



St. Paul's United Methodist Church • 1965 Ferguson Road

Allison Park, PA 15101 • (412)486-7006 • stpaulsumc.com

Happy November!

Every year as November draws near a new sense of serenity comes over me. The seasons are changing, and the horizon is set ablaze by all the colors from the Lord's paint brush. The clothes get cozier as we settle in for the upcoming weather. And, even though the calendar can get busy with all of the impending holiday activities, a calm takes over. For November is a month of Thanksgiving. An entire month to reflect on simple gratitude.

Gratitude is the ability to experience life as a gift. John Ortberg

Most families take a moment or two at the holiday meal to share what they are thankful for at the time, or maybe for that year. I find it cathartic to try to spend a quiet moment each day in November to try to reflect on the many blessings I have to say thanks. I know contemplating one's blessings is a very personal experience. Some can easily rattle off many items they're thankful for. Others find it hard to discern one or two things. A wise person once reminded me to freely share in simple gratitude, for even with all of my concerns, I still live a life that someone else can only dream of.

But this past year has been like no other in recent memory. 2020 has been in a class all its own. Life as we have known it, what we became comfortable with, has all changed. We're living in a new normal. And, for many of us, it has been challenging day-to-day. It's hard to stop and see the present as a gift. We as humans have a lot of trouble saying thank you for the simple things. We can easily recognize that the big things deserve thanks, but the little things go unnoticed far too often. We get caught up in the importance of the big thank you. And, in 2020, everything seems huge. Disappointments abound. What is there to be thankful for?

Gratitude turns what we have into enough, and more... Melody Beattie

It is in these times when I am most thankful for my God. And, when I turn to him, I am reminded of St. Paul's and our wonderful church family. It can be easy to overlook these blessings this year. We haven't been able to gather as we normally have. We haven't always been in each other's presence. But the true blessing is that we still have remained there for each other. As Stewardship Chair I am happy to report that even while struggling with the financial challenges of the pandemic, St. Paul's has been blessed by your generosity in 2020. Our pledged and estimated giving is only about \$24,000 behind for the year. This is a pretty strong position to be in at this point of the year as many of our givers "catch-up" at year's end. However, revenues from Weekday Ministries, which go towards our utilities and the maintenance of our facility, are down substantially due to COVID-19 restrictions. Earlier this year we received a Paycheck Protection Program loan that allowed us to keep our Weekday Ministry staffs employed during the shutdown. The church is not just our beautiful building. Again, and again, we the patrons of St. Paul's prove to be the Church and for that I believe we are blessed. We continue to step up in times of trouble and chaos without hesitation, both financially, spiritually and in ministry.

(Over)

I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. Psalm 86:12

November is here. In a few short months we will welcome a brand-new year in 2021. A fresh start with a whole calendar year of opportunities. What will 2021 have in store for us? I can only imagine! But I know that I will step into it with confidence in the support on my church family once again. Enclosed in this letter is our Estimate of Giving cards. This Stewardship season please take the time to look into your heart and pray for the ongoing success of St. Paul's and its many far-reaching ministries. Our Stewardship pledges are not financial contracts. They are just a way for us to be able to plan, predict and expand our vision for all that we wish to do in the up-coming year. None of what we do is possible without the on-going generosity of our Congregation. We need you to continue to share your time, talents and treasures for St. Paul's to be able to share our ministries. We have tremendous outreach. For that I am thankful.

After you have prayerfully filled out your Estimate of Giving card, please mail it back to the church in the enclosed envelope. Our goal is to have as many of them back by Sunday, November 29. A new feature this year is an electronic version of the Estimate of Giving card, which will be sent out with the next St. Paul's email update. If you would like to use this, click on the link that will be provided, fill out the card, and email a copy of it to the provided email. (This email address is a direct link to our Financial Secretary, Robert Milavec, for reasons of privacy.)

This letter is to say thank you very simply for being there for us, and with us. 2020 has been hard, but we have been resilient. To that end I say thank you, again. On day one I give thanks for you, my church family. Simply, thank you. For I am filled with Simple Gratitude...

Simply,

Janeen S. Atkins

Janeen S. Atkins, Stewardship Chair

Note from the Finance Committee: A special tax provision as part of the CARES Act allows even those who take the standard deduction to claim \$300 of charitable gifts in 2020.