



Membership Matters...But Is It Ever Changing!

One of the most influential books I have ever read is *Why Christianity Must Change or Die* by Bishop John Shelby Spong. It is a fantastic book, but it does not really address membership in specific congregations. I find it interesting that a person like me—a person who has lived on both coasts of the United States and in several states in between, a person who finds change exhilarating—has spent most of my career in an institution that is often resistant to change.

Not only do I believe Christianity must change, but I also believe we need to rethink our understanding of church membership.

St. Paul's is the first congregation I have served that has a requirement to receive communion at least once a year in order to remain an active member. It is also the only church I have served where people wait until confirmation before receiving communion. Other churches I have served have been more like our Catholic brothers and sisters, celebrating First Communion in first or second grade.

I am fine with some restrictions. I agree that people need a certain level of instruction before receiving a sacrament or joining a church.

So while I am comfortable with the way things are, I think it would be interesting for the consistory and congregation to wrestle with the idea of what membership means in our church. The ideas that follow are not entirely my own. Years ago, I read a book that proposed alternative forms of membership, offering a variety of categories. Individuals or families could choose the category that best fit their current season of life and renew that commitment annually.

The categories went something like this:

Sustainers - These are generally long-time members who have been part of the church for generations. Because of health concerns, age, or other limitations, sustainers may not attend often. Yet many congregations are financially sustained by a handful of faithful people who quietly give far more than the rest of us.

They love God, love the church, and give generously. For years, churches felt that ministers should not know who gives or how much they give. Modern fundraisers often take a different view. Why not celebrate generosity? Why not thank people for their faithful support and allow them to teach the rest of us the joy of giving?

Sustainers may serve in leadership roles, but for the most part they have "been there and done that." Their wisdom and generosity continue to bless the congregation.

Whilers (As in, they attend once in a while.) Let's take what is often considered a pejorative term and turn it into something positive. Many Whilers have deep connections to the church. They were baptized here. Their grandparents served on consistory. They may have been married here.

These people genuinely love and value the church and its presence in the community. However, they are busy people. Honestly, they are probably never going to read Scripture on a Sunday morning, attend a Bible study, or volunteer for a mission project. It isn't because they don't value those things; it's because they simply cannot squeeze one more commitment into their schedules.

Whilers may attend every month or two, but they often give generously and appreciate knowing the church is here. We need our Whilers. They may even serve on leadership teams from time to time, though perhaps somewhat reluctantly.

Seekers and Friends - As the name suggests, these are people who are exploring their options. They probably like us, but they may not be ready to jump into the deep end just yet.

Perhaps they started attending because they live nearby, because a friend invited them, or because they discovered us online. Seekers desire connection—with God, with Jesus, and with other people—but they are searching for the right environment in which to make those connections.

Many seekers would struggle to describe exactly what they are looking for. They simply know they will recognize it when they experience it.

Some come with specific spiritual questions; others come with a vague sense that something is missing and a hope that a church community might help them discover what that is.

Seekers often enjoy Bible studies and book discussions as much as worship. Financially, they may be willing to "pay as they go." They are unlikely to serve in leadership roles—at least not yet.

Pillars - As the name implies, pillars help keep the church standing. Pillars attend regularly, perhaps 50 percent of the time or more. They give generously, serve as deacons, read Scripture, volunteer for projects, and will do just about anything that needs doing—including shoveling snow.

For them, church membership is a significant part of life. Many are third- or fourth-generation members. Church truly feels like family. Their faith has enriched their lives, and they want to give back through service.

Pillars are often the people who fill leadership positions and keep the ministry of the congregation moving forward.

OA Members - OA stands for "Overachievers." These are people who enjoy setting goals and pursuing them. An individual or family might declare their intention to become an OA member for the coming year. If they achieve their goals, there could even be a year-end celebration.

To become an OA member, you might agree to:

1. Attend worship at least 50 percent of the time.
2. Participate in at least one Bible study or book study.
3. Work on at least two mission projects during the year.
4. Participate regularly in some ongoing ministry.
5. Explore whether tithing (giving 10 percent of your income) is possible for your household.
6. Take the pastor golfing, to dinner, or to a show at least once during the year. (just seeing if anybody reads this far).
7. Contribute regularly to worship life, whether through music, technology, hospitality, or another meaningful role.

Mission Accomplished!

Our Mission Team recently returned from a meaningful week of service in Wooster, Ohio, located in the heart of Ohio's Amish and Mennonite communities.

Throughout the week, team members had the opportunity to share Christ's love through acts of service, fellowship, and compassion.

The experience was both rewarding and inspiring as the team worked alongside others, and built new relationships, and witnessed God's presence in the lives of those they served. In addition to completing various projects, participants were blessed by the hospitality, faith, and sense of community they encountered throughout their time in Wooster.



We give thanks for the safe travels, dedicated service, and spiritual growth experienced by our Mission Team. Thank you to everyone who supported this ministry through your prayers, encouragement, and generosity. Together, we continue to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world.



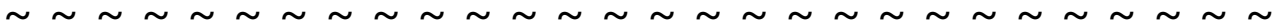
Little Library



The St. Paul's Little Free Library has been quite popular with readers of all ages. The idea is simple: Take any book and, when possible, replace it with a different one to be enjoyed by someone else.

To keep our library full of a variety of books, we need donations of used books for all ages. Children's and Teen's books especially are in high demand so if you have any laying around, please consider donating them to the Library.

Share the joy of reading * Build connections with our
neighbors * Expand book access for all



Aluminum Tabs

Sally Jane Payson is coordinating the aluminum tab collection for those of you who participate. The collected tabs will be delivered to the Miller Blood Bank, which gathers them in support of the Boy Scouts. Aluminum tabs from beverages and soup/pasta cans can be placed in the box located in the narthex. Thanks for supporting the Scouts!



Give Hope!



Our local families in need benefit greatly from your donations to the Northampton Food Bank. **Items needed:** peanut butter & jelly, boxed potatoes, canned potatoes, canned vegetables, canned soup, canned pasta, pancake mix & syrup, cereal, tuna fish. Non-perishable items and monetary donations can be dropped off at church or the church office. Thank you for caring and sharing!

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Redner's Save-A-Tape Program

Support St. Paul's every time you shop at Redner's! Simply save your receipts to help us receive a percentage back through their Save-A-Tape program. Our last check totaled \$329.57. Whole receipts can be placed in the Redner's receipt bag in the narthex or dropped off at the church office. Thank you for helping turn everyday shopping into a blessing for our church!

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Giant Gift Cards

If you shop at Giant, please consider participating in a great fundraising opportunity for St. Paul's through Giant's "Cash for Causes" program. **St. Paul's earns 5% of the face value of all the gift cards sold.** Gift cards are available in denominations of \$25, \$50 and \$100 and can be used like cash at any Giant location. If interested in purchasing gift cards, please contact Cindy Swankoski 484-560-6542.

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St. Paul's Prayer Partners help to provide hope, spiritual support and help to bring a deep sense of comfort to someone going through a difficult time. If you would like to become a prayer partner, or have prayer requests/updates, please contact Sally Jane Payson by email @ sallyjane1717@ya*hoo.com

LET US REMEMBER IN PRAYER: Lynne Schlager, Faye Kern, Alison Delabar, Peggy Moser, Betty Stolz, John Stolz, Ronald Lobach, Keith Beil, Lynnel Groller, Kenneth & Peggy Kohler, Consistory, churches, nation and leaders, U.S. Military, many refugees, and persecuted Christians.

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Celebrating Independence Day – 250 Years of Our Nation

As we celebrate Independence Day, we give thanks for the freedoms and blessings we enjoy as a nation. This year marks the 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a historic milestone in our country's journey. May we remember with gratitude those who have served and sacrificed for our freedom, and may we continue to pray for peace, unity, and God's guidance for our nation.



**St. Paul's UCC
Financial Report
May 2026**

Current Income:	\$16,272.61
Benevolence:	195.00
Building & Maintenance:	1,691.25
Mission Fund Income:	100.00

Total Income: \$18,258.86

Current Expenses:	\$ (1,142.96)
Utilities (Church & Annex)	(652.00)
Pastor's Expense:	(9,668.78)
Lay Staff Expense:	(4,064.19)
Benevolence:	(629.20)
Building & Maintenance:	(3,342.20)
Christian Education:	(30.00)
Convergence (1 st Payment):	(3,250.00)
Vanco Fees (E-Give):	<u>(14.03)</u>

Total Expenses: (22,793.36)

Net Income (Loss): (4,534.50)

E-Give Offerings: \$452.46

Strengthen the Church Offering: \$170.00





Altar Flowers

July:

07/05 – Open
 07/12 – Open
 07/19 – Open
 07/26 – Open

August:

08/02 – No Flowers (Picnic)
 08/09 – Open
 08/16 – Open
 08/23 – Open
 08/30 – Open



Bulletins

July:

07/05 – Ronald Lobach
 07/12 – Phyllis Bartholomew
 07/19 – Ronald Lobach
 07/26 – Open

August:

08/02 – No Bulletins (Picnic)
 08/09 – Open
 08/16 – Open
 08/23 – Open
 08/30 – Open

The cost to sponsor the Altar flowers is \$30.00 and the Bulletins is \$10.00. Please sign up in the narthex or call the church office @ 610-261-2910 if you would like to sponsor.

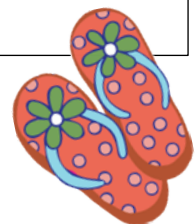
Note: There are two spaces available to sign up on the altar flower chart in the narthex. You are encouraged to sign up for any date even if someone else already has.

**July:**

07/05 – Karen Sands
 07/12 – Stacy Knecht
 07/19 – John Kromer
 07/26 – Dave Farkas

August:

08/02 – Kathy Kaintz
 08/09 – Karen Sands
 08/16 – Donald Biggs
 08/23 – Brian Saylor
 08/30 – John Demczyszyn





7/11 – Mr. & Mrs. Richard Bartholomew
7/26 – Mr. & Mrs. Michael Gabovitz



7/06 – Kenneth Kohler
7/13 – Daniel Knecht
7/17 – Richard Bartholomew
7/26 – Ryan Biggs
7/28 – Michael Gable
7/30 – Joyce Haines

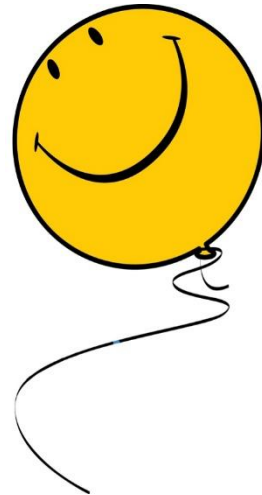




8/02 – Rudolph & Karen Klein
8/09 – John & Sandra Kokinda
8/17 – Maurice & Evelyn McNeely
8/18 – David & Penny Farkas
8/21 – Dennis & Marianne Michael
8/22 – James & Debra Gable
8/29 – Craig & Connie Markulics



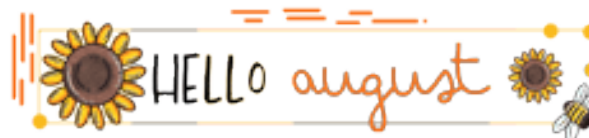
8/02 – Lori Balliet
8/03 – Matthew Hoh
8/04 – Kimberly Snyder
8/05 – Donna Biggs
8/06 – Karen Zemlansky
8/07 – Amelia Zeiner
8/12 – Donna Mohr
8/14 – Larson Schultz
8/17 – Edward Hawk, Jr
8/20 – Connie Markulics
8/22 – Sam Bubick
8/23 – Kelsey Williams
8/24 – Kirsten Gabovitz
8/29 – Kathy Kaintz
Christine Kromer



*Did we miss your special day?
Please call the church office and
let Christine know. Thank you.*



July 1 – 7:00 – Scouts (FH)
July 4 – Happy 4th of July!
July 5 – 10:30 – Worship w/Communion
July 6 – 7:00 – AA (parlor)
July 8 – 7:00 – Scouts (FH)
July 12 – 10:30 – Worship
July 13 – 7:00 – AA (Parlor)
July 15 – 7:00 – Scouts (FH)
July 19 – 10:30 – Worship w/Rev. Todd Fennell
July 20 – AA (Parlor)
July 22 – 7:00 – Scouts (FH)
July 26 – 10:30 – Worship
July 27 – AA (Parlor)
July 29 – 7:00 – Scouts (FH)



August 2 – 10:00 – Annual Combined Church
Picnic @ St. Peter's
August 3 – 7:00 – AA (parlor)
August 5 – 7:00 – Scouts (FH)
August 9 – 10:30 – Worship/Deadline for Sept.
Newsletter Articles
August 10 – 7:00 – AA (Parlor)
August 12 – 7:00 – Scouts (FH)
August 16 – 10:30 – Worship
August 17 – 7:00 – AA (Parlor)
August 18 – 6:30 – Consistory (Annex)
August 19 – 7:00 – Scouts (FH)
August 23 – 10:30 – Worship
August 24 – AA (Parlor)
August 26 – 7:00 – Scouts (FH)
August 30 – 10:30 – Worship
August 31 – 7:00 – AA (Parlor)





Pastor – Rev. Joel Biggers

Director of Christian Ed. – Melinda Does

Office Administrator – Christine Hostetter

Custodian – Shea Killeen

Church Office Phone – 610-261-2910

E-mail – stpaulsnorth@gmail.com

Website – www.stpaulsnorthamptonpa.org

Pastor's Office Hours: Thursday & Friday from 9:00-5:00 PM. Pastor Joel can be reached by email joelwbiggers@gmail.com or by calling 732-853-4809.

Church Office Hours: Mon., (8-12 PM) Tues., Wed., Thurs. (8-3 PM)

