

THE EPISCOPAL MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 2026

SAINT PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

The Gospel According to Matthew records these words on the lips of both John the Baptist (3:2) and Jesus (4:17). The Greek word translated into English as “repent” is “metanoieite” which means to think differently, reconsider, or to change one’s mind. This is the core of John’s ministry and is the statement with which Jesus begins his ministry. The subsequent 24 chapters in this Gospel help us understand the full meaning of Jesus’ call to repent.

According to Stong’s Exhaustive Concordance, the interpretation of repentance has developed over the centuries and now more accurately translates as a “...decisive, Spirit-wrought turning of the heart and mind that reorients a person from sin to God. Not mere remorse but a wholehearted response to divine truth that involves faith, obedience, and fruit worthy of repentance.”

Lent is the season of the church year that focuses our attention on this call of Jesus and John to repent. You’ll see changes in the services that reflect this focus. The arc

of the season will also take us from the reminder of our own mortality on Ash Wednesday to the passion of Jesus on Good Friday.

How can we use this season to help us respond to this call? Traditionally, Lent was a time of fasting and often Christians gave up something during Lent. However, another approach is to take something on – a new discipline, a new habit which strengthens our relationship with God.

One potential discipline is to read scripture. This year, one excellent option would be to read the Gospel According to Matthew during the 40 days of Lent. Use a good study bible or commentary to help guide you in this endeavor. Take time to mull over what you read each day. As an example, here’s a question about the genealogy found in Chapter 1. Who are the women listed in the genealogy and what message does their inclusion convey?

Alternatively, consider using the Daily Devotions found on pages 136 to 140 of the Book of Common Prayer and pray four times a day. When Thomas Cranmer wrote the first Book of Common Prayer for the Church of England, he intentionally placed the Daily Offices at the beginning of the prayer book to prioritize each individual

praying on a daily basis imitating what happened in monasteries and convents.

Another possibility is to incorporate a short prayer into your life. In the orthodox world a popular prayer is the Jesus Prayer – Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. Out of the Western Church comes the Trisagion – Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us.

During this Lent, intentionally change your perspective (repent) and move toward our loving and gracious God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. – *Deacon Jim Jenkins*

Message from the Senior Warden

The Search Committee had our first meeting with Canon Veronica Chappell on January 14th. She shared information about the process to advertise our position opening for a priest as well as the current methods used to craft a parish profile. Much of this communication is done online via the Diocesan website and St. Paul's website.

On January 28th the Committee discussed necessary updates to the parish website. It is important to make our website more robust in the hope of attracting interest from potential candidates. If anyone in the congregation has friends or family members with clerical backgrounds who might consider moving back to Bloomsburg, we encourage you to let them know of our job opening. – *Katherine Staller, Senior Warden*

Elections held at Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting was held on February 1. Attending were 24 members in person and five members on Zoom, establishing that we had a quorum. The meeting was opened in prayer by Deacon Jim Jenkins.

- Elected and continuing members of Vestry are Katherine Staller (Senior Warden), Dennis MacMahon, Victoria Wilcox, Val Evert, Rachel Bitler and Doug Hippenstiel, leaving one Vestry position unfilled.
- Elected as delegates to Diocesan Convention were Katherine Staller and Victoria Wilcox, with Rachel Bitler serving as alternate delegate.
- Members of the Board of Trustees were re-elected, including Steve Hicks (Chair), Darley Hobbis, Rob Dillon, Alton Walker and Carol Tevis. Additional members Sam Miller and Teresa Booker were nominated by the current Board and elected at the Annual Meeting.
- Financial information was discussed and the church finances remain sound.
- The Search Committee (Katherine Staller, Doug Hippenstiel, Rachel Bitler, Victoria Wilcox and Karen Zekauskas) updated the parish about progress in the search for a new priest. We are at preliminary stages, developing a Parish Profile and job description and updating the website so the job can be posted locally, statewide and nationally as soon as possible.
– *Victoria Wilcox*



Alpha is coming!

Do you ever wonder:

- Is there more to life than this?
- Why did Jesus die?
- How do I pray?
- How does God guide us?
- What does the Holy Spirit do?

Alpha is a fun, relaxed video-and-discussion series where we investigate these and other big questions of faith. It's for people new to church as well as for those who have been around for a while.

On February 15, 6 p.m. at St. Paul's, (snow date Feb 22) we will have an introductory video evening for you to see what it's about. Pizza will be served!

Regular weekly classes start:

Sunday, March 1, 6 p.m. on Zoom

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89009873767>

Monday, March 2, 10:30 a.m. in person at St. Paul's

Please sign-up at the usher's table if you plan to attend the February 15 introductory evening so we have enough Pizza! *Attending the intro carries no obligation to join the full course.* – Susie Vollmer

Kids' Sunday School

In Kids' Sunday School we usually start with a physically active game (sorry if you hear us upstairs), eventually settling down for a Bible story and then a craft. We move, we talk, we have hands-on items with which to interact.

Kids' Sunday School for School-aged children meets on the **2nd and 4th Sundays** during the **10:30 a.m. service**, in the downstairs Parish Hall.

February Baptismal Birthdays

James Fritz * Michelle Matzko * Meredith Wilcox * Christopher Wilcox * Jason Kyle Brandt * Matthew Evert Haney * Kathy Reimard Hippenstiel

THE EPISCOPAL MESSENGER

A newsletter for the parish family of

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Bloomsburg

Please send articles and other correspondence to

Doug Hippenstiel * Dch17846@gmail.com

Vestry Notes for January

Senior Warden's Report

Discussed food for Annual Meeting.

Deacon's Report

- Jim is trying to contact Protestant Campus Ministry, with limited success.
- Jim is focused primarily on worship and pastoral care. We have been fortunate so far in obtaining supply clergy with almost all Sundays until Easter being covered. Additionally, he is receiving good responses from his initial request covering post-Easter through July.
- In the absence of a priest-in-residence, we can celebrate the days of religious significance with Evening Prayer services. We did that with Epiphany and will also do that on Ascension Day. We will have two services each on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday; however, none of those services will involve communion.
- We will have Rev. Sarah Weedon with us for the primary services of Holy Week – Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday.
- We would like to petition the bishop to allow us to transfer the observance of St. Peter and St. Paul Day to June 28th. This would allow us to celebrate our patronal day on Sunday. The readings would be focused on Saint Paul.
- On December 28th, we celebrated our 11th baptism in 2025 when Oliver Motyka was received into the household of God.

- On January 9th, we commended our brother in Christ Jim Brandt to the loving care of God.

Junior Warden's Report

Val is doing church sign updates, and would find it helpful for the next Junior Warden to have a job description.

Treasurer's Report

Monthly Reports: on track

- Balance sheet 01. Savings and checking account (\$909.12) and Savings account (\$14,009.89)
- Budget Report: Income was over budget by \$23,000 and expenses were over budget by \$2,300 leading to a positive balance.
- Restricted spending: Took \$10,000 from parking lot proceeds
- Report on trusts: net assets in portfolio grew by \$99,000 but we pulled out \$40,650 in regular dividends
- Lowe House: kept extra monies in account to build up reserve for future property bills

2026 Budget: Vestry considered the consolidated version of the 2026

Assistant Treasurer: Despite pleas in newsletter and "Happenings," no one has come forward to fill this position. Vicki has agreed to do it as interim, but we will discuss the need at the Annual Meeting

Old Business

Ian has checked Staples for nametags. Staples has a magnetic board for name tags for \$300, printing for magnetic nametags \$1.25/tag. A magnetic disc placed on underside of shirt holds nametag on so people won't stick themselves with pins.

Sound issues: Choir can hear clearly—many thanks. There are still some problems hearing supply priests.

New Business

- Property:
 - Rectory has been cleaned, took a lot longer than expected, some damage to floors and cabinets from pet damage.
 - Backyard fence: Ongoing dispute with AT&T and American Tower about who is responsible for the fence at the back of our property along the parking lot now owned by Zoppetti.
 - Fire alarm system is 30 years old. Estimate for replacement is \$23,000.
- Recycling: 3 bins now in kitchen to recycle plastics, cans, glass and cardboard, with directions about rinsing items.
- Sunday School is ongoing, and needs parent volunteers. Susie and Vicki are talking about splitting the class into two age groups, which will require more adult help.
- Discussed requests for Nursery coverage
- Technology needs: Vicki needs help with the website.

Committee Reports:

- Christian Education: Alpha Course will run February 15th through first week of May. Alpha explores the basics of our faith. It is wide-ranging and involves both videos and discussions.
- Parish Life: Will do a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper.



Recycling Bins available

There are now THREE recycling bins in the church kitchen to recycle plastics, cans, glass and cardboard, with directions about rinsing items. Vicki will take the recycling to the Recycling Center the first week of each month.



*Come for pancakes!
Shrove Tuesday!
February 17th!*

Parish Leadership

The Rev. Jim Jenkins, Deacon
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Dr. Alan Hack, Music Director
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Patty Creasy, Church Secretary
Telephone: 570-594-4518
saintpaulsbloom@gmail.com

Officers

Katherine Staller, Senior Warden
kesbb@windstream.net

Valerie Evert, Junior Warden
Valerie17815@gmail.com

Victoria Wilcox, Secretary
Victoriawilcox7@gmail.com

Dennis MacMahon, Treasurer
Denmac733@gmail.com

Other Vestry Members

Rachel Bitler
rbitler@ptd.net

Doug Hippenstiel
Dch17846@gmail.com

February Lectionary

2/8 – Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

- [Isaiah 58:1-9a, \[9b-12\]](#)
- [1 Corinthians 2:1-12, \[13-16\]](#)
- [Matthew 5:13-20](#)
- [Psalm 112:1-9, \(10\)](#)

2/15 – Last Sunday after the Epiphany

- [Exodus 24:12-18](#)
- [2 Peter 1:16-21](#)
- [Matthew 17:1-9](#)
- [Psalm 2](#)
- or [Psalm 99](#)

2/18 – Ash Wednesday

- [Joel 2:1-2,12-17](#)
- or [Isaiah 58:1-12](#)
- [2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10](#)
- [Matthew 6:1-6,16-21](#)
- [Psalm 103 or 103:8-14](#)

2/22 – First Sunday in Lent

- [Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7](#)
- [Romans 5:12-19](#)
- [Matthew 4:1-11](#)
- [Psalm 32](#)

‘Noisy’ Collection

In February, the Noisy Collection at St. Paul’s will go to the Columbia-Montour Agency on Aging. If you do not have the opportunity to place your coins in the collection plate during Sunday services at the church, you may send a check and write “CMAA” on the memo line.

Music as Invitation and Reflection

As we move through February, the church year guides us from the season after Epiphany toward the quiet, reflective days of Lent. This in-between time invites us to listen more closely to the words of scripture, to the movement of the Spirit, and to the ways music helps shape our understanding of both.

On the first Sunday of the month, the choir offered *The Beatitudes*, a setting that gives musical voice to Jesus' vision of blessedness. These familiar words spoken on hillsides and echoed across generations challenge our assumptions about strength, success, and fulfillment. Set to music by Alan Lovelace, the Beatitudes become more than teaching; they become prayer, inviting us to reflect on humility, mercy, peacemaking, and trust in God's promises. It is a reminder that worship does not simply affirm who we are, but gently forms who we are becoming.

Then, on Transfiguration Sunday, just before we enter the season of Lent, the choir will sing Bob Chilcott's *Be Thou My Vision*. Rooted in Celtic spirituality and set with lyrical depth, this anthem is a fitting companion to the mountaintop imagery of the Transfiguration. As we glimpse Christ revealed in glory, this beloved text reminds us to fix our hearts on God as our guide, our wisdom, and our true source of light.

Through all these musical moments, the choir continues to serve not as a performance ensemble but as a liturgical partner through the leading of hymns, shaping the worship flow, and offering anthems that deepen our prayer and proclamation. As Lent approaches, may we carry these melodies and messages with us as reminders that through music, we prepare the way for reflection, renewal, and hope. – *Dr. Alan Hack, Music Director*

Choir receives new robes



The Lessons and Carols Service in December featured our choir in new choir robes and cottas. These new robes replaced ones that were approximately 30 years old, and showing signs of wear. A robe committee consisting of Karen Jenkins and Jean and Scott Atherton was appointed in May. After extensive internet research the committee chose a sample

cassock and cotta from CM Almy, After reviewing the sample it was determined that we would need custom cassocks with no sleeves and pockets. The cost of 15 new Cassocks and Cottas was \$3,354.30. This amount was covered by savings in the music budget plus a generous contribution from an anonymous parishioner.

Some of the better-preserved older cassocks and cottas will be kept for visiting musicians. – *Scott Atherton*

Outreach Report

Mini refresher on the history of the Panther Pack Challenge

The January Challenge to St. Paul's congregation began in 2015 with 2 tasks: match a \$200 grant we received from the Diocesan initiative *Operation Understanding* (Feed my Sheep) and provide 25 bags of food for the launch of a new partnership between the Bloomsburg School District and BFC called *Panther Packs*. Panther Packs help families deal with the snow days, weekends, and holidays that stretch their food budgets to the breaking point.

Food Cupboard/Panther Pack Volunteers prepare 315 Panther Packs per week. For a typical two-day weekend a Panther Pack includes 2 breakfast items: individual size cereal, oatmeal, breakfast bars, or cocoa mix; 2 lunch items: canned pasta, canned soup, peanut butter mac & cheese, or Ramen noodles; 2 snacks: granola bars, fruit cup, juice boxes, pudding cups, Jello cups, cookies, or popcorn. In addition, the packs include 2 bagels provided by BFC, a piece of fresh fruit, and, when available, baby carrots & celery with ranch dressing. For longer weekends (holidays, snow days, teacher in-service days) Panther Packs also include a box of cereal (8 – 11.5 oz sizes) and additional lunches and snacks.

Last year we raised \$1,300 in monetary donations (virtual donations) **plus** 25+ bags of kid-friendly food (actual donations) from the congregation **plus** \$500 matching funds from Outreach.

Welcome to year 12 of the Panther Pack Challenge!



January 4 - February 15



Panther Packs Challenge XII

For the 12th annual Panther Packs challenge our goal is **60 actual or virtual** bags of kid-friendly food for BFC. It has been another rough year for the Bloomsburg Food Cupboard. St. Paul's annual Panther Pack Challenge provides a much-needed boost in BFC's supply of kid-friendly foods. We work hard to keep shortages from cutting into Panther Packs, a project that is so important to the well-being of the children in our community. Here's how you can help:

1. Fill-a-Bag with kid-friendly food or add items to "shared bags".
2. Use donation envelopes to make a monetary donation.
\$10 donation = 1 virtual bag of food.

Outreach Report *(continued)*

According to St. Paul's Panther Pack volunteers, the food items that will best support the 2026 program include:

- macaroni & cheese (boxes/cups)
- 16 oz cans ravioli with meat & Spaghetti O's with meatballs
- 16 oz. jars of peanut butter
- cold cereal: 8 oz – 12 oz boxes or individual servings
- hot cereal: individual cups/boxes of individual packets
- Chicken noodle or tomato soup; ramen noodles
- Cracker packs/granola/breakfast bars/microwave popcorn
- Canned tuna, fruit/applesauce cups, Jello/pudding cups, , hot chocolate pouches

For monetary donations, checks should be written to St. Paul's with **Panther Packs** on the memo line. Donation envelopes are on the "example" table in the foyer.

**The challenge runs from January 4– February 15
Let's keep our 11-year winning streak going!**

OOM Dessert Mission Begins February 8th!

The 2026 dessert mission schedule will begin in February, with sign-up sheets available mid-January. To sign up, or if you have questions, contact Elaine Pongratz at mdmep@ptd.net.

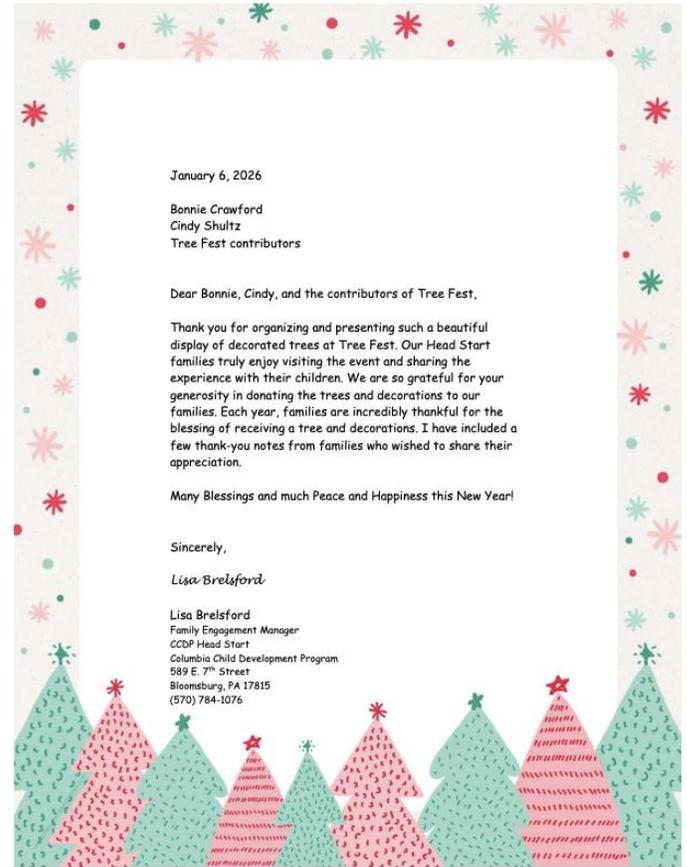
Supporting the BU Women's Basketball Team in 2026

Saturday, February 14	1:00 p.m.	Kutztown University
Saturday, February 21	1:00 p.m.	Millersville University
Wednesday, February 25	5:30 p.m.	Lock Haven University

Home games are played in the Nelson Field House on the upper campus. From the traffic light on Lightstreet Road, the stadium is a left (heading east) or right (heading west) turn onto Country Club Road and straight up the hill.

Fundraising/Outreach at Ren Jam on April 26!

Warm thought for a frigid winter day: we've claimed our spots at Renaissance Jamboree for St. Paul's homemade strawberry short cake stand!



St. Paul's Altar Flowers

If you would like to provide altar flowers for a special occasion, please send your request to Patty Creasy at the Church Office (Post Office Box 764). Flowers for one Sunday cost \$45, plus \$6 for delivery, but you are welcome to contribute whatever you can.

Please make checks payable to St. Paul's Episcopal Church and mail to P.O. Box 764, Bloomsburg, PA 17815. Please include a note with the following information:

- The Sunday you would like to provide the flowers.
- Notation: The Altar Flowers are given by _____ in loving memory of _____, or in thanksgiving for _____.
- Your name and contact information (phone number, email address, etc.)



Tree Fest 2025

Dear Tree Fest donor,

Although delayed, I want to express our gratitude of your donation! The tree (and decorations) were enjoyed by our whole family. It stayed green well past christmas day and was an appreciated gift this holiday season. Thank you for lifting the burden of finding and affording a tree through your sponsorship.

From our family to yours - Thank You!