

PROCLAIMING A TIMELESS CHRIST IN A CHANGING WORLD

SINCE 1794



THE SPIRE

SAINT PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH † CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND

CONGREGATION OFFICERS

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February 2024

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



What is Candlemass?

While many people know the date as Groundhog Day, the celebration of February 2nd in the Universal Church began far earlier than most people realize. Way before our ancestors started crossing into the United States looking for a woodchuck's shadow.

This Christian feast has many names, including the feast of the Presentation of Our Lord, the feast of the Purification of Our Lady, the feast of the Encounter and Candlemass.

All the funny business of a woodchuck's shadow aside, this feast celebrates the event recorded in St. Luke 2:22-38: Mary and Joseph's presentation of Jesus in the Temple 40 days after his birth and the response from Anna, the prophetess, and Simeon of Jerusalem.

According to the Book of Leviticus, a mother was considered ritually unclean from her bleeding for 40 days following the birth of a son. After that period of time, Mosaic Law required that if that child was the first born son, not only was a sin offering required for the purification, but a sacrifice also had to be offered to God because the son belonged to God.

Like the feast(s) of Epiphany and the Baptism of Jesus by John, this feast relates to the manifestation and revelation of Jesus.

When Jesus was presented to the Temple, Simeon took him into his arms and said, "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people, Israel." St. Matthew 6: 16-21.

THE REVEREND
RYAN K. VIANDS
Pastor

DAVID RANKIN
Director of Music

DEBBIE SZYMANSKI
Parish Administrator

CASEY COLLEDGE
Treasurer

RAMON ROCHE CARDONA
Sexton

Inspired by this scriptural reference, this feast's traditions center around candles and relate to the time of year when there is so much darkness within nature and within culture itself.

Indeed, the associations with cosmic light and darkness show how much Groundhog Day and Candlemas have in common.

The shortest and darkest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere is the winter solstice, usually around December 21st. From that day on, the daylight grows until matching the darkness and night at the spring equinox, roughly around March 21st. The midpoint between winter solstice and spring equinox revolves around — you guessed it — February 2nd.

Even before Christ's coming, and long after his ascension, nature knew of Him — indeed, sun, moon, stars, and earth announce His mystery in concert, as it were. Today's liturgical calendar therefore incorporates not only the historical facts of Christ's life — such as His incarnation in the womb of Blessed Mary, His birth in Bethlehem, His presentation in the Temple, and His Paschal Mystery — but also elements of God's own creation. ...

Candlemas recalls this great mystery: that the light has come into the world (December 25th); that it grows in brightness even now (February 2nd); until that day when it destroys darkness and death by its radiant beauty at the Easter vigil.

Candlemass, like the Sacrament of Baptism and the Easter vigil, this feast is an opportunity to focus on Jesus as the Light of the World, as candles always represent the light of Christ.

Saint Egeria, a fourth-century pilgrim to Jerusalem, was the first to describe the celebration, A solemn procession and Mass would commemorate the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. Over the following centuries, the celebration spread to other churches throughout Christendom. The feast of Candlemass appears in Rome in liturgical books of the seventh and eighth centuries. Saint Sergius I was the first to prescribe a procession with candles, and the blessing of candles developed in Western and Central Europe during the early Middle Ages.

The blessing of candles and the procession both take place at the beginning of the main Mass, setting the feast apart from most other liturgies. The feast, as the procession highlights, features two themes: light and the encounter between the Lord and His Church.

One of the procession chants begins, "*Zion, adorn your bridal chamber and welcome Christ the King,*" mirroring the symbolism the procession presents of the Church, the Bride, going to meet Christ, the Bridegroom, the first time the Lord enters his temple in the flesh. This very act is also reenacted when anyone attends a true traditional wedding in the church building. This very sentiment is how a traditional wedding is conducted with Christ as the Bridegroom (husband to be) and the Church as the Bride (wife to be, coming down the aisle for all to stand and see).

This feast also marks the end of the extended Christmass cycle.

Although an ancient tradition, the celebration of Candlemass is not as widespread in the contemporary Church as in ages past. But in Father Ryan's experience, most liturgical worshipping communities appreciate discovering the Church's ancient traditions and customs for feasts. He recommends emphasizing the feast through homilies, announcements, bulletin articles, decorations, vestments and music. The Reformation church should have never thrown out these ancient traditions with the baby and bath water. Though this particular feast was not thrown out by Luther himself, but by later more "zealous" reformers that came after him.

After our time of worship today parishioners are allowed to take those candles (in front of the free standing altar) home and use them during devotions and household crises as a reminder of the light of Christ and the need for patience amid the struggles of life.

This feast is especially nice it is an inclusive feast that is an intergenerational feast.

You have the prophet(s) Simeon and Anna, you have saint(s) Mary and Joseph, and you have the Christ Child. And all of those are together, as the entire Church is all those ages together.

It's the day when the Church blesses all the liturgical candles it uses for the year.

This is a feast were everyone can get involved either, arrange the candle blessing, procession and traditional food, or people can simply invite friends and family over to enjoy food, light candles, read the Gospel account of the Presentation, and pray or sing the Canticle of Simeon, or *Nunc Dimittis*.

So, I hope this helps explain a little more in detail why we celebrate Candlemass and the reason why our parish today is celebrating and observing this wonderful feast day.

From the president....

As we begin to enter the Lenten season, many of us spend the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Holy Week reflecting on the past year and preparing to honor the resurrection of Jesus. In 2024, Ash Wednesday or the Day of Ashes will be February 14th.

The Thursday before Easter, Maundy Thursday, marks the night of the Last Supper when Jesus gathered with his 12 disciples to celebrate Passover before he was crucified, which took place on Good Friday. Easter Sunday celebrates the resurrection of Jesus after his death on the cross.

The Lenten season is inspired by the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert preparing for his own sacrifice. In that same spirit of sacrifice and reflection, many people will give up something or spend the time thinking and praying about something important to them. Maybe that includes ways they can work toward being better or more prayerful people or ways to make the world a better place. In our house, I think back to when our children would have "rice bowls" used to collect their loose change during those 40 days that would then be given to help with World Hunger.

Blessings

Sue Umstott,
Council President

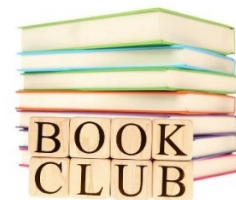
ANNUAL MEETING &

All Are Welcome!

The annual meeting of St. Paul Church will be held following worship on Sunday, February 4th in fellowship hall. We will share a potluck luncheon prior to the meeting.

Everyone attending St. Paul Church is encouraged to join us! Meet new council members and hear what's happening at your church.

Copies of the annual report are available in each narthex.



Joy Book Club

The Club's next selection is *The Prospectors* by Ariel Djanikian. The discussion will be held on Tuesday, March 26th.

**Shrove Tuesday
Pancake Supper
Tuesday, February 13th at 6:00pm**



**Ash Wednesday
February 14th**

Shrove Tuesday signals the end of Epiphany on the church calendar. It comes the day before Ash Wednesday. This day is also called Fat Tuesday and Pancake Day.

The word shrove is the past tense of the word shrive, meaning to confess and seek forgiveness. Many Christians observe Shrove Tuesday and often host pancake suppers as a way to recognize the day. Eating pancakes on this day is believed to have come about as a way to use up butter, eggs, milk, and fat in preparation for fasting during Lent.

We will gather to eat pancakes and all things fattening on Shrove Tuesday.

***Please sign up on the
bulletin board and bring a pancake
topping or
sweet treat to share.***

St. Paul church will be open
for the
Distribution of Ashes
7:00 a.m.-11:30 am
1:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

St. Paul Church will host
an Ecumenical
Ash Wednesday Liturgy
with Emmanuel Episcopal and
First Presbyterian
12:00 noon

Ash Wednesday Liturgy
at St. Paul Church
7:00 p.m.

What does the pastor do all week?

According to recent studies... 4,000-5,000 pastors quit each year. They don't quit because they have a lack of faith in God. They don't quit because they don't believe in the calling God has placed on their life. Most don't even quit because of financial reasons.

Pastors quit because they are overwhelmed with mental exhaustion.

Until you're a pastor you'll never fully understand what it's like to carry spiritual burdens for people. Getting up in the middle of night, praying for your family of faith. Awakened in the middle of night with someone on your heart. Overwhelmed with concern by a person's absents or distance.

Your mind continually occupied with the presentation of the upcoming Sunday message - how to preach it, what to teach on, how do we apply it? Getting critiqued on a continual basis.

Being told you need to do better or that some areas of the church simply need to be better.

Pastors invest their whole life into people and yet people will turn their backs on their pastor at the first sign of a storm, usually without a conversation. Pastors stand in the middle of disputes.

Pastors stand in the middle of gossip.

Pastors council broken marriages.

Pastors comfort those who have suffered loss. Pastors navigate the waters of imperfect people with a desire to see each one thrive in their faith.

They long for spiritual breakthroughs. Your pastor craves the very best for you. All of this, while trying to battle their own flesh and grow in their own relationship with God.

Pastors see the posts.

Pastors hear the whispers.

Pastors endure the negativity.

Pastors are continually caring for the sheep while fending off the wolves.

Pastors pour out and pour out - rarely being poured into.

What keeps a pastor going? YOU!

You - the person who is genuinely hungry.

You - the person who worships with passion and freedom.

You - the teenager who is striving to be a follower of Jesus.

You - the single mom who understands the beauty of the hope found in Christ.

You - the one who walks through the door for the first time because you're in search of peace, hope, and community.

Pray for your pastor. Serve with your pastor.

Talk with your pastor. Encourage your pastor.

They are human. They need You more than you think!

Written by: Dr. L. Ronald Durham

January, 9th, 2023

So, it is not, "What does the pastor do all week?" It's more like,
"What does the pastor do for God's children for a lifetime?"

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

3 – Timmy Friend

5 – Dennis Read

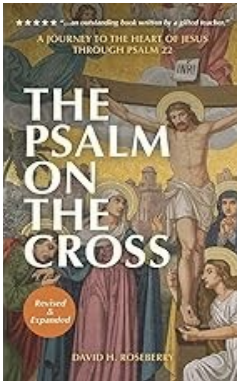
5 – Kay Cochrane

10 – Christine Miller



A Journey to the Heart of Jesus Through Psalm 22

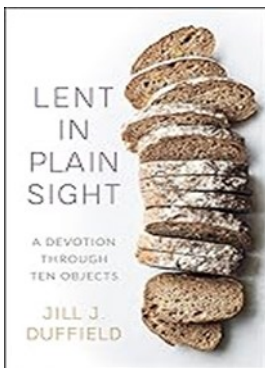
*'My God. My God.
Why have you forsaken me?'*



While the words depict the anguish of suffering, Jesus knew that the complete psalm was one of triumph and hope. The moment that began in darkness and despair eventually ends with a proclamation of confidence and victory.

**Via Zoom, Tuesdays at
11:00 a.m. during Lent.**

**Please sign up
on the bulletin board.
We will order books,
at a cost of \$13.00 each and begin
on Tuesday, February 20th.**



**Sunday morning
Book Study
8:30 a.m.
Lent in Plain Sight
A Lenten devotion through
ten objects.**

The days and weeks of Lent call us to *keep the focus* of our lives of faith on Jesus, our Lord, and to learn more of Him and His loving plan of salvation for us.

**Please sign up on the bulletin board.
We will order books,
at a cost of \$10.00 and begin the study
on Sunday, February 11th.**

Hatred stirs up conflict, but **love** covers
over all wrongs. **Proverbs 10:12**

**In follow up: to the articles in the
November and December Spire:
Please join us:**

**February 12, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. in the
Martin Luther Chapel**

***Jesus Christ carries on intercession for us
in heaven;
the Holy Ghost carries on intercession in us
on earth;
and we the saints have to carry on
intercession for all men.***
Oswald Chambers

Let us join together the second Monday of each month to lift our voices in united prayer as intercessors before God for the needs of our Saint Paul family, going through serious health and/or personal crises, and for our communities and world at large.

Prayer changes things. It changes us. And there are times in which God waits for us to ask for things because his plan is that we work with him in the glorious process of bringing his will to pass here on earth.
- R.C. Sproul

Intercessory prayer, praying for the needs of others, joins God in His work. When we pray for others, we share their burdens.

*Bear one another's burdens
and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Galatians 6:2



Faith Formation Team

The next meeting for the Faith Formation Team will be on Monday, February 26th at 5:30pm.

The team plans and facilitates LOFT Bible study, Christ Cubby resources, first Sunday of the month intergenerational events, 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 or 703-303-7255).

Epiphany Celebration Monthly Intergenerational Food and Fellowship

Originally scheduled for January 7th, Feast of the Epiphany was rescheduled due to inclement weather and was held on January 14th. Over 30 people of all ages gathered to celebrate Epiphany. Many thanks to those who contributed to the soups/chilis, crackers, breads, salad, and desserts. The event opened with a special blessing and prayer followed by highs and lows shared at the tables. There were crowns to decorate, house blessings to take home, an Epiphany Milestone Moment to use at home, and sticker sheets for children. The highlight? The traditional King's cake. Congratulations to Gregg Mazzone for finding the baby Jesus in her slice of cake!



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Epiphany Celebration

Monthly Intergenerational Food and Fellowship



The next Intergenerational Food and Fellowship Gathering will take place on Sunday, March 3rd following worship. The theme will be prayer.



APPS After-School Program is back!

With the help of faithful teachers, Christine Miller and Sue George, the APPS program welcomed the first group of students from West Side Elementary School, since 2020, when the program was closed due to COVID. We started on September 29th and currently have 15 elementary students enrolled. Most of the previous APPS students have aged-out of the program, but we do have a few younger siblings of our alumni participating in APPS. In addition, alumni have returned to be helpers. Those alumni are now attending middle or high school, and one is in college! This year, we also have Pastor Ryan with us! He is a great addition for the older class of 4th and 5th graders, who have a lot of questions. We will be teaching the older class to look-up and read scripture from their bibles and reading bible stories to the younger children's class. The two groups are combined to share games, dinner, and crafts. And speaking of dinner, the wonderful kitchen crew has returned with a few new faces. Rena Christopher, Ed & Nancy Ayers, Kathy Dolly, Ellen Roberts and Bob & Judy Powell (my parents) have provided delicious snacks, dinners, and desserts for the children. In December, we had a visit from St. Nicholas (thank you Travis Medcalf!) and went caroling at The Kensington. We sang a few Christmas favorites and the kids handed out Christmas ornaments, which they had made during craft time.



We also welcomed the children's families for a Family Christmas Party. We enjoyed a delicious, home-cooked meal, decorated Christmas cookies for dessert, and handed out some goodies to the kids. Thank you to the congregation for the wonderful gifts for each child! It was a fun evening getting to know the families. I look forward to more fun this year, as we get to know our new group of children and their families. We are always looking for new volunteers in the kitchen or with the children, please contact me at 240-522-2645 to volunteer, or just show up on a Wednesday around 3:30.

Respectfully submitted, Stephanie Wade

PLACE Assessment? What is it really?

Personal discovery in a combination of assessments and teaching where you learn:



Discover God’s Plan for You

It can be confusing to find your place in daily life and even when you consider where and how you can serve in the ministry of the church, whether in the congregation or the community. Society or even your friends and family say you “should” be serving in one way, but this leaves you feeling discouraged and unfulfilled. No matter what age we are, there are times we feel stuck in a role and prayerfully seek answers. The PLACE assessment helps you know who you are and the gifts God has given you.

God created you for a purpose. Let’s discover it!

Debbie Streicher will facilitate a two-day session. She has been trained in facilitating, has taken it several times herself, and administered it to over 80 people. Over 20 have taken the assessment in our own congregation. She has seen it make a big difference in the lives of individuals as well as the ministry of the church in several different congregations. The two-day process includes discovering personality, spiritual gifts, abilities, passions, and how life experiences reveal where God may be calling you and connecting your passions and abilities to daily life.

Dates: Friday, February 16 –Dinner at 5:30pm followed by Part 1 ending at 9:00pm

Saturday, February 17 – Begin Part 2 at 9:30am, lunch, finish at 1:30pm

Location: St. Paul’s Lutheran Church

Cost? Donations towards books and meals are appreciated.

Interested? Contact Debbie (dstreicher52@gmail.com or 703-303-7255)



2023 Giving Statements

Please see Debbie Szymanski in the church office if you’d like a copy of your statement.

COLORING PAGE FOR KIDS OF ALL AGES!



For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not
perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Homemade
GIFTS MADE EASY

February

Sunday February 4
 10:00 AM Worship-Candlemas
 11:30 AM Potluck luncheon and annual meeting in fellowship hall

Monday February 5
 7:00 PM Let's Beautify Cumberland meeting

Wednesday February 7
 3:30 PM APPS Afterschool program
 5:15 PM Hand Bell rehearsal
 6:00 PM Vespers in the chapel
 6:45 PM Choir rehearsal

Thursday February 8
 4:00-6:00 Bountiful Blessings

Saturday February 10
 10:00 AM Dementia support group

Sunday February 11
 8:30 AM Book Study
 10:00 AM Worship
 11:30 AM LOFT

Monday February 12
 11:00 AM Chapel Intercessory prayers
 5:30 PM Council Meeting

Tuesday February 13
 6:00 PM Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner

Wednesday February 14
 7:00 AM-11:30 Distribution of ashes
 12:00 PM Beginnings Dismissal
 12:00 PM Ecumenical Liturgy
 3:30 PM APPS
 1:30-7:00 Distribution of ashes
 7:00 PM Ash Wednesday Liturgy

Friday February 16
Beginnings Closed-parent conferences
 5:30-9:00 PLACE assessment

Saturday February 17
 9:30-1:30 PLACE assessment

Sunday February 18
 8:30 AM Book Study
 10:00 AM Worship
 11:30 AM LOFT

Monday February 19
Church office and Beginnings closed for President's Day

Tuesday February 20
 Bountiful Blessings delivery
 11:00 AM Psalm 22 study via Zoom

Wednesday February 21
 3:30 PM APPS
 5:15 PM Hand Bell rehearsal
 6:00 PM Vespers in the chapel
 6:45 PM Choir rehearsal

Thursday February 22
 4:00-6:00 Bountiful Blessings

Saturday February 24
 10:00 AM Dementia support group

Sunday February 25
 8:30 AM Book Study
 10:00 AM Worship
 11:30 AM LOFT

Monday February 26
 5:30 PM Faith Formation team meeting

Tuesday February 27
 11:00 AM Psalm 22 study via Zoom

Wednesday February 28
 3:30 PM APPS
 5:15 PM Hand Bell rehearsal
 6:00 PM Vespers in the chapel
 6:45 PM Choir rehearsal