



## Pastor's Message

*I am the church! You are the church! We are the church together! All who follow Jesus, all around the world? Yes, we're the church together.*

— The United Methodist Hymnal

What do you picture when you hear the word "church"? What do the people of our congregation or our community picture? What does the church look like in the days of COVID?



How would our church be different if we really lived as though "church" was a gathering of people worshipping and serving God, defined by

the life of Jesus rather than our address?

I was thinking about this recently after I read an article in *Circuit Rider* magazine about the Rethink Church campaign going on, and when someone told me what others in the community were saying about our church.

Church is when we collect money and supplies for hurricane relief. Church is dropping off items for sack lunches at the Emergency Aid Coalition. Church is when we gather online for Holy Communion or Compline. Church is a phone call to a friend who might be really lonely in these days. Church can happen in all sorts of circumstances.

Jessica Kelley wrote, "Buildings provide a home base for countless ministries of the church, not the least of which is a place to gather for worship. The church itself, however, will not be defined by the height of its steeple but the reach of its compassion, not the number of seats but the

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## Disaster Relief, Resources, and Readiness

Most of us have been through a hurricane, so we know the pain of dislocation and loss. To help relieve some of that pain from our neighbors to the East who were hit by the recent Hurricane Laura, we have provided ways through our website ([www.stpaulshouston.org/disaster-readiness](http://www.stpaulshouston.org/disaster-readiness)) for you to donate with money and/or physical items and to volunteer for cleanup.

### Coalition in Action

The Restoration Team, a coalition of churches organized for disaster response, has already begun organizing our efforts, and we have so far we have sent two moving vans full of supplies to sibling congregations in Louisiana.

The Restoration Team, was founded after Hurricane Harvey, The Restoration Team also hosts trainings to keep our disaster response team prepared. If you would like to be sign up to be a regular volunteer with the

Restoration Team, visit [therestorationteam.org/hurricane-laura](http://therestorationteam.org/hurricane-laura)

The overall disaster readiness coordinator is Rev. Paul Richards-Kuan is St. Paul's Disaster Readiness Coordinator.

### Resources and Readiness

To help us prepare for what may come — as individuals and as a congregation — and to respond to the outcomes, the disaster readiness webpage ([www.stpaulshouston.org/disaster-readiness](http://www.stpaulshouston.org/disaster-readiness)) provides a disaster readiness checklist from the City of Houston and a volunteer form.

A link also is provided to Crowd Source Rescue ([www.crowdsourcerescue.com](http://www.crowdsourcerescue.com)) an organization of neighbors helping neighbors with flood evacuations. Check it out now so you will know what to do if you ever need them — or if you can help through them now.



## Supplies Needed for Hurricane Laura Relief

Please bring any of these items to the Jones Building between 10am and 2pm M-Th. Questions? email [prichards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:prichards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org).

- Waterproof roof tarps (UV resistant, reinforced, minimum of 20'x15')
- Lumber (2x4x8 studs or longer)
- Button cap nails and roofing nails
- 3" deck screws and nails
- Work gloves
- Non-perishable canned food items (preferably ring-pull lids)
- Bottled water
- Baby items (diapers of all size, wipes, formula)
- Adult diapers
- Cleaning supplies (Clorox wipes, paper towels, brooms, trash bags, masks)

## Baptism Celebrations to Resume Soon

St. Paul's soon will be able to safely resume celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism.

Baptisms will be recorded in advance following the rigorous safety guidelines that the St. Paul's Re-gathering Task Force and the Texas Medical Center have recommended.



A scallop shell is a symbol of baptism and pilgrimage, signifying the journey of faith that lies ahead. A shell will be used to pour water over the one being baptized and will be presented to them following the baptism.

The congregation will witness to each baptism through the Sunday worship broadcast. A critical part of our celebration of baptism, the congregation will be responsible for making their commitment to the one being baptized as members together in the Body of Christ.

**Help Prevent  
Flu Season  
& COVID-19  
Collision  
Get Your  
Flu Shot Now!**

### Pastor's Message

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number of lives changed, not the shape of the doors but the disciples that pass through them as they head out into the world to make a difference in Jesus' name."

Many great things are going on in September — see you for online church and meetings or when you are being the church in the community!

Peace,  
Jeff

Rev. Jeff McDonald, Senior Pastor

## BLOOD DRIVES @ ST. PAUL'S

Sundays,  
September  
13 & 27



9 am - 1 pm  
Activity  
Center

SCHEDULE ONLINE THROUGH  
GULF COAST BLOOD CENTER

WWW.COMMITFORLIFE.ORG/  
DONOR/SCHEDULE/DRIVE

### Pastors Bible Study

*The Book of Revelation*

10-session study

begins

Wednesday, September 16

More information to come via  
The *Chimes*, Facebook, and  
other St. Paul's Media.

Digital  
Bolivia Mission Trip  
for Youth & Young Adults  
September 18-20

Questions?  
[nataly@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:nataly@stpaulshouston.org)  
or  
[tiffin@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:tiffin@stpaulshouston.org)

### St. Paul's Family

#### Member Weddings

Congratulations to Sunny Krishnan and Graham Bayley, who were married on August 9, 2020. Graham's parents are Kimberly and Scott Bayley.

Congratulations to Maggie Gordon and John Swatkowski, who were married on August 15, 2020.

#### Birth

Congratulations to Joann and Chris Prause on the birth of son, Lane Prause, born August 2, 2020, in Sugar Land.

#### Deaths

Deepest sympathy to Louise Riley on the death of her brother, Carlton, who died July 14, 2020.

Deepest sympathy to Mary and Dick Yehle on the death of Dick's father, Eugene (Gene) Yehle, who died in Michigan on August 7, 2020.

Deepest sympathy to Shiella Fort-David on the death of her husband, Tom Fort, who died in East Texas on August 11, 2020.

Deepest sympathy to Holly and David Smith on the death of David's mother, Frances Brunkhorst Smith, who died in Mississippi on August 19, 2020.

To update membership records, including telephone numbers and email addresses, please contact Nina Hall via [nina@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:nina@stpaulshouston.org).

To schedule a funeral or notify the church of births, deaths, hospitalizations, or other concerns, please contact Nina Hall via [nina@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:nina@stpaulshouston.org).



Thanks the Revive Building Committee to David Gunn and Veronica Pearce for all the above and beyond work they did to help us bring this great project to completion.

## Rachel Wiggs New Director of Communications

To ensure consistency of communications messaging, Rachel Wiggs has been named Director of Communicators in addition to her role as Ministerial Assistant to the Senior Pastor.

For several months she has been responsible for most of the church website, the church app and Facebook activity, and much of the creative process behind these. This title formalizes that activity, which is expected to expand while the senior pastor's need for assistance is expected to diminish over time.



Among her former responsibilities that are now handled by others are

- **Membership records and funerals, including funeral bulletins** - Nina Hall: [nina@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:nina@stpaulshouston.org). Nina continues with her other responsibilities as Coordinator for Hospitality and Congregational Care.
- **Baptisms and altar flowers** - Dawn Uebelhart: [dawn@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:dawn@stpaulshouston.org). Dawn continues her other responsibilities as Music Administrator, producer of the worship bulletins, staff musician, and captain of the bell tower.

Donna Adair remains part-time Editor and Director of Special Projects with primary responsibilities for the *Chimes* weekly eletter, the monthly newsletter, and certain parts of the church website.

Tim Leatherwood remains in charge of all electronic media.

## Amazing Place Offers Options

Amazing Place now offers virtual and off-site support options, including activities, brain-healthy meals, and dementia caregiver counseling.

Described in more detail at [www.amazingplacehouston.org/updated-services](http://www.amazingplacehouston.org/updated-services), in summary they are

**Day Program Services.** These include: *Virtual Activity Program* and *Dementia Caregiver Counseling Services*.

**Memory Preservation Nutrition<sup>(R)</sup> Meals.** This carryout and delivery meal service is the solution for easy, delicious, brain-healthy nutrition. The current week's menu and online order form are provided.

**Connections Programs.** These include: *Savvy Caregiver*, *Support Groups*, and *Memory Training*.

Amazing Place is a day program for people with to moderate dementia that also trains and educates caregivers, congregations, health professionals, and the community to equip them with essential knowledge and tools.

## Music Videos on Web

To watch this summer's Music Department presentations, go to [www.stpaulshouston.org/music](http://www.stpaulshouston.org/music).

- May 31 Pentecost Festival of Hymns, featuring members' favorite hymns along with background information about each
- June 28 Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) documentary (in lieu of St. Paul's annual hosting of the RSCM Gulf Coast Course)
- July 26 Organ Pops Concert and Organ tour, including behind-the-scenes peeks at locations you probably did not know existed

Each of these was made possible through assistance from the St. Paul's Chamber Music Society. To support the society, which also makes possible the Lenten Recital series and other special music presentations, please email [music@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:music@stpaulshouston.org)

**SEPTEMBER HEALING CIRCLES**  
all via Zoom

**Single Moms Circle**  
2nd and 4th Tuesdays @ 8:30 pm

**Pandemic Life Support**  
Scheduled as needed for supportive community  
in these uncertain times

**Healing of Racism Art Circle**  
in conjunction with the Center for the Healing of Racism  
Third Friday, September 18, from 10 to 11:30am

To connect: email Helen Spaw via [hspaw@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:hspaw@stpaulshouston.org)



## Race • Justice • Us

St. Paul's provides and recommends opportunities to overcome racism, both continuing and new. These are described more thoroughly at [www.stpaulshouston.org/anti-racism](http://www.stpaulshouston.org/anti-racism) where a registration form also is provided. Among them are

**St. Paul's Moms Group** is identifying implicit bias in their parenting as they strive to raise children with better awareness of social justice. Meets 2nd and 4th Mondays at 8 pm via Zoom.

**her | meneutics** is studying Willie Jennings' commentary on Acts as they share spiritual practices centered around implicit bias. Meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

**Missions Cohorts for Racial Justice** is for those serious about taking action for racial justice and are willing to learn and unlearn toward that action.

**Beyond the Book: An Anti-Racism Learning Group** is reading books on race and justice, alternating monthly with action. Meets 4th Sunday of month, from 1 to 3 pm via Zoom.

Ideas fir Your Group. Cotact Rev. Karyn Richards-Kuan via [kricards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:kricards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org).

# 30 days of ANTI-RACISM

SEPTEMBER 2020		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

For more anti-racism resources from the United Methodist Church's General Commission on Race and Religion, see [www.gcorr.org](http://www.gcorr.org)

### SUPPORT ST. PAUL'S COMMUNITY GARDEN MISSION

**TO HELP PLAN, COORDINATE, DEVELOP, MAINTAIN**  
**EMAIL [HSPAWE@STPAULSHOUSTON.ORG](mailto:HSPAWE@STPAULSHOUSTON.ORG)**

Next meeting: Friday, September 11, at 10:30 am via Zoom. To connect, email [hspaw@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:hspaw@stpaulshouston.org). Anyone interested in helping with this garden is encouraged to virtually attend Urban Harvest's "Starting a School or Community Garden Workshop." It will be held on Saturday, September 19, from 10 am to 12:30 pm via zoom. To register, go to [www.urbanharvest.org/education/classes](http://www.urbanharvest.org/education/classes), and select this class. You may find other classes of interest to you as well.

## Enjoy Chimney Swift Evenings at St. Paul's

St. Paul's provides shelter to hundreds of chimney swifts as they pass through Houston en route to South America in late summer.

After staying in the air all day eating airborne insects, at dusk chimney swifts begin swirling around our chimney before diving in for the night.

Primarily due to habitat loss, chimney swifts are categorized as "vulnerable," though not yet endangered.

In lieu of an organized Swift Night Out to count them alongside Houston Audubon ([www.houstonaudubon.org/birding/bird-surveys/swifts-over-houston](http://www.houstonaudubon.org/birding/bird-surveys/swifts-over-houston)) and Bellaire's Nature Discovery Center, this year we invite you to watch the birds from the large parking lot after sunset any evening.



## Computers to MacGregor

Thanks to everyone who stepped up to furnish computers for the children of our partner school, MacGregor Elementary, to use for distance learning.

By the end of August, more than \$12,100 and several laptops were collected to support the educational needs of these vulnerable children.

“Along with our neighbor church, South Main Baptist, we were able to cover all the laptops needed and also were able to purchase other technology needs to support learning from home,” Said Rev. Paul Richards-Kuan, Associate Pastor for Missions.

“While we are not able to support MacGregor with our usual teacher appreciation luncheons, mentoring services, and other in-person programming, we are still exploring ways to support the education of our neighborhood children,” he added.

“If you would like to join the mentors, when we are able to resume, please email me via [prichards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org/](mailto:prichards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org/).



St. Paul's Youth and their families are invited to stop by the patio of Bodega's Taco Shop ([www.bodegastacoshop.com](http://www.bodegastacoshop.com)) and Fia's Pizzeria ([www.fiaspizzeria.com](http://www.fiaspizzeria.com)), 1200 Binz, on Sunday, September 13, between 5 and 7 pm to pick up “Do Mor Gud” t-shirts and other goodies from the Youth Department. They also may put the “Do Mor Gud” theme into action immediately by purchasing supplies to make Manna Bags to distribute in their community and are invited to dine on the patio or pre-order take out.

## Girl Scout Silver Award Project Helps Children — and their Parents — through Pandemic Creatively

Mira Yankowsky, an eighth-grader at Hogg Middle School, used her time this summer to conduct a project to earn her Girl Scout Silver Award.

She developed an innovative way to teach Bible stories at home. She created craft boxes for the children of St. Paul's. Invitations to participate were sent to families' homes through St. Paul's e-letter to Families with Kids, and those who wished to participate completed the order form, which included the children's age ranges, a blank to state any food or material allergies, and the dates for delivery of the boxes.

She then created the boxes and provided them at the church for contact-less pick up on Wednesdays. She is pictured with her last delivery is pictured at right.

The Girl Scout Silver Award is the highest honor a Cadette can achieve. To earn it, they focus on an issue they care about, learn the facts, and take action to make a difference.

## EAC Adapts to Serve Growing Clientele

The Emergency Aid Coalition (EAC) continues to serve approximately 400 sack lunches each weekday, requiring clients to practice physical distancing and providing masks for those without.

Urgent needs vary a bit each week. To ensure receiving the weekly update, email [info@eachouston.org](mailto:info@eachouston.org).

Clothing is now distributed by appointment with no physical contact.

Ongoing needs include boxer shorts in sizes M, L, and XL; men's jeans, sizes 30, 32, and 34 in various lengths; and large tubs of peanut butter. Also needed are fresh fruit (apples, oranges, bananas); peanut butter or cheese crackers; large jars of grape jelly, canned fruit, individually packaged trail mix, and “pop-top” items with protein such as tuna, Vienna sausages, pork and beans, bean dip, and Chef Boyardee pasta meals.

Shop Amazon wish list: <https://a.co/3b79tEQ>. The EAC has requested that Amazon orders be delivered between 8 am and 1 pm M-F. If you live near the church, arrangements can be made for an EAC volunteer to pick up your order from your home.

And donate local bakery goods through Three Brothers Bakery: [www.3brothersbakery.com/product/provide-a-mitzvah-make-a-donation](http://www.3brothersbakery.com/product/provide-a-mitzvah-make-a-donation).



## Good-bye Long Summer, Hello Fabulous Fall

After a summer of frequently changing plans, pivoting to new opportunities, St. Paul's held the annual Locomotion Promotion on Sunday, August 30, in a new format.

Rather than children and their families rolling around the circle drive in the traditional trackless train, they rolled through it in their family cars.

Greeted by their masked teachers and clergy, they also were given St. Paul's yard signs, curriculum, and other goodies from the children's ministry department and the opportunity to sign up for one of the children's choirs.

Fall programming for children and youth begins Saturday, September 12.



## Families with Children

Dropbox folders with a new video, Wednesday Bible Stories, and Sunday lessons are sent via email to families with children. A new link to September 13 classes will be in the weekly eletter to families with children. To ensure receiving these and the links to join Zoom gatherings, contact Rev. Kate Flint via [kflint@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:kflint@stpaulshouston.org).

Also, check the Children's Ministries Facebook Page for activity ideas and Children's Ministry news.

### Gathering Times

GROW (2nd-5th-grades) starts meeting at 9:45 am on Sundays on September 13, still via Zoom.

Joyful Noise, the music and worship assembly for three-year-olds through 1st graders, and Primary Children's Sunday School meet via Zoom at 9:45 am. Connect through Rev. Kate Flint: [kflint@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:kflint@stpaulshouston.org) or Anna Teagarden: [ateagarden@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:ateagarden@stpaulshouston.org)

## Youth

Currently, all Youth (grades 6-12) meet via Zoom on Sundays from 2 to 3 pm and Wednesdays from 7 to 8 pm. The Sunday sessions include a Sunday School type of lesson, small group discussions, and a chance to connect with other St. Paul's Youth.

In late August the Youth began an online book group that meets Fridays at 7 pm.

The Youth may transition to small, in-person, outdoor "porch party" gatherings this fall, consistent with CDC guidelines and St. Paul's Re-Gathering Plan.

The date for formal Confirmation classes to begin is being determined.

To ensure receiving the latest Youth-related information, email Tiffin Wilsford via [tiffin@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:tiffin@stpaulshouston.org) or Oksana Schwak via [oksana@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:oksana@stpaulshouston.org).

## Parents - Zoom for Now

*Amazing Parents, Amazing Kids (APAK)*. For families with children with special needs. Meets first Sundays at 1 pm. To connect, email Jennifer West via [vcjwest@gmail.com](mailto:vcjwest@gmail.com).

*St. Paul's Moms Hang Out*. 2nd and 4th Mondays at 8 pm. To connect, email Rev. Kate Flint via [kflint@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:kflint@stpaulshouston.org). Current study focuses on identifying implicit bias in our parenting as we strive to raise children with better awareness of social justice.

*St. Paul's Single Moms Circle*. 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 8:30 pm. To connect, email Helen Spaw via [hspaw@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:hspaw@stpaulshouston.org).

## Adults, Mostly

### Sundays - Streamed

*Ordinary Life*. Streamed at 9:45 am. To connect, around 9:30 am, go to [www.ordinarylife.org/live-stream-broadcast](http://www.ordinarylife.org/live-stream-broadcast). Current series: *InterBeing: How Jesus and Buddha*

*Can Guide Us through the Pandemic*. For more about this class, go to [www.ordinarylife.org](http://www.ordinarylife.org).

### Sundays - Zoom

Listed in time, then alphabetical, order:

*Centering Prayer* from 8:15 to 9:35 am. To connect, email Enod Gray via [enodhgray@gmail.com](mailto:enodhgray@gmail.com).

*Candlelighters* at 9:45 am. To connect, email Beverly McMahan via [bjmcmah@swbell.net](mailto:bjmcmah@swbell.net).

September topic: Rev. Rick Pettys teaches series on Phiippians: *It's Not Your Mail; It's a Letter to Someone Else!*

*Journeys* at 9:45 am. Currently on vacation. To re-connect, email Gary Payne via [gary.payne001@gmail.com](mailto:gary.payne001@gmail.com) or Kyle Frazier via [kyle@frazierlawhouston.com](mailto:kyle@frazierlawhouston.com)

*Roundtable* at 9:45 am. Taught by John Feather. To connect, email Tom Cole via [tscole6234@yahoo.com](mailto:tscole6234@yahoo.com). Current topic: *The Book of Mark*.





**Special Studies** at 9:45 am. To connect, email Sol Bobst via [smbobst@yahoo.com](mailto:smbobst@yahoo.com). Current topic: *Heretics and Heroes: How Renaissance Artists and Reformation Priests Created Out World* by Thomas Cahill

**Epworth Young Adult League** at 10 am. Resumes on September 13. To re-connect, email Rev. Dr. Jim Bankston via [jimbankston@yahoo.com](mailto:jimbankston@yahoo.com).

**Living Faith** at 10 am. To connect, email Leah Barton via [leahrachel@gmail.com](mailto:leahrachel@gmail.com). September schedule:

- Sept. 6 - Back-to-School social.
- Sept. 13 - Movie night with Tom Thrash (movie tbd).
- Sept. 20 - Book Club: *Parenting the Modern Teen: The Secret to Understanding, Connecting and Communicating with Your Teenager in a Disconnected, Distracted and Digital World* by Louise Clarke
- Sept. 27 - Book Club: *Prophetic City* by Stephen Klineberg - Discuss implications for St. Paul's.

**Living Room** at 10 am. To connect, email [juliannet-kasper@gmail.com](mailto:juliannet-kasper@gmail.com). Current topic: Led by Justin Flint, the class is examining different ways to think about and interpret the Bible through thought experiments, difficult questions, and a set of lenses ranging from literary criticism to mysticism.

**POV Forum** occasionally meets via Zoom To connect, email Chris Newlin via [chrismnewlin@gmail.com](mailto:chrismnewlin@gmail.com).

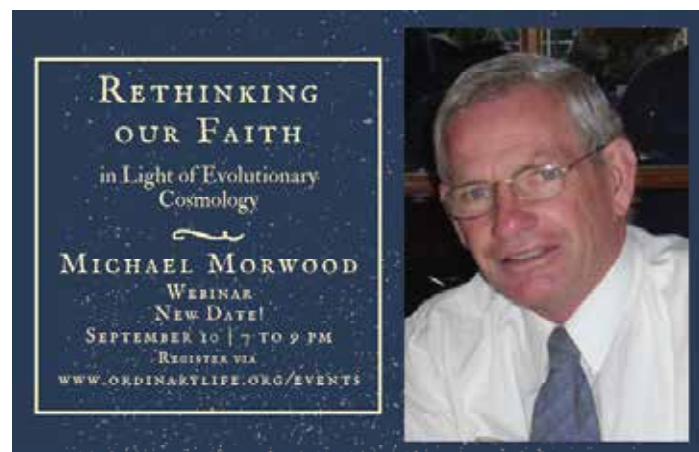
## Sundays - Whatsapp

**Fe y Esperanza** at 5 pm. Share a scripture reading in Spanish and a brief refection. Also as needed. To connect, email Rev. Nataly Negrete via [nataly@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:nataly@stpaulshouston.org).

## Tuesdays

**Tuesday Lectionary Bible Study with Rev. Paul richards-Kuan.** At noon via via Zoom. To connect, email [prichards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:prichards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org).

**Young Adult (Epworth) League Night.** Resumes in October. To connect with this city-wide ministry for 18-35-year-olds, email Rev. Karyn Richards-Kuan via [krichards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:krichards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org).



Morwood's lecture at St. Paul's last year is available on YouTube

## Wednesdays

**Men's Lectionary Bible Study with Rev. Dr. Jeff Mcdonald.** Wednesdays at 7:30 am via Zoom. To connect, email Brad Harmes via [bharmes@gmail.com](mailto:bharmes@gmail.com).

## Thursdays

**Women's Lectionary Bible Study with Rev. Barbara Robberson.** Thursdays at 8:30 am via Zoom. To connect, email Beverly McMahan via [bjmcmah@swbell.net](mailto:bjmcmah@swbell.net)

**Sugar Land Sisters.** 1st & 3rd Thursdays at 10 am via Zoom. To connect, email Judy Leatherwood Smith via [leatherwoodjl@aol.com](mailto:leatherwoodjl@aol.com).

**Her | meneutics.** 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 6:30 pm via Zoom. To connect, email [hermeneuticsSPUMC@gmail.com](mailto:hermeneuticsSPUMC@gmail.com)

**Ordinary Life Women.** Usually 1st Thursday at noon. After summer break, re-convening September 2 in hybrid of small in-person groups and Zoom. September topic: *How Cities Can Tackle Violent Crime without Relying on Police.* To connect, email Lynn Schroth via [lynnmschroth@yahoo.com](mailto:lynnmschroth@yahoo.com).

**St. Paul's Primetimers.** To connect: [primetimers@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:primetimers@stpaulshouston.org).

- September 17 program: A virtual tour at 11 am of the *Women Warriors of China* exhibit at the Asia Society Texas
- October 8 program: A virtual tour at 11 am of the *Gone to Texas: Part of the Nation's Immigration Story* exhibit at the Bullock Texas State History Museum.

## Book Groups

**Beyond the Book: An Anti-Racism Learning Group.** Meets 4th Sunday from 1 to 3 pm via Zoom. The group covers books on race and justice and learns more about their related topics and space of action. Alternate reading months with working months. On current reading list are *Just Mercy*, *How to Be an Anti-Racist*, *So You Want to Talk about Race*, and *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*. Questions or to sign up, email Rev. Karyn Richards-Kuan via [krichards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:krichards-kuan@stpaulshouston.org)

**Chapter One Book Group.** Meets 3rd Tuesdays at 7 pm via Zoom. To connect, email Linda Harmes via [hblinda@hibit.com](mailto:hblinda@hibit.com). Upcoming books: September 15: *The Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri and October 20: *The Disappearing Earth* by Julia Phillips

**Ordinary Life Book Group.** Meets 3rd Monday evenings via Zoom. To connect, email George Sroka via [george.a.sroka@gmail.com](mailto:george.a.sroka@gmail.com). September 15: *White Fragility: Why It's so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* by Robin DiAngelo.

**New! Youth Book Club.** Fridays at 7 pm. Current Book: *Live Fearless: A Call to Power, Passion, and Purpose* by Sadie Robertson. To connect, email Oksana Schwack via [oksana@stpaulshouston.org](mailto:oksana@stpaulshouston.org)

## Congregational Survey Summary

Earlier this summer, we asked the St. Paul's community to participate in a congregation-wide survey. The response was amazing! More than five hundred of you took the time to share your thoughts; we are grateful for your insights.

In creating a snapshot of St. Paul's at this pivotal point in our history, the survey respondents have enabled us to begin determining what to stop, what to continue, and how to grow for the future post-COVID. We anticipate the next phase will involve small group conversations to envision the next steps in our growth, possibly via Zoom. A summary of responses follows. For a more extensive report, please see [www.stpaulshouston.org/congregational-survey-summary](http://www.stpaulshouston.org/congregational-survey-summary).

### What brought you to St. Paul's?\*

Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents were attracted by St. Paul's style of worship — with strong emphasis on preaching and music — as well as location, architecture and theology.

### Who Were the Respondents?

At 86.5%, the bulk were St. Paul's members, and almost twice as many females (61%) responded as males (37.4%). While all ages groups live in the households of respondents, we are a largely older congregation:

Although 34.9% live within 10 miles from the church, more than a quarter (26.5%) drive more than 15 miles to worship. While distance is not a limiting factor for 71.2% to participate in church activities beyond Sunday worship, a key inhibitor was traffic.

### Who do we strive to be?

The words of the *Vision Statement* strike a chord with the respondents: 44.9% strongly agree, and 37% agree; 10.9% are neutral; and the remaining 7.2% disagree or strongly disagree.

However, respondents had strong opinions about specific phrases in the Vision Statement.

The word "cathedral" is a flashpoint for many, who note that by definition, a cathedral is the seat of a bishop, and in the Methodist Church, bishops do not have seats; the usage focuses on a building, not on a community. Others pointed out that it presents an image of exclusion/exclusivity that is inconsistent with the vision of inclusion expressed in the statement.

Others questioned the use of "embodying diversity," noting that the phrase is misleading in that our

congregation is overwhelmingly white: we may promote diversity but we do not see it in the pews on Sunday.

Respondents agreed that we are "inclusive," particularly with LGBTQ issues, but we could do more. And we could be more inclusive and welcoming to visitors and new members.

Many noted an absence of any reference to Jesus Christ or Christianity

Agreement with the *Mission Statement's* wording also is overwhelming, with 40.8% strongly agreeing; 42.5% agreeing; 13.3% neutral; and only 3.4% disagreeing/strongly disagreeing.

However, a large number questioned key phrases. Respondents wondered if "vibrant" is an accurate description of St. Paul's traditional worship services. Some expressed a desire for more variety in Creeds, music, worship, and preaching styles.

Others expressed concern that the Mission Statement is too focused on the concept "Enter to Worship" and diminishes the "Depart to Serve" element. Some believe that the statement is too broad and question the outreach to "all peoples and all communities." A number noted that a reference to Jesus should be central. Last, while the Mission Statement addresses "hospitality," many new members struggle to find a place here

### How well do we communicate?

Most (92%) are happy with the amount of communication they receive from St. Paul's. The majority utilize more traditional on-line resources, with the *Chimes* being the most read and best regarded. Approximately 65% utilize the website. Both the weekly pastoral message and the

special messages are viewed by approximately 60%, and more than half use the Sunday Bulletin regularly.

More than half found social media to be non-applicable, and many stated that they are unaware of certain communication vehicles.

### How do we live out our faith?

Pre-Covid 19, respondents were equally split between attending an adult study class or Sunday school class. However, currently 40% of respondents no longer attend a class.

Comments include a desire for more weekday and evening Bible studies and more Disciple study offering and that Fellowship Fridays are good for community building

Examples of other programming or opportunities to be explored included Family-oriented mission activities; Anti-racism programming; Local outreach, particularly to the 3rd Ward; Social justice action; Interfaith activities/lectures; and Retreats.

### How do we support our church?\*

Respondents live out their vows of membership to St. Paul's by their

- Presence in worship and other gatherings - 83%
- Annual pledge/gift - 56%
- Recurring gift - 49%
- Prayer for the congregation, as individual or in a prayer group - 45%
- Volunteering at church - 32%
- Expertise used to support the church, programs, or missions - 20%
- Volunteering as a teacher or mentor (children, youth, adults) - 13%
- Church leadership - 12%

Yet many still seek ways to take a more active role in the life of St Paul's.