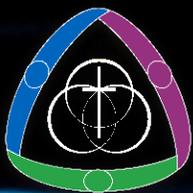
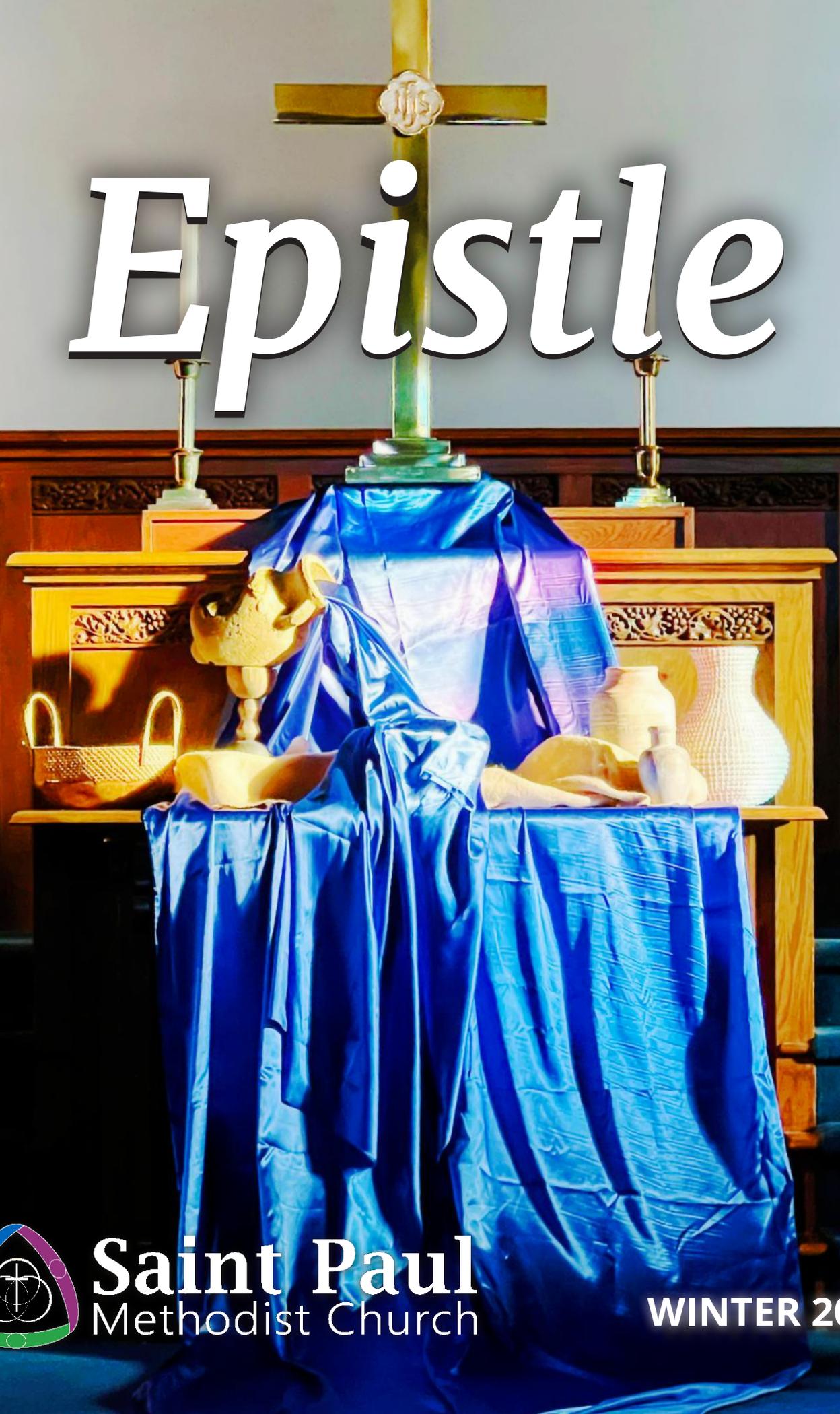


# *Epistle*



**Saint Paul**  
Methodist Church

**WINTER 2026**

# Welcome to the Saint Paul Epistle

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*Associate Minister*

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## STAY CONNECTED

Visit us online at  
[stpaulgoldsboro.org](http://stpaulgoldsboro.org)

Follow us on  
Social Media at



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[@stpaulgoldsboro](https://www.instagram.com/stpaulgoldsboro)

## Church Office Hours:

**Monday-Thursday**

**9 AM - 12 PM**

**& 1 PM - 5 PM**

**Friday**

**9 AM - 12 PM**

*(Closed on Fridays from  
Memorial Day to Labor Day)*

**Contact the  
Church Office at:**

**(919) 734-2965**

**[stpaul@stpaulgoldsboro.org](mailto:stpaul@stpaulgoldsboro.org)**



## *A Message From Our Senior Minister* **Rev. James H. Harry**

***Be still and know that I am God***

***Be still and know that I am***

***Be still and know***

***Be still***

***BE***

I would like to invite our congregation into a year of learning to be rooted deeply in Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means that the people of Saint Paul Methodist Church reaffirm our commitment to fulfill the promises we made when we joined the church and pledged to be faithful members of Saint Paul.

***Our Question:***

***Will you be loyal to Saint Paul Methodist Church, and make a covenant with the Lord to uphold it by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness?***

***Our Response:***

***I will.***

***Congregational Response:***

***Let us rejoice in the faithfulness of our covenant God. We renew our covenant to faithfully participate in the ministries of the Church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness, that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.***

Just as we re-affirm-ed and re-member-ed our baptism on January 11th of this year, I want us to re-affirm and remember the promises we made to Jesus, the Lord of the Church, in a fresh and new way for 2026. Perhaps a better word than promises for Christians is covenant. God invited his people into a covenant relationship with him. This covenant was entered into at God's invitation. And it is into this covenant relationship with him that God invites us to enter with joyful obedience.

# From Our Senior Minister

(continued)

- **Abrahamic Covenant:** I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. (Genesis 12:3, 17:7)
- **Mosaic Covenant:** “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession” (Exodus 19:5)
- **The New Covenant:** “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28)

I want our congregation to grow deeper in the Lord this year by living into our covenant with Him. We can do this by paying close attention to the Holy Spirit moving through Psalm 46:10. The Holy Spirit said, “BE STILL, and KNOW, that I AM GOD!” The Hebrew word to “Be still” used in this verse is the word *raphah* (רָפָה). It means literally to ‘let go,’ or to ‘relax one’s grip,’ or more particularly, ‘to surrender.’ When we ‘let go’ of ourselves and truly ‘surrender’ to God—giving him total control over our lives—we are better able to reaffirm the promises we made to follow Jesus and to be faithful

members of Saint Paul Methodist Church. So, how can we more fully surrender our lives to Christ in 2026 than we did in 2025?

Our theme for living into our covenant for 2026 is to:

**“BE HERE: Be in Community,  
Be in Covenant, Be in Christ.”**

I believe this will help all of us remember our baptism, remember our covenant, and grow in love with God as we live faithfully into our mission to WORSHIP together, GROW together, and SERVE together.

God invites us to BE STILL. And in this stillness, God calls us to BE!

**Be in Community**

**Be in Covenant**

**Be in Christ**

**Be Here!**





**Saint Paul**  
Methodist Church

Worship • Grow • Serve

**BE**

*in* **COMMUNITY**

*in* **COVENANT**

*in* **CHRIST**

**HERE**

# Advent WORSHIP Highlights

*Our children helped lead a traditional Hanging of the Greens Worship Service to kick off the first Sunday of Advent.*



***Thank You to our Saint Paul Kids who led our Advent Wreath Candle-lighting Readings and served as Acolytes!***



*We are deeply grateful for the powerful worship offering of our special Saint Paul Christmas Cantata Choir.*



*9am Worship Service Christmas Music Special*



*Saint Paul Community Christmas Concert*

# From our ASSOCIATE Minister



***Grace and peace to you, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.***

I'm grateful to be writing my first "epistle" to you here at Saint Paul. Even after just one month together, it already feels like we've been walking this road longer than that. From the very beginning, you have welcomed my family—Sarah, Becca, Ethan, Daniel, and me—with such genuine love, making us feel not just welcomed, but truly at home.

Any time we step into something new and good, fear can creep in, whispering that we don't belong or that we aren't enough. Scripture reminds us that this is often how the enemy works. And yet, throughout the Bible, whenever God calls someone, there is always a choice:

***To accept the call or to run from it.***

***And every single time, God proves faithful.***

I think of Jesus calling the fishermen from the shoreline, inviting them to leave their nets and follow Him. They were called right where they were. Their story reminds us that God calls each of us differently, but all of us share the same calling:

***To be disciples of Jesus who make disciples.***

This is something John Wesley understood well. Wesley believed that God's grace is already at work in people's lives, drawing them toward faith, community, and transformation. Following Jesus, then, isn't about having all the answers.

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***Here's what I'm learning: your view out the window might change. You might get called to a new place. But the garden—the place where God is growing you—doesn't really change. God is still shaping us, still teaching us, still calling us forward.***

---

It's about living the gospel daily, sharing our story, and inviting others to experience the goodness of God.

I truly believe God has called us into this season together. I'm thankful to walk this journey with you, and I'm excited to see what God will continue to do in and through Saint Paul as we move forward in faith. Never forget—you are called by God just like those men on the beach. "Come, follow me," Jesus says, "and I will make you fishers of men."

I also wanted to share a few photos from our new journey here in Goldsboro and this whole mainland-life thing, mixed in with some reminders of home from the Outer Banks. Back on the island, we have these awful little things called sand spurs—useless pricklers that stick to everything. I remember leaving and saying, "Praise God, I'll never have to step on another sand spur again."

Well, it turns out the mainland has its own version. The other day, I was walking through our backyard and discovered gumballs. They don't grow on the ground, but they sure fall on it—and stepping on one gets your attention real quick. Let's just say I'm learning not to walk barefoot quite as confidently as I used to.

Here's what I'm learning: your view out the window might change. You might get called to a new place. But the garden—the place where God is growing you—doesn't really change. God is still shaping us, still teaching us, still calling us forward.

It brings me right back to the call Jesus gives those fishermen, when He meets them right where they are and says, "Do not be afraid; from now on I will make you fishers of men." They weren't called after everything was figured out. They were called right in the middle of real life. And that's still how Jesus calls us today.

***With gratitude and hope,***

**"PT" Pastor Tim Fitch  
Associate Minister**

*Welcome to Goldsboro Pastor Tim, Sarah,  
Becca, Ethan, and Daniel Fitch!*





# From our *MUSIC* Ministry



## ***Greetings, Saint Paul Church!***

It is a privilege to be writing to you as the official Music Director of Saint Paul Methodist Church. As of January 1, I assumed this position full-time and have been working diligently since. I would like to take a moment to reflect on our music ministry during the Christmas season and share some of the exciting musical opportunities ahead in the coming year.

Christmas at Saint Paul was one of the most rewarding experiences I have had in my music ministry. Our choir presented a Christmas cantata accompanied by a string quartet and piano—an undertaking of a scale I had never directed before. I am incredibly proud of our dedicated choir for their hard work, commitment, and patience throughout the process. The culmination of the season was our Christmas Eve service. Hearing the congregation sing Silent Night in our beautiful sanctuary, candles held high, was a deeply moving moment of worship that I will never forget.

January has been nothing short of busy, as I have quite literally been getting the pipe organ under my feet. Being at Saint Paul and practicing daily has allowed me to fully concentrate on learning a new instrument. Learning the organ and worshiping Christ through it has been a dream of mine for several years, and I cannot adequately express my gratitude for the opportunity to worship, grow, and serve in this capacity.

***My vision is for this ministry to be a beacon of light in Goldsboro and the surrounding communities, and a hub for developing future church musicians.***

In addition to planning and learning new music, I have also been working to relaunch the Thera McPhail School of Sacred Music, which is set to reopen in February. This ministry is truly unique in Goldsboro. It provides access to music education for individuals who might otherwise never have the opportunity to take lessons, all while glorifying and honoring the Lord. The school unapologetically teaches basic musical fundamentals and sacred church music exclusively—something I am deeply proud of. My vision is for this ministry to be a beacon of light in Goldsboro and the surrounding communities, and a hub for developing future church musicians.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the many music and worship opportunities envisioned for Saint Paul, including a community hymn sing, a concert featuring beloved hymns and praise music on piano, and visits from world-class guest musicians and singers. Be on the lookout for these exciting events!

Coming to Saint Paul has answered many prayers. I am grateful for each of you and pray that the musical offerings I bring help usher you into the presence of the Lord. Thanks be to God for you all and for the gift of music.

*Zach Blackburn*  
Music Director

# From our CHILDREN'S Ministry

The New Year is often marked by a flurry of resolutions and renewed efforts - any number of means we enlist to make a change for the better. Yet it can also bring a quiet invitation - an opportunity to open our hearts to receive what God has in store for us - to lean into where God is leading us. It is as if the cold outside trickles in and informs our posture inside - slow down, rest in me. What a distinct change from where we have been the last couple of months.

Advent is a season in which it can be hard to quiet the external noise, the busy and the extra demands. So many things we really want to do which sometimes pull our focus from its rightful place. Yet in the midst of the bustle, our children came together - intentionally, tenderly - to bring Jesus into focus.

November gave way to the beginning of Advent: Our children had a wonderful, messy time learning the meanings of Christmon symbols and making their own ornaments to adorn both our Saint Paul Christmas trees and their own trees at home. Soon after, families joined together for an evening of fellowship to decorate the Saint Paul Christmas trees and create Advent wreaths. Each family received a devotion booklet for weekly worship, reflection and prayer; these, along with an Advent wreath, were also shared with our TLC friends.

Our children enthusiastically helped lead our congregation in a beautiful Hanging of the Greens service and continued to participate throughout Advent with readings and candle



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***Now, as we embark on  
a new year God is still  
with us. Even more  
- He's already gone  
before us.***

---

lightings during worship services. Nothing captured the Advent message more perfectly than the sincere pride in their eyes, knowing they had done something perhaps new to them, and certainly meaningful for their church. The Christmas Pageant was just as special as always and perfected in the donkey's "hee-haw!" of precious Price. As we began to settle into the last week of Advent, we enjoyed a festive caroling hayride to spread Christmas cheer.

So, all in all, we lit candles of hope, peace, joy and love. We read Isaiah 40:3-5 – *"A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it."* And the babe was born – Emmanuel, God with us - and we celebrated, hearts illuminated.

Now, as we embark on a new year God is still with us. Even more – He's already gone before us. As we journey into this new season and all it brings (Valentines! Egg Hunts!) God knows what lies ahead. So we plan and prepare with excitement and anticipation but ultimately, may we surrender all of these to the glory of God.

God, in all that we do in this year ahead, may our hearts be attuned to your loving invitations. May you use us to shepherd the children of Saint Paul for your glory, that with each passing year they may grow in their relationship with You and the discipleship of all your children.

**Mary George Barwick**  
**Children's Director**

# Advent CHILDREN'S Highlights



*Fun memories made at Advent Family Night!*



*Saint Paul Children's Christmas Pageant*

## Saint Paul Kid's Caroling Hayride



## Children's Sunday School Worship



# From our YOUTH Ministry



It is hard to believe that 2025 is in the rearview mirror as we press onward into 2026! We don't believe the first semester of Saint Paul Youth could have gone any better. We are so excited about where we are—and where we are headed!

The first semester had a lot to do with laying a foundation. We wanted to incorporate a program that was God-centered and to be consistent with our meeting frequency. Both of those objectives were accomplished. We created a first-semester calendar so that students and parents would always know when we were meeting and could plan accordingly. We received a lot of positive feedback, so we have done the same thing for the second semester. The calendar can be found on the church website. ([www.stpaulgoldsboro.org/youth-schedule-spring-2026](http://www.stpaulgoldsboro.org/youth-schedule-spring-2026))

Currently, we have anywhere from 15–25 students showing up on Sunday nights. We would love for this number to stay steady and continue to grow. Right now, we are more middle school-heavy in numbers, which didn't surprise us, as many of our high school students have been without a youth program for an extended period. We look forward to continuing to bridge that gap so our high school students feel wanted and welcomed.

A big step in that direction will be the ski trip coming up in February. We have 24 students going on this trip, and over half of them are in high school. We are hoping to use this ski trip as momentum and as a way to see these students

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***Our goal is to have  
THE youth group in  
Wayne County—a  
place where students  
want to come to  
have fun, fellowship  
with friends, and  
be challenged by  
Scripture and called  
to grow in their faith.***

.....



on Sunday nights on a regular basis this spring and moving forward. Please pray that the Lord has His hand on this movement. We are excited about our strong presence of middle schoolers combining with our high school students and forming ONE youth group. The future is SO bright!

Church members, you blessed us so much during the first semester. We did not have to come out of pocket a single time to feed the youth group—thank you! Because of your generosity, we were able to provide a meal every Sunday night. We hope to continue doing that this spring semester, but we need your help. Please visit the church website and register to feed the youth group. ([www.stpaulgoldsboro.org/youth-fellowship-meals](http://www.stpaulgoldsboro.org/youth-fellowship-meals)) One thing seems to be consistent with teenagers throughout history: “If you feed them, they will come!”

As we press forward, we ask that you continue to pray blessings and grace over the youth ministry. Our goal is to have THE youth group in Wayne County—a place where students want to come to have fun, fellowship with friends, and be challenged by Scripture and called to grow in their faith. Sharing the gospel with our youth will always be our number one priority. It will take a commitment from youth leaders and volunteers, our students, and our parents as we continue pushing this group to new heights.

Thank you, and we look forward to a fantastic 2026!

***Blessings,***

**Hadley & Bennett Johnson**  
**Youth Directors**

# Advent YOUTH Highlights

## Sunday Night Youth Fellowship





# SAINT PAUL YOUTH SPRING 2026

ALL 6-12<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS ARE INVITED  
FRIENDS ARE ENCOURAGED!

## JANUARY

11 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

18 NO YOUTH - MLK HOLIDAY

25 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

## MARCH

1 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

8 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

15 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

22 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

29 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

## FEBRUARY

1 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

5-8 YOUTH SKI TRIP

8 NO YOUTH

15 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

22 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

## APRIL

5 NO YOUTH - EASTER

12 NO YOUTH - SPRING BREAK

19 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

26 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

## MAY

3 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

10 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY

17 SAINT PAUL YOUTH SUNDAY  
END OF SEMESTER

ALL YOUTH SUNDAYS MEET IN THE YOUTH SUITE:

- 10:00-11:00 AM: YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL
- 5:30-7:00 PM: SUNDAY NIGHT YOUTH {DINNER @ 5:30}

 **Saint Paul**  
Methodist Church  
Worship • Grow • Serve  
204 EAST CHESTNUT ST. | GOLDSBORO

**BENNETT JOHNSON 252-315-7308**  
**HADLEY JOHNSON 910-849-4167**



# SIGN UP TO PROVIDE A YOUTH FELLOWSHIP NIGHT MEAL

*Help provide a meal for  
our Sunday Night Youth  
Fellowship gatherings!*

Support our  
Saint Paul Youth!



[www.stpaulgoldsboro.org/youth-fellowship-meals](http://www.stpaulgoldsboro.org/youth-fellowship-meals)

# Saint Paul WOMEN'S Ministry

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## *Saint Paul Methodist Women*

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## **Methodist Women's Circle Meeting Schedule**

### **Unity Circle:**

**1st Tuesday of the month at 11am**  
*(Saint Paul JP Edwards classroom)*

### **Faith, Hope, & Charity Circle:**

**2nd Tuesday of the month at 10:30am**  
*(Saint Paul Parlor)*

### **ACTS Circle:**

**2nd Wednesday of the month at  
6:30pm** *(upstairs of Hinnant Family  
Dentistry)*

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*Titus 2 Women's Ministry*



# HOSPITALITY Ministry

## *Welcoming New Members & Baptisms*

*On November 30, 2025 we were excited to welcome Hannah, Aurelia "Ari" (10) , Brett (8) , and Heidi (6) Lewis in covenant membership at Saint Paul Methodist Church. Ari, Brett, and Heidi were received through Holy Baptism.*



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## ***Holy Baptism***

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*On January 11, 2026 Mary Tayloe McLemore Buckman was baptized into Christ's holy church in the Sanctuary at Saint Paul Methodist Church.*



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## ***Hosting the GMC Bishop***

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*On January 5 & 6, 2026, Saint Paul was honored to host the Bishop of the Global Methodist Church, Bishop Jeff Greenway, and the GMC pastors from churches across the eastern North Carolina area for a time of worship, teaching, and pastoral development. Thank you to everyone who helped to serve and extend a warm Saint Paul welcome during this time!*

# BEREAVEMENT Ministry



## ***Maye Spivey Gurley Myers***

Maye Spivey Gurley Myers, of Goldsboro, North Carolina, passed away on Wednesday, December 3, 2025, at Kitty Askins Hospice Center, surrounded by the love of family, friends and her minister.

A service to celebrate Maye's life will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 11, 2025, in the sanctuary of Saint Paul Methodist Church, Goldsboro, North Carolina, with Reverend James H. Harry officiating. The family will receive friends following the service at the church. Private entombment will take place at Wayne Memorial Park.

Born in Kenly, North Carolina, Maye was the daughter of the late John Maynard and Mary Caroline Mitchell Spivey. Maye was an active and faithful member of Saint Paul Methodist Church. She found purpose in her church community

through the J. Paul Edwards Sunday School Class and through her service on the bereavement committee, as an office volunteer, and as a member of the altar guild and prayer team. She also served on the administrative board and led her church circle, giving generously of her time and care to her congregation.

Having received her early education in the Kenly Public Schools, Maye went on to graduate from Atlantic Christian College with a degree in business. Maye began her career with the Wayne County Health Department in 1956 as a Clerk-Typist III. Over the course of 35 years, she advanced to Clerical Unit Supervisor V and Administrative Officer II. She was appointed Acting Health Director in 1986 and became Health Director in 1987. Maye retired in September 1991 after decades of dedicated and compassionate service in public health, including five years as the local health director of the Wayne County Health Department.

Maye was a member of the North Carolina Public Health Association (NCPHA), the Eastern District NCPHA, and the North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors. She was honored to serve as the first President of the North Carolina Local Public Health Management Support Supervisors Association and was an active member of the Legislative Committee and Policy Planning Committee of the North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors.

Throughout her distinguished career, Maye received numerous honors and awards for her service in public health, including the esteemed Watson S. Rankin Award. Beyond her professional achievements, she devoted herself to a wide range of civic and health-related organizations/committees, among them the Wayne County Council on Aging and the county personnel committee. She was also a long-term member of Goldsboro Chapter No. 54 of the Order of the Eastern Star. Her dedication to community care and public service extended well beyond her workplace, enriching every area of her life.

Maye's family fondly remembers her gifts for gardening and cooking. She loved to grow and share her beautiful flowers and delicious tomatoes with family and friends. She delighted her loved ones with her cooking and baking, including family favorites such as her beef ribs, Watergate salad, seven-layer salad, red velvet cake, cheesecake, black walnut pound cake, chocolate fudge and peanut brittle, just to name a few! And if she heard snow was on the way, she would run and put out her special "snow bowl" and made the best snow cream ever! Maye had a deep love for animals, especially dogs, and cherished her beloved companions, Bumper and Scooch.

Known for her fun-loving, take-charge spirit, Maye was always ready to roll up her sleeves and get things done. Whether directing family weddings, organizing community or church events, or being listed in the newspaper as “serving the punch” at social functions, she was a natural organizer and doer who could be counted on to make things happen with warmth, humor and care. Her life was marked by devotion to her faith, her family, her community and to the health and well-being of others. Her legacy of service, leadership and quiet strength will continue to ripple through the lives she touched.

Maye is survived by one sister, Gloria Spivey Cooner of Holly Springs, North Carolina; one stepdaughter, Patrice Strickland (Jim) of Beaufort, North Carolina; two stepsons, Russell William Myers III (Margaret) of Charlotte, North Carolina, and David William Myers (Nancy) of Wake Forest, North Carolina; six step-grandchildren; and nine step-great-grandchildren. She is also survived by nieces, Karen Moore Mercer (Danny) of Wilson, North Carolina, Beverly Trammell Noble (Paul) of Melbourne, Florida, Lisa Trammell Dissinger (Ray) of Tucson, Arizona, Anne Moneyhun Harrison of Melbourne, Florida, Donna Trammell Phillips (Jeff) of Melbourne, Florida, Julia Perry Lassiter (Rick) of Holly Springs, North Carolina, and Mary Perry Swick (Mickey) of Melbourne, Florida; and nephews, John Trammell of Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, Robert Moore of Nahunta, North Carolina, Timothy Moore of Wilson, North Carolina, Donald Moneyhun (Romulo) of Melbourne, Florida, and Dale Moore of Kenly, North Carolina. Eleven great-nieces and nephews survive her: Caroline Mercer Sweezy, Elizabeth Gilstrap, Jarred Gilstrap, Tyler Dissinger, Evan Dissinger, Josh Harrison, Ryan Moore, Brandon Moore, Brandon Ballance, Connor Ballance and Austin Brymer, as well as many great-great nieces and nephews, cousins, other extended family members, and dear friends.

In addition to her parents, Maye was preceded in death by her husband Russell William Myers Jr., her first husband Thaddeus Ralph Gurley, sisters Marie Spivey, Juanita Spivey Moore and husband Bobby Moore, Lee Spivey Brown and husband Seymour Brown, Anne Spivey Moneyhun and husband Mike Moneyhun, Elizabeth Spivey Trammell and husband James “Jim” Trammell, brother-in-law David Cooner, and stepson Steven Williams Myers.

The family would like to extend a special “Thank-You” to Maye’s nephew by marriage, Roland Gurley and his wife, Sandra, for their devotion, love and support to Maye, providing steadfast care and presence that meant so much to her and to the family. The family also extends heartfelt gratitude to the staff and friends at Parkwood Village in Wilson for the love and kindness shown to Maye during her residency, and to the staff at Gentiva Hospice who assisted Maye during her last few months there.

They especially wish to recognize caregivers Cassandra Dublin, Shan Bynum, and Mary Burch for the loving care they provided to Maye during her last several months at Parkwood Village. In addition, the family sincerely thanks the staff and volunteers at Kitty Askins Hospice Center for the comfort and compassion given to Maye during her time there these past two months.

In the days before her passing, Maye shared with her chaplain at Kitty Askins that one of her prayers was for peace on earth. When asked by two of her nieces which Advent word she liked the most, she quietly whispered, “Peace.” And when asked her favorite Christmas carol, she softly replied, “O Holy Night – it’s so peaceful.” In this way, Maye’s message this Christmas season to all who loved her is one of peace, a reminder to cherish moments of love and connection, and to listen for the quiet blessings around us – “oh hear the angel voices.”

# BEREAVEMENT Ministry



## ***Velvie Sue Hand***

Velvie Sue Hand, age 70, passed away in her sleep at her home in Niceville, Florida on December 7th, 2025.

Velvie was born at Ramey Air Force Base in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico on February 10th, 1955, to parents Sam and Georgia Crumby. Her family settled in Tampa, Florida where Velvie grew up. Tragically, when she was 6 years old, her father was severely injured in a motorcycle accident and remained hospitalized for the rest of his life. Without him, daily life became much harder for Velvie and her five siblings, and her formative years were very difficult. Her home lacked the love, safety, and security all children deserve. Brave and unafraid, Velvie left home at the age of 16 to make a better life for herself.

After high school, she pursued her associate's degree in Special Education at Hillsborough Community College. To put herself through school, she worked as a lifeguard at the swimming pool on MacDill AFB where she met an Air Force Lieutenant training to fly the mighty F-4. His lap swimming, and her red bikini, eventually blossomed into their romance.

Velvie married that zipper-suited sun god on February 26th, 1977, at the MacDill Air Force Base Chapel in Tampa, Florida. Together, Chuck and Velvie traveled the world before retiring to Niceville, Florida in 2017. They raised two sons, Jerad and Justin, and were blessed with two wonderful daughters-in-law and five amazing grandchildren. Velvie was an exceptionally devoted wife, mother, and grandmother and took immense pride in creating a loving and safe environment for her family. Breaking the chain of generational trauma was Velvie's proudest accomplishment.

Velvie worked as a Red Cross Water Safety Instructor throughout her life serving as a lifeguard, lifeguard instructor, swim instructor, aquatics director, and high school swim coach. She was also a dedicated military spouse that supported her husband through multiple deployments across his 22-year Air Force career. As a mother, Velvie was passionate about her children's education and activities; she coached multiple youth sports teams, volunteered at public schools, and served in parent-teacher organizations. In retirement, Velvie enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren, watching news and sporting events or playing trivia with Chuck, cultivating a shamelessly progressive world view, and reading banned books.

Velvie is survived by her husband, Charles (Chuck) Bruce Hand, her two sons Jerad Michael Hand and Justin Mathew Hand, and her five grandchildren.

Velvie's funeral service will be held on Thursday, December 18th, 2025, at Heritage Gardens Funeral Home with visitation beginning at 1:00pm, a memorial service at 2:00pm, and interment at 3:00pm. There will be a nearby celebration of life immediately following the interment. Reverend James Harry of Goldsboro, North Carolina will officiate the ceremony.



***Milton Worth McKeel***

Goldsboro-Milton Worth McKeel, 96, passed away at Wayne UNC Health Care.

Milton is survived by his wife, Janet Smith McKeel.

A graveside service will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 17, 2025 at Wayne Memorial Park. The family will receive friends following the service at the cemetery.

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## *Upcoming Events*

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### **Save the Dates for upcoming events at Saint Paul!**

- **Beginning Sunday, February 15 – 10 am | Church-wide Lenten Bible Study** | This Lent, we invite everyone at Saint Paul to take part in our church-wide Lenten Bible Study, *Jesus Asking* by J. D. Walt. Over six weeks, this study will guide us through the questions Jesus asked throughout the Gospels—inviting us to slow down, reflect deeply, and grow in faith together. To make participation accessible, we are offering four small-group options meeting at different times throughout the week:  
***Small Group Options (6-Week Study):***

- **Sundays at 10 am – Women’s Small Group** Led by Mary Ellis, Begins February 15
- **Sundays at 10 am – Men’s Small Group** Led by Pastor Tim Fitch, Begins February 15
- **Thursdays at 7 pm – Thursday Night Small Group** Led by Rev. Jim Harry, Begins February 19
- **Wednesdays at 10 am – Wednesday Morning Small Group** Led by Pastor Tim Fitch, Begins February 25

If you are unable to attend one of these times, we encourage you to consider forming and leading an additional small group that fits your schedule. Teaching resources for group leaders are available—please contact the Church Office for more information. Even if you are not able to join a small group, everyone is welcome to participate by following along with the daily devotional book as part of their personal Lenten journey.

- **Beginning Sunday, February 15 – 12 pm | Catechism & New Member Class** | Everyone is invited to join our 6-week Saint Paul Catechism & New Member Class on Sundays at 12 pm, beginning February 15. The Catechism Class is intended to share who we are and what we believe as the particular people called: Christians, Methodists, and Members of Saint Paul. This class is led by Rev. Jim and will be held in the fellowship hall after the 11 am Traditional Worship Service – a light lunch will

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## ***Upcoming Events***

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be served. It is a great way for new visitors to learn more about Saint Paul, and we hope to see many new faces and friends!

- **Wednesday, February 18 – 10 am & 7 pm | Ash Wednesday Worship Services |** We will have (2) worship services on Ash Wednesday, February 18, both including Imposition of Ashes. We will gather at: 10 am in the Sanctuary Chapel and 7 pm in the Sanctuary (nursery care will be available during the 7pm service).
- **Sunday, March 1 – 9 am & 11 am | Scout Sunday Worship Services |** Join us on Scout Sunday, March 1, as we recognize the Saint Paul Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. We will also award the prestigious Eagle Scout Award during our 11 am worship service.
- **Sunday, March 8 | Sanctuary Dedication Easter Lily Sale Begins |** Our Sanctuary Easter Lilies are a beautiful way to remember or honor a loved one for Easter. The lilies will be placed in the Saint Paul Sanctuary for our Easter Sunday worship service and a list of the honorary and memorial names will be included. You will be able to place your orders online or by contacting the Church Office.
- **Saturday, March 21 – 12 pm | March Madness Family Fun Day |** Everyone is invited to join us for a March Madness Family Fun Day filled with fellowship, fun, and friendly competition! Come cheer on your favorite team, enjoy time together, and take part in our bracket challenge. We'll gather at noon in the fellowship hall. Please bring a game-time snack or sweet treat to share. All ages are welcome—bring your friends and come ready for a great afternoon with your Saint Paul Church family!
- **Friday, March 27 – 9:30 am | Preparing Palm Crosses |** We will gather on Friday, March 27 at 9:30 am in the fellowship hall to continue our tradition of making palm crosses in preparation for our Palm Sunday Worship Service. Everyone is invited to join us for this joyous time of coffee, fellowship, and service. No experience necessary!

# From Lyndsey Clark



## ***With Gratitude for What Has Been and Hope for What Is to Come***

As I look back on all that God accomplished through Saint Paul Methodist Church in 2025, I am filled with gratitude. As Operations Director, I have had the privilege of seeing so much of our ministry up close—through worship, communications, technology, administration, finances, and the behind-the-scenes work that supports it all. What stands out most to me is the faithfulness of the people of Saint Paul and the way so many gifts come together to live out our shared mission: to **Worship** God, **Grow** in faith, and **Serve** others in the name of Christ.

Saint Paul's story didn't begin with us. Since 1883, generations of faithful saints have worshiped, served, and laid a foundation that we continue to build upon today. I'm grateful to be part of a church that honors its traditions while also listening for where God is leading next. In 2025, I believe we did both—holding onto what matters most while stepping forward with faith and hope.

One of the joys of this past year was welcoming new friends through our Catechism and New Member Class. This class reflects who we are as the particular people of Saint Paul—clearly naming what we believe and inviting others into covenant life with us. It will be exciting to meet new friends as we offer this six-week class again in February and continue opening our church and hearts to those God is calling to be here.

This past year was also marked by collaboration and shared joy. Our March Family Worship Weekend was a beautiful example of that, as so many ministry teams worked together to create a weekend of worship, fellowship, and fun for all ages. The faithfulness of our Methodist Women throughout the year—especially their care for our TLC friends—reminded me again that ministry is often about showing up, loving well, and being present with one another.

I was especially encouraged watching our new children's and youth staff leaders build and grow those ministry areas. Their work in launching a new Promotion Sunday to help

bridge the transition from children's ministry into youth, and hosting nearly 100 children during Vacation Bible School were powerful signs of God's presence among us. Seeing the Youth Suite renovated and filled with Scripture, worship, and service—especially as our youth served lunch to veterans in our community this fall—was a reminder that God is shaping the next generation right here at Saint Paul.

Our call to serve also extended beyond our walls, from packing meals through Rise Against Hunger to welcoming our community during Advent and Christmas. Those seasons of worship and beauty reminded us that the church is a place of hope—not just for us, but for all who enter.

I also saw our shared mission lived out in meaningful ways through the faithful work of our administrative committees. Near the end of the year, leaders from across the church worked together with care, generosity, and stewardship to purchase and furnish a home to welcome our new Associate Minister and his

family. This act of hospitality was a powerful reminder that ministry happens not only in worship and programs, but in the way we care for one another and make space for those God is calling to serve alongside us.

Scripture tells us that we are “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10). In 2025, I saw that lived out. As the people of Saint Paul, we upheld our covenant together through our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness—and the fruit of that faithfulness is evident.

As we move into 2026, our theme to “**Be Here**” feels especially meaningful. We are called to be present—to be in community, in covenant, and in Christ. I am deeply thankful for the people, time, and resources that make ministry possible here at Saint Paul, and I look forward with hope to all that God will continue to do among us. Trusting that the One who began this good work will be faithful to carry it on (Philippians 1:6), we step forward together.

***Thanks be to God for the people of Saint Paul Methodist Church!***

*Lyndsey Clark*  
Operations Director

