

From the Minister

This Sunday is our worship service for Black History month. Here we seek to balance the telling of history to include the marginalized and oppressed. It is our story and racism is a real and ongoing issue in Canada. Many of us believe that we are not racist and choose to remain ignorant to the subtle and systemic racism that many face in their lives. We hold onto the myth that we are an inclusive society. We insist that people must “fit in” with our culture while not stopping to learn how we can embrace the cultural diversity that makes Canada so wonderful today.

I had a long conversation with a good friend of mine who is a different race than I am. I asked him to share with me his experiences of racism and more importantly, to help me comprehend the polite and yet subtle ways that this happens. Wow, I learned a lot about myself and my own forms of racism that I never would have realized until I took the time to truly listen to him.

The United Church of Canada encourages us to include this important topic in our worship. To be a follower of Christ is to strive to love others as God loves them. It is always a path that challenges us to be authentic and walk with integrity. Facing racism is one way in which we do that.

Worship



Sunday, Feb. 12, 2023

St. Paul's United Church, Midland, ON

<https://youtube.com/live/9XysP8Dp7N8?feature=share>

Worship with us in person on Sundays at 10:00 a.m. or online. Click the link above to go directly to the service or visit our website at www.stpaulsmidland.org and use the direct

YouTube link at the top of the page. Or you can simply go to YouTube and subscribe to our channel. Just type in "St. Paul's Midland" and you will find us.

St. Paul's ZOOM Coffee Hour



Our next **ZOOM** coffee hour is **this Sunday, February 12th** at 1:00 p.m. This is a really fun gathering with lots of laughter and sharing. If you haven't tried it or its been a while, we invite you to join us. It is a way to stay connected, especially for those who are not able to attend church in person and for those in our congregation who do not live locally but join us on online. You can continue to use the same link as before: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89969004401>

In-Person Coffee Hour

Join us on **Sunday February 19th** after service for our in-person coffee hour. We are looking forward to gathering together again on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month.

Congregational News

We sadly have had two more passings of members of our congregation. Heather Wilson's father passed away on Saturday, February 4th and Barb Pakulak passed on Monday, February 6th. Please keep their families in your thoughts and prayers.

We are currently asking for prayers for Syria and Turkey as they face the devastating aftermath of the earthquake. It has been declared a state of emergency in 10 provinces extending across southern Turkey for the next three months. The combined death toll has now exceeded 5,000 and counting in Turkey and Syria. Please pray for these countries as they strive to recover from this tragedy.

On the Way to the Red Carpet: Our very own Shayla Brown, just 19 years old, from Port McNicoll, is enjoying much well-deserved fame with her role in "Women Talking" in theatres now. Rooney Mara, Claire Foy, Jessie Buckley, Sheila McCarthy and Judith Ivey, with Ben Whishaw and Frances McDormand, star in Sarah Polley's fearless adaptation of Miriam Toews' acclaimed novel about a cloistered world where women struggle with an epidemic of abuse. The film "Women Talking" is based on a book by Canadian Author Miriam Toews. Both the book and film tell the stories of several sexual assaults that took place in a Mennonite community. The film follows a group of women in a religious colony struggling to reconcile their faith moving forward after discovering that they've been subject to years of sexual abuse. It is a very powerful and moving film and has been nominated for two Academy Awards: Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay. How wonderful, Shayla! St Paul's is so very proud of you and your accomplishments.



Volunteers Needed

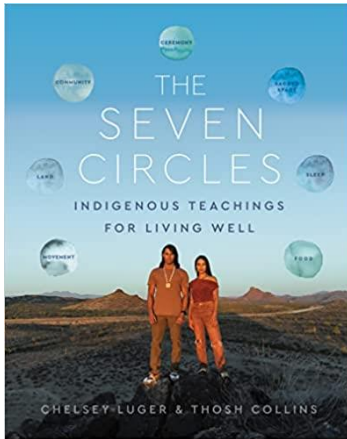
We are still seeking volunteers here at the church. We have a variety of committees and other volunteer positions available. Without our volunteers, we could not be the church, so please prayerfully ponder if you might be able to help. Some of our committees meet in person, others by Zoom. Please call the church office, Karen or Sue Dorion, our Chair of the Board. We will be happy to speak to you and explore where you might feel you are able to contribute, even if only for a few hours every now and then.

UCW

There will be a UCW meeting on **Tues. Feb. 14th at 1:30 p.m.** in the Parlour. Zena will be speaking about St. Paul's role in bringing refugees to come and live in Canada. All ladies of the congregation are welcome.

Faith Formation

During Lent, you are invited to an **eight-week study starting on Wed/ Feb. 15th, 2023 - April 5th, 2023 by Zoom on Wednesday afternoons from 1:00-2:00 p.m. We will be studying a book called "The Seven Circles"**: This book encourages us to honour our own path to wholeness including our spirituality while learning more about these ancient teachings.



How the book is described in the cover jackets is this:

In *The Seven Circles*, Luger and Collins share intimate stories from their life journeys growing up in tribal communities. Along the way, Luger and Collins invite readers to both adapt these teachings to their lives as well as do so without appropriating and erasing the original context, representing a critical new ethos for the wellness space. Each chapter closes with practical advice on how to engage with the teachings, as well as wisdom for keeping that particular circle in harmony with the others.

With warmth and generosity—and 75 atmospheric photographs by Collins throughout—*The Seven Circles* teaches us how to connect with nature, with our community, and with ourselves, and to integrate ancient Indigenous philosophies of health and wellbeing into our own lives to find healing and balance.

If interested, you would need to order your book right away as it is taking longer to get this book since it is hot off the press. As it is a new book, it is only available in hard cover for \$37 - the same price both at Georgian Bay Books here in Midland, Chapters (online only not yet in stores) or on Amazon. Amazon offers a kindle option which is much cheaper. I am not sure if you can purchase the same locally. There is a copy in the Midland Public Library. Should anyone find this price too steep, please speak to me and we can perhaps provide some assistance confidentially. Please let me know if you are interested in joining us.

Contact Karen if you would like to be part of this 8-week study group. She can be contacted by phone at 705-433-1224 or by email minspucmidland@gmail.com.

Discovery Kids update

Faith Formation is excited to announce that we have expanded to welcome in some volunteer teachers to help teach the Sunday Discovery Kids lessons. All of our teachers have been approved by and welcomed onto our St. Paul's Faith Formation Committee. Our current group of teachers include Rebecca Amadei, Heather McDonald, Kim Belfry, Kait Byrick and Lynne Angus. If anyone is interested in learning more about how to become a volunteer teacher, please reach out to Rebecca Amadei. 226 339 8218 rebeccaamadei@gmail.com.

Take Out Dinner

We will be hosting a take-out dinner on **Wed. February 22nd**, with **pick up between 4:30-5:00 p.m.** We'll be serving an old favourite - ham and scalloped potatoes, a hot vegetable side

and coleslaw with dessert. The price is \$20 per meal, paid to the office in advance by cash, cheque or e-transfer. Thank you for your on-going support of our church's work.

Outreach: Coldest Night of the Year: St. Paul's is supporting our Guest House:

The Coldest Night of the Year event is an amazing family-friendly walk to help raise money for the Guest House Shelter, which serves people experiencing hurt, hunger and homelessness. We are so privileged to be able to participate in an event like this and we hope you will jump in too!

For this event on **Saturday February 25th**, we are looking for **volunteers** to join our **walking team**, that will walk the streets of Midland with a follow up chili supper for the walkers at St. Paul's. We are also looking for **volunteers** to help **set up and assist with the chili supper**. Lastly, **volunteers** are needed to assist as **hosts** for people coming to register or needing directions to our washrooms.

We are looking for **donations** from our congregation to support our St. Paul's walkers and this very important organization at work in our community. Come and be part of the solution to homelessness and lack of affordable housing in our community. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact the church office by email or contact Zena Pendlebury at 705-527-6789 or by email at zenapendlebury@gmail.com.



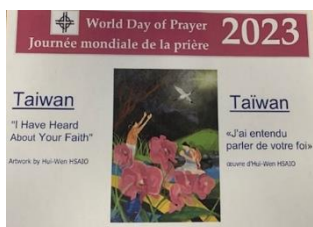
To donate you can go to the link that follows, which will take you directly to the St. Paul's Team page or you can send an e-transfer or cheque to the church with a note that is for the Benevolent Fund for the Coldest Night of the Year - St. Paul's team.

<https://secure.e2rm.com/registant/TeamFundraisingPage.aspx?teamID=995349&langPref=en-CA>

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Our AGM is scheduled for **Sunday, February 26th**, following the worship service. This year the meeting will be in-person. The 2022 Annual Report was emailed out yesterday and we encourage you to read it prior to the AGM.

World Day of Prayer



A World Day of Prayer event is taking place on **Friday, March 3rd** with a service here at St. Paul's at 1:30 p.m. The host writing country for 2023 is Taiwan. The service is written by the World Day of Prayer Committee of Taiwan and prepared for use in Canada by the Women's Inter-Church Counsel of Canada. Refreshments will follow the service. All are invited.

Office Hours

The office is open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Jane is in the office on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. You can reach her by email at officesecretaryspuc@gmail.com or by phone at 705-526-6077. Louise is in the office on

Wednesday mornings. The remainder of the time (between Tuesday and Thursday until 4:00 p.m.). Louise can be reached at stpaulsunited@rogers.com or at her home phone number 705-526-1640.

This Week's Minute for Mission

**GOD'S MISSION
OUR GIFTS**



**Grandmothers connect
love for their
grandchildren to God's love for all.**

We would like to introduce our new Annual Giving Lead, Glenn Waterman. Glenn felt drawn to this story of discrimination changing through education and compassion because it mirrored the work he was involved in at two of his prior organizations, The Leprosy Mission and International Justice Mission. In both cases, one through stigma surrounding leprosy and the other dealing with slavery, the people he interacted with needed understanding, compassion, and justice.

In the Rift Valley of Kenya, 7 percent of the people who live there are HIV positive—nearly 900,000—and many will not survive. Grandmothers whose children have died of AIDS are often left alone to care for their grandchildren. Even worse, their church community condemns them, leaving them alone without support as they raise their grandchildren.

Some pastors in the Rift Valley, as in many other places, believe and teach that faithful Christians cannot contract the disease and that it is a judgment from God—a disease for sexual sinners.

"The pastors had little information about HIV and AIDS; to them, and others in the community, it was a strange disease.... [They believed] HIV was a result of sexual sin and was a judgement from God for the sexually immoral," writes Esther Mombo of the World Council of Churches.

In partnership with the United Church, Mombo and Pauline Wanjuru of St. Paul's University in Limuru, Kenya, led a series of workshops in one Rift Valley community that has been hit especially hard by HIV/AIDS. They invited grandmothers and pastors to connect and learn from each other.

One grandmother who attended the workshops was 70 years old. She had lost both her daughter and her son and was left to raise three grandchildren on her own. Instead of stepping up to help, her neighbours refused to visit her because they said her daughter and son had been sexually immoral. Her pastor wouldn't even attend her children's funerals because he didn't want to be seen associating with her family. When she went to church, the pastor preached about the punishment for sexual immorality.

At the workshops, this woman bravely told her story to the pastors who attended. She also shared with them how it felt to be shamed for loving her children and grandchildren. Another grandmother explained that her grandchildren were born with the virus and couldn't have been involved in any sexual immorality. Yet another spoke of God's love for everyone. The pastors

listened and learned and ended by making a commitment to extend compassion and offer pastoral care to the grandmothers.

All of us know from our own life experience that when we know better, we do better. Your Mission & Service gifts gave these grandmothers the opportunity to help their pastors learn to do better by connecting their love for their grandchildren to God's love for all. Thank you.

Blessings everyone,

Rev. Karen Ptolemy-Stam, Minister, St. Paul's United Church 705-433-1224
minspucmidland@gmail.com

Church Administrator – Louise Therrien, (Tues. Wed. Thurs.) 705-526-1640
e-mail stpaulsunited@rogers.com
Louise works at the church office from 8:30 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays only.

Office Secretary – Jane Quigley (Tues. Thurs.) mornings 9:00 a.m.- 12 at the church.
705-526-6077.