

St. Paul's News ~ *January 2021*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Each year at Charge Conference, pastors are asked to prepare a Pastor's Report that summarizes their experience in ministry in the previous year. I always like to share this report with the entire church congregation. Below is the report I submitted to our District in November of 2020.

Jeremiah 29:11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. 12 Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. 13 When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

The year 2020 has been unlike any year that I have lived in my 45 years on this planet. Serving as a pastor in the year 2020 has been unlike any that I have served in my brief four-year career as a pastor.

None of the plans that I made for 2020 came to fruition, at least not in the way that they were originally planned. In person worship was interrupted. Christian education was interrupted. Small groups were interrupted. Church traditions were interrupted. Life was interrupted.

There is a saying in the church; a saying that has actually become sort of a joke in church circles. "This is how we have always done it." The year 2020 has proven that the church will continue to minister to all in ways that we have NEVER done it. When pressed into the most unusual circumstances the church has remained able

and (mostly) willing to do whatever it took to make ministry happen.

Pastors adapted when they were thrust into online ministry. AV people stepped up and took the lead to make sure that online worship could happen in a meaningful way. Church leaders adapted to be sure that administrative tasks could be cared for. Church staff adapted and turned their homes into offices so that congregations and pastors could be supported. Families adapted as dining room tables turned into offices and school rooms. Congregation members adapted as their lives were turned upside down and they were forced to look for new ways that God was moving in their lives and in the life of the church.

It has not been easy. There have been days that have been beyond difficult and there were moments that I wondered if anyone knew what would happen next. Then I turned to the words of Jeremiah 29:11 and remembered that God knew what would come and I had to ease into the future with the promise that God had a plan for prosperity of health and life and that God's plan included limitless hope.

There have been tears this year. There have been frustrations. There have been moments that were almost too much. But there has also been joy and laughter. There has been excitement. There have been moments of remembrance at funerals, as well as baptisms and confirmations celebrated outdoors where we could be safe. There have been great reminders that the church was never closed, in fact, the church was opened in ways never seen before. Praise God for God's plans!

I am grateful that we are turning the page onto January 2021; however, I also acknowledge that turning that page does not automatically change the circumstances we are currently living in. However, I know that God's mercies are new every day and I am beyond grateful for that. I look forward to all of the ministry opportunities that lay before our congregation in 2021. God's blessings be with you as the new year begins.

~ *Blessings, Pastor Charlene*



January birthday celebrations:

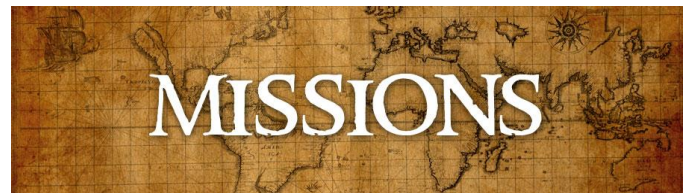
Shirley Counselman - January 23rd

Jan Rennels - January 20th

If you are over 80 years old and would like your birthday listed so we can celebrate you, please let the church secretary know. Thank you!



**A total of seventeen outfits were collected and given to the Salvation Army, who were extremely excited for the donations. All the outfits were dispersed to youth in Seneca County. Thank you to everyone who donated.
~ Sandy Arnold**



Our Church Missions have continued despite the pandemic. Our Thanksgiving Offering of \$635.00 was donated to F.A.C.T. in the name of Rex Huffman Jr. He was Joyce Randell's brother and is missed by family and friends. He passed away from cancer November 4th. F.A.C.T. is a local nonprofit agency dedicated to assisting Seneca County residents with cancer related expenses.

Even though we have not been in the church, the Angel Tree project collected 17 outfits for local children. Sandy Arnold delivered these to the Salvation Army. Thank you Sandy.

We had to cancel our participation in the December Sharing Kitchen due to their closure related to COVID problems. We were looking forward to working with our Youth Fellowship who had volunteered to help. We are hoping to schedule something like this again in 2021.

The Christmas Offering of ____ will go to First Call for Help-Heating Fund.

The Missions Committee is hoping our Church family had a safe, healthy, happy Christmas and New Year. We will be back in 2021.

~ Denise Lawson for the Missions Committee

PRAYER WALKS

In a moment of frustration, Pastor Amy Vittorio and I wished that there was something that we could do to support healthcare workers and patients/residents of area healthcare facilities. Praise God that we were reminded that we always can offer comfort through the power of prayer (the most effective thing that we can offer in any circumstance). And so began our prayer walk ministry!

Each Sunday evening, we have gathered with a group of people from area United Methodist Churches and we have prayed for the staff and residents of these facilities. To date, we have visited Elmwood at the Shawhan, Seneca House, Autumnwood, Tiffin Rehab Center, Tiffin Mercy Hospital and St. Francis Home. We contacted each facility prior to scheduling the walk and each was grateful for our presence and our prayers. Residents were able to look out of windows and see us as we held up candles and signs and prayed for them and their caregivers.

The next time you feel that there is nothing that you can do to help a situation, remember that God works through us and empowers us with our prayers. God is offering us new and meaningful ways to support our community. We just need to be open to them.







Online Worship Update

Because Seneca County has had a dramatic increase in COVID-19 cases and has been declared a Red county according to the State of Ohio Alert System, the worship and trustees' committees have decided to offer online worship only. Please know that this difficult decision was made for the health and safety of all who are part of our faith community.

We are continuing to monitor the situation and will be re-assessing each week. Everyone wants to return to in person worship as soon as possible and we will return as soon as we are able.

Important Dates in 2021:

- East Ohio Annual Conference: June 16-19, 2021
- General Conference (Previously Postponed): August 29-September 7, 2021

Thank you so very much!

I wanted to express my gratitude to the St. Paul's church family for your kindness, compassion, and prayers at my brothers passing in early November and your Christmas donation to F.A.C.T. in his name. I am not a physical member of your family, yet you reached out to me with such care, you truly are an extension of Christ's love and you are appreciated. Thank you!

~ Joyce Randell, Secretary

Thank You!

December 20 seemed like a typical evening. I was sitting at my desk, preparing the e-mail with the worship link for Sunday morning. Suddenly, Dominic stood up and looked out the window and said “Mom, there are people outside.” Thinking that he must be hearing things, I go the door and look out the window.

The sidewalk of the parsonage was lined with people from St. Paul’s. They were holding balloons and they were singing Christmas carols. I could hardly believe my eyes and my ears.

After grabbing a mask and a sweater, I headed out onto the porch and the sight became even sweeter. My heart was overflowing with love and appreciation as I took in this scene.

I cannot express how grateful I am that you took time out of your schedules to come to the parsonage and Christmas carol for me. That would have been gift enough (because I know how precious your time is), but then I was presented with your love offering for me and my family. Thank you all for this generous gift.

You have blessed me so greatly. I cannot thank you enough.

~ Pastor Charlene, David, and Dominic (& Stella too)

