

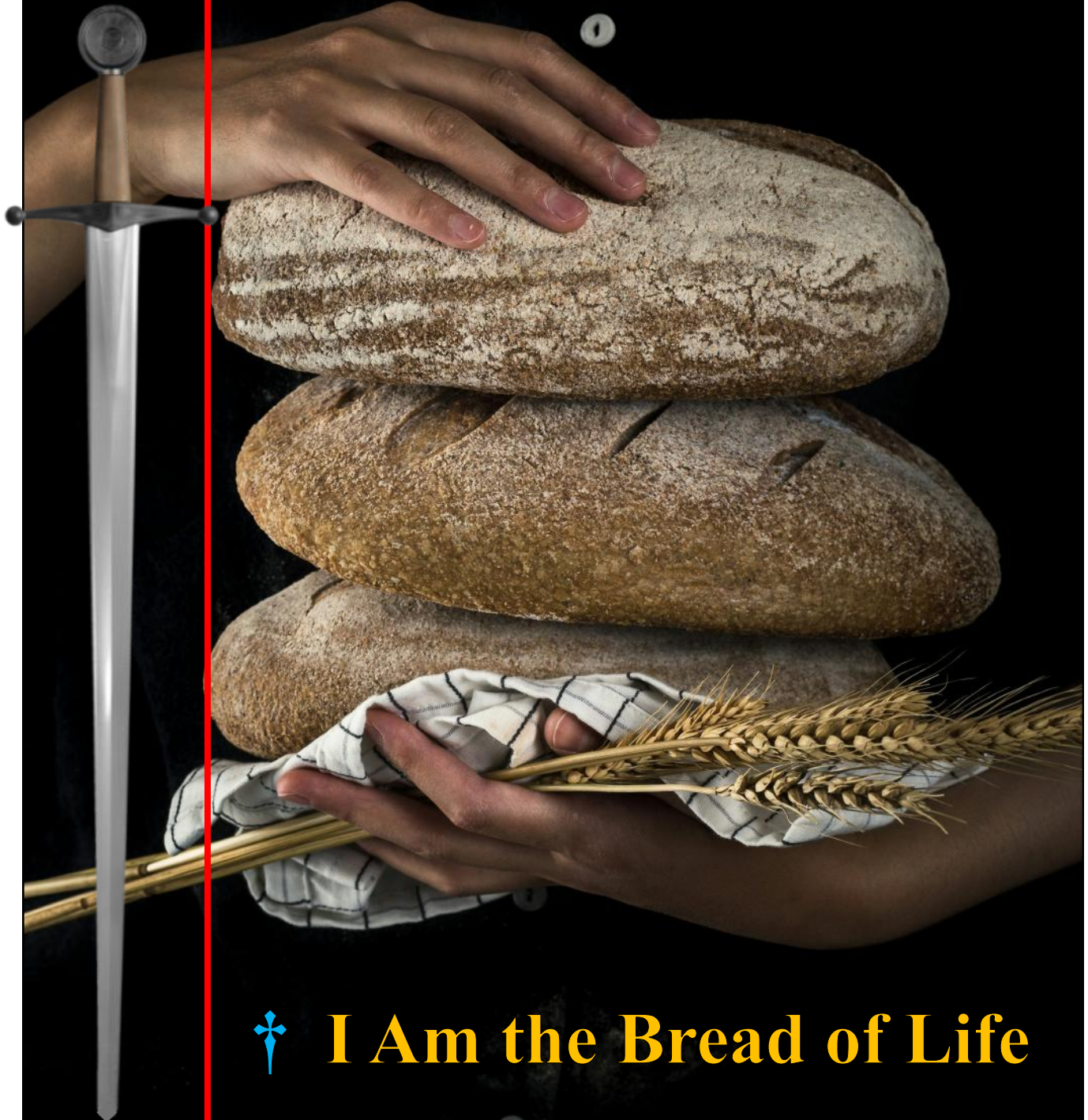
*Transforming
Lives Through
Jesus Christ*

SWORD POINTS

February 5, 2026

www.SaintPaulsBrookfield.com

(203) 775-9587



✝ **I Am the Bread of Life**

† I Am the Bread of Life

Sometimes hindsight can be a disadvantage. We make assumptions and then ignore everything else. This is true about the words in Sunday's gospel. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." We naturally assume that he is talking about the Eucharist, and of course he is. But that conclusion can prevent us to see beyond the simplest interpretation. There is more to the Eucharist than just wafers and wine. Even when we correctly understand that Holy Communion is Christ's body and blood, we fail to understand the full meaning of his words.

Jesus is also telling us that we must ravenously devour him. We must hunger for spiritual as well as physical union with him. Simply put, this means that taking Holy Communion can become a mechanical action. It's sort of like taking an aspirin for a headache. We take it without trying to understand its uses and dangers. There is a danger to the Eucharist: to take it requires a commitment to a life change. Are you ready to accept that commitment?



I am the living bread that came down from heaven.
Whoever eats this bread will live forever.

This bread is my flesh,
which I will give for the life of the world.

John 6:51

✠ Adult Class

Being Real – The Power of Vulnerability and Transparency is the title of our current Adult Christian Formation series. Perhaps when you hear the word vulnerability or transparency you get uncomfortable. However, the only way we can grow as Christians and be authentic believers is to recognize what we truly need and be open to God and to others. When it comes to transparency, God is not asking us to do something that He hasn't already done himself! Please join us in the Guild Room each Sunday morning at 9:30 for this intriguing and challenging 5-part series.

Jesus' life is filled by many, who make demands on his time. In spite of these heavy demands, he still makes time to be alone in prayer. As a faithful follower, does your life follow his pattern of prayer and action?



✠ This Week at St. Paul's

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------|--|
| Thu, Feb 5 | - 9:30 am | - Iron Sharpens Iron Discussion Group, Guild Room |
| | 11:30 am | - Chronic Pain Support Group, Guild Room |
| | 7:30 pm | - Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary |
| | 7:30 pm | - Property Committee, Guild Room |
| Fri, Feb 6 | -10:00 am | - St. Paul's Walking Group, Richter Park, Danbury |
| Sat, Feb 7 | - 7:30 am | - <u>John 21:12</u> Group, Theo's Downtown Diner, New Milford |
| | 8:00 am | - Men's Prayer Breakfast, Guild Room |
| | 10:00 am | - PraiseMoves, Crocker Hall (Zoom) |
| Sun, Feb 8 | | 5th Sunday after the Epiphany |
| | - 8:00 am | - Traditional Holy Communion (YouTube Live) |
| | 9:30 am | - Adult Class, Guild Room |
| | 9:30 am | - Newcomers Class, Crocker Hall |
| | 10:30 am | - Holy Baptism & Contemporary Holy Communion (YouTube Live) |
| | 11:45 am | - Sunday School, Classrooms |
| | 6:00 pm | - Super Bowl Party, Guild Room |
| Mon, Feb 9 | - 7:00 pm | - Men's Bible Study, Crocker Hall (YouTube Live) |
| Tues, Feb 10 | - 9:30 am | - Ladies Tuesday AM Bible Study, Guild Room |
| | 7:00 pm | - Boy Scout Troop #5 |
| Wed, Feb 11 | -10:00 am | - Holy Communion & Healing (YouTube Live) |
| | 11:30 am | - Noonday Prayer , Guild Room |
| | 7:00 pm | - Ladies Evening Zoom Bible Study (Zoom) |
| | 7:30 pm | - Vestry Meeting, Guild Room |
| Thu, Feb 12 | - 9:30 am | - Iron Sharpens Iron Discussion Group, Guild Room |
| | 7:30 pm | - Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary |
| Fri, Feb 13 | -10:00 am | - St. Paul's Walking Group, Fairfield Hills, Newtown |
| Sat, Feb 14 | - 7:30 am | - <u>John 21:12</u> Group, Theo's Downtown Diner, New Milford |
| | 8:00 am | - Men's Prayer Breakfast, Guild Room |
| | -10:00 am | - PraiseMoves (Zoom) |
| Sun, Feb 15 | | Last Sunday after the Epiphany |
| | - 8:00 am | - Traditional Holy Communion (YouTube Live) |
| | 9:30 am | - Adult Class, Guild Room |
| | 9:30 am | - Newcomers Class, Crocker Hall |
| | 10:30 am | - Holy Baptism & Contemporary Holy Communion (YouTube Live) |
| | 11:45 am | - Sunday School, Classrooms |

Check our website daily for schedule updates.

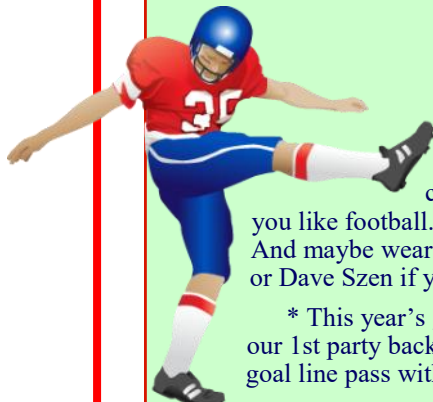




The Priest-in-Charge WEEKLY

Fr. Nate, our Priest-in-Charge is distributing a weekly e-mail to communicate things directly from his desk to yours. **Connection, communication, and care** are among the highest priorities of his new ministry, and he wants to make sure there are

regular touch points between us. If you would like to receive *"The Priest-in-Charge Weekly"* and **already receive weekly e-mails from St. Paul's**, you don't have to do anything - you're already included on the list! If you would like to receive *"The Priest-in-Charge Weekly"* and **DO NOT receive weekly e-mails from St. Paul's**, or if you want to opt out, write Fr. Nate at priest@saintpaulsbrookfield.com and let him know.



† "It's Good!"

This Sunday February 8th we will be hosting our 11th annual* Super Bowl party! We're setting up our big screen in the Guild Room. And you're invited. Men, women, children. It doesn't matter who you're rooting for. Or even if you like football. Just bring yourself, your favorite appetizer, beverage or snacks. And maybe wear your favorite team shirt. No cost. No fuss. Contact Ron Switzer or Dave Szen if you're interested so we have an idea who's bringing what.

* This year's game between the Patriots and the Seahawks is a rematch of our 1st party back in 2015 when Patriot Macolm Butler famously intercepted a goal line pass with 20 seconds remaining!



† Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper - Mardi Gras Extravaganza

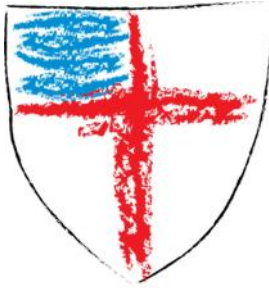


Everyone is invited to Saint Paul's Annual Pancake Supper on Shrove Tuesday, February 17th, from 5:30 to 7:00 pm. Come celebrate the final moments before Lent begins with pancakes and games, beads

and balloons! A freewill offering will be accepted.



SHROVE TUESDAY



† Ih-pis-kuh-puh l / Dik-shuh-ner-ee

(Episcopal Dictionary)



† Baptism

/ bap-tiz-uhm /

Baptism - This is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body, the church. God establishes an indissoluble bond with each person in baptism. God adopts us, making us members of the church and inheritors of the Kingdom of God (*Book of Common Prayer* (BCP), pp. 298, 858). In baptism we are made sharers in the new life of the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins. Baptism is the foundation for all future church participation and ministry. Each candidate for baptism in the Episcopal Church is to be sponsored by one or more baptized persons.

Sponsors (godparents) speak on behalf of candidates for baptism who are infants or younger children and cannot speak for themselves at the Presentation and Examination of the Candidates. During the baptismal rite the members of the congregation promise to do all they can to support the candidates for baptism in their life in Christ. They join with the candidates by renewing the baptismal covenant. The water of baptism may be administered by immersion or affusion (pouring) (BCP, p. 307). Candidates are baptized "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," and then marked on the forehead with the sign of the cross. Chrism may be used for this marking. The newly baptized is "sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever." When all baptisms have been completed, the celebrant and congregation welcome the newly administered within the eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or another feast.

The Catechism notes that "Infants are baptized so that they can share citizenship in the Covenant, membership in Christ, and redemption by God." The baptismal promises are made for infants by their parents or sponsors, "who guarantee that the infants will be brought up within the Church, to know Christ and be able to follow him" (BCP, pp. 858-859). Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, the Day of Pentecost, All Saint's Day or the Sunday following, and the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (the First Sunday after the Epiphany).



This Sunday at the 10:30 service we will be baptizing two babies. Join us.

† What's the Difference?

[Isaiah 58:1-12](#) - [Psalm 112:1-10](#) - [1 Corinthians 2:1-16](#) - [Matthew 5:13-20](#)

How is it that the community of believers in Jesus Christ can know the truth that seems to be hidden from those who do not believe? Since Jesus is the unique embodiment of God and came and lived openly among humans in a specific period in our history, the mystery of God's nature should be clearly evident to all. But that is surely not the case, then or now.

The key to the revelation of the truth about God is faith in Jesus Christ as he is revealed in Scripture and not as we would like him to be or think he should be. Then, through faith in Jesus, we open ourselves to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God and the Wisdom of God.

Finite and fallible creatures cannot begin to understand the infinite and infallible God. What creature can comprehend the mind of its creator? The creator must be capable of contemplating in his mind all there is of the creature even before it is created. The creator's mind must be able to contain the mind of the creature as well as the thoughts necessary to create it.

Our willful arrogance, our sin, also limits our knowledge of God. We speak of the arrogant people in our lives as know-it-alls. They are the ones who think they have no need to listen to others. Our sin nature makes us that way in our relationship with God and results in our living our lives as if there were no God.

The only way the finite creature can know anything about the infinite God is by revelation. Thankfully God, the infinite Creator, reveals himself to each generation of created human beings through his Spirit. The only way the fallible human race can be cured of the sin-blindness that obscures God's revelation is through the convicting and guiding work of the Holy Spirit ([John 16:8-15](#)). It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that unites believers in Jesus Christ as the Church, because it is only through the Spirit that we can know God and his will. The Spirit also empowers us to live according to God's will and participate in demonstrating his purpose to the world.

We announce and demonstrate the holy God's purpose and direction through lives that are radically different - lives that are focused on obeying God. We were created to be agents of change. Even before the Fall, our assigned duty was to spread God's order (the garden) over chaos (the wilderness of the world). That is the

call to subdue and rule over the world that we read about in [Genesis 1:28](#).

But being made in the image of God and subordinate to him, our authority is delegated by him and to be exercised according to his plan - the plan that is revealed to us by the Spirit and the Scriptures. Likewise, God's people are called to participate in his redemption of the world by witnessing to his steadfast love and mercy shown through his Son, Jesus Christ.

In this world, when something is radically different, it is noticed. There is no way that we can even approximate the eight characteristics of a citizen of God's kingdom described in the Beatitudes and go unnoticed in this world. We are to be God's billboards along the highway of life. A billboard that no one *sees* is nothing but wasted space.

Look It Up - Isaiah 58:6-9a

Think About It - What is the light of the lamp of faith?

- by The Rev. Dr. Chuck Alley, *The Living Church*, 2026



*Knowledge of Divine
Glory | Lawrence
Lew, OP | Flickr*

† *Art in the Christian Tradition*

Orphans,

by Thomas Benjamin Kennington (1856-1915),
oil on canvas, painted in 1885,
© Tate Britain, London

Here's a true story which can perhaps somehow help us understand Sunday's reading a little better. It is about an event that happened during World War II. When Europe was being freed from Nazi occupation at the end of the war, there was still terrible hunger. The allied forces grouped many starving orphans together in camps where they would be fed and looked after. Even though they were lovingly cared for, the orphans hardly slept at night. Psychologists were brought to the camps and what transpired is that the orphans were anxious because they feared they would wake up again with no food. The allied forces running the camps then gave the orphans a piece of bread that the children could sleep with at night. The children were told the bread was just to be held and not eaten. The results were amazing. All the kids slept well from then onwards. The guarantee that they would wake up to food calmed their fears and made them fully trust they were now in good hands....

In Joh's gospel reading Jesus is telling us that he is the bread of life, always there alongside us. That thought should comfort us and also calm our fears.

This painting depicts orphans, probably not looking too dissimilar than the orphans mentioned in the story. Painted in 1885 by Thomas Benjamin Kennington, it shows two young boys, seated on the floor, without furniture. Their plate is chipped, with only a tiny piece of bread remaining. Their feet are dirty, as they probably have no money to buy shoes. A bit of hay on the left of the painting suggests that they don't have a proper bed to sleep in, but have to make do with the most basic of sleeping settings, some hay. Their clothes are torn and worn. Despite all this, there is great affection and tenderness between the two boys, probably brothers: they are obviously caring for one another. Kennington was one of the founder members of the New English Art Club in 1886, and its first Secretary. He was well known for his compelling pictures of the urban poor, although he also painted less emotive scenes from everyday life and portraits. The rich coloring, smooth handling of paint, and subject were probably inspired by the work of the seventeenth-century Spanish artist Murillo, who also painted poor children.





Here is an update about St. Paul's ongoing food-related ministries serving our community:

Drive Thru Food Collection - occurs every other Wednesday from 11 am - noon. We have now held 152 food drives since April 22, 2020! Last time our trucks delivered to the Victory Christian Center, Danbury and the Jericho Partnership in Danbury.

Our next food collection, will be next Wednesday, February 18th and will support the Christian Victory Center in Danbury, and the Jericho Food Pantry in Danbury.

Thank you all for your ongoing generosity and to the many volunteers who have helped to load the trucks and deliver food to the pantries.

Next Drive-Thru Food Collection Wednesday February 18th

*Help us,
Help others*



If you would like to request Altar flowers for a particular Sunday in Memory of a friend or loved one, please fill out an envelope located in the back of the church or send an email request to dszen@yahoo.com or contact David Szen.



Altar Flowers

† Transforming Saints of God

Thursday, February 5th

Agatha of Sicily

Martyr, c. 251

Agatha of Sicily was one of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs from the early church. It is believed that she was born around 231 to a rich and noble family. From a very young age, she chose to dedicate her life to God as a consecrated virgin, but this did not stop men from making unwanted advances toward her.

Her written legend comprises "straightforward accounts of interrogation, torture, resistance, and triumph which constitute some of the earliest hagiographic literature."

According to the 13th-century *Golden Legend*, fifteen-year-old Agatha rejected the amorous advances of the low-born Roman prefect Quintianus, who thought he could force her to turn away from her vow and force her to marry. His persistent proposals were consistently spurned by Agatha, so Quintianus, knowing she was a Christian during the persecution of Decius, had her arrested and brought before the judge. He was the judge.

He expected her to give in to his demands when she was faced with torture and possible death, but she simply reaffirmed her belief in God. To force her to change her mind, Quintianus sent Agatha to Aphrodisia, the keeper of a brothel, and had her imprisoned there. While she remained confined there for a month, she never wavered in her resolve that she would never willingly give herself to him or to any other man.

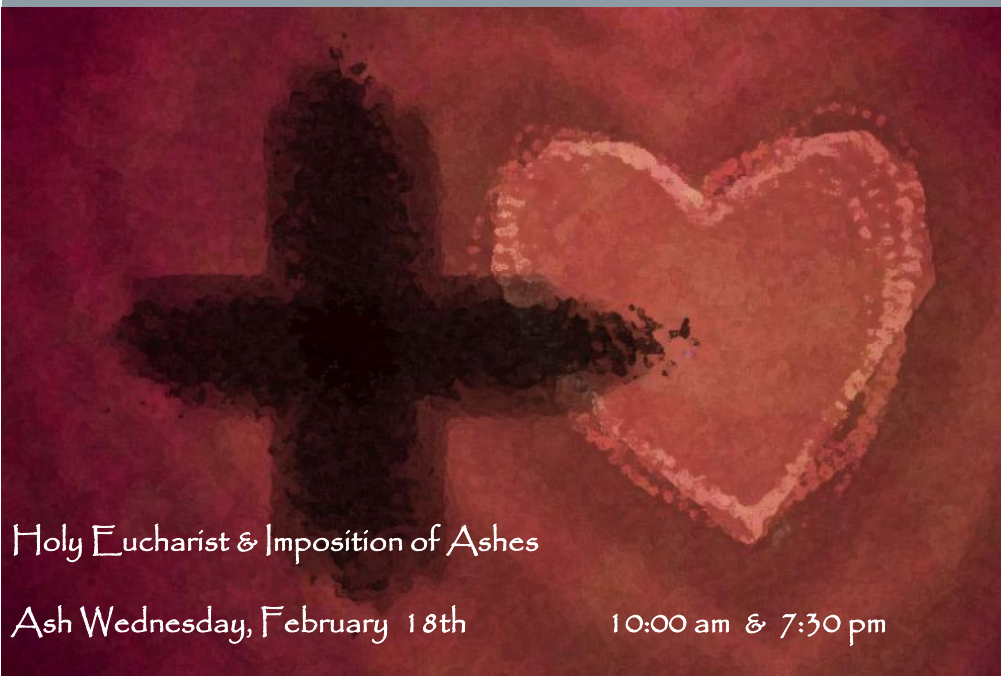
Quintianus sent for her again, argued, threatened, and finally had her put in prison and had her tortured. After further dramatic confrontations with Quintianus, Agatha was then sentenced to be burnt at the stake, but an earthquake saved her from that fate; instead, she was sent to prison where St. Peter the Apostle appeared to her and healed her wounds.

Saint Agatha died in prison, probably in the year 251 according to the *Legenda Aurea*.

Counted as a virgin martyr because of her refusal to consent, she is regarded as the patron of all those who are subjected to sexual harassment or assault. Because of her popularity, she was one of the very few saints who were retained on the calendar of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer after the Reformation.



Agatha attended by
St. Peter & an angel
in prison.



Holy Eucharist & Imposition of Ashes

Ash Wednesday, February 18th

10:00 am & 7:30 pm

Take note

by Kirsten Peterson, Organist & Choirmaster

Greetings!

This Sunday our Gospel reading comes from John 6. Within it is the famous passage where Jesus tells us he is the bread of life. It seems appropriate, therefore, that we should sing Suzanne Toolan's *"I Am the Bread of Life"*!

Toolan, a nun and teacher of choral music, initially wrote the song in 1964, but it received its final form in 1966. The hymn is popular in Catholic churches and well-known at St. Paul's!

Since she is the expert, I thought I'd let Toolan tell you about the song she composed:



Sister Suzanne Toolan

I wrote *"I Am the Bread of Life"* for a San Francisco archdiocesan event in 1964. I was teaching high school at the time and wrote the song during my free period. When the bell rang for the next class I decided I didn't like the music, so I tore it up and threw it in the wastepaper basket.

My classroom was next to the infirmary, where the girls who didn't want to take tests or were otherwise unprepared for class went for a period or two until they were tracked down by an exasperated teacher. As I left my classroom, a freshman girl came out of the infirmary and said, "What was that? It was beautiful!" I went back into my classroom, took the manuscript out of the basket and taped it together. It has had a life of its own ever since.

"I Am the Bread of Life" began to appear in archdiocesan liturgies. There were many purple ditto copies going around.

Not everyone liked the hymn. One liturgist gave talks on why it shouldn't work, saying: "It is not metric; its tessitura [vocal range] is too high. Its tessitura is too low." Others objected to it because they felt by placing the words of Jesus into the mouths of the assembly, those words were being attributed to the assembly.

Travelers to Europe and Asia in the 70s and 80s would tell me about hearing *"I Am the Bread of Life"* in different countries. I have a copy of it in a Slavic language, in Korean and Spanish, but it has been sung in so many other languages. It is included in hymnals of other Christian faith traditions. I remember being introduced to a woman who was Episcopalian. When she heard my name she said, "Oh, number 335!" - the number of the hymn in the Episcopal Hymnal.

I could never figure out how the hymn became popular. I know in our Roman Catholic tradition it came at the beginning of our use of the vernacular, and we simply didn't have much to sing in our own language. But I also think its popularity stems from its message of resurrection, which is so strong in these words of Jesus. We so need that message of hope. I am always touched when people tell me that at the funeral of a mother, father or friend, these sung words of Jesus gave them consolation. Then I know the hymn has done its work.

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Choir Notes

Thank you, young freshman way back in 1964! I'm sorry if you were not feeling well that day and had to go to the infirmary - or, I'm glad that you decided to sit that class out. I hope your teacher didn't scold you too much.

It can be tricky to sing; even Toolan alludes to the fact that it is "not metric" meaning the words don't always fall on regular beats, but if you're worried, you can practice along with the following video. Some of the words are a bit different, but you'll get the idea!

Peace and blessings,



✠ Good Stewardship Begins At Home: *Our Home*

Please remind all who use our home to be good stewards by turning off lights, closing curtains, turning down thermostats, cleaning up after themselves and locking doors when they are leaving, especially as cold weather and dropping temperatures consume more energy.

LENTEN SERIES

† St. Paul's Lenten Program

Les Miserables: More than Merely a Mega-Musical A Road to Redemption

If you have followed at all any entertainment news, you will have discovered that the world-wide smash production of "*Les Miserables*" is celebrating its 40th anniversary with a global tour. The musical adaptation of Hugo's 19th century classic has already had gala performances to honor 10th and 25th anniversaries and it would not be a surprise to suspect that planning for the 50th is likely in its initial stages, much to the delight of fund raisers at PBS.

Many of you may have read Hugo's novel, perhaps even more are familiar with the glorious music of the stage production and have attended performances on Broadway or in the West End or on the road - it has been performed in high schools and colleges across the country. (And I've seen it at least thirty times.) There is one song, a choral spectacular, "One Day More," that brings together all the major characters and expresses a major theme not present predominantly in the original French version of the musical : THAT OF GOD'S ROLE IN THE DRAMA - "Another day, another destiny, this never ending road to Calvary... Tomorrow we'll discover what our God in heaven has in store."

Les Miserables is an intensely theological work of art as the reader/theater-goer journeys with Jean Valjean along the road to Calvary, to forgiveness, to redemption, to paradise, and this journey renders it a fitting work for study and exploration during Lent. What follows is an outline for the journey that you and I will undertake together.

- **Sunday February 22** (Session 1) - 1-1:45 pm. "Another Day, Another Destiny: Les Miserable as Journey Home"
- **Sunday February 22** - 2-5:30 pm - watch the movie - popcorn, snacks, and drinks available
- **Wednesday February 25** (Session 2) - 7-8 pm - "The Bishop and the Convict: The First Step"
- **Wednesday March 4** (Session 3) - 7-8 pm - "Fantine and the 'Lovely Ladies': The Poor and the Rejected"
- **Wednesday March 11** (Session 4) - 7-8 pm - "Jean Valjean and Javert: Grace and Mercy vs. Law and Justice"
- **Wednesday March 18** (Session 5) - 7-8 pm - "Love as Patriotism - Love as Romance - Love as Prayer"
- **Wednesday March 18** (Session 6) - 7-8 pm - "Seeing the Face of God: Beyond the Barricades"

ANDREW PETERSON



Resurrection Letters TOUR



Walnut Hill Community Church

156 Walnut Hill Rd, Bethel, CT | Mar 28, 2026 | 7 pm

find tickets at andrew-peterson.com/tour



† Vestry Meeting January 14th



Opening: Warden Lois Hunt opened the meeting with prayer by Bill Schrull at 7:35 pm.

Scripture & Reflection: ([John 1:29-42](#))

Question: *Did anything jump out at you, or did you see anything different that you did not previously observe?"*

Lois: I never thought about John's comment, that he did not know Jesus. Was it God who spoke to him when discussing that "the Holy Spirit comes and stays?"

Bill B.: We discussed this in our Monday study, and I believe that John knew Jesus prior because they were cousins. I believe that Jesus did not have the powers of heaven before this baptism.

Jeff C.: Oh, to be there and have John and Jesus lock eyes, it had to be something else! I find it interesting that John and Peter were present, and Peter ended up denying Jesus and John sent followers to ask Jesus if he is really the Messiah.

Dan B.: I was struck by how John fulfilled his call to prepare the way of the Lord. John was not intimidated by Jesus, but he was willing to let go of his ministry to let Jesus take up his ministry. After the baptism, they were both in the same region but not working together. John decreased so Jesus could increase.

Nate: There is a style of artwork that shows the life and death of Jesus in a very dramatic fashion. The picture I am thinking of depicts John's finger pointing to Jesus. It is all our roles to point our finger to Jesus.

she had driven by this beautiful church on several occasions. She really enjoyed the service, so she returned for the Sunday worship service. What really touched her was that Father Andy greeted her by name after only attending St. Paul's once. She really liked the special, friendly welcome from everyone she met. She has been here at St. Paul's for 20 blessed years, and she prays she has many more.

Beth attended the ALPHA Course; which made her realize that she didn't know the Bible and Scriptures as well as she thought. She had many questions that were answered during this study and with help from others. This really opened her mind and heart to want to seek more of God's word. One Sunday morning, while she was praying at church before the service, she had a very calm, peaceful feeling come over her. She realized right then that it was the Holy Spirit. This is when she knew God put her where she should be. She is so grateful that her prayers were answered and thankful for all the blessings in her life.

The December Vestry meeting minutes - approval were approved as written.

Treasurer's Report: Chuck reported that December's performance was very strong, showing a surplus of \$35,622. This amount is 23% of our annual income, and it is double the amount received in the month of

December for any prior years. This brings the YTD income to a small deficit of \$6,624. The Franklin Funds had a solid year. YTD gain is \$211,700 or a 12.0% increase. We are at 100% of payments for 2025 Mission Budget.

Once again, our Lord has provided for all of our financial needs in 2025, and our commitment to our Faith Budget has been reinforced.

The vestry has approved our recommendation to set up a new checking account and also approved the signers below signers for main checking account- James Miller, Diane Simone, Charles Allen & David Williams.

Signers for Rectors Discretionary fund - Rev Nate Lee, James Miller & Charles Allen

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Vestry Minutes



Vestry Testimony: Beth Beckwas raised in a Catholic family, attending Catholic school for 14 years, going to church every Sunday. It wasn't until she lived on her own that she wanted to inquire for herself other beliefs and the faith of other religions. She did just that when she moved to Reno, NV. It was a great experience for her to participate in several different church communities, and she met many people this way.

In 2005, Beth met her husband, John. On their second date he brought her to the Good Friday service at St. Paul's. She notes that

Vestry Minutes

(Continued from page 14)

We are working on our insurance policy. We are still waiting on the valuation of the stained-glass windows. Once we get that we will work with the Insurance Company to ensure we are covered with full replacement value.

Committee/Ministry Reports:

JoAnn Hornak: **Hearts to Hands** - Dot reported that they have been supplying drivers for doctor's appointments. JoAnn: "Jack and I were the recipient of the love and kindness of the people of this ministry. It was amazing and greatly appreciated."

Sunday School - Julie Astbury will be retiring as the Sunday School Administrator. Julie and Paul are going back to their old church in Sherman. A level 2 Sunday School class teacher is needed. There are a few people considering the Sunday School Administrator position.

Diane Peterson: Discussed with Lois the **Stephen's Ministry**. It was very informative, and the hope is that this ministry will be revived. The **food drive** is a well-oiled machine with the dedicated team, and all is well.

Dan B.: **Adult Education Formation** With the three studies of the Gospel of John and the Sunday morning Adult Education, the number of participants is up to 40 individuals. This is a great turnout!

Jeff C.: **Property Committee**, reported on the progress of the slate roof replacement. Handed out the two quotations to replace the roof. Jeff gave a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of each of the proposals and asked the Vestry to review the proposals and be prepared to discuss them and make a decision at the February Vestry Meeting.

Priest-In-Charge Report:

- The new nominations for the Wardens, Officers and Vestry Members were presented to the Vestry and were well received.
- Fr. Nate is actively looking to expand the staff.
- Julie Astbury has decided to resign as the Sunday School Administrator and teacher after many years of dedicated service. Julie and Paul are heartbroken about leaving St. Paul's, but for health reasons they are moving to a church closer to home. A reception will be held this Sunday, the 18th after the 10:30 AM service to honor and thank Julie for all that she has done.

- Kagan Kronberg has agreed to take on the Sunday School Administrator role, and she is very excited about the opportunity. Currently Sunday School teachers consist mainly of the parents of the children attending. The parents want to be in the service with their children and have Sunday School before or after the service. Fr. Nate's goal is to build a roster of teachers for our three classes, complete with at least four (4) teachers. He has come up with a handful of people that would help fill this roster.
- Along with the changes to the SS program, Fr. Nate is currently working to redesign the 10:30 am service. The redesign will offer something for everyone, of all ages and background. A team was put together to re-image the 10:30 am service. Members went to 8 different churches to see firsthand how they have been successful in their design. A handout explaining the new 10:30 service was reviewed. There was discussion about the new service. This new service will be a 'soft launch' starting on February 1st through May 31st, Trinity Sunday. It will then be evaluated, and any possible changes and/or improvements will be discussed.
- A meeting with the Healing Ministry director is scheduled for Sunday. With all the changes taking place, it is important to have prayer coverage for our specific needs, direction and wisdom. There is also an interest in having healing prayer on a weekly basis.

Vestry Minutes

Old Business:

- Annual Report and Annual Meeting: All reports should be sent to Fr. Nate and both Wardens for review, and they will pass them along to Dave Szen.

New Business:

- PIC & Staff Annual Review. The Diocese of CT made the recommendation of 3¼% Cost of Living Increase for 2026. There are two St. Paul's Staff members that will be affected: Kirsten Petersen and Fr. Nate. The Vestry discussed the increase and agreed to the 3¼%. This increase will take

(Continued on page 16)

Vestry Minutes

(Continued from page 15)

- effect as of January 1, 2026.
- Special recognition of service for Chuck Allen, Julie Astbury, Dan Bacon and Lois Hunt. Prayers were offered up for all.

vision is to have this committee add new members and advertise for special cleanup events. The Vestry agreed to this proposal.



Vestry Minutes



- Formalize the Sexton Committee: Jeff C. explained that, with Jim Miller becoming the Treasurer, he will not be continuing his work on the Sexton team. Jeff is asking that we officially create a Sexton Committee. This committee can then better organize by setting up a schedule for the cleaning of the church, assigning responsibility for ordering supplies, managing maintenance, etc. Dave Allen will be the committee chairperson. The

- Approval of expenses for the Newcomers Social. On January 24th, a Newcomers Social will be held. The committee has sent out 40+ invitations, and the hope is that most will accept and come to be greeted and welcomed. A budget of \$1,000 was set as a maximum to be spent. If the cost is less, then it is a savings. The actual amount spent will be reported in the February Vestry Meeting.

Closing: The meeting 'was closed by Lois Hunt, with prayer by Fr. Nate at 9:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
David Williams, Clerk

† Sabbath Rest Is Important, But...

Isaiah 58:1-12

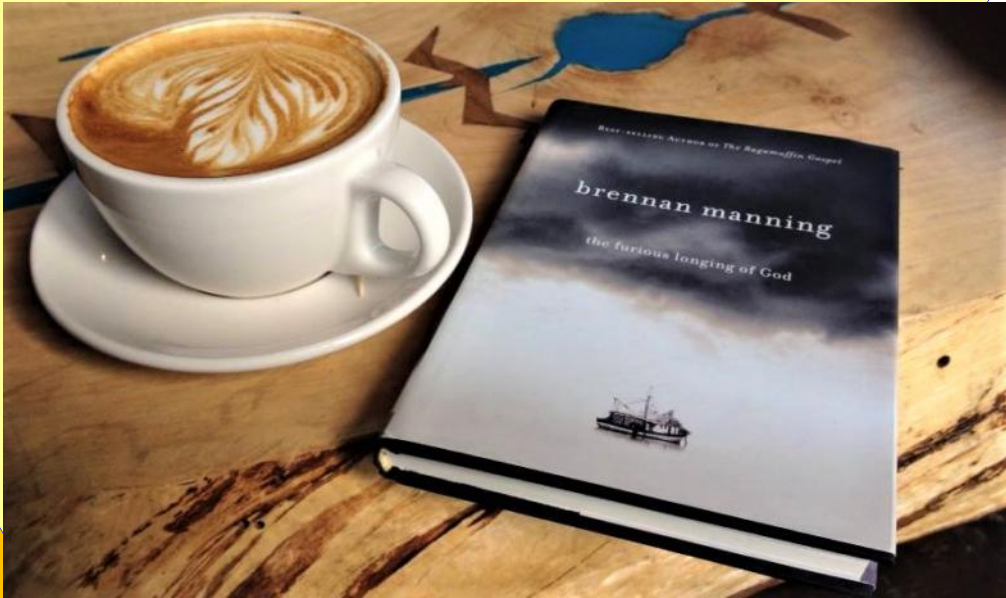
We live in a time when Sabbath rest hardly happens, even when we sleep. But before you blame the 24/7 wired world take note that Isaiah 58 is written to people living in the sixth century before God engaged the world through the Christ and yet they appear to be plenty busy on the day God set aside for rest. It is what occupies one's ultimate concern that matters to God, so if your wired world is all about you in the same way that serving one's own interests in the sixth century before "Silent Night" superseded the Sabbath then God is not pleased. So we who celebrate God's mercy to us should not be surprised that the way God would have us keep the Sabbath is to be merciful to others. Offer your food to the hungry. Satisfy the needs of the afflicted. Stop pointing the finger and refrain from speaking evil. Sabbath rest is important to one's well-being, but resting from Sabbath work is not.



† Thought for Reflection

- from Fr. John Morrison

The invitation to union “is not restricted for those who are well-known mystics or for those who do wonderful things for the poor...[It is for] those poor enough to welcome Jesus. It is for people living ordinary lives and who feel lonely. It is for all who are old, hospitalized or out of work, who open their hearts in trust to Jesus and cry out for his healing love.”



“Jean Vanier, cited in *The Furious Longing of God*, p. 60

Phishing Scams - Don't fall for them! Please do not respond to any message from Fr. Nate or St. Paul's by email or any other method of communication that asks you to purchase something (often a gift card) or asks for a “favor.” **Delete these messages, do not reply, do not click links in the messages, mark them as Spam or Junk.** If there is any doubt about the veracity of a text or email, contact Fr. Nate by e-mail at (priest@saintpaulsbrookfield.com) or the office



† Wednesday Morning Healing Service

Our mid-week Wednesday morning 10 am Holy Eucharist with healing prayer, now has about 50 worshippers weekly.. With live music and a brief homily, this service is just what you need to sustain you through the week. Come join us and check it out or watch on YouTube Live.

Our Men meet weekly to study on Monday nights. They are currently dissecting the Gospel of John. Join them each Monday night at 7 pm in Crocker Hall. All the studies are available live on YouTube.



||| A THIRD OF US

† **Praying for the 1/3 of our world that are still unreached with the Gospel.**

Talysh

Country: Azerbaijan | Population: 591,000 | Language: Talysh | Main Religion: Islam | Evangelical: less than 0.01%

The Talysh have lived in the southwestern Caspian Sea region for thousands of years. They were under Russian control from the early 1800s until 1991, when Azerbaijan declared independence from the Soviet Union. The majority are farmers, and some are skilled craftsmen. The Talysh are Shia Muslims and like many other peoples in the region, they are struggling with whether to follow Islamic traditions or embrace Western culture. Many women have abandoned traditional long robes and veils in favor of Western-style clothing. The Talysh continue some of their pre-Islamic beliefs, including having great reverence for trees. They also believe in good and evil spirits, with the most dangerous being one that attacks women during childbirth and newborns. Pray that the Talysh would open their hearts to Jesus, who created the trees they revere and is more powerful than the spirits they fear. Ask God to orchestrate opportunities for believers to share the Gospel and pray that the Talysh would want to follow Jesus.



† Women's Wed Evening Bible Study

The Women's Evening Bible Study is beginning a new study on the Gospel of John, beginning Wednesday, January 7 at 7:00 on Zoom. All women are welcome. All women are welcome. For more information contact Kathy Whipple at kthyw49@gmail.com.



† St. Paul's Walking Group!

Our St. Paul's walking group is racking up the miles, chilly as they may be! Their next walk will be on the cart paths at the Richter Park Golf Course, Friday, February 6th at 10:00 am. Plan to meet at 100 Aunt Hack Road in Danbury. We will plan to meet 10:00 am at the parking lot next to the club house. Sign up with Ron Switzer (rjswit@msn.com) to be on the mailing list.



† Sunday School Info!

ATTN: PARENTS OF ALL SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENTS:

Sunday School classes now start at 11:45 am each Sunday. Bring the students directly to their classrooms.



COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

Feb 8th 8 am - Polly Sorrentino	10:30 am - Kronberg's
Feb 15th 8 am - Crocker's	10:30 am - Amy Boyce
Feb 22nd 8 am - Durkin's	10:30 am - Switzer's



**COFFEE HOUR
HOSTS NEEDED**

Contact Mary Allen at
203-775-6633 or
chamla@charter.net



Holy Land Revisited

✠ The Capernaum Synagogue ✡

The Capernaum Synagogue is the most completely restored ancient synagogue in the Holy Land. Scholars have concluded that this limestone structure was built a few centuries after the time of Jesus, during the Christian Byzantine era, and that it was built directly above the synagogue that Jesus knew ([John 6:59](#)). For clarity in this article we're going to call the Jesus-era synagogue the black synagogue, since it was made with black basalt stones, and the newer one is the white synagogue, since it was made with polished white limestone.

An artist's rendition of what the synagogue looked like in the fifth century



The black basalt foundation of the first-century synagogue shows below.



From the outside, you can see the foundation of Jesus' black synagogue along the base of the newer white synagogue. Historically, the first time that the white synagogue was referred to in literature was in the year 381 AD by the Spanish lady pilgrim, named Egeria. This suggests that this white synagogue may have been built sometime late in the fourth century, with certain additions made in the fifth century. That's why the sign outside the synagogue dates its construction to the fifth century.

The main doorway faces south toward Jerusalem where the first-century Temple was. Most ancient synagogues were built with this orientation.

In this pit (*to the left*) you can see remnants of the original black synagogue. This black synagogue was built here shortly before Jesus moved to this town from Nazareth. The man who built it was a Roman centurion who had such a love for the Jewish people that he constructed this building with the same black basalt stones from which their surrounding homes were made.

One of the miracles that Jesus performed in this room was the healing of a demoniac ([Mark 1:23-28](#); [Luke 4:33-37](#)) - an act for which He was criticized by the ruler of the Synagogue, because he healed this demonized man on the Sabbath.

(Continued on page 21)



(Continued from page 20)

Capernaum Synagogue

The main gallery of the synagogue is approximately the same size as the original first-century black synagogue. Only Jewish men were allowed in this main section, and they would either sit or stand during the meetings that were held there. We know that there was a lot of tension between the Jews and Christians in Capernaum during this time, and this synagogue was probably built in response to the ever-expanding Christian church that was only a stone's throw away.

What did Jesus do here?

About two-thirds the way back inside the main gallery there was probably a raised platform, called a bema, where the Old Testament Scrolls were read. Jesus likely taught from this platform on several occasions, facing southward toward the main entrance. Here in this room Jesus preached His famous Bread of Life Sermon ([John 6:26-59](#)), the day after He fed over 5000 people with only five loaves and two fish ([Matthew 14:13-21](#); [Mark 6:32-44](#); [Luke 9:10b-17](#); [John 6:1-15](#)). Some of these people were hungry again, and they followed Jesus to this very room, apparently looking for another free meal. This time Jesus didn't offer them physical bread. He offered them Himself. His message was - "I am to your soul what bread is to your body. Don't just seek the food that perishes, but seek Me - the food that will bring you eternal life."



This black and white photograph shows the synagogue at Capernaum prior to 1921 AD. That when the Italian archeologist Father Gaudenzio Orfali arrived to start his work in reconstructing the white synagogue.

Almost every stone in this synagogue was lying on the ground, so the entire building had to be reconstructed. Sadly, Father Orfali was killed in a car accident in 1926 as he was driving away from Capernaum. He is currently buried on Mount Zion, in a cemetery just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Part of the ruins that you see above includes two staircases made of the same basalt stones from which the black synagogue was constructed. In both of the synagogues that were built here there was a second-floor gallery, in which the women were allowed to attend the events of the synagogue, and these stairs were probably used by the women to ascend to this gallery. Jesus' mother, Mary, may have been such an attendee, and if this is the case, then Mary herself may have climbed these stairs during her visits to this synagogue.



Father
Gaudenzio
Orfali

Take a Hanger Fill a Hanger



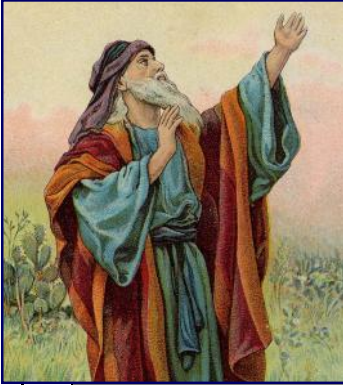
We are holding our annual Coat Drive to benefit the various agencies in Danbury supported by the Jericho Partnership. **"Take a Hanger"** from the rack we'll have at the back of the church this weekend. Check your closets for those unused coats. And **"Fill a Hanger."** Bring it back to St. Paul's and we'll get that coat on the back of someone who needs it.

Surely the righteous will never be shaken;
they will be remembered forever.

Psalms 112:6

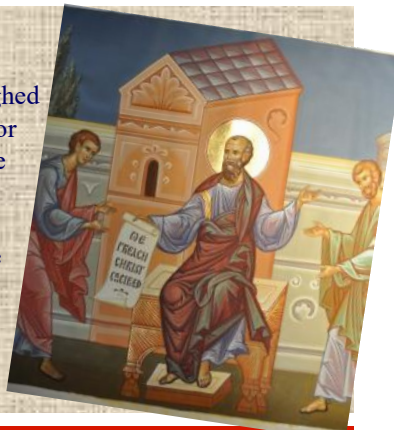
† Isaiah

Our Old Testament reading this week is from the *Book of Isaiah*. This book can be divided into two (and possibly three) parts. Chapters 1 to 39 were written before the exile, from about 740 BC to about 700 BC. These were difficult times for the southern kingdom, Judah: a disastrous war was fought with Syria; the Assyrians conquered Israel, the northern kingdom, in 723 BC, and threatened Judah. Isaiah saw the cause of these events as social injustice, which he condemned, and against which he fought valiantly. Chapters 40 to 66 were written during and after the Exile in Babylon. They are filled with a message of trust and confident hope that God will soon end the Exile. Some scholars consider that Chapters 56 to 66 form a third part of the book, written after the return to the Promised Land. These chapters speak of hope and despair; they berate the people for their sin, for worshipping other gods. Like *Second Isaiah*, this part speaks of the hope that God will soon restore Jerusalem to its former glory and make a new home for all peoples.



† Sublimity of Words

Paul came to Corinth, Greece after literally being laughed out of Athens. In order to preach a new philosophy or religion in the Greek capital he had to gain a license from the "Court of Philosophers." It met on Mars Hill, opposite the Acropolis. He tried to preach Christianity in very philosophical terms. He was going fine until he spoke of the resurrection of the body. This was contrary to the lofty schemes of the intellectuals and they rejected him. In Corinth, he tried an entirely different, more spiritual approach and won many converts.



Name
Tags

Name Tags - Many people have mentioned how helpful wearing nametags were to them in assimilating into the congregation. Please continue to be courteous to fellow parishioners, to newcomers and guests by extending a warm welcome to them and by wearing your name tag. And remember to wear them to coffee hour as well.

"CHRIST, WHOSE FLURRIES FILL THE SKIES"



Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

Isaiah 58:6



Psalms 122:6

Pray
for the
peace
of
Jerusalem;

May they prosper that love you.

† What I Came to Do

Jesus is exhausted. His power to cure illness made him a free doctor. At the time physicians were primitive and usually ineffective. The sick were thought to be "possessed" by evil spirits, rather than germs. The devil has successfully side-tracked Christ's true ministry. This explains his somewhat strange response when Peter announces that "...everyone is looking for you." Jesus proclaims that it is time to move on to other areas. In effect, he is abandoning his home base in Capernaum. Our Lord reveals the real focus of his career. He is a teacher with the most important lessons that will ever be shared. He does not want to be a healer, but a educator. He came to teach the way to eternal life in God.

Proclaim
The Gospel

That is
What
I Came
To Do



† Greeters Needed

Greeting people in a warm way makes them feel good about their presence in church.

At St. Paul's, we are always looking for people who feel called to serve in this important ministry. If you are interested in becoming a greeter, please contact Pam Szen (prszen@gmail.com) or David Szen



"...give us the liberty of that abundant life you have made known to us in your Son our Savior, Jesus Christ..." Try to imagine the joy in your life if you concentrate on its abundance and do not allow yourself to live in a mindset of scarcity. God does indeed provide for all our needs if we live in Him and for him.

Thank
you

Our 242nd Annual Meeting last Sunday was a great success despite the cold weather. Thanks to everyone who helped; from working on the Annual Report, to setting up and taking down tables & chairs, to participating in the meeting, to bringing and organizing the food!





HAPPY BIRTHDAY



Lois Hunt & Vivian Tilford celebrate on Friday. **Erinn O'Hara** blows out candles on Saturday. Opening presents on Sunday will be **Bill Bennett**. Have a blessed day everyone!

RFB

Presents

COFFEE WITH JESUS

**Too
Trivial**



When I'm faced with a decision I think is too trivial for you, Jesus, I try to figure it out on my own.



What could possibly be too trivial for me, James?

I want you to bring everything to me.



Well, this morning I was torn between my colorful striped socks or the more subdued navy blue ones.

I went with...



I saw what you went with, James.

Should've asked me.

©Radio Free Babylon® All rights reserved. "Pray without ceasing," or "Praying always," Paul wrote. A nice bunch of comments on Monday's comic underscored this. One standout was, "And it doesn't have to be elaborate rituals. Just little conversations all day long." He gave us brains and reasoning abilities, sure, but maybe Jesus knows something here James doesn't. Nothing's too small. Don't construct a hierarchy of needs, taking only the most critical needs to the Lord in prayer.

✠ RCL Readings for This Sunday

(Click on the red links for the readings)

Faithful Discipleship

[Isaiah 58:1-12](#)

This passage is a denunciation of the injustices of those who only act at their religion. There is a promise of the Lord's favor for those who genuinely repent and care for the needy. Fasts and many prayers are of no purpose and may be misused if they do not involve the liberation of the oppressed and help for the weak and afflicted. When there is justice and sharing, then the light of the Lord will rise out of darkness and all the ruins will be rebuilt.

[Psalm 112:1-10](#)

Blessed are those who are right with the Lord, who are just and generous with those in need.

[1 Corinthians 2:1-16](#)

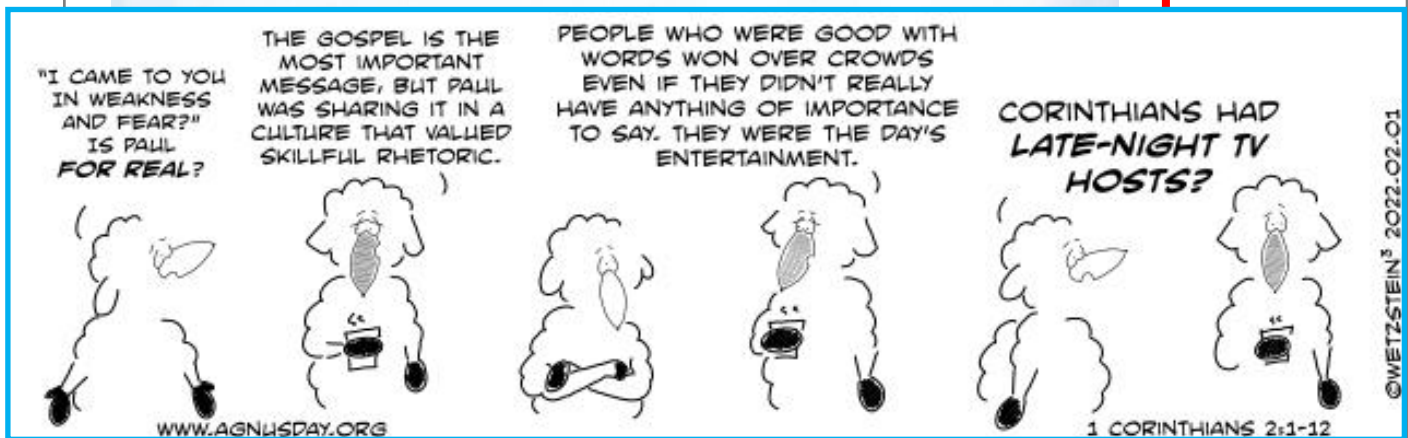
In this lection Paul teaches the Corinthians that the wisdom of God is very different from the wisdom which humans pride themselves. Some of the Corinthians were apparently boasting of their Christianity as though it were powerful in terms of worldly wisdom. They even made fun of Paul for his lack of eloquence. The true power of God is, however, hidden from the ruling forces of the world, for it is discovered in a crucified Lord. This is revealed through God's own Spirit. Genuine spirituality manifests itself in wise discernment and a Christ-like cast of mind.

[Matthew 5:13-20](#)

In the gospel lesson we learn that disciples are like salt and as light to the world. They are to live even more righteously than the pious scribes and Pharisees. Like a city set on a hill or a lamp on a stand. Jesus' followers must show forth their good works to the glory of God. Jesus has not come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill their purpose. Only those who go beyond the keeping of the law and are wholly committed to God's will can enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:13-20

Don't think that my teachings replace or reduce the law and the prophets. And don't think you can skip the details. Details count. But something more than the details is also needed. You must align your whole self with what God desires - that is what those in Heaven are like.



✠ Sermon Shorts

Guarding the Command - Betraying the Gift. To replay all our sermons, audio and videos follow this link for the [Sunday Sermons](#). Check out our [Sermon Archives](#) as well.



† Your Prayers Are Requested For...

It is such an intimate time when praying for the health and well being of others and such a privilege. Made like us in every respect, our high priest knows our suffering and intercedes for us before the throne of mercy, as we pray for:

.....Ed Licence, Gail Winkley, Barbara Hock, Tom Maxwell, Larry Coleman, and other parishioners convalescing in extended care facilities.

.....[Christ & The Epiphany](#), East Haven; [Christ Church](#) Easton; [Holy Trinity](#), Enfield; [St. John's](#), Essex.

.....Revival at St. Paul's and the greater Danbury area.

.....For Parish volunteers & parish historians.

For the Ecumenical Ministry Network.

.....For the Peace of Jerusalem. - *Psalm 122:6*

.....Clayton Ferry, Jim Megura, Peter Scalzo, Sr., Peter Scalzo, Jr., Doris, Karen, Beverly Hall, Roger, Cynthia, Heidi Pinheiro, Dale Mitchell, Ruth, Blake, Cliff, Evelyn Kirner, Jane Sedor, Jim Beck, Larry Wanzer, Bob Finn, Paul Kovacs, John Crisalli, Erin LaBrake, Walter, Amy Boyce, Elana and Veronika.

.....the people of [Ukraine](#); the people of [Republic of Kenya](#); the people of [Thailand](#); the bishop, clergy and laity of the [Diocese of Tamale](#) - The Church of the Province of West Africa; and our sister and brother members of the [Evangelical Reformed Church in Bavaria and North-Western Germany](#).

.....For courage: that we may awaken our society from complacency as we bring the insights and challenges of the Gospel into our neighborhoods, workplaces, and public discourse.

.....[Victory Christian Center](#), Danbury and their Food Pantry, which is the recipient of our food basket collections for the month of February.

.....[Linde Gas](#), Danbury, a community supporter of the Jericho Partnership.

.....Our missionaries, Will & Becky McLaughlin and their family, and their ministry in Cambodia; the Holy Spirit will provide them with words that communicate effectively in the Cambodian culture and language.

.....[Those About To Be Baptized or To Renew Their Baptismal Covenant](#).

.....that others can see we live as Christians by the way we act, dress and talk.

.....the one third of humanity that does not have access to the gospel, for zealous preachers of the word, that by the Holy Spirit, they that they would become strong in their faith, grow in numbers and be a light to those around them.

.....For the wealthy, the free, and the healthy, that they may use their possessions to aid those in need. Pray for compassion among people.

.....[Peace Among the Nations](#).



continually
pray thankful
joyful be always
Thessalonians
5:16-18



Capernaum & the Synagogue Where Jesus Taught



Kefar Nahum is the town which was the center of Jesus' ministry in northern Galilee. A 4th-century synagogue built on top of the original one where Jesus taught.



Just For the Joy of It!

(And Christian Fellowship)

†OMICS by Tom Gould

John 6:1-9



PRAYER PUPS BY JEFFREY SMITH

† It Takes An Editorial Board
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