

# PROCLAIMING A TIMELESS CHRIST IN A CHANGING WORLD

SINCE 1794



# THE SPIRE

SAINT PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH † CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND

## 2023 CONGREGATION OFFICERS

**President:**

Suzanne Umstott

**Vice President:**

Debbie Streicher

**Secretary:**

Debbie Szymanski

**Treasurer:**

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December 2023

## CONGREGATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

**Education**

**(Faith**

**Formation):**

Debbie Streicher

**Evangelism**

Jane Roderick

**Finance:**

Casey Colledge

**Ministry in Daily Life:**

Nancy Ayers

**Property:**

Todd Umstott

**Social Ministry (Fellowship):**

Cindy Read

**Worship and Music:**

Liz Medcalf

**Youth:**

Gary Miller

## A Sign of Vulnerability



The true miracle of Christmas is not only that God comes to earth, but that God becomes the most vulnerable and dependent of creatures: a tiny baby who can only cry to make His needs met and known. The mystery of Christmas is not only that God is the maker of heaven and earth, but that God rules from the humble throne of a small manger bed, among messy stalls and straw piles. “This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger bed” (St. Luke 2:12). What draws us to this humble sign of a newborn child? Perhaps this baby is a mirror that exposes the vulnerabilities we are afraid to admit within ourselves. There is great pressure on adults and older children NOT to be ever found unprepared and vulnerable. We work hard to appear that we have everything under control at all times, in full command on the job or among friends and family. But when confronted with a little baby who has no control, we become very well aware of our own fragile lives, or pain or deep sense of loss that we cannot manage and memories and pains come flooding back that we may have thought were long gone and forgotten.

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THE REVEREND  
RYAN K. VIANDS  
Pastor

DAVID RANKIN  
Director of Music

DEBBIE SZYMANSKI  
Parish Administrator

CASEY COLLEDGE  
Treasurer

RAMON ROCHE CARDONA  
Sexton

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But something deeper comes in this sign of vulnerability too however. The birth of a little baby and the awesome responsibility it brings is a *KAIROS* moment: a life-altering gift from God your heavenly Father that breaks into time itself and remakes the whole of creation of this world. Jesus is God's supreme *KAIROS* moment, breaking into our lives and bringing what we could not provide for ourselves on the along the way: healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, and a love that is so much deeper and stronger than any human love has ever experienced before. In this most holy a lowly Child, God the Almighty becomes one of us. He becomes vulnerable as you and I were at the time of our own births. Just so he could feel and know us so intimately that He would feel and know all the joys, hurts, needs and wants that we do. You see, Jesus takes on all the messiness of our lives, so that we might live in a new way, a way we could not imagine by or for ourselves. In the most holy season of Christmas, the Ruler of heaven and earth enters our lowly hearts and minds and bodies, our common, humble lives, our human flesh, and declares, "You will be a most vulnerable sign of my presence". My dearest brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, we have been given the greatest treasure and gift that has ever been given to the human race. We worship a God that loves His creation so very much that He gave the greatest gift given, Himself. What more could have humanity ask for, but to receive a God in the flesh that could not bear to have heaven without us, so He humbled Himself to bring heaven down to us. Child of God, whatever you are going through this season, joys, heartache, fear, anticipation or wonder, know that God is right there beside you to bring you the love He so desperately wants you to know and have. Receive it with joy and with a holy comfort. For you are His possession.

*St. Peter's First Letter 2:9*

*9 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*

Blessed Christmas to you all, dear child of the most high God,  
In His Service, Fr. Ryan +

## *From the president.....*

To me, the holidays are a joyful time of sharing and giving. As we enter the holiday season please be mindful of some of the programs and events going on here at St. Paul's. We are always looking for volunteers to assist with our many projects. If you feel called to help, please reach out to me or a council member.

"Christmas, my child, is love in action. Every time we love, every time we give, it's Christmas."

♦ Dale Evans

♦

Wishing everyone a very merry and blessed Christmas season.

Sue Umstott, Council President



### **Sneezin' Season" Appeal**

Bountiful Blessings is asking for donations of Kleenex or other tissues. Our final session for this year is scheduled for Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> when, among other items, we would like to offer each recipient a box of Kleenex. If you can help us have some by then, please put them in the box inside the parking lot entrance to the church.

We all thank you very much.



Bishop William Gohl will preach and co-preside for worship at St. Paul Church on Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>  
is the First Sunday in Advent**  
**Join us for our first of the month intergenerational gathering**



Following worship on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, you are invited to join us in the Fellowship Hall for a light luncheon and to observe the beginning of the Advent season. Each household will receive Advent candles for use on an Advent Wreath at home plus a blessing for their wreaths. There will be a few extra faith formation resources for children and youth.

**Come! Join us! Mark your calendars now!**



Also, please mark your calendars for the Intergenerational First Sunday of the Month food and fellowship gatherings to come:  
January 7 – Feast of the Epiphany  
February 4 – Candlemass  
March 3 – Lenten Prayer Luncheon  
(April and May to be announced)

# BACH'S "MAGNIFICAT"

AND SOLEMN VESPERS

FSU CHAMBER SINGERS

Dr. Scott Rieker, conductor

Dr. Joseph Yungen, collaborative keyboardist

● SUNDAY, DEC. 3, 2023 | 6 PM ●

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Cumberland



St. Paul Lutheran Church, Cumberland, will hold its annual Advent Vespers service featuring the Frostburg State University Chamber Singers presenting Johann Sebastian Bach's Magnificat canticle.

The service will be at 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 3.

Bach composed his setting of the Magnificat canticle in 1723, after becoming music director at St. Thomas Lutheran Church in Leipzig.

Part of Bach's duties as the "Thomaskantor" (as the position was called) was to compose music for the liturgical year, usually in the form of cantatas. Bach's Magnificat is structured similarly to a cantata, though it is not based on a pre-existing hymn tune (a "chorale), and—remarkably—it is in Latin, not German. The Magnificat—with its effervescent writing, captivating solos, and uplifting choral movements—continues to be one of Bach's most popular compositions, 300 years after it was first composed.

As the flagship choral ensemble of FSU, the Chamber Singers are a highly select group of singers performing a wide variety of choral literature designed to promote individual musicianship, advanced techniques, and quality of ensemble. They perform under the direction of Dr. Scott Rieker, with Dr. Joseph Yungen as collaborative pianist.

The vespers service is open to the public.



The tradition of decorating the altar and chancel with poinsettias will continue this year. Orders will be taken through **Thursday, December 14th**. The poinsettias will be ordered from a greenhouse in Pittsburgh and the cost for each plant is \$7.00. Please call the church office to place your order or place it in the offering plate marked "poinsettia order" and advise us how you wish to have your floral offering designated in the bulletin. Be sure to let us know if you will be picking up your plant.



Soon it will be time for hanging of the greens, garland and setting up Christmas trees which is scheduled for Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> following worship. **In order for this to be successful we need volunteers.**

Please contact the church office  
301-722-6604 or  
[debbie@stpaulcumberland.org](mailto:debbie@stpaulcumberland.org)  
if you're able to help.



**Blue Night (The Longest Night)**  
First Presbyterian Church  
11 Washington St.  
Thursday, December 21st  
6:00 p.m.  
Reflective worship of healing and hope for those coping with loss.



***The Holy Solemnity Mass for the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ***  
***Sunday, December 24th***  
***7:00 p.m.***

***The Holy Solemnity Mass for Christmas Day***  
***Monday, 10:00 a.m.***

***Lessons and Carols***  
***December 31st***  
***Sunday, 10:00 a.m.***

# Faith Formation Team

The next meeting for the Faith Formation Team will be on Monday, January 8th at 5:30pm. The team plans and facilitates LOFT Bible study, Christ Cubby resources, seasonal faith formation resources for households, and Vacation Bible school. If you are interested in joining us or have questions, please contact Debbie Streicher ([dstreicher52@gmail.com](mailto:dstreicher52@gmail.com) or 703-303-7255).

## LOFT for Adults (Living Our Faith Together)



LOFT, Living Our Faith Together, Bible study will team with the Faith Formation Team each month to host a light luncheon to enjoy food and fellowship in an intergenerational setting. Each month there will be a theme setting. All other Sundays, this group will meet at 11:30am in Fellowship Hall for Bible study.

December 3 - First Sunday of Advent – Food and Fellowship

December 10 and 17 – Taking Faith Home Bible Study

December 24 – LOFT does not meet (but rumor has it there will be cookies and fellowship following worship)

**Special Note:** LOFT for children and youth will no longer meet weekly. Each month, children, youth, and families are encouraged to join the congregation for food and fellowship every first Sunday of the month.



## A Festival of Lessons and Carols for Christmas

Sunday, December 17, 2023

5:00 p.m.

Emmanuel Episcopal Church  
16 Washington Street, Cumberland,  
MD

Mountainside Baroque's popular annual gift to the community features

The Scholars of St. Cecilia, Mountainside Baroque's resident chamber choir, in a celebration that encompasses six centuries of Christmas music, including traditional carols and readings. This year, the voices will join with instruments for Heinrich Schulz's "Christmas Story." Mountainside Co-Artistic Directors Ryan Mullaney and Lyle Nordstrom will lead The Scholars. This favorite holiday tradition is not a ticketed event but donations will be welcomed!



**A Faithful Prayer Life  
Part Two!**

In follow up to an article in the November Spire, “A Faithful Prayer Life”, the question was asked, “are we as faithful in giving time to prayer as we are to finding time for other activities?” During Sunday morning worship at Saint Paul, we pray the Prayers of Intercession, praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need. The names of those for whom prayer has been requested are read aloud. In addition, Saint Paul has an intercessory prayer ministry. A letter is sent to the members of this prayer team each week and is more specific about the need for prayer.

Author F. B. Meyer, says: “The great tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but un-offered prayer.”

We will add a third ministry of prayer beginning on **February 13, 2024**. Let us gather together on the second Tuesday of each month, at 10:30 a.m. in the Martin Luther Chapel to pray for the needs of individuals, our community and our world. Father Ryan has said often that when we meet God at the end of our lives, we want Him to know who we are and that personal relationship is developed through our prayer life. We also get to know ourselves better!

Praying together encourages prayers for others, rather than just our own needs. We will open ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to pray in line with God’s desires. **Romans 8:26**: “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”

Prayerfully consider this opportunity to come together in the new year to lift our voices in united prayer for those in our Saint Paul family who are going through serious health and/or personal crises, and for our community and our world at large.



The next PLACE two-day spiritual gifts assessment will be offered at St. Paul’s on **Friday, February 16 and Saturday, February 17**. Debbie Streicher will facilitate. Mark your calendars now and stay tuned for more information in the next newsletter.



## Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Fundraisers

The Making Strides Walk, here in Western Maryland, took place on October 7<sup>th</sup>. Even though we will still be able to submit funds until December, I am going to give you a summary of how well we did.

And I do mean “We.” As of today, our walk here in Western Maryland has collected a total of \$39,509. Our team, Mama Kay’s Survivors, raised \$9,020. of that total. The wonderful folks at St. Paul Church donated \$2,710 of our total from the two luncheons, dessert auctions, personal donations and St. Paul Church is already a team sponsor.

Your generosity is overwhelming! Thank you all so very, very much for your donations that helped make this year’s event so successful. Also, thank you for the fellowship we had at the luncheons, the spirited competition at the auctions and the overall enjoyment we had, planning and executing these events.

Hopefully, we can support Making Strides again next year. For now, let’s go raise some money for our church!!!

Thank you again, Jay and Kay Cochrane

### Thank you!



Thank you to all who helped design the banner to be displayed in the faith formation room for children and youth.

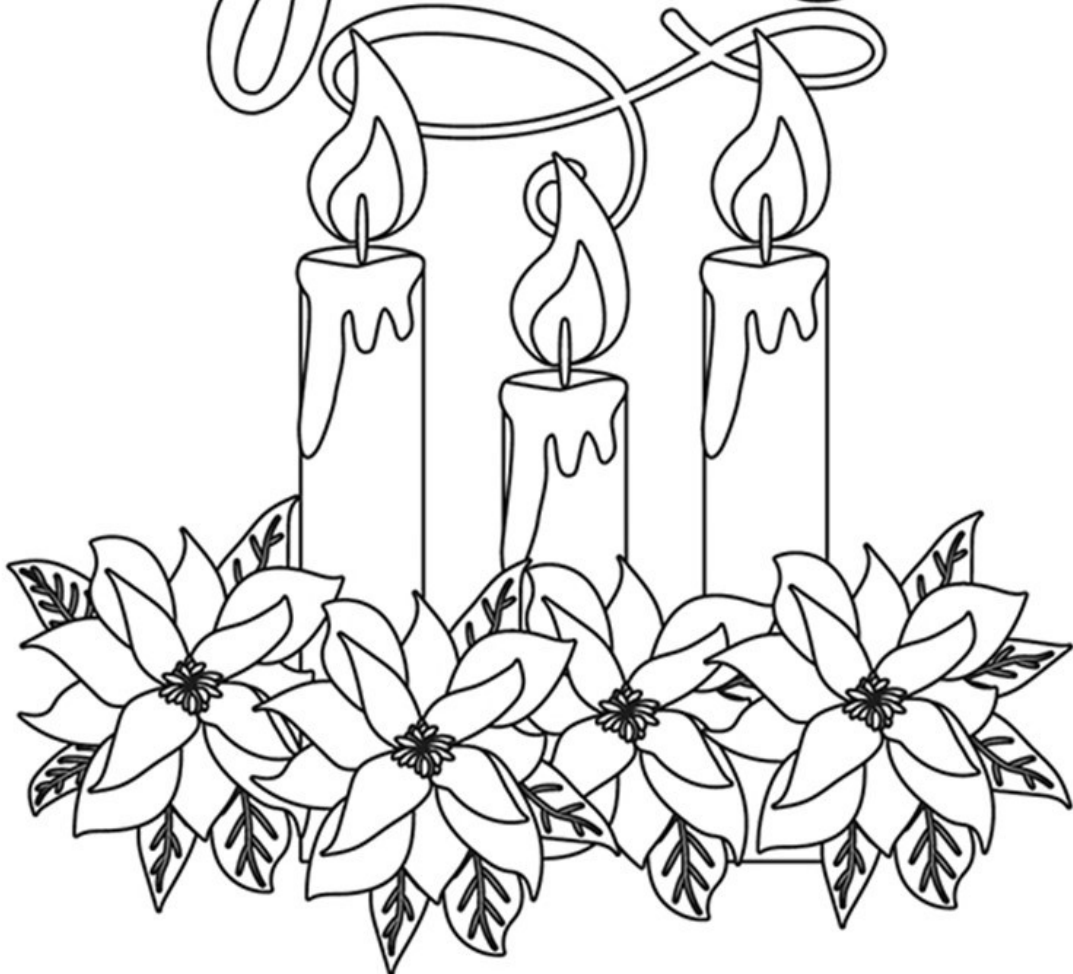




*Coloring page for kids of all ages!*



Christmas  
IS ALL ABOUT  
Jesus





<b>Sunday</b> 8:30 AM 10:00 AM 11:30 AM  6:00 PM	<b>December 3</b> Book Study Worship-Advent 1 First Sunday of Advent Fellowship luncheon Bach Advent Vespers	<b>Wednesday</b> 3:30 PM 5:15 PM 6:00 PM 6:45 PM	<b>December 20</b> APPS family Christmas Hand Bell rehearsal Vespers in the chapel Choir rehearsal
<b>Wednesday</b> 3:30 PM 5:15 PM 6:00 PM 6:45 PM	<b>December 6</b> APPS Afterschool program Hand Bell rehearsal Vespers in the chapel Choir rehearsal	<b>Thursday</b> 2:00 PM 6:00 PM	<b>December 21</b> Beginnings Winter program Longest Night- First Presbyterian
<b>Saturday</b> 10:00 AM	<b>December 9</b> Dementia support group	<b>Saturday</b> 10:00 AM	<b>December 23</b> Dementia support group
<b>Sunday</b> 8:30 AM 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	<b>December 10</b> Book Study Worship-Advent 2 LOFT	<b>Sunday</b> 8:30 AM 10:00 AM 11:30 AM 7:00 PM	<b>December 24</b> Book Study Worship-Advent 4 Cookie fellowship The Holy Solemnity Mass for the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
<b>Monday-Friday</b>	<b>December 11-15</b> <b>Beginnings Santa Shop</b> in conference room	<b>Monday</b> 10:00 AM	<b>December 25</b> The Holy Solemnity Mass for Christmas Day
<b>Tuesday</b> 5:30 PM	<b>December 12</b> Council Meeting	<b>Sunday</b> 8:30 AM 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	<b>December 31</b> Book Study Worship-Lessons & Carols LOFT
<b>Wednesday</b> 3:30 PM 5:15 PM 6:00 PM 6:45 PM	<b>December 13</b> APPS Hand Bell rehearsal Vespers in the chapel Choir rehearsal		
<b>Thursday</b> 4:00-6:00	<b>December 14</b> <b>Poinsettia Order deadline</b> Bountiful Blessings		
<b>Sunday</b> 8:30 AM 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	<b>December 17</b> Book Study Worship-Advent 3 LOFT <b>Hanging of the Greens</b>		

**December Birthdays**



**Happy Birthday, church friends and family!!!**

- 10 – Caitlin Hudgins
- 20 – Gregg Mazzone
- 25 – Sharon Clark
- 29 – Grayson Green