

PROCLAIMING A TIMELESS CHRIST IN A CHANGING WORLD

SINCE 1794



THE SPIRE

SAINT PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH † CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND

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February 2021

CONGREGATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Education

(Faith Formation):

Debbie Streicher

Evangelism:

Jane Roderick

Finance:

Suzanne Umstott

Ministry in Daily Life:

Nancy Lohr

Property:

Edward Ayers

Social Ministry (Fellowship):

Cindy Read

Worship and Music:

Kathleen Ball

Youth:

Gary Miller

Pastor's Ponderings

*"But I am like an olive tree
flourishing in the house of God;
I trust in God's unfailing
love for ever and ever." Psalm 52:8*

&

*"But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body
through death to present you holy in His sight,
without blemish and free from accusation. Colossians 1: 22.*

To the Saints of Saint Paul Church,

We begin, yet again, another month! The year of 2021 A.D. is just rolling right along. Even though I realize it's just only February, it seems that this year is running fast for me already. But this month brings for us many anticipations. It may be your birthday, wedding anniversary, the month of one or more of your children's or grandchildren's birthday, or maybe the anniversary month of a loved ones death, and of course, St. Valentine's Day. There's also another observance that we will be remembering during this month on February 17th. Can you guess what that is? This year on our liturgical calendar, the holy season of Lent begins on Feb. 17th. And even though we are still very much in a time of a global pandemic I (as your shepherd) still plan to distribute ashes to the congregation on Ash Wednesday. Though we are not worshipping together in-person for Ash Wednesday, I do plan to have the church nave and sanctuary open on Ash Wednesday from 7a.m. to 6p.m. for anyone who may want to come and receive the sacramental symbol of their faith upon their forehead. I will be adhering to all the proper protocols on this day with masking, sanitizing cloths etc. Again, there will not be a corporate (in-person) worship that day, but you are more than welcome to come as you are to receive your ashen cross and stay and pray if you wish.

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THE REVEREND
RYAN K. VIANDS
Pastor

DAVID RANKIN
Director of Music

DEBBIE SZYMANSKI
Parish Assistant

STEPHANIE WADE
Treasurer

RAMON ROCHE CARDONA
Sexton

Lent (meaning spring) is a time of committing (if possible) to fasting, as well as giving up certain luxuries in order to replicate the account of the self-sacrificing nature of our Lord's journey into the desert for 40 days. Many Christians throughout the world in observance of these holy days add a Lenten spiritual discipline, such as reading a daily devotional or the bible or praying through a Lenten calendar to draw themselves closer to Christ and God our father. If one is not able to "give up" something, one can take on something new. Like helping out with a ministry or two here at St. Paul Church. Perhaps helping to distribute much needed items for Bountiful Blessings on Thursdays would be a good place to start. Or joining our LOFT (Living Our Faith Together) class time following worship. There are endless ways in which we can grow spiritually during this time of Lent. I pray that you may make a commitment this Lenten season to be more intentional in what you may do as part of your pre-Easter devotion. Whatever you choose to do during this most holy season of our faith, do it with Christ as its center, as we meditate upon the greatest self-giving gift humanity has ever received.

The above scriptures and Dr. Luther's commentary on these passages are the first step to your Lenten discipline. What is it to be *Simul Justus et Peccator*? See what Luther has to say about this Latin phrase. Blessed Lenten journey children of God.

Pax, Fr. Ryan +

FATHER LUTHER'S COMMENTARY

A Christian is *Simul Justus et Peccator* (righteous/saint and a sinner at the same time before God)- both a friend and an enemy of God. The philosophers will not admit this paradox because they don't accept the right way of becoming justified. That's why they demand that people keep on doing good works until they don't feel sin anymore. This teaching has caused many people to become very distraught, because they strived as much as they could to become completely righteous but could never achieve it. Even among those who spread this godless teaching, countless numbers of them have fallen into despair in their hour of death. This would have happened to me if Christ hadn't mercifully looked upon me and fed me from this error.

In contrast, we teach and comfort troubled sinners this way: Dear brothers and sisters, it's impossible for you to become so righteous in this life that you won't feel sin anymore. It's impossible for your body to become as bright and spotless as the sun. Though you still have wrinkles and spots, in spite of this, you are holy. But you may wonder, "How can I be holy since I sin and feel sinful?" sinners holy."

—The Rev. Fr. Dr. Martin Luther.

A prayer of Luther's

There are scars,
seen and unseen,
in my life, in each life.
There is pain inside and out.
Hear this confession of heart...
There is need for wholeness and peace.
There is room for healing, and grace.
God of wholeness heal the hurts,
both inside and out, that make life difficult each day.
Ease the pain, loosen the chains,
bringing freedom in their place.



Our Christian sympathy is extended to the families and friends of
Mary Margaret Dormio and Harry Beal.

Mary Margaret died on January 9th.
Please keep her daughter and son-in-law
Marti and Craig Moreland and family
in your prayers.

Harry died on January 26th. Please keep his
son and daughter-in-law Mack and Kay Beal
and family in your prayers.

A Word from the President

The church council met via a Zoom video conference on January 12. The focus was on preparing for the annual congregational meeting which was held on Sunday, 31 Jan 2021 via Zoom. The council approved the agenda for the meeting and determined that was best to meet on-line for the meeting rather than in-person for the safety of our members due to the continuing COVID-19 infection rate within the local community. The council also determined that we should continue on-line worship services, Bible studies, and meetings until the pandemic situation improves.

The finance committee and staff are currently waiting for a non-profit certification from the Federal Internal Revenue Service so that we can proceed with setting up on-line donations on our web-site and Facebook page. This will allow us greater flexibility in reaching our giving goals. Not meeting in person each week has made it difficult for our members to contribute. Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic, the congregation has weathered last year's financial storm well and did not have to reduce our cash reserves too much.

This will be my last article for *The Spire* as hosting the annual meeting was my last action as your Congregational President. It has been an honor and privilege for me to be your Congregational President for the past three years. There is much to be proud of in our accomplishments as a faith community during this time. However, it is time to let someone else fill this role of leadership for us. We are in an excellent position to reinvigorate our ministries again once we can safely resume meeting in-person. I hope everyone will continue to enjoy the Epiphany season with family and friends as we prepare for the coming Lenten season. Our church council will meet next on 9 February 2021.

Blessings in the New Year,

(Burt Streicher, Council President)



Book Club

The Book Club met in January to discuss “**The Bookwoman of Troublesome Creek**” and all highly recommend it. Our discussion was lively as always, sharing our memories of libraries, and their impact on our lives. Will they continue to be relevant in our technology-driven times?

Our next selection is “**The Tour**” by Jean Grainger. Described as a book to sweep you away to Ireland, with Conor O'Shea, who collects a new group of American visitors from Shannon Airport to embark on a high-end tour of the *Real Ireland*.

But this particular tour, with its cast of unintentionally hilarious characters, presents even seasoned tour guide Conor with situations that test even his vast experience.

A date will be set for discussion, via Zoom, and all are invited to join us.

Home Packets for Lent



Ash Wednesday, signaling the beginning of Lent, is on Wednesday, February 17. Lent packages are being prepared for each household. Included will be a votive candle, mat, unfinished cross for you to decorate, Taking Faith Home for Lent, a devotional, and more. **We invite you to pick packets up at the church on Friday, February 12 between 3:30 and 5:30 pm.** Some will be delivered. If you are able to help with delivery, please call the church.

Shrove Tuesday at Home



Mardi Gras beads, babies, King's cake, and pancakes!

Tuesday, February 16th is
Shrove Tuesday!

Included in each Lent package, you will find a special bag with a faith-filled guided conversation, an easy recipe for making a King's cake using refrigerator cinnamon rolls, a baby to place inside the cake, and beads to wear while you gather around a meal of pancakes.

In Appreciation for Council President, Dr. Burton Streicher

Burt was elected President of the Council in 2018 at a time when our Pastor had just retired and we would embark on a two-year search for the pastor God would call to St. Paul's. He increased the size of the Council to facilitate better oversight and reporting, and the next three years would put the stamp of approval on that decision!

Where to begin to tell the story of Burt's tenure?

The 225th Congregational Anniversary Celebration? Our theme: "I Love to Tell the Story", celebrating our rich heritage, recognizing generations of worshipers before us.

Celebrating 225 Years of Lutheranism in Allegany County? Brunch on May 12, with the churches in our conference, sharing a catered luncheon and the histories that tie us together, as well as the **Time Capsule Opening.**

Joint Reformation Service? On October 27, we hosted 161 parishioners from churches in our conference, sharing a catered luncheon and the histories that tie us together.

Covid-19 Pandemic? Installation for Pastor Ryan? Major building Repairs? Bountiful Blessings volunteer? Puppet Ministry? LOFT? Social Gatherings? (He does love a potluck!)

His position as Chairman of the Stewardship Committee was appropriate, as he offered his time, talent and treasure, in these pursuits, as well as many other behind-the-scenes activities, all offered to the Glory of God.

The Council and Congregation appreciates Burt's thoughtful attention to our needs. With his leadership, we weathered it all and maintained momentum and quality of church ministries.

Thank you Burt!

**God's blessings as you continue to serve Him and His people,
The Council and Congregation of St. Paul's Church**



LOFT Living Our Faith Together Bible Study

Each week, you are invited to join us for a Zoom online Bible study. It begins at 11:30 am and includes sharing Mountain Highs and Valley Lows, reading scripture, talk about the scripture readings, a hymn of the week, and a closing prayer and blessing. Our discussions are based on the weekly Taking Faith Home guide for faith-filled conversations received each week. Scripture readings are based on the weekly readings heard during worship. Contact the church office if you'd like to join us and information will be forwarded for a link to our time together.



VBS Planning

What? It is that time of year again? Yes, it is! Time to make plans for VBS 2021. Our first planning meeting will take place during a Zoom conference call on Wednesday, March 3 at 5:30 pm for all who are interested and able to join us. We will begin discussions about the look and feel of VBS this summer. If you'd like to join us, please contact Debbie Streicher at 703-303-7255 or dstreicher52@gmail.com.

Luther League Puppet Ministry Team News



As we look to the spring and summer, we wait to see if there can be an Easter presentation for APPS and then look towards getting ready for VBS. The puppet ministry team will begin to make plans with the hope there may be a few live presentations this year. Many hands, voices, and skills are needed. If you are interested in learning more about the team or interested in helping, please contact Debbie Streicher (703-303-7255 or dstreicher52@gmail.com).

Thank You

Happy February Birthdays!!!!

Dear Friends of St. Paul's,

I write to thank you for your condolences when Cecil died unexpectedly as well as your outreach during our illness with the Covid virus. I appreciate the dish garden from the entire congregation as well as the cards, phone calls, linens for my hospital bed, Ensure and soup. I was especially moved by the pages in the Spire dedicated to Cecil and his hands-on ministry in APPS and Bountiful Blessings. Donations to the Western Maryland Food Bank, where Cecil spent time weekly, are what he would have prized. He believed strongly in all the efforts of the church to feed the hungry and help the needy in our community.

A memorial service for Cecil has yet to be planned due to the dangers inherent in gathering at this time. There will be a local service at some point, and the information will be widely disseminated and St. Paul's will have an opportunity to make an announcement to the congregation.

Again, many thanks for all the ways you have shared your love for my dear Cecil.

Pastor Marsha

Dear St. Paul's Lutheran Church,

Thank you very much for your generous financial gift. Your contribution will help us to follow through with our Matthew 25 call and mission. Your gift will go a long way when it comes to providing warm meals and shelter, new clothes, toiletries, Bibles, Employment support, housing support and ultimately Jesus.

Thanks again for your gift of love.

Sincerely in Christ,

**Pastor David and Andrea Ziler
Directors, Union Rescue Mission**

****St. Paul's 2020 budget included a \$500 donation to the Union Rescue Mission; this amount was sent to them in December.****



**February – 5 – Dennis Read
10 – Christine Miller
23 – Claire Rowley
28 – Robin Douglas**

**What does a clam do on his
birthday?
He shellabrates!**



FEBRUARY



Monday 5:30 PM	February 1 Worship and Music Committee Meeting via Zoom
Tuesday 10:00-12:00	February 2 Beginnings Closed- teacher planning Lutheran Questions, Lutheran Answers book study
Sunday 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	February 7 Online worship LOFT via Zoom
Tuesday 10:00-12:00 5:30 PM	February 9 Lutheran Questions, Lutheran Answers book study Church Council meeting via Zoom
Thursday 4:00-6:00	February 11 Drive-thru Bountiful Blessings
Friday 3:30-5:30	February 12 Lent packet distribution
Sunday 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	February 14 Online worship LOFT via Zoom
Monday	February 15 Office and Beginnings Closed
Tuesday 10:00-12:00	February 16 Lutheran Questions, Lutheran Answers book study
Wednesday 7:00 AM-6:00 PM 5:00-6:00	February 17 ASH WEDNESDAY Imposition of ashes APPS Drive-thru session
Sunday 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	February 21 Online worship LOFT via Zoom
Tuesday 10:00-12:00	February 23 Lutheran Questions, Lutheran Answers book study
Thursday 4:00-6:00	February 25 Drive-thru Bountiful Blessings
Sunday 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	February 28 Online worship LOFT via Zoom

Bountiful Blessings

Paper towels, toilet tissue, dish soap, bar soap, shampoo, toothpaste, a cleaning product and a deodorant are core items the Bountiful Blessing recipients receive the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month in a drive through distribution.

In January we served 90 families, who each time express their gratitude to us for this outreach.

Please consider donating products to this necessary and vital outreach of St. Paul's.