

Deadline to submit articles for "The Epistle" is the 15th of each month.

Feb. 10 • 11:30 a.m. • Worship Committee meeting

Feb. 15 • 5:15 p.m. • Vestry Meeting

Feb. 21 • Parish Office closed in observance of Presidents Day

Feb. 27 • EYC at Church of the Mediator 5-7 p.m.



Thank you to our outgoing Vestry members — Rick Barry, Lee Loeb, Meredith Roberts — and others who provided a delicious brunch following our recent Parish meeting (with the cake to welcome our new Deacon Elizabeth).

How About That Groundhog?

Way back on February 2, 1887, Groundhog Day, featuring a rodent meteorologist, was celebrated for the first time at Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, PA. According to tradition, if a groundhog comes out of its hole on this day and sees its shadow, it gets scared and runs back into its burrow, predicting six more weeks of winter weather; no shadow means an early spring.



Groundhog Day has its roots in the ancient Christian tradition of Candlemas, when clergy would bless and distribute candles needed for winter. The candles represented how long and cold the winter would be. Germans expanded on this concept by selecting an animal—the hedgehog—as a means of predicting weather. Once they came to America, German settlers in Pennsylvania continued the tradition, although they switched from hedgehogs to groundhogs, which were plentiful in the Keystone State.

Groundhogs go into hibernation in the late fall. In February, male groundhogs emerge from their burrows to look for a mate (not to predict the weather) before going

underground again. They come out of hibernation for good in March.

In 1887, a newspaper editor belonging to a group of groundhog hunters from Punxsutawney called the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club declared that Phil, the Punxsutawney groundhog, was America's only true weather-forecasting groundhog.



Shield the Joyous

One of my favorite prayers in the Prayer Book comes at compline with the phrase “shield the joyous.”

I would like to believe that feeling joyous is one of my gifts, at least it was once upon a time. Though I admit over the past few years I have been guilty, as imagine as have many of you, with my share of all-or-nothing thinking; that the worst-case scenario is coming at any moment. This is, I think, why pandemic life has been so hard for us all. We are not programmed to anticipate for bad things to happen for so long a time.

But I encourage you, as I am reminding myself, to choose joy. Choose joy and shield it every chance you get. This is they way God intends life to be for us. God created us out of love, for God to love, and that we might love each other. We are created and are called to work with joy for the world that God created.

Now optimism can be naïve because things may or may not work out. People, institutions, all things of this world can inevitably disappoint. St. Paul's and yes, your priest, will disappoint. But when we look for the joy around us, it is a whole lot easier to work towards making more of it.

I love the way St. Thomas Aquinas speaks of hope and joy. Hope is directed toward “nothing less than God, since the goodness by which God bestows good things on a creature is nothing less than God's essence.” As Christians, we are engaged in the world, and live with suffering, while we also look toward the greater things, the joy that only God brings.

As we approach Lent — the season for repenting to change our mindset — I am turning around to look for the joy as my Lenten discipline. Often the season names all the “Good Friday”-ness of our world. Our prayers are of penitence and brokenness. But this year, I am seeking joy. Joy found in God's people and in the flowers in the trees in my backyard. I am working towards shielding the joyous this year while I know there is still plenty in the kingdom that needs to be tended to.

For those who find themselves out of place in a world of optimism, there may yet be hope.

Austin+



Our children have been working on “Blessing Bowls” that they lovingly created with their own hands. A Blessing Bowl is a vessel to share caring thoughts, loving words and generous gratitude. In the next couple of weeks, you will see these bowls displayed in the hallway in between the Parish Hall and the Nave... please pick up a “blessing” (which will be pre-printed and ready to put into the bowl), to “bless” our children and tell them how important that they are to us.



Deacon's Corner

Thank you, St. Paul's, for the warm welcome you have given my husband, Sam, and me. I have enjoyed my first month serving with you and I look forward to the upcoming months.

The Boomers and Friends adult formation class got off to a great start on the snowiest day of the year. Our first story from Friedman's Fables was entitled "The Bridge." It prompted a lively discussion and left us with some thought-provoking questions. Each story stands alone, so you will not be behind if you cannot attend a class. Join us each Sunday morning at 9:20 in All Saints Hall.

This month I will begin pastoral visits and calls. If you would enjoy a visit, home communion or a phone call, please call me on my cell phone at 940.642.5195 or call the church office. I am available most days and times. I am anxious to meet and get to know all of you.

—Peace and joy, *The Rev. Deacon Elizabeth Graham*

Ash Wednesday Services • March 2

It's hard to believe, but the Season of Lent is fast approaching. This year, Ash Wednesday falls on March 2 and we will observe two services — one at noon and one at 5:30 p.m. Please mark your calendars, come and begin the season of Lent with the rich liturgical elements that Ash Wednesday invites us to share.

Serving On St. Paul's Bereavement Team

The Bereavement Committee has seen a great deal of change this year. We are thankful for Polly Covert for taking the reigns as Chairman.

After being notified by Fr. Austin when a death occurs, one of the team leaders is notified who then contacts team members.

We are grateful to Susan Coffin, Kathy Pigford, Catherine Little and Edie Simmons who have agreed to serve as team leaders. If you would like to participate in this ministry for St. Paul's, please contact Katie Simmons, Polly Covert or contact the Parish Office.

We Remember in our Prayers

For our Parish family: Billie Jean Drennan, Don, DJ Wells, Edgar Morrison, Elaine Sanders, Harriet Simmons, Holly Morgan, Jerry Greene, Jo Van Devender, Kay Dickson, Margaret Van Dyke, Mary Dunn, Peggy Carrico, Rick Farr, Tadley, Wanda Blount, David Benson and Mary Scott.

In our senior living communities: Joyce Welsh, Lora Jones, Mary Scott and Nita Neville.

Extended family and friends: Alison Ulmer, Amanda Rainey, Andi Kushner, Betty Lee Marshall, Bill Selman, Brooke, Brooks Moore, Chuck Fishburn, Clancy, Cory Gaylord, David, Diane Dunn, Donna Polizzi, Edesser "Dess" Reid Ward, Rob & Aislinn Ward, Emily Chancellor, Frances, Francois DuPlessis, Frank Baker, Frank Barrett, Freddie Bea Watson, Gayle White Nelson, George Farr, Jada Dooley, James, Jan, Jane Wacaster, Jeana Bennett, Jeff, Jim Thompson, Jo Nell Brown, John, Josh, Katie, Ken Fisher, Kylie Temple, Leland Tew, Lisa Primeaux, Lou Dubose, Mac Thigpen, Martha Mazingo, Mary Halliwell, Michelle Nelson, Mike Covert, Nell McMullen, Norman, Pat Carver, Patsy Harris, Randy Moore, Rick, Roger, Rosemary Kahlmus, Sandy Carrier, Taylor & Trey, The Rev. David Elliott, The Rev. Greg Proctor, Tom Schram, Tony Sansone, Wanda Farr, Wanda Scott, Willie Spencer, Wilma Kangery, Wyatt Moore and parents, and Zack Martin.

We pray for those who have died, especially Paul Alfieri and Ruth Fletcher, sister in law of Kay Dickson.

We pray for those serving in the Armed Forces, for all who serve overseas and their families, especially Andrew Behm, Shum Benson, Connor Covert, Graham Ford, Nick Mullenand and Zack Thomas.

We pray for our Bishop Brian and for our Rector Austin and Deacon Elizabeth.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Feb. 2Robert Bailey	Feb. 18Rosilyn Holladay
Feb. 3Bobbie Rea	Feb. 20Adrian Page
Feb. 5Ann Marie Fitzgerald	Feb. 21Woodie Abraham, Luke Carrier, Chip Harwell, Meredith Roberts
Feb. 6Gary Jones, Lucy Simmons	Feb. 22Dawson Eason, Bob Pigford
Feb. 7Rick Farr	Feb. 23Andrea Carver
Feb. 8Lilly Graham	Feb. 24Cyndy Howarth, Martha Young
Feb. 9Jerry Greene	Feb. 28Tile Howell
Feb. 13Gary Boone, Cate Simmons	
Feb. 14Rob & Connie Arline, Lillian Green	

Services

	FEB. 6	FEB. 13	FEB. 20	FEB. 27
VESTRY COUNTERS				
8 A.M.				
CHALICE	Malcom Gee	John Carrier	Bob Covert	Malcom Gee
READER	Malcom Gee	John Carrier	Polly Covert	Malcom Gee
USHER	Malcom Gee	John Carrier	Bob Covert	Malcom Gee
10:30 A.M.				
READER 1	Jerome Kittrell	Bev Pringle	John Compton	Rick Entrekin
READER 2	Katie Simmons	Gary Jones	Sally Gray	Cliff Odom
PRAYERS	BAPTISM	Lynn Waddle	Bobbie Rea	Helen Abraham
USHERS	Susan Nowak	Will Simmons	Lauretta Hamilton	Cheri Barry
	Larry Nowak	Edie Simmons	Stacey Harwell	Rick Barry
ACOLYTES	Annie Martin	Elizabeth Scott Bond	Sellers Breaux	Ann Revere Davis
	Jack Martin	Maurice LaBiche	Hayes Lancaster	Lucy Simmons
	Maggie Martin	Simmons Davis	Landon Smith	William Davis
ALTAR GUILD	Gloria Chancellor	Rainey Breaux	Candy Ward	Bev Pringle
	Gloria Chancellor	Rainey Breaux	Candy Ward	Bev Pringle
	Reset: Linda Carrier	Reset: Linda Carrier	Reset: Linda Carrier	Reset: Linda Carrier
CHALICE	Rick Entrekin	Gloria Chancellor	Gary Jones	Lynne Taleff