

The Epistle of St. Paul's

December 2020

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St. Paul's United Methodist Church

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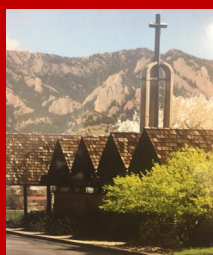
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From The Pastor's Desk...

It was in 1843 that Chapman & Hall published a novella by Charles Dickens and illustrated by John Leech entitled "*A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas.*" This short story went through thirteen editions over the next year and has never gone out of print. I was thinking of this the other day as I started working on our Christmas card list, listening to Christmas music, and enjoying a fire on a snowy morning in the parsonage and how this story, set in Victorian England, is as timely as ever and fits the current circumstances here in Colorado.

The Ghost of Christmas Past – Do you remember what the seasons of Advent and Christmas have looked like over the years at St. Paul's UMC? This year's devotional contains several entries that quote from some of the many of the pageants that we have held since that first Christmas as a congregation in 1964. Do you remember the children, grandchildren, and others who have taken part in these pageants? Over the years we have come together to decorate the sanctuary for the season during the Hanging of the Greens, shared festive foods, and lit countless candles on Christmas Eve. Oh, and the music! Cantatas, carols, hymns, and much, much more! All these memories speak to us and remind us of those experiences, relationships, and gifts given and received that lifted up our spirits during the cold and snows of many a December morning, drawing us ever closer to the intimacy that is Emmanuel, God with us. Talk with other St. Paul's UMC members, do their memories mesh with yours?

The Ghost of Christmas Present – Little did we know that when we abruptly stopped in-person worship on March 15th that come December, we would still be meeting via Zoom! I have already noticed that this year just does not feel the same with day after day at home rendering Christmas break largely irrelevant. Still, we press on, trying to stir up some sense of normalcy and looking for ways to "make Christmas real" during a time of a pandemic sweeping across our community. What do you long for or (really) need this season to "make" Christmas, Christmas? Consider those in your life, including those in our community, that have been impacted by the economic turmoil, the unending nature of the pandemic, the historic nature of this year's fire season. Is what you are missing really that important this year? Or to put it another way, what gift will you give to remind someone else, and yourself, of why Emmanuel is alive in you?

The Ghost of Christmas Future – St. Paul's marked its 56th anniversary in November, fifty-six years of being a witness to God's love in south Boulder. Now, let yourself move into the future, forty-four years to be exact, 2044 and the centennial of St. Paul's UMC. Can you see what traditions might remain or what might be different about Advent and Christmas for those who call St. Paul's their church home? What is it about Christmas that will still be relevant to those Christians or will the Nativity Story no longer be The Greatest Story Ever Told?

Past. Present. Future. We learn from and experience all of these as we tell our personal story. We also learn from and experience all of these as we tell the gospel story. If your memories of gifts given or received speak of the gifts given to you by God, then you will have a memory worth holding onto. If you can see Christmas as being something more than parties, presents, food, or favorite traditions that are you are missing this year, then Christmas will retain that meaning it had on the first Christmas in Bethlehem. If you can imagine that in the future, someone will be thankful that you shared the meaning of Christmas with them, then the story will live on.

Every blessing, Pastor Charles

Something new from the Mountain Sky Conference!

Our Mountain Sky Conference is launching something new in November – a new website called Mountain Sky Ministry Crossroads. But Crossroads is more than a website. It is a platform to find resources for ministry and network with others for ministry support and innovation.

Our Crossroads Purpose Statement: Ministry Crossroads brings together our United Methodist leaders – laity and clergy – from across our wide geography to share ministry ideas, network for solutions to challenges, and support one another's ministries so that we can live into innovative ways of being followers of Jesus transforming our world into God's vision of beloved community.

Why should you join?

At the heart of Mountain Sky Ministry Crossroads are three core convictions:

- Though at times we struggle with what it means to be followers of Jesus in a quickly changing world, God is still leading people, communities, and our world to a hope-filled future.
- God has blessed our community of faith (both local and global) with all the gifts we need to make God's vision for us a reality. We only need to find ways to share the gifts we possess with those who need them, and to receive the gifts we need to meet our ministry challenges.
- We are stronger when we work together, honoring our diversity, uniting in Love. This network seeks to bring us together across our wide geography to swap stories, experiences and ideas around our shared mission and lean into innovative ministry through inspirational, thought-provoking conversations.

To become a member of Mountain Sky Ministry Crossroads, go to <https://mtnskyumc-crossroads.mn.co/>

St. Paul's is a Reconciling Congregation

After a process that took us nearly one year, we held a vote on whether to adopt the statement "St. Paul's UMC welcomes and affirms people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions." We had 43 "yes" votes and 2 "no" votes. To everyone who participated in this process: Thank you!

We have already begun posting this statement on our internet sites. You may see it other places (like this Epistle newsletter!), and when we have paper worship bulletins, you will see it there. We can't fit the whole statement on our yard sign, but we will soon have a shortened version there. If you have other suggestions for how the statement can be used, please let us know.

All of us on the Reconciling Team have been inspired by the spirit of grace and love that this congregation has shown during this process. St. Paul's is a place where all are welcomed and loved.

Virtual Christmas Eve Service

Join us at **7:00 pm on Christmas Eve** for a virtual sharing of the Christmas story with your church family. There will be music, the sharing of the meanings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, the lighting of candles and the singing of "Silent Night." Please share this with your friends, family, and neighbors and let's come together to make Christmas Eve 2020 a most joyous occasion. Zoom details will be sent out the week of December 20.

Stop by the **Winter Festival on Saturday, December 19**, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. in the church parking lot. This is another neighborhood event in partnership with The Meridian. Enjoy hot cocoa, music, and festivities. Bring a can of food to support EFAA. Contact Belinda Alkula for more information.

Women's Summer Book Group in the Winter?

By all accounts, last summer's Virtual Book Group was a success. Maybe, in this strange year, we should see if it works as well in the winter. Interested? Let Judy Waller hear from you.

Several of us have looked at a couple books by Bob Goff (check out his web site): *Love Does* (study questions available) and *Everybody, Always* (becoming love in would full of setbacks and difficult people). Other suggestions welcome and encouraged.

New for January 2021 Scott Glancy and Claudia Mills will lead a discussion-based class in the philosophy of religion. Together we will explore foundational questions like "What is God like?", "Can we prove that God exists?", and "What is a soul?" The class will start in January and run for 12 weeks. We will choose the meeting time according to the availability of the participants, and we will meet over Zoom. If you are interested, please contact Scott at scott@glancys.net.

Dinner Circle regrouping will take place as soon as we can meet in person. This would be the usual shuffle time and time for new people to join. Good news you have more time to consider joining this fun part of St. Paul's where we gather in small groups to share a meal/food. Time, place and complexity of the event varies with the wishes of the group. Please contact me at mo-randfar39@gmail.com 307-761-0574 720-562-8200.

Faith and Hope with Christian Love, Marcia Hult

Lunch Bunch will not meet until further notice due to Covid. We will miss seeing everyone and pray all stay well.

Loving God & Creating Hope & Changing Lives

Finance Committee Stewardship Campaign Report

The Finance Committee would like to thank everyone for their generous support of our 2021 Stewardship Campaign. The annual Stewardship Campaign is what the Finance Committee uses to prepare the annual budget for our church, and your support is what makes our church operations continue. We thought, in the spirit of transparency, that we would share with you where our numbers ended up, and how our pledges this year compare to last year and 2019.

The chart below indicates the following figures:

2019 pledges of \$179,185

2020 pledges of \$166,505

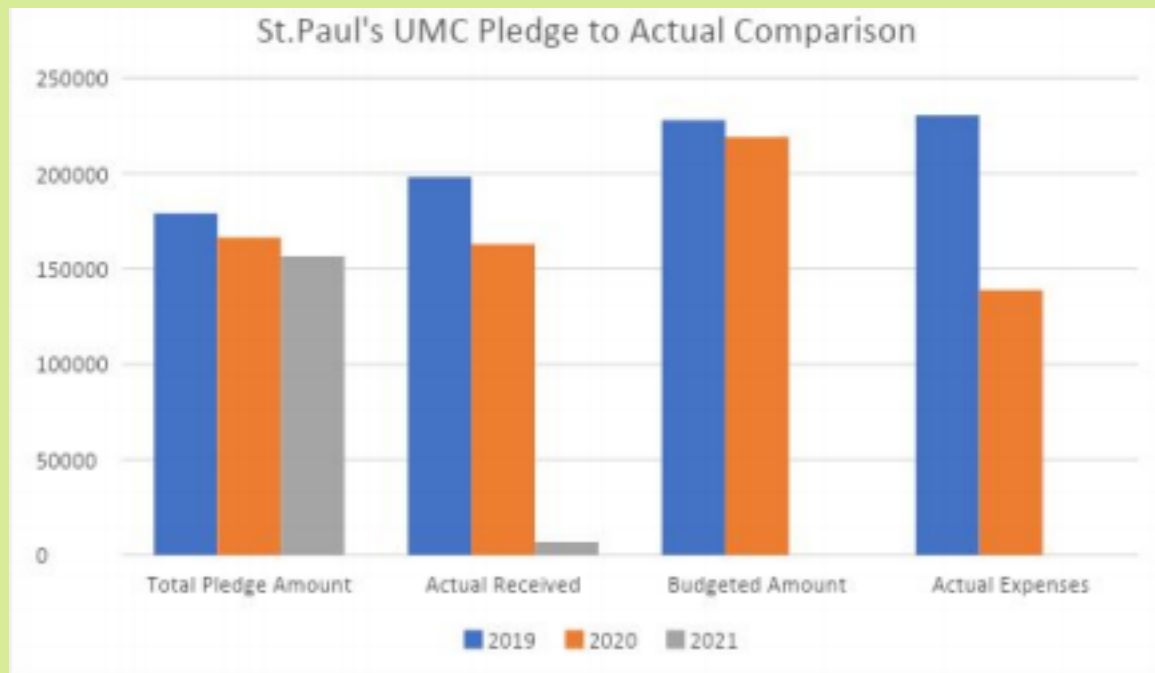
2021 pledges of \$155,505

2019 actual pledges received of \$198,007

2020 actual pledges received of \$162,833 (as of November 1, 2020)

2021 actual pledges received of \$6800 (prepaid in 2020)

Even with the decrease in pledges in 2020, we were able to maintain the budget at nearly the same level as we did in 2019; only decreasing it by \$3000. The Finance Team will be looking at the 2021 budget in the coming weeks and we ask for your prayers as we take on this important task. Please note that the actual expenses for 2020 will increase as some expenditures have not been updated. Please feel free to reach out to Bob Muckle (Finance Committee Chair) if you have any questions.



MITTEN TREE DONATIONS

Thank you to everyone who donated for our Mitten Tree collection for the homeless shelter during our Advent Curbside Kickoff event.

WOOL SOCKS: 114 pairs!

WARM GLOVES: 52 pairs!!!

WARM HATS: 47!!

MISC OTHER WARM ITEMS: 6

\$5 GIFT CARDS to McDonalds, King Soopers, Target:
90 cards x \$5 = \$450

Claudia had SEVEN large trash bags stuffed full to bring to the homeless shelter. This is at least double what we've have before - and we aren't even done yet. **The generosity of this church in the midst of this pandemic is astonishing.**

ADDRESS CHANGES

Abby Lageman
3 Pheasant Lane
Pittsfield, IL 62363
Cell and email are the same

Ryan and Melissa Sullivan
4687 Gordon Drive
Boulder, CO 80305
Ryan's cell is 970-331-4412
Ryan's email rysriding@yahoo.com

Joyce and Bob Brandon
1050 Arapahoe Avenue
Boulder, CO 80302

Elaine Morrison
836 Mount Evans Ct
Louisville , CO 80027

Sandy Bainbridge's cell phone number is 970-584-0312.

FOOD BANK DONATIONS

Thank you to everyone who donated to the EFAA food bank during our Advent Curbside Kickoff event. They were very pleased to receive the food. They said they needed it. We had 40 sacks of food and boxes, approximately 600 pounds of food!

In Memoriam, [Ring out, wild bells]
Alfred Lord Tennyson - 1809-1892

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

**St. Paul's UMS welcomes and affirms people of all sexual orientations,
gender identities, and gender expressions.**

December Birthdays

12-1 Marcus Berlin

12-4 Jerry Fergusson

12-5 Mary Ferree

12-5 Don Fritchel

12-9 Sandy Bainbridge

12-10 Lance Bishop

12-15 Billy Cook

12-19 Patty Wright

12-22 Jan Browning

12-23 Ann Abbott

12-25 Rev. Dr. Charles Alkula

12-25 Peg Fritschel

12-27 Alan Polacek

12-30 Ron Revier



DECEMBER PREACHING SCHEDULE

Worship Sundays at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom

December 6

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord"

Isaiah 40:1-11, Mark 1:1-8

VIRTUAL COMMUNION

December 13

"Maybe Isaiah was on to something"

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

December 20

"Seeing it through"

Luke 1:26-38, Romans 16:25-27

December 24—Christmas Eve

A service of drama and music

December 27

Claudia Mills preaching

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