

**St. Pauls United Church of Christ**

# **Today and Tomorrow**

## **Important Conversations**

**Theology**

**Worship**

**Church Programs**

**Membership**

**Participation**

**Finance and Stewardship**

**Outreach and Benevolence**

**The Physical Church and Neighborhood**

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**A Note about the Profile Committee**

**May 2010**

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Dear Members and Friends of St. Pauls,

St. Pauls has numerous strengths as a church, many of which Senior Pastor Tom Henry cultivates through his leadership and leaves as a thriving legacy on which to build. Though Pastor Henry's retirement will be a tremendous loss, it also presents a unique opportunity. This time of pastoral transition is an important occasion for an examination of who we are as St. Pauls Church, and who we want to become.

St. Pauls Profile Committee was formed last summer in part to assist the congregation and staff in "taking stock" of where we are as a church today so that we can plan for our future. We have prepared "**St. Pauls Today and Tomorrow—Important Conversations**" to deepen understanding and to stimulate important conversations among St. Pauls members and staff about our church. The report describes our church in the following areas: Theology, Worship, Church Programs, Membership, Participation, Finances/Stewardship, Outreach/Benevolence, Our Church Building and Neighborhood.

Our next step is to use this report as a springboard for **Important Conversations** throughout the next several months in the form of discussions among members, interviews with staff and member surveys. Conversations include "Listening and Dialogue" forums to be held via existing church groups where at all possible. Additional groups will be added as needed. Members of the Search committee, Council and select members of the Profile committee will facilitate these forums.

The Profile committee has been excited to create the platform to get the conversations started. Our congregation is a vibrant community of faith. And now we invite every member of St. Pauls to contribute to this conversation. Your voice will help St. Pauls continue to make a joyful sound in the city.

Sincerely,  
St. Pauls Profile Committee

Becca Brown  
Vicki Kendall  
Jana O'Brien

David Schmahl  
Char Damron, co chair

Michael Cansfield  
A. Kyle Mack  
Steve Patton

Peg Wander  
Tim Reed, co chair

Ann Christophersen  
Lydia Murray  
Dana Peterson

## **THEOLOGY**

Ours is a biblically based and progressive theology. We seek a healthy balance between personal faith and spiritual growth and the manifestation of that faith in social justice and other good works. We also strive to balance our shared belief in Jesus Christ as transformative life-changer with an appreciation for diversity in Christian belief and respect for individual differences. As our current mission statement puts it, St. Pauls “recognizes the uniqueness of each person as a gift of God. We uphold the worth and dignity of all individuals and welcome them into our community to share our faith, with its joys and sorrows, regardless of race, color, age, marital status, natural origin, gender, sexual orientation, or physical condition. We are members ‘one of the other’ and show active love and support for each other.”

Questions for consideration:

- Have we found the right balance between personal faith and spiritual growth and social justice and outreach? Should we place more/less emphasis on personal faith and spiritual growth? Should we place more/less emphasis on social justice and outreach?

- Do we have the right balance between a shared belief in Jesus Christ and appreciation for diversity in Christian beliefs and respect for individual differences? Have we become so tolerant of personal theologies that we threaten the Christian ties that distinguish us from other, non-church groups and organizations?
- Are we challenging ourselves enough with respect to our spiritual growth? Or have we become too comfortable and complacent?
- Have we been too timid in addressing how our Christian faith informs and guides us with respect to current events, such as abortion or the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? Or are such issues simply too far a field from our common mission and too divisive?

## **WORSHIP**

Of all the various programs and activities that define St. Pauls, Sunday morning worship is probably the one common experience shared by every (or almost every) St. Pauls member or friend and the one constant of our church life that most unites us as a congregation. Our website describes that experience as follows: “Community worship is our opportunity to open ourselves to God’s revelation and power, give thanks for our lives, and find inspiration for our lives through words, music, and action.” One could add to that description the opportunity to come together and connect with and support each other as a congregation, to recharge and refocus ourselves spiritually, and to learn God’s Word and how to better apply it in our daily lives.

Our pastors define spirituality as the intuitive recognition of the connection to someone or something beyond oneself. They see St. Pauls members coming together in worship to be inspired by sermons, music and prayer and then scattering to do good works as an expression of their inspiration. We like to experience spiritual moments but few members feel comfortable talking about their personal spirituality.

Worship at St. Pauls includes our traditional service at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings (10:00 am in the summer months) in the church sanctuary. In addition, five years ago, St. Pauls added a service in the church chapel on Sunday mornings at 9:45 from September through May, which is smaller and more intimate. Recently, a meditative, centering service has been added on Wednesday evenings for those who are not able to attend on Sunday or want an additional opportunity to worship during the week.

Our Sunday morning service is traditional, but has some contemporary elements. It is characterized by sermons that largely follow the Standard Lectionary (Revised Common Lectionary) and Traditional Liturgical calendar and apply a Biblically-based Gospel in an accessible and practical way to the everyday problems and challenges of faith-based living. Sermons at St. Pauls aim to be thought-provoking, but are not politically partisan.

The other key ingredient of Sunday morning worship at St. Pauls is the music. St. Pauls Chancel Choir is a large, dedicated, and exceptionally high quality volunteer choir, with a professional choir director, organist, and section leaders. The choir performs a wide range of religious music, from the classical to the contemporary, and including occasional original works.

The Chancel Choir is supplemented by occasional outside soloists, ensembles, and musicians, as well as four very talented and high-quality youth choirs -- The Joyful Sounds (high school), Pauls People (junior high), the Children's Choir (elementary), and the Kinderchapel Singers (pre-school). Finally, the St. Pauls Orchestra, a multi-generational group of amateur St. Pauls musicians, performs at least one Sunday each year.

Our Sunday worship is also leavened and enlivened by a number of special services and events throughout the year that add to the richness of our worship experience. This includes: an annual Bible Story Theatre production by our church school and an ensemble of adult volunteers; an annual gospel, sing-along service, "How Sweet the Sound;" a special Christmas service of readings and carols; and occasional Youth Sundays. St. Pauls also celebrates a number of Christian Holy Days with beautiful and tradition-filled services, such as Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

Questions for consideration:

- Are we happy with our Sunday morning worship services? Do they contain the right mix of message, music and prayer? The traditional and contemporary? The formal and the informal?

- Are we satisfied with the preaching? Is it the right mix of the biblical and the current? The Gospel and daily application? Are we giving our members and friends the spiritual sustenance and guidance they need?
- Are our sermons challenging us enough regarding social justice? Do they challenge us enough to reexamine and strengthen our faith? To live more Christian, faith-based lives?
- Should we continue the Chapel worship service? Are we happy with its content and structure? Are we concerned that multiple services on Sunday “divide” our community of faith?
- Should services be provided at other times? (We have just started a Wednesday evening meditative, centering service.)

## **CHURCH PROGRAMS**

St. Pauls is an active congregation with a wide variety of Christian education, personal support and social networking, and social justice and outreach programs and activities. The number and diversity of these programs and activities has increased in recent years as our congregation has grown and as St. Pauls has made an effort to increase opportunities for its members to find community and to make connections.

**Christian Education.** We have a very active -- and growing -- church school program starting with Sunday school classes for toddlers and continuing through to junior and senior high youth. The program is supported in many ways beginning with Baptism classes for families of young children. Music and theatre are woven throughout worship events such as Bible Story Theatre, Kids chapel, puppet shows, plays, convocations and an annual Youth Sunday service. In addition to youth groups for fellowship, our youth participate in a number of service projects each year, including an annual CROP Hunger walk and an annual week-long mission trip to Appalachia that last year included more than 35 senior high youth and adult sponsors.

We also have a two-year confirmation program in which adult sponsors accompany our youth on an exploration of their faith and our Christian and denominational heritage in preparation for congregational membership.

Christian education opportunities for adults include among others a Sunday morning discussion group, Bible study groups, One Church One Book, and the Faith and Public Issues Task Force, which sponsors Sunday afternoon lectures and discussions examining current social and economic issues from a faith-based perspective.

**Personal Support and Social Networking.** St. Pauls members have also formed a number of groups that provide support, fellowship, and networking opportunities. This includes POYC (Parents of Young Children), which provides an opportunity for parents experiencing the joys and challenges of young children to get together for play dates and other events to share notes and provide support; the 21/41 Club, which organizes social and other events and service projects for members and friends ages 21-41; GLBT and Friends, which meets monthly for brunch and organizes holiday parties and other special events; the St. Pauls Women's Group, which sponsors periodic dinners and other get-togethers for St. Pauls

women; Date for Eight, a social program that brings together small groups of St. Pauls members and friends several times each year for dinner and sports, theatre, and other events; Connectors, a group of St. Pauls members dedicated to keeping our congregation connected by sending Halloween care packages to our college students, Easter baskets to our senior members, and birthday, get well, and sympathy cards and calls throughout the year; and Ministers of Care, a group of laypersons trained in pastoral care that works with our full-time ministers in making hospital visits and providing pastoral care to St. Pauls members and friends. Finally, there are Couples classes for those about to be married.

**Social Justice and Outreach.** St. Pauls members also get together to work on a variety of social justice and outreach events and activities. This runs the gamut from volunteers serving meals at the Lincoln Park Community Shelter and at the Good News Community Kitchen; to Sarah's Sisters, which meets weekly to pack bag lunches for neighbors in need; to the Shawl Ministry, which meets twice a month to knit and crochet shawls and other items for individuals in need; to Partners in Care for Illinois Veterans of the National Guard, which provides assistance to veterans in need; and to the St. Pauls Environmental Resource Group, which encourages

St. Pauls and its members in “caring for creation” through stewardship of our resources.

Questions for consideration:

- Are we doing enough to educate our children and young people as to the basic tenets of our Christian faith and traditions? If not, what more should we be doing? And how?
- Are we satisfied with the number of our young people who continue to be active in St. Pauls after they graduate from high school and/or return to St. Pauls after going away to college or military service?
- Are there steps we should be taking to increase the number of our young people who return to, or continue to be active in, St. Pauls as young adults? If so, what?
- Do we have the right mix of groups and activities? Are there groups or activities that we should add? If so, what?
- Are we meeting the spiritual and other needs of our members?

- Are there congregational needs that are not being met? If so, what?
- Are there additional actions we should be taking to increase the community and connectedness of our friends and members? If so, what?

## **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

St Pauls -- unlike many main-line Protestant churches -- is growing. Our current membership, at 1000, has grown by 270 members, or more than one-third, over the last ten years. This membership total is stable, however, the composition is always changing as new members replace others who move away.

Ours is also a very robust and diverse congregation from the standpoint of age. While many American congregations are aging, much of the growth in St. Pauls' membership in recent years has been among young adults and families with young children. Indeed, 70% of our new members over the past ten years have been 35 or younger, and during that period our church school has grown by 75%, from 120 to more than 210 children and teenagers, with nearly 100 of those age 6 and under.

St. Pauls is also diverse -- and welcoming -- in terms of our members and friends who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. We officially became an open and affirming congregation 21 years ago, in 1989. And, since 2002, one of our three full-time clergy is gay.

Having grown as a neighborhood church, St. Pauls reflects the racial and social economics of the immediate community. As a result, it is less

diverse with respect to people of color. Relatively few of our members are African-American, Hispanic or Asian.

St. Pauls has never collected information regarding member income. We appear to be a financially solid middle class congregation. However, our pastors report we have members and friends at all income levels.

Because our theology is progressive and we work hard to be welcoming, we have members and friends of many faith backgrounds including Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, etc. Also, couples each with different faith backgrounds report that St. Pauls is a place where they can worship together. We have fewer members and friends who report no previous church background.

Questions for consideration:

- Should we take steps to actively recruit new members and encourage growth? If so, what?
- Are we doing the “right” things to remain a viable church option for the younger membership?
- Is there a concern that our congregation is, or may become, too large and too impersonal? That we do not, or will not, have the

pastoral and other resources to support our members? If so, are there additional steps we should take to increase community and connectedness among our members and friends? To provide pastoral and other support for the needs of our members and friends? If so, what?

- Should we be doing more to spread the Good News and to reach out to our friends and neighbors who are not Christian or are unchurched? If so, what?
- Are we welcoming enough to visitors and new or prospective members? Should we be doing more to welcome visitors and new or prospective members? And if so, what?

## **PARTICIPATION AND COMMITMENT**

Many of St. Pauls members and friends actively participate in its mission and programs in numerous ways, including serving as church school teachers, confirmation and youth group sponsors, new member sponsors, communion servers, greeters, ushers, care givers, church council members and officers, committee members and chairpersons, choir members, and mission trip sponsors and volunteers. Measured by a couple of key benchmarks -- attendance and pledging -- the percentage of St. Pauls members and friends that are actively participating in and supporting its programs in recent years has remained relatively constant, and compares favorably to nationwide trends. Indeed, the percentage of our members who pledge has actually increased over the last ten years, from 32% in 1999 to 40% in 2009. Similarly, the percentage of our members who attend Sunday morning worship services has held relatively steady at 40%, which compares favorably to the nationwide average for congregations of our size, which is 25%.

However, a significant proportion of our members and friends have little or no involvement, except for occasional attendance at Sunday morning worship or other church events. Those responsible for lining up volunteers

for outreach and other events, such as serving breakfast at Lincoln Park Community Shelter or dinner at Good News Community Kitchen, often struggle to find enough volunteers. Sixty percent of our members are not in church on any given Sunday. A comparable or even greater percentage is not actively engaged in the church's many outreach and other activities.

Questions for consideration:

- Are there things we could do to increase the participation, and encourage the volunteerism, of our members and friends?
- Should we take steps to increase the number of our members and friends who pledge?
- St. Pauls has been successful at attracting new members.

However, many of these new members do not become fully integrated and active in the church's programs and activities. Are there things we could be doing to better welcome and integrate our new members? To strengthen their sense of connectedness to and community with the congregation?

## **FINANCES AND STEWARDSHIP**

St. Pauls is blessed with a large and growing congregation that, over the last decade, has increased its annual giving by a total of 59%. St. Pauls has also been blessed through the generous bequests of a number of past congregants. This has enabled the creation of a reserve fund (sometimes referred to as the “Memorial Fund” or “endowment”) that currently totals approximately \$1.8 million. Since the 1940s, St. Pauls has relied on this reserve fund to cover annual shortfalls in revenues compared to costs and to pay the capital costs associated with improving, maintaining and repairing our buildings. In the 1960s and 1970s, the reserve fund was the principal reason St. Pauls was able to survive a steep downturn in membership and revenues.

Since the late 1990s, our annual expenditures and capital costs have consistently exceeded our annual revenues from congregational giving and other sources, sometimes by as much as 20%. In 2010, this annual shortfall of revenues (from pledges, offerings, and building use) compared to costs is expected to total more than \$130,000 on an estimated budget of \$1.2 million, or 11% of total expenditures.

In past years, we have made up this annual shortfall by using earnings from the reserve fund and, in some years, dipping into the reserve fund's principal. During the 1990s and early to mid-2000s, in most years the growth in the reserve fund through earnings and investment returns more than offset these annual "withdrawals" to fund current expenditures. However, reserve fund earnings have fallen dramatically over the past three years, as has the value of the reserve fund. As of December 31, 2009, the value of the reserve fund stood at approximately \$1.8 million, or \$600,000 (33% less) than the \$2.4 million in the fund three years ago, at the height of the bull market. If these trends were to continue, the reserve fund will be depleted over time.

The preceding paragraphs seem to suggest that deficit spending is undesirable. There is another point of view that the reserve fund is a resource that is available to the church and that we have been able to raise funds when we needed to do so. Recent capital campaigns are evidence of this and demonstrate the congregation's commitment to financial health.

In either case there are only three ways to address St. Pauls recurring annual deficit: (1) increase our giving; (2) reduce our expenditures (which, given the fixed nature of our utility and other building-related expenses,

means cutting staff and/or programs); or (3) continue to spend our reserve fund.

Questions for consideration:

- Are there steps St. Pauls can take to encourage increased pledges and other giving and, if so, what are they?
- Should St. Pauls explore new ways of raising money to support its programs and, if so, what are they?
- Should St. Pauls continue to use the interest income from its reserve fund to fund its current budget? Should St. Pauls continue to use the principal from the reserve fund to fund its current budget?
- Should St. Pauls reduce its expenditures by reducing current staff levels and cutting back on current programming?

## OUTREACH AND BENEVOLENCE

Outreach and Benevolence happens through the time and talent of members and friends and the physical and financial resources of the church. Participation has been discussed in the “Participation and Commitment” section of this report. Use of the church as a benevolence is described in “The Physical Church and Its Neighborhood”. Financial commitment and priority are described here.

The 2010 church budget designates approximately 8% (\$101,200) to line items identified as Outreach and Benevolence. This category includes the following areas and allocation:

UCC Directed: (OCWM: Our Church’s Wider Mission)	50%
St. Pauls Directed: (Faith based, historic affil. & and other)	26%
Mission Trip (Budget and Fund Raiser)	18%
Special Offerings (Sarah’s Sisters, Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour Of Sharing)	6%
Pastors Emergency (Confidential to people in need)	5%

St. Pauls Directed funding is determined through its Outreach and Benevolence Committee. The committee provide financial and other support to approximately 15 religious-based and other charitable organizations, such as Good News Community Kitchen, Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries, the Night Ministry, and the Chicago Anti-Hunger Federation. Funding also includes contributions to our historic affiliations with St. Pauls House and UCAN (Uhlich Children's Advantage Network .) This percentage (26%) is consistent with St. Pauls giving to such organizations since 2006. However, this amount is half of the \$50,000 per-year St. Pauls gave to such organizations prior to 2006. At that time approximately 50% of the money previously contributed to such causes was redirected to other uses, principally support for our denomination, the United Church of Christ, through Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM).

Questions for consideration:

- Are we comfortable with the overall level of outreach support?

Should we be doing more? If so, how do we reconcile such increased support with our inability to completely fund our current expenditures with current giving (we annually fund the budget partly from reserves)?

- Are we comfortable with the current percentage allocation across categories of Outreach and Benevolence funding?
- Should we focus our financial and other support on a smaller number of organizations in order to provide increased support or should we focus on many organizations to provide more comprehensive, but less substantive support?
- Are there ways in which St. Pauls can increase its support of these organizations and their missions other than increased contributions? If so, what? How?

The significance of St. Pauls commitment to outreach has also been one of emphasis and leadership. Over the course of its 167-year history, St. Pauls has addressed the needs of the larger community through a number of “big projects.” These were major undertakings that required a concerted commitment of the time, talents, and tithes of St. Pauls congregants. During and after the Civil War, St. Pauls “big project” was addressing the needs of Chicago-area war orphans through Uhlich Children’s Home (now known as Uhlich Children’s Advantage Network or UCAN). In 1920, it was addressing the needs of the elderly, particularly those without means,

through St. Pauls House. In 1975, it was addressing the needs of runaway teens and young adults who were living their lives on the streets of Lakeview and Lincoln Park, through The Night Ministry. And, in 1985, it was providing for the needs of Chicago's homeless through the Lincoln Park Community Shelter.

Today, St. Pauls and its congregants continue to support these organizations financially, as volunteers, and through board membership and other leadership positions. However, it has been almost 25 years since St. Pauls, as a congregation and community of faith, took on a new project of this magnitude.

Questions for consideration:

- Are we ready to take on another “big project”?
- If so, what should it be?

## **THE PHYSICAL CHURCH AND NEIGHBORHOOD**

St. Pauls is fortunate to have a beautiful sanctuary and chapel, classrooms, gymnasium and other facilities in a very desirable location. Although these facilities date back to the 1950s or earlier, they have been well maintained and continue to be very functional in meeting the church's space needs. They are also an important part of St. Pauls' outreach. Among other things, St. Pauls is the home of the Park West Cooperative Nursery School, a not-for-profit pre school serving the Lincoln Park neighborhood. In addition, more than 20 not-for-profit and other community groups use St. Pauls facilities for meetings and other events, including Al-Anon, Overeaters Anonymous, Amnesty International, the Life Link Adoption Agency, and Mid-North Neighborhood Association.

Prior to 2007, St. Pauls was also the site of evening meals, and provided shower and laundry facilities, for the Lincoln Park Community Shelter. In earlier years, St. Pauls was also an overnight site and provided sleeping facilities for residents of the shelter. Since 2007, and the opening of renovated space for the Shelter at Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church, St. Pauls has become the site of the Shelter's Saturday morning Community Engagement Program, providing shower, laundry, food, clothing and social

work services to those who are on the Shelter's waiting list and others who need regular contact.

Utilities, insurance, and other expenses of maintaining St. Pauls physical plant currently total approximately \$350,000 per year, and have been increasing at a rate of approximately 10% per year for the last several years. Rental and other income from the Park West Cooperative Nursery School, weddings, and other paying users of St. Pauls space, on the other hand, has remained relatively flat at approximately \$120,000 per year.

Questions for consideration:

- Should St. Pauls attempt to find another major mission-related group or cause like the Shelter to use its facilities and, if so, who?
- Should St. Pauls actively promote greater use of its space by other faith- and community-based non-paying groups as part of its outreach efforts? If so, how? Who?
- Should St. Pauls promote greater use of its facilities by for-profit or other paying groups as a source of rental income to support its other programs? If so, how? Who?

For more than 100 years, St. Pauls immediate neighbor to the west, and the anchor of its neighborhood, has been Children's Memorial Hospital. That is about to change. Last year, Children's announced plans to abandon its current site and move to a new hospital complex downtown, adjacent to Northwestern Memorial Hospital, in 2012.

Questions for consideration:

- What, if any, role should St. Pauls play in the redevelopment of the Children's site?
- What steps should St. Pauls take to ensure that it continues to have use of the parking garage currently owned by Children's after Children's moves?
- Does the closing of Children's and the redevelopment of its site present opportunities for a major mission-related project in which St. Pauls might serve as a catalyst or participant, such as the development of mixed-income or more affordable housing in the Lincoln Park neighborhood?

## **A Note about the Profile Committee**

The Profile Committee was the first committee formed in 2009 by the Executive Committee and affirmed by the Council as part of the Transition Plan. It is composed of 13 talented and committed church members that represent a cross section of the congregation. Their names appear at the beginning of this report.

The committee is responsible for two documents to accomplish the following:

- Draft preliminary responses to the denomination questionnaire, **The Local Church Profile**, used to assist the pastoral search process. This is an exhaustive, 40 question document that asks about church history, church finances, programming, pastoral preferences, etc. Responses require considerable research into past documents and quantitative and qualitative data. The Profile committee has completed as much as it can and will now give the questionnaire to the Search Committee for completion. Some of the remaining questions will require congregational input.
- Take stock of where we are as a church so we will be ready to think about where we want to go in the future. It is critical that the entire congregation be involved in this critical work. As a result the committee has prepared **St. Pauls Today and Tomorrow—Important Conversations**. The report describes St. Pauls in eight areas of its ministry and then poses **key questions** for the congregation to consider. This report will be used as the basis for small group “Listening and Dialogue” forums where church members and leadership can discuss more fully their ideas and wishes for the future.

Both documents will now be given to the Search committee so that it can begin its work.

# **END OF DOCUMENT**