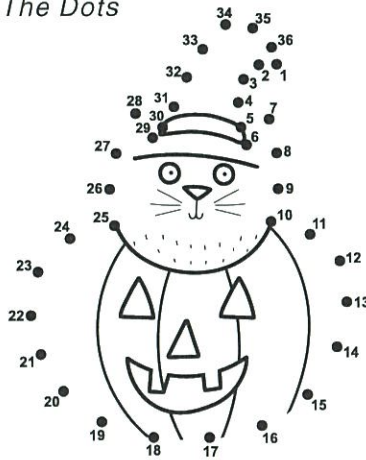
A newsletter for the community of St. Paul's United Methodist Church

A Word from Rev. Ron



Connecting The Dots

Remember those "Connect The Dots" pages we used to do in school, or for fun, as children? You might have a blank page with numbered circles, but if you took the time to connect them suddenly you'd get the intended image, be it a bridge or cat or Notre Dame Cathedral. (The later may have only been for advanced use.)



Can you imagine, though, how difficult it might be to do one of those pictures if the dots weren't numbered? We'd be as likely to end up with a mess than a cohesive picture. Sometimes ministry feels like a Connect-The-Dots, without clear direction on where to go. So here are a few thoughts about how we go about being in ministry together from the image of a dot-to-dot.

First, we start at mission. Our mission expresses who we are, what we're doing, and to what end.

Ultimately our mission is given to us by Jesus, who calls us to "follow me," to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength," to "love your neighbor as yourself," and to "go make disciples..." As Christians, we seek to follow Jesus and live after his teachings and example. Jesus taught that the core commandment is to love God and love our neighbor, which suggests a life of piety

and service. The United Methodist Church, at large, furthers this into an organizational mission by sharing that

"The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

St. Paul's has, for years, further articulated a mission specific to our congregation that link who we are, what we're doing, and to what end. The mission statement of the church used to read: "We are called to be a community of generosity and love where we invite others to join us in becoming disciples of Jesus Christ for the good of the world," and while church members could articulate some of the concepts of this mission few could share it in full. In 2021 we shortened it to be more memorable, so we can all recall it. We aim to be

"a generous community following Jesus for the good of the world."

This mission describes who we aspire to be together (a generous community), what we do (follow Jesus), and to what end (the good of the world.)

From mission, we move to vision. Our vision is about the end product, what we want to see in the world. It's like closing your eyes and seeing what the world would be like if our community inspired others to know and follow Jesus. Our vision also gives us more clarity on what we mean by "the good of the world" in our mission.

Leaders from our congregation worked on this for some time, finally articulating that we want to see

"communities transformed because people are..."

This means we hope we will see communities in our world – from families to cul-de-sacs to neighborhoods and beyond – changed for the better because people come to our church and are themselves changed for the better. And the ellipses (...) is even important! Not only does this vision share that we believe people can experience positive growth and transformation here and take it into the world, but we can even share what that looks like!

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Connecting The Dots (continued)

At the ellipses, we can add the adjective form of any of the fruits of the spirit from Galatians 6 (loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, generous, faithful, self-controlled) or the cardinal virtues of 1 Corinthians 13 (faithful, hopeful, loving) taught by the church as well as many other positive qualities that people nurture through their faith and discipleship in Jesus Christ.

We want to help nurture one another to be more loving, more patient, more joyful, etc., after the example of Jesus, that we may go into the world and see it transformed for the better.

**communities
transformed
because people are...**
*faithful
hope-filled
loving*

Furthering this, our core values share how we have agreed to go about this work. We have discerned that these are key behaviors (or experiences) that we believe to be foundational to our ministry together. So we seek to have them at the core of our ministries and initiatives:

*Belonging
Compassion
Faith
Helping Others*

By working to connect these dots of mission, vision, and values together in everything we do, our leaders and staff go about trying to create a picture of the Kingdom of God here in our Tucson community.

See you in Church!

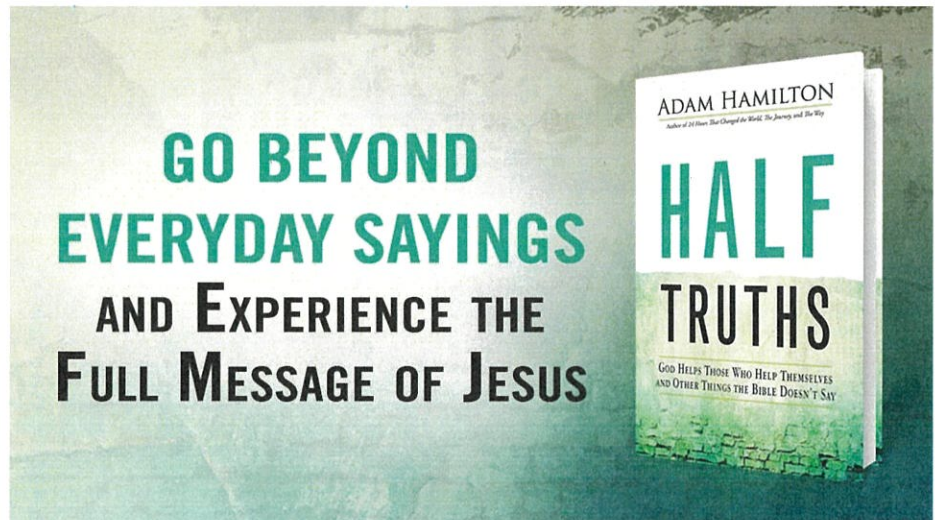


What's Coming In Worship: October and November

Half-Truths

(Worship Series & Book Study)

In the months of October and November we'll be exploring, both via a worship series and a weeknight book study, Rev. Adam Hamilton's book *Half-Truths: God Helps Those Who Help Themselves and Other Things the Bible Doesn't Say*. In this series, we'll reflect on the nature of Scripture and then consider some of the "myths" that people attribute to the Bible. I haven't settled on sermon titles yet, but below are the topics we'll consider each Sunday of the series.



In addition to hearing about these topics on Sunday mornings, you are invited to join Rev. Ron in reading and discussing the book on the Monday nights preceding the sermons! We will have a book study meeting on the following Mondays at 6:30PM on the days indicated in parenthesis.

- Sunday, 10/12 - Series Introduction: Making Sense of the Bible
- Sunday, 10/19 – Myth: Everything Happens for a Reason (Monday, 10/13)
- Sunday, 10/26 – Myth: God Helps Those Who Help Themselves (Monday, 10/20)
- Sunday, 11/09 – Myth: God Won't Give You More Than You Can Handle (Monday, 11/03)
- Sunday, 11/16 – Myth: God Said It, I Believe It, That Settles It (Monday, 11/10)
- Sunday, 11/23 – Myth: Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin (Monday, 11/17)

Please be sure to RSVP for the book study at our webpage.

Special Combined Worship Service:

**Sunday October
19, 9:30am**

We are having a special Sunday combined worship experience on Sunday, October 19. That morning we will only have one festive, blended service at 9:30am, featuring worship leaders from all three of our weekly services. We have heard how meaningful it is for our congregational members to all gather together from time to time, and look forward to having a full house! See you then!

Charge Conference Announcement

Our annual charge conference, equivalent to an annual meeting, will be held on Tuesday, October 28, at 7:00pm in the church's sanctuary. This is our 65th such annual charge conference. We have invited leaders and staff to share written reflections on both the year past of ministry as well as plans for the future year, and also hope to include some history of our congregation in the booklet. Our new superintendent, the Rev. Javier Olivares will be with us that night as our Church Council leaders guide us through conversation centered in our mission to be a generous community following Jesus for the good of the world.

If you have a meaningful historical report to share about the ministries of St. Paul's UMC, past, present, or future, please do so. Send them to our Administrative Assistant no later than Tuesday, October 14.



Sock and Undie Sunday Returns!

We have not had a Sock and Undie Sunday since before 2020. This year, bring kid sized new socks and undies on Oct 12 and drop them off before you sign up to sponsor a food box!

There is always a need at the schools for the smaller sizes for the preschool and younger elementary kids, but don't forget the older kids as well! As we have heard over the years, many of the children have very few socks and undies. If you don't want to wait until Oct 12, feel free to bring them earlier!



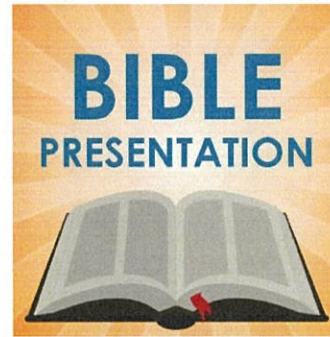
Holiday Food Box Sign Up

On Sunday, October 12, Cheryl Smith and Genita Salvagio will be on the patio outside the sanctuary to sign up people to adopt families for our Thanksgiving and/or Christmas food boxes for our 3 schools. The information for the sign up will be available for you at the table and we will answer your questions.

We realize that food cost is higher than it has been, but we will try our best to help our families at the schools, along with helping church families in need as well. If you have questions ahead of time, please call either Cheryl at 520-205-1667 or Genita at 520-404-2123.

CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRIES

Bible Dedication for 3rd Graders
Sunday, September 28th
9:30 am service



OPENING THE BIBLE:

A beginning Bible class for upper elementary students and above

This 4-week series of interactive classes (no boring lectures!) geared toward late elementary students and their favorite adult; perfect for our 3rd grades (and above) who will be receiving their first Bible. We will walk through each book in the Bible and highlight a verse in a memorable way as well as cover Bible basics like organization, authors and more!

While this class is FREE,
registration is required
so we have enough supplies and seats!



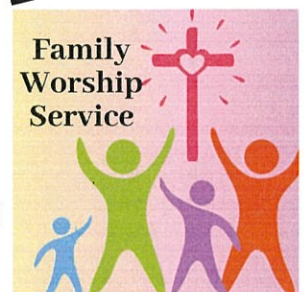
Join us at Bloom Elementary School
Friday, Oct 31st

Contact Heather to see
how you can help!

If you can't join us on the day,
Candy and small toy
donations are welcome!

SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday,
Nov. 30th
at the 9:30 am
service



Contact Heather Stein for information on Children and Family Ministries or any events on this page. 520-296-6149 or FamilyMinistries@StPaulsUMCTucson.net



Shared Youth Ministry: *Belong - Believe - Serve*



The last two months: Games & tacos kickoff; Priorities & summer (2026) plans; Teamwork & trivia; Fellowship Square visit; South District Splash Bash; Promised Land & play; Escape Room trip; Indoor volleyball; Old-school games.

We practiced priorities, welcome, care for creation, being present, trusting God, teamwork, new skills, problem-solving, and simple, joyful fun.

SUMMER 2026 TRIPS: It's not too early to announce, we're already planning a domestic Fun Trip (MS & HS) and an international Service-Learning Trip (HS). Thank you for supporting our youth and upcoming fundraising events. Stay tuned!

Upcoming Local/District Youth Group Events

- Oct 5: Culture & Diversity (Part 1) – guest speaker + surprises
- Oct 12: Movie Night (Christ Church UM)
- Oct 19: Community Garden & Chicken Coops (Vail)
- Oct 26: Large Sunday School – Echo the Story + Pickleball 101 (Desert Skies UMC)
- Nov 9: Outdoor District Youth Event (Fort Lowell Park, Ramada 3)
- Nov 16: “Can I Ask That” with all three pastors
- Nov 22: Parents’ Night Out (Save the Date; small fee supports the Youth Mission Trip)

We also have a few outdoor events to confirm (outside our normal gathering hours), including reforestation projects with Tucson Clean & Beautiful, a hike to Picacho Peak, and volunteer days with Community Gardens of Tucson. Any other suggestions?

Special Invitations:

- **At Desert Skies UMC: Flea Market** - Volunteers & Sale Help needed Mondays & Thursdays, 8:00 am–12:00 pm (sorting room, housekeeping, hauling). **Annual Flea Market Sale: Nov 6–8.** Donations accepted until Oct 1.
- **All Congregation** (Dec 14): Join us to sing carols and share Advent hope at Fellowship Square; two rehearsals will be announced.

Would you like to lead a one-time workshop? Your expertise, insight, time, and gifts would be greatly appreciated. For more information or to share suggestions, please email Luis at youthdirector@tucsonumcyouth.com

Getting Into The Community: Tucson Meet Yourself (Oct. 17-19)

Tucson's beloved folklife festival, "Tucson Meet Yourself," will be held Friday-Sunday, October 17-19, 2025. This multi- and inter-cultural experience features live performances, delicious food, friendly folk artists, demonstrations, and more. You can watch dances, see a live cooking demonstration, pursue children's activities, and experience the ways that our community's leaders believe our Old Pueblo's multicultural folklife helps us to experience belonging, identity, and community. (You can even pre-purchase a "Taste of the Festival" Passport in advance, featuring "a specially curated five-plate sampler" of the festival's rich culinary diversity.

This festival was founded in 1974 by local University of Arizona folklorist and anthropologist Dr. James Griffith. Tucson Meet Yourself shares that they are "building a community that respects traditions, culture, diversity and honors the land and environment ("sense of place") unique to the desert borderlands."

The festival occupies 3 city blocks and Jacomé Plaza, in front of the Joel D. Valdez Main Library, 101 N. Stone Ave, and runs the following days and times:

Friday, October 17 | 11am – 10pm (no performances between 2 and 5pm on Friday, but plenty of food and folk art)

Saturday, October 18 | 11am – 10pm

Sunday, October 19 | 11 am-6pm

While it is a free event, they do accept donations to support the non-profit organization that produces the festival, and there will be a variety of food and crafts available for sale.

Find out more about the festival at tucsonmeetyourself.org

Some of our church members are active supporters and participants in this festival and would happily carpool to the event on Saturday, October 18. Watch for details in our weekly email and Sunday bulletin.

Getting Into The Community: Willcox Wine Country Fall Festival (Oct. 18-19)

With its high elevation, abundant sunshine, and rich volcanic soil, Willcox has become a thriving wine country, boasting numerous vineyards and wineries that produce exceptional wines. The Willcox Wine Country Festival is back and better than ever, promising a delightful weekend filled with exceptional wines, live music, and unforgettable experiences. The festival will feature live music, over 50 artisans, craft food vendors, and food trucks to create an unbeatable experience.

Attending the festival itself is free; if you wish, there are tickets that allow for tastings of five or ten wines represented at the festival. We have been offered a group discount on the "10 Tastings" ticket (presale is \$30, we can purchase for \$25).

Someone shared a crazy idea and we ran with it: we will have a bus leaving the church after worship on Sunday, October 19, to go to the Festival! If you'd like to invite a friend, invite them to join you for worship and then go to the festival afterward! We ask a donation of \$25 to help cover the cost of our communal transportation.

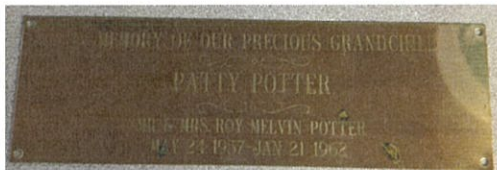


Oh The Things You Find When You're Cleaning

As many of you know, the church office, along with the church campus as a whole, can tend to collect stuff. With St. Paul's being around for 65+ years and 60+ years in this location, there are definitely some treasures to be found.

I have been working hard throughout my time here to clean up and organize the office, which is usually the first place to collect things. People drop off different items or someone on campus finds documents or photos and decides that the office is the best place to put them, even when I have no idea what it is. You might think it sounds silly, but how many of you have brought me old office supplies or old church documents that you had at home or old Bibles or...

While cleaning up the back counter of the office this week, I found old receipts from before my time, old personnel manuals, and a small plaque, pictured here. The plaque reads:



*In Memory of Our Precious Grandchild
Patty Potter
Mr. & Mrs. Roy Melvin Potter
May 24, 1957-Jan. 21, 1962*

So I put on my Sherlock Holmes hat and got to work to see if there was any way of finding Miss Patty Potter's family.

First, I went to Google and searched the name Roy Melvin Potter and found some information that included his son's name. Roy passed away back in 1969, but a quick Google search on his son, Melvin, showed me an obituary from earlier this year. In that obituary, it mentioned that Melvin, or Mel, had had a daughter named Patty who had predeceased him and it mentioned the church where his service would be. I called that church and didn't get an answer, but then noticed that Bring's Funeral Home was listed as well. I called over there and spoke with a lovely employee there and told her about the situation and asked if there was any way to get a message to the next of kin. Less than 10 minutes later, I had a call from Mel's daughter. I told her what I had and she was so happy that we had gotten in touch. Her and Patty's mother is still living, which means that this plaque will make it back to its rightful place with the family.

As a church worker, the weeks can become pretty routine and this was a puzzle and project I was happy to work on.

Getting Into the Community: Pride Weekend (Nov. 21-23)

While there are not details about the forthcoming Tucson Pride weekend in November, we know that members of our church wish to demonstrate their care and our church's welcome to our LGBTQ+ neighbors. Tucson Pride has met since 1977 with a goal of empowering "the LGBTQ+ Community of Southern Arizona through community building, enhanced visibility, and unwavering support." Watch for details at their website: tucsonpride.org.



Getting Into The Community: Christmas Plans

Mark your calendars now for these two dates and watch for more information in future communications: Christmas Caroling: We plan to carol at Fellowship Square on Sunday, December 14, at 3:00pm.

Christmas Movie(s): On Sunday, December 7, at 3pm, we plan to rent a theater for a special showing of some of the Christmas movies we will be discussing in our worship series "Christmas Through The Lens of Hollywood."



St. Paul's T-Shirts

We are working on getting church T-Shirts! We hope to have at least 2 designs that you can pre-order as part of a bulk order soon. In addition, you can choose to order more customized shirts from an online store that we will set up (though these custom shirts will cost more than the bulk order).



What I'm Currently Reading

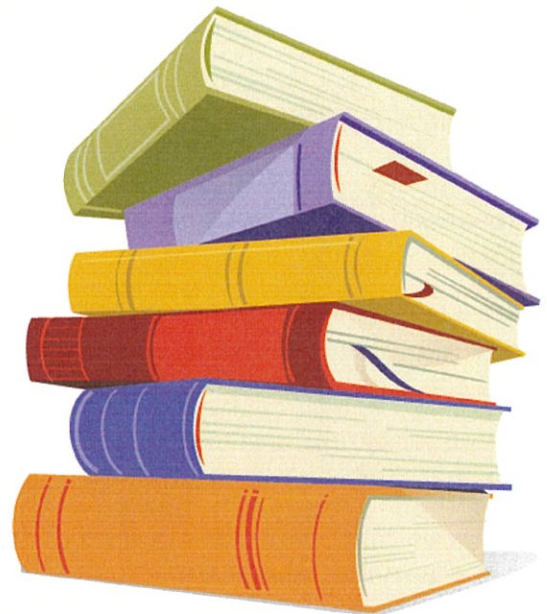
I shared in the last newsletter that I had been reading Dr. Ashley Boggan's recent book *Wesleyan Vile-tality: Reclaiming the Heart of Methodist Identity*, in which she illustrates how John Wesley's commitment to Christ led him to breaking with some of the cultural norms of his day and choosing what were otherwise considered "vile" means of sharing the Gospel of Jesus with others. After citing Wesley's experience, Dr. Boggan went on to illustrate both how the Methodist movement "lost" its "vile-tality" in relation to key areas – such as race and gender – and then also how some sustainers within the movement continued to champion counter-cultural approaches to such areas in keeping with Jesus' teachings. She ended with reflections on how we can seek to "reclaim vile-tality" in our world, seeking to truly and radically love God and neighbor.

I followed this up by reading a text Dr. Boggan just released this September with co-author Chris Heckert, *Calling on Fire: Reclaiming the Method of Methodism*. In this text they again looked at the example of John Wesley and his ministry in Bristol, and introduced what they come to call the "Practical Quadrilateral," in reference to the theological framework known as the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. The authors shared that four key practical ministry initiatives were the spine of the success of the Methodist movement. These included:

- Field-preaching, or going to where people are. In Wesley's day this literally meant preaching at coal mines and open fields. Today they illustrate how modern spiritual movements are utilizing podcasts and Tik Tok videos to effectively share the Gospel in digital places people already gather.
- Micro-Communities, or creating small groups. John Wesley organized people into smaller groups of classes and societies, and the authors, in addition to citing the small group movement appropriated from our heritage by nondenominational churches, shares that there are new means of gathering people together into micro-communities where they connect with one another.

- Social Engagement, or responding to the needs of the world around us. The Methodists have always been on the side of actively responding to social needs, even when such movement is critiqued either by secularists or other Christians.
- Leadership Activation. The last ministry initiative that is core to our identity has always been the empowerment of leaders in our groups and churches. The Christian work of our communities was never intended to be sublimated to a vocational priesthood of clergy; laity and their empowerment have always been the core of what we do.

In the text, Boggan and Heckert share reflection questions for the reader to think on how they and/or their church might pursue these elements of the "Practical Quad" to the betterment of our congregations and denomination.



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As a part of my current studies I am reading *High on God: How Megachurches Won the Heart of America* by a trio of scholars: James Wellman, Katie Corcoran, and Kate Stockly. While I'll have the text finished by the time you read this article, at this exact moment I have half way through the book. It is organized in three sections: Part 1 deals with theory and observations noting the common human desires that are expressed in religious groups in general and megachurches specifically. Part 2 looks at six specific desires – Desire for Acceptance and Belonging, Desire for Wow, or Hacking the Happy, Desire for a Reliable Leader, Desire for Deliverance, Desire for Purpose in Service, and Desire to Re-member – and illustrates how megachurches, and specifically the standard worship service of a megachurch, meet these common desires. Part 3 goes in to the Dark Side of Megachurches, and how some have done more harm than good. I find it interesting that from the start the authors acknowledge the negative bias that many scholars and traditional religious practitioners (especially those in mainline denominations such as ours) have toward the megachurch stereotype, and then they go on to repeatedly demonstrate how their bias was challenged by the positives they noted. I'm already taking notes and sharing with some of our church leadership lessons from the text that I think might be helpful to our church's vitality.

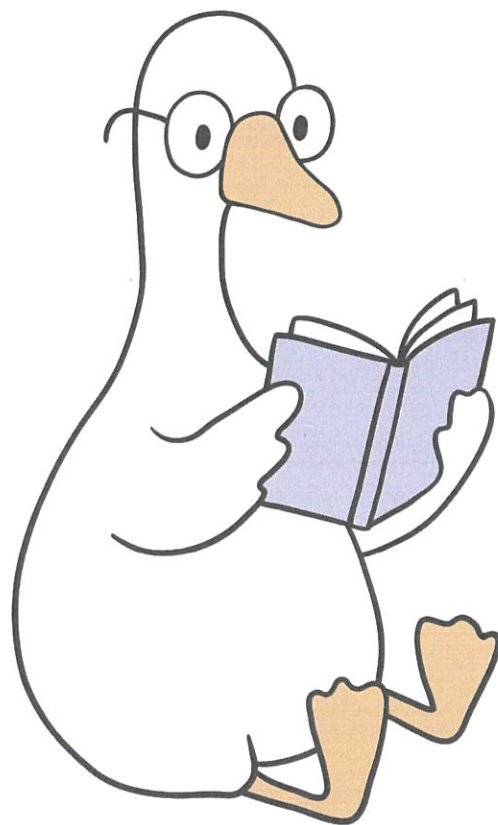
I've also been enjoying daily readings *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*, from which I've shared some prayers during our weekly worship services this past month.

In coming weeks I'll be reading *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America's Largest Churches* by Scott Thumma and Dave Travis

How to Tell a Story by the team behind the podcast "The Moth" as I continue to prayerfully discern how to create a storytelling ministry.

Half Truths: God Helps Those Who Help Themselves and Other Things the Bible Doesn't Say by Adam Hamilton. As you'll read elsewhere, we'll be exploring these half-truths in worship and I will be leading a book study as I re-read this helpful book from one of our United Methodist Church's greatest contemporary leaders.

I am also excited to read Walter Brueggemann's small group study *Journey to the Common Good*, where he "brings together contemporary cultural analysis with challenging biblical insights and offers a hopeful roadmap for our shared human journey."



Preschool Financial Update - Corrected

The Preschool ended its fiscal year with the end of June. Our previous summary was based on the budget, not their actual figures, which showed improvement. They had annual income of \$82,501 and expenses of \$93,238, resulting in a deficit of (\$10,736). While the Preschool has struggled to break even since Covid and is looking at alternatives to pursue sustainable operations, they do retain a year-end cash balance of \$133,087, allowing them a few more years to make the changes to sustain the preschool long-term.

Volunteers Wanted!

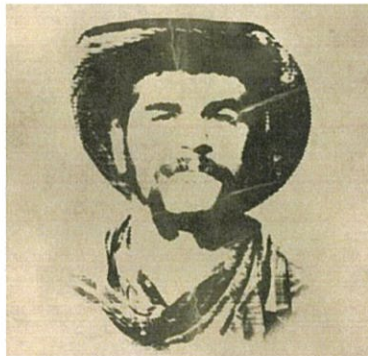
Did you know that this church runs on volunteers? While there are staff to coordinate different things, the bulk of the ministries on the campus are done by volunteers. We are always on the lookout for people to help out with coffee fellowship and other food based events, reading or singing in worship, being present with our children and youth, leading a Bible or book study, helping serve our community in the food bank, coaching with Upward, or even just stuffing envelopes for mailings! Be on the lookout for announcements for specific things or reach out to the church office if you are interested in sharing your time with the church!

WANTED

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS

for Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and Milestone Ministries

PREFERABLY ALIVE



CONTACT

FamilyMinistries@StPaulsUMCTucson.net

520-296-6149