

Messenger

APRIL 2024

St. Mary's
Arlinton



- Meet Your Six Vestry Candidates
- Annual Meeting on May 5 at 9 am
- Register for Shrine Mont today!

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Choral Evensong and Eastertide Hymn

by Dr. Gregory Hooker, Music Minister



Choral Evensong Sunday, May 5 at 5:00 pm

A festive reception follows in Paca Hall

St. Mary's Choir leads this beautiful short service of prayers and readings in preparation for our Summer 2024 Salisbury Cathedral Choir Pilgrimage with the glorious music of English Cathedral tradition. Join us also June 2 at 5:00 pm.

Hymn No. 213 for Eastertide

The music to “Come away to the skies” first appeared in an American hymnal compiled by Shenandoah Valley farmer, printer and singing-school teacher Ananias Davisson around 1821. The tune was originally named

Middleberry but was also called *Middleburg*. The original eight stanza hymn by Charles Wesley was first published in London in 1780. The jubilant text recounts God's blessings of grace, bounty, creation and love that are ours through the sacrificial gift of

Jesus Christ and his triumphant resurrection.

Salisbury Choir Pilgrimage Report

A pilgrimage is a journey that requires preparation even before the first step on the path is taken. The mind and the heart are prepared and skills are developed. Youth choristers and adults have indeed begun preparations for our choir pilgrimage to Salisbury Cathedral and other sites in the United Kingdom this summer, July 29-August 4. The energy level has been high with great learning and progress being made at each of our Choral Evensong services so far.



Expressing Grounded Hope in Five Specific Ways

Dear Friends,

The Annual Meeting of the Parish will occur on Sunday, May 5th at 9:00am in Paca Parish Hall preceded by a light continental breakfast at 8:45am and followed by Baptism and Eucharist at 10:00am. Worship will also be at 8 and 5 per normal. Because of our constrained timeframe, we will start promptly at 9 to elect (3) persons to your Vestry, to be updated by our Treasurer, Deb Gandy, to hear from Gordon Thomas, our Senior Warden, and receive the report of the Rector. We are grateful to Gretel Lynch, Dennis Carter-Chand and Gordon as they complete their terms of office. We have a strong slate of candidates. More information on the candidates is in this issue of the *Messenger*.

I went to church this morning, the II Sunday in Easter, at St. Paul's in Lancaster, NH where the eclipse will be total on April 8 for a minute or two. The Gospel for II Easter is always "Doubting" Thomas for whom I am named so I love to hear the story over and over again. The Living Word of God never gets old. Over time I have come to believe that "Honest" Thomas strikes closer to the mark. He was honest with his peers. That cannot have been an easy conversation. He was honest with himself and most important he was honest with Jesus.

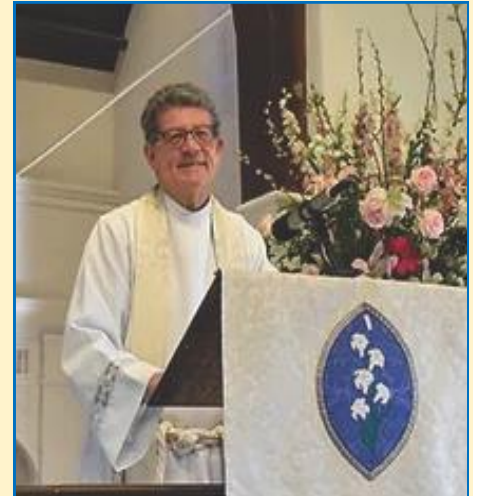
I first preached and celebrated at St Paul's in 1982. It is a parish that I know well. The rector in his homily likened the moon moving across the sun as the stone being rolled away at the tomb Easter morning. The darkness of the world is real and the darkness of our own lives is real but darkness does not have the final word. That is why we are a people whose hope takes the paradoxical shape of a cross.

We express our grounded hope in specific ways.

Let me suggest a few and invite you to commit to at least one of them over the next couple of months.

- 1) Rebuilding Together, Saturday, April 27th. See more in this issue of the *Messenger*.
- 2) The next day, Sunday the 28th, at 2pm St. Mary's will be co-hosting with our neighbor, Mt. Olivet United Methodist Church, an opportunity to hear from Joan Mulholland, a Freedom Rider, and an Arlington resident. While I was on pilgrimage last October with the Diocese, from Memphis to Selma, Montgomery to Birmingham, Joan's famous mug shot was everywhere. I am so excited to meet her in person and to hear her story firsthand. Our work is not finished.
- 3) Death is the ultimate darkness. Monday nights in May (omitting Memorial Day) 6, 13, 20 and Monday, June 3rd from 7:00-8:30 pm you are invited to join in a conversation with others about living with death as a part of life, that Good Friday and Easter go together not unlike doubt and honesty's curious pairing. Together we will plan our own services-what lessons, prayers, and hymns and why- and hear from trained caregiving professionals and legal, and planning experts, as well as hear one another's stories. I do ask that the commitment be for all 4 evenings. This is not a drop-in kind of offering.
- 4) The Shrine Mont Parish Weekend (June 7,8,9) has always been an integral building block of the parish's communal life. We are limiting costs for families to encourage participation. If your kids go once, the chances are you will go again and again.
- 5) We must continue to rebuild the fabric of our St. Mary's community after the pandemic by welcoming new members, anticipating the new life that God is entrusting to us.

Faithfully,
Andrew+



Meet your Vestry Candidates

Patty Balestrieri



My name is Patty Balestrieri and I am both honored and pleased to be on the ballot to be a Vestry member of St. Mary's. I am a cradle Episcopalian having been raised in a very small parish, St James Episcopal Church, in Payette, Idaho. However small, my faith journey was started in that small parish, for which I am grateful.

I have been coming to St. Mary's for 29 years. My two daughters, Kathleen and Clara, were raised at St. Mary's, having sung in the Children's Choir, and served as Acolytes. I have served on the Altar Guild and Outreach Committee for several years. I also served on the Vestry from 2015-2018.

"From the Baptismal Liturgy, the statement "Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" is something we should all strive for. I would love to see more parishioner and youth involvement in our Outreach ministries (local, state, national and international.) In a world where statistics show a decreased number of folks being involved in organized religion, and a nation and world in turmoil, St. Mary's

offers a faith home where we can turn to God, enjoy fellowship, be welcoming to others, and help those in need. I am an RN and have been at Fairfax Hospital for 30 years, working in the Main PreOp/PACU unit.

St. Mary's has given me so much, and I want to give back more. I'd be honored to have the opportunity to serve on your Vestry, and am hopeful you would consider me for this most important role. Thank you

Mike Devine



St. Mary's is entering a time of reflection and discernment. As St. Mary's reaches its 100th year, we will celebrate our past and look proudly upon the contributions St. Mary's has made to the community and the world. At the same time, we must discern our future as we transition from Father Merrow's four decades of leadership.

I began attending St. Mary's in 2007 and was received in November of that year. Both of my children were baptized and confirmed here. We used the nursery, enrolled our boys in Sunday School and the youth programs. I am honored to serve as a chalice bearer and lay reader. I taught 4th Grade Sunday School for five years and am looking forward to my third mission trip with our senior youth this summer. The Men's Bible Study group has deepened my understanding of our shared faith, while serving at AFAC and Santa Maria's food distributions has allowed me to turn that faith into action.

As a lawyer, I have always served others – as a public defender, law firm founder, and now as a circuit court judge. All these experiences allow me to make a unique contribution as a member of the Vestry.

Meet your Vestry Candidates

Campbell Hutton



St. Mary's was the first parish my husband, Church, and I visited when we were looking for a church about 15 years ago, and it was the last. As a young couple, we were struck by the friendly parishioners, the vibrancy of the community and all the happy children. We quickly became active members of the parish. I taught Sunday School for many years and was nursery coordinator when our three children, Lanier, Benjamin and Bowen, were young. I've since joined the Altar Guild and love learning about the procedures to care for the Altar and prepare for services. A particularly meaningful experience was serving on a Lay Committee for one of our Seminarians. As a family, we routinely participate in the children and youth activities and attend the 10am service. The St. Mary's community has stood with me and my family through our darkest days and our most joyous ones. It continues to fill me with faith, love, and hope and I would be honored to serve as part of your Vestry to help shepherd St. Mary's into our next century as a parish.

Gordon Mantler



I am quite humbled to have been asked to run for vestry. Our family – myself, my spouse, Christina Headrick, and our kids, Zella (15) and Dash (10) – started attending St. Mary's in the fall of 2014 after moving from North Carolina. Over the years, I have been involved in primarily outreach and racial reconciliation efforts, including as a founding member of the MORE ministry and a participant in VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement). This work, drawing on my day job as a civil rights historian at George Washington University, has led to leading a revision of St. Mary's official history that keeps race in mind – just in time for the parish's centennial. I have also been involved as a parent of a youth chorister, at Santa Maria food distribution, and any number of adult forums and parent meetings. My goal as a vestry member is balancing our cherished traditions as Episcopalians and St. Maryans with innovative ways to lower barriers to participation. That is one reason I find Wilderness Church, started

at the height of the pandemic but still going strong more than three years later, so meaningful. Thank you for your consideration.



The ANNUAL MEETING is scheduled for MAY 5

9 am in Paca Hall

8:45 am—Continental Breakfast

Come and make your vote count!

Meet your Vestry Candidates

Nick Polizzi



Hello fellow parishioners! This is Nick Polizzi and I am honored to be a Vestry candidate. My family and I have attended St. Mary's since 2011 and I have also been active in the church for the better part of the past 10 years. When my girls were little, I co-directed the Christmas Eve Christmas Pageant for 3 years in a row. Later, I proudly served on the St. Mary's Shepherds Committee, which reimagined and revitalized the process by which our congregation takes care of one another. I also co-lead the search committee which eventually brought Mother Sara and Father Pete to St. Mary's. This endeavor required careful planning, prayer, and discernment, to identify the best people possible to meet the diverse and impactful work of our congregation. Last, it has been my pleasure to support the music ministry at St. Mary's by playing violin and encouraging my children play their instruments during worship, be it in the church or at Wilderness Church; we are grateful to support God's word and joy through music. I look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead and all the wonderful ways we can spread God's Word and Joy throughout Arlington, NOVA, and the world.

Suzanne Stroup



On Easter Sunday, I felt blessed to be at St. Mary's, surrounded by so many in joyful prayer. Then and every day, I am grateful to be a part of this community. It is because of this immense gratitude that I choose to run for Vestry. Keegan and I came here for our daughter's baptism in the fall of 2000. Over these past 20+ years, St. Mary's has welcomed and provided us with the most amazing faith community. Our six children have grown up as acolytes, choristers, and youth group members. Keegan and I have also willingly accepted the call to serve, whether on finance or stewardship committees, the St. Mary's Foundation, Altar Guild, outreach or our annual homecoming gatherings. Through service, St. Mary's has allowed us to grow our faith and experience God's tremendous love in action.

During this season of Resurrection, I can't help but reflect on our church's exciting future. St. Mary's is steeped in honored traditions, but newness and change are always just around the corner. Looking ahead to our incredible 100-year anniversary and Father Merrow's eventual retirement, I ask you to consider me to be a part of your Vestry at this critical juncture. God is great, St. Mary's is good, and we are all blessed to have found one another in this wonderful place. Let's look forward together in faith, hope and love to all that is to come!

AMAZON ORIGINAL DOCUMENTARY

ONE OF THE MOST
REMARKABLE AND
CONSEQUENTIAL
FIGURES IN AMERICAN
20TH-CENTURY HISTORY

- THE NEW YORK TIMES



My name is

Pauli Murray

COMING SOON TO THEATERS

Mon., April 15,

6:30-8:00 pm

Please Sign Up Using

THE QR CODE

OR ON THE HUB

STMARYSARLINGTON.ORG

Walk Ins Welcome!



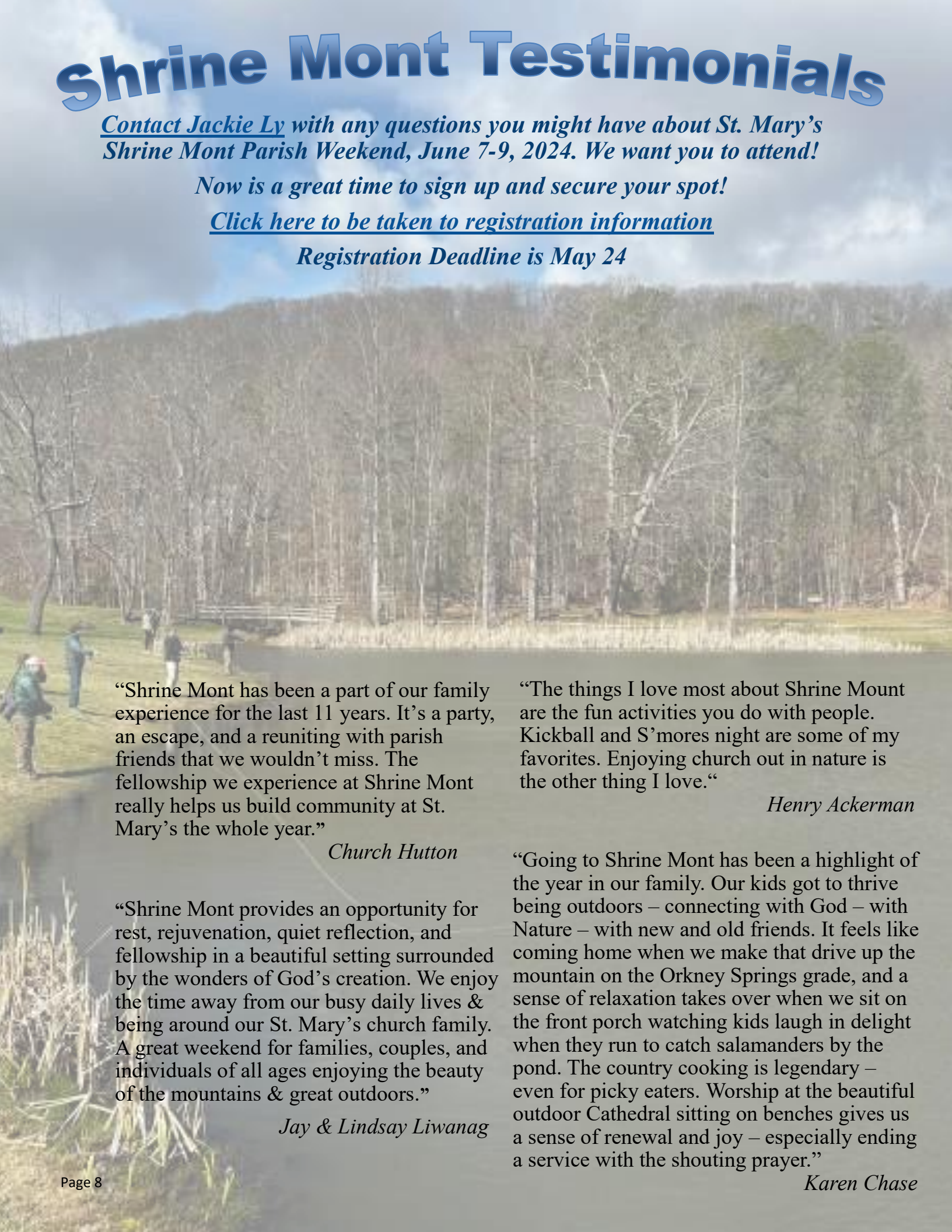
Shrine Mont Testimonials

Contact Jackie Ly with any questions you might have about St. Mary's Shrine Mont Parish Weekend, June 7-9, 2024. We want you to attend!

Now is a great time to sign up and secure your spot!

[Click here to be taken to registration information](#)

Registration Deadline is May 24



“Shrine Mont has been a part of our family experience for the last 11 years. It’s a party, an escape, and a reuniting with parish friends that we wouldn’t miss. The fellowship we experience at Shrine Mont really helps us build community at St. Mary’s the whole year.”

Church Hutton

“Shrine Mont provides an opportunity for rest, rejuvenation, quiet reflection, and fellowship in a beautiful setting surrounded by the wonders of God’s creation. We enjoy the time away from our busy daily lives & being around our St. Mary’s church family. A great weekend for families, couples, and individuals of all ages enjoying the beauty of the mountains & great outdoors.”

Jay & Lindsay Liwanag

“The things I love most about Shrine Mount are the fun activities you do with people. Kickball and S’mores night are some of my favorites. Enjoying church out in nature is the other thing I love.”

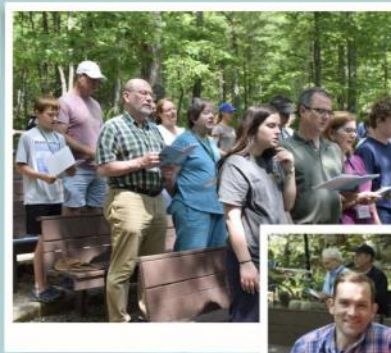
Henry Ackerman

“Going to Shrine Mont has been a highlight of the year in our family. Our kids got to thrive being outdoors – connecting with God – with Nature – with new and old friends. It feels like coming home when we make that drive up the mountain on the Orkney Springs grade, and a sense of relaxation takes over when we sit on the front porch watching kids laugh in delight when they run to catch salamanders by the pond. The country cooking is legendary – even for picky eaters. Worship at the beautiful outdoor Cathedral sitting on benches gives us a sense of renewal and joy – especially ending a service with the shouting prayer.”

Karen Chase



Shrine Mont Parish Weekend, June 7-9, 2024



REGISTER ON REALM TODAY! [HTTPS://SHORTURL.AT/NBV39](https://shorturl.at/nbv39)



APRIL CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUNDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Holy Eucharist at 8 am | 10 am | 10:15 am* | 5 pm**

*10:15 am Wilderness Church at Zachary Taylor Park, 1st and 3rd Sundays

**5 pm Evensong on May 5 and June 2 with reception following

MIDWEEK SERVICES

Tuesday, Noon Day Prayer | Wed., Holy Eucharist 7 am | Thurs., Holy Eucharist 11 am

Week of April 14

Sunday, April 14

The Third Sunday of Easter

Holy Eucharist at 8, 10 & 5 pm | Nursery open 8:30-11:30 am

Adult Faith Formation with Fr. Andrew Merrow, Paca Hall, 9 am

“Second Sunday” Parent Meetings downstairs, 9 am

Bakery Fundraiser for Choristers, Paca Hall

Monday, April 15

“My Name is Pauli Murray” Movie in Paca Hall. 6:30-8 pm

Tuesday, April 16

Tuesday Morning Bible Study, Sr. High Room, 10-11:15 am

Noon Day Prayer, Chapel

“Not in God’s Name” Book Study #4, zoom, 7:30-9 pm

Centering Prayer, hybrid, Chapel, 7:30-8:30 pm

Confirmation Class, Paca Hall, 7:30-8:30 pm

Wed., April 17

Holy Eucharist, 7 am, Chapel

Jr. & Sr. High Youth Group, Paca Hall, 7-8:30 pm

St. Joseph’s Ministry, Vestry room, 7-8:30 pm

Thurs., April 18

Holy Eucharist with healing prayer, Chapel, 11 am

Boys & Girls Choir, 6:30 pm

Adult Choir Rehearsal, 7:30 pm

Fri., April 19

Friday morning Book Club, zoom, 10-11 am

Saturday, April 20

Altar and Flower Guild, 8:30-9:30 am

Invasive Plant Clean Up at Zachary Taylor Park, Open to ALL! 9am-Noon

Week of April 21

Sunday, April 21

The Fourth Sunday of Easter

Holy Eucharist at 8, 10, 10:15 am & 5 pm | Nursery open 8:30-11:30 am

Adult Faith Formation, Care of Creation Presentation, Paca Hall, 9 am

10:15 am Wilderness Service at Zachary Taylor Park

We say good bye to the Rev. Jarrod Moore

5:00 pm Holy Baptism, Confirmation, Reception & HE w/ Bishop Shand

Monday, April 22

Finance Committee Meeting, Vestry Room, 7-8:30 pm

Tuesday, April 23

NEW! Tuesday Morning Men’s Bible Study, 6 weeks on zoom, 7-8 am

Tuesday Morning Bible Study, Sr. High Room, 10-11:15 am

Noon Day Prayer, Chapel

Centering Prayer, hybrid, Chapel, 7:30-8:30 pm

Wednesday, April 24

7 am Holy Eucharist, Chapel

Sr. High Group at AFAC, 6 pm

Treble Choir, 6:30-7:15 pm

St. Joseph’s Meeting, Vestry room, 7-8pm

Centering Prayer, hybrid, 7:30-8:30 pm



APRIL CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Thursday, April 25	Holy Eucharist w/healing prayer, Feast of St. Mark's, Chapel, 11 am Boys and Girls Choir, 6:30-7:30 pm Adult Choir Rehearsal, 7:30-8:30 pm
Friday, April 26	Friday morning Book Group, zoom, 10-11 am
Saturday, April 27	Rebuilding Together Event (see below for registration link) 8 am-4 pm Altar and Flower Guilds, 8:30-9:30 am
Week of April 28	The Fifth Sunday of Easter
Sunday, April 28	Holy Eucharist at 8, 10 am & 5 pm Nursery open 8:30-11:30 am Adult Faith Formation, Panel with our Past Wardens, Paca Hall, 9 am <i>An Ordinary Hero: A Conversation with Joan Mulholland, 2-3 pm</i> Mount Olivet United Methodist Church 1500 N. Glebe Road, Arlington, VA 22207
Monday, April 29	All day Clergy event at Shrine Mont Seminarian Lay Committee meeting, Merrow Fellowship Center, 6:45-7:30 pm
Tuesday, April 30	All day Clergy event at Shrine Mont Men's Weekly Bible Study, zoom, 7-8 am Tuesday Morning Bible Study, Sr. High Room, 10-11:15 am Noon Day Prayer, Chapel Centering Prayer, hybrid, 7:30-8:30 pm

SATURDAY APRIL 27th | 9 am – 5 pm

REBUILDING TOGETHER 2024 RAIN OR SHINE!



Rebuilding Together is a national organization that organizes and supports community partners in the repair and renovation of homes whose owners are unable to do this for themselves (low income, elderly and physically challenged). Rebuilding Together's signature event is National Rebuilding Together Day, which takes place on the last Saturday of April. Since 1988, the Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church affiliate of Rebuilding Together has been organizing this effort locally and St. Mary's parishioners have been involved nearly that long. Last year, a thousand people volunteered locally to make significant repairs to 30 private homes and non-profit residential facilities. The St. Joseph Ministry leads our efforts and this year's House Captain is Jeff Knight. There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer. National Rebuilding Together Day is not only a fun and gratifying way to help out our neighbors in need, it is only a great way share fellowship with St. Mary's members. Sign up for one of the following teams: Paint, Landscaping, Carpentry, Repairs, Hospitality, and Clean up. [Sign up here](#) or on the [parish hub](#).

All skill levels, age 14 and up are welcome!

The Center for Anglican Communion Studies (CACS) at Virginia Theological Seminary is pleased to invite you to:



Forming leaders, transforming conflict

Envisioning cultures
of **radical hospitality**
on our campus and
in our community

In a fractured world
defined more by conflict
than shared
responsibilities,

where we are losing the
spaces to encounter one
another truly and deeply.

Led by:
Canon Sarah Snyder, Founding Director,
Rose Castle Foundation,
& Anna Caffell, Advisor to the Founding Director

**Join us for an evening to
explore the concepts and
challenges of the ministry
of reconciliation in times of
chaos, conflict and change.**

Details

When?

Wednesday, April 17, 2024, 7-9 pm

Where?

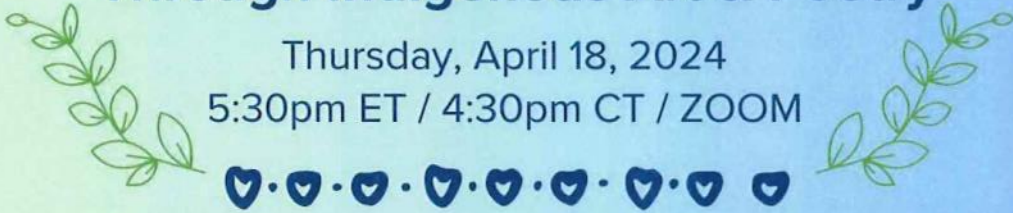
Virginia Theological Seminary,
Gibbs Room, Meade Hall

This free event will be held on our campus in Alexandria, Virginia and co-hosted with the [Rose Castle Foundation](#), the internationally known source for reconciliation training, resources, and opportunities. **Canon Sarah Snyder, Founding Director of Rose Castle, and CACS Fellow for Peace and Reconciliation, will be the lead trainer for the event**, joined by Anna Caffell, Advisor to the Founding Director. This two-hour long evening event (7pm – 9pm) is designed for those new to techniques of reconciliation, as well as experienced faith-formed community leaders who could use some encouragement or refreshment in these techniques. This event is open for registration at this [link](#) and we would welcome new faces and perspectives.

Please feel free to email cacs@vts.edu with any questions.

Pathways to Heartwork: Building Community Through Indigenous Art & Poetry

Thursday, April 18, 2024
5:30pm ET / 4:30pm CT / ZOOM



Martha Berry



Tanaya Winder



Weeya Calif



Sageeyah Gold (2018)



University of NM Press (2021)



Reliant (2023)

An interactive conversation with beadwork artist **Martha Berry**, Cherokee Nation; poet & singer/songwriter **Tanaya Winder**, Duckwater Shoshone Nation; and artist & storyteller **Weeya Calif**, Echota Cherokee Tribe of Alabama. **Please join us!**



Scan code to register & receive ZOOM link!



For questions, please contact Barb Kreutzer at email:
bbkreutz.hme@outlook.com

SPRING EVENTS FOR YOUTH

Sat. April 20th

9-11am

Zachary Taylor Park Invasive Plant Clean Up and Native Planting event for 9 and up. Parish-wide! [SIGN UP HERE](#)

3-4pm

Youth Ministry in the Diocese Zoom. Meet at St. Mary's to join together and let your voice be heard!

Sat. April 27th

Rebuilding Together, a Day of Service for 14 and up

*Youth Mission Trip

Participants must volunteer for a shift! [SIGN UP HERE](#)



Sun. May 5th

9am Annual Meeting of the Parish

Youth help count votes for the next Vestry class

Sun. May 12th

Youth Sunday- All students

invited to lead the 10am service

and all High School Seniors will be celebrated, followed by a

festive reception. Contact Jackie

for more information!

Sun. May 19th

Pentecost and Music Ministry Sunday

9-9:45am

Final Sunday School with

Easter Egg Hunt for kids

11:15am

Final Sr. High Brunch during Pentecost Reception



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Help Wanted: Confirmation Mentors Needed

We have 20 excited confirmation students who are in need of Mentors this year- Mentors meet with their students periodically to support their faith journey, share in each other's lives and attend the confirmation service in January 2025. Interested adults should email Jackie Ly (jackie.ly@stmarysarlington.org).

Help Wanted: Mission Trip Chaperones Needed

Have you ever considered being a chaperone for the 2024 Mission Trip to New Bern, NC, June 16-22 or can you think of someone who would be a great addition to the team this summer? We need faithful, fun and flexible adults to help supervise students, drive rental vans, participate in programming and support the team in their ministry to the community. Expenses are paid, and it is time well spent! Please direct questions or interest to Jackie Ly at jackie.ly@stmarysarlington.org.



St. Mary's Ministries Information Needed!

Ministry Leaders: Please send Andrea a blurb, paragraph or write-up about your ministry and how people might go about trying out or joining your ministry team. We would like to publish this information in the June Messenger, update the website with current descriptions and contacts and also help office staff give out correct information as well. We want to hear from you!

National Volunteer Month

St. Mary's wishes all of our Volunteers a very **BIG THANK YOU !!!**

We appreciate all you do all year long! Today we want to especially let you know that we recognize - that we couldn't do all we do - without depending on you!!!

Make an Altar Flower Dedication Anytime

A new flower chart for the next two years is now located in Paca Hall. Sign up there or online on the Parish Hub, or simply ring the church office. There is a suggested donation of \$100. We will print your dedication in the leaflet however you wish it to read.

The Secret Garden playing at St. Andrew's Church: April 19-20 & 26-28



St. Andrew's Players presents "The Secret Garden" in support of the St. Andrew's Garden of Hope and Creation Care Ministries. Performance dates are April 19-20 and April 26-28, 2024. Location is St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 4000 Lorcom Lane, Arlington, VA 22207.

NEW STUDY AND FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES!

Men's Weekly Bible Study:

Tuesdays from 7-8 am
April 23—May 28 (6 weeks)
Contact Paul Douthit (psdouthit@yahoo.com)
for more information and/or for the zoom link.

Christians and the End of Life:

Mondays from 7-8:30 pm on the following dates:
May 6, 13, 20 & June 3
Led by Father Andrew Merrow
In person, at St. Mary's



together as we continue to express our faith and share our knowledge and love of God with others. As our prayer filled plantings reach for the heavens; so, may our love of self and others grow beyond our wildest dreams and expectations.



Perhaps you've driven by at night and seen the bluish-purple glow of the grow lights emanating from the Merrow Fellowship Center. Those lights were lovingly put up by Louisa McClanahan who wanted to ensure that our seed paper prayers were bathed in warmth. Our very own Jane Shafran researched and concocted a special soil mix so that our prayers would be in fertile growth inspiring praise inducing soil. We will have to put our prayer filled plantings outside soon so they can continue to thrive. Before that happens, I wanted to share with you what we have done

Easter Flower Transformation, "To The Glory of God" by the Flower Guild Ministry.

Thank you to Flower Guild & to all who dedicated flowers this year!



Before: Above
After: Below

Thank you!



Why Easter is called Easter, and other little-known facts about the holiday

By Brant Landau, Lecturer in Religious Studies, The University of Texas at Austin

Submitted to the Messenger by The Reverend Janettarose Greene

The date of Easter, when the resurrection of Jesus is said to have taken place, changes from year to year. The reason for this variation is that Easter always falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox. Research shows that this dating of Easter goes back to the complicated origins of this holiday and how it has evolved over the centuries. Easter is quite similar to other major holidays like Christmas and Halloween, which have evolved over the last 200 years or so. In all of these holidays, Christian and non-Christian (pagan) elements have continued to blend together.

Easter as a rite of spring

Most major holidays have some connection to the changing of seasons. This is especially obvious in the case of Christmas. The New Testament gives no information about what time of year Jesus was born. Many scholars believe, however, that the main reason Jesus' birth came to be celebrated on December 25 is because that was the date of the winter solstice according to the Roman calendar.

Since the days following the winter solstice gradually become longer and less dark, it was ideal symbolism for the birth of "the light of the world" as stated in the New Testament's Gospel of John.

Similar was the case with Easter, which falls in close proximity to another key point in the solar year: the vernal equinox (around March 20), when there are equal periods of light and darkness. For those in northern latitudes, the coming of spring is often met with excitement, as it means an end to the cold days of winter.

Spring also means the coming back to life of plants and trees that have been dormant for winter, as well as the birth of new life in the animal world. Given the symbolism of new life and rebirth, it was only natural to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus at this time of the year.

The naming of the celebration as "Easter" seems to go back to the name of a pre-Christian goddess in England, Eostre, who was celebrated at beginning of spring. The only reference to this goddess comes from the writings of the Venerable Bede, a British monk who lived in the late seventh and early eighth century.

As religious studies scholar Bruce Forbes summarizes:

"Bede wrote that the month in which English Christians were celebrating the resurrection of Jesus had been called Eosturmonath in Old English, referring to a goddess named Eostre. And even though Christians had begun affirming the Christian meaning of the celebration, they continued to use the name of the goddess to designate the season."

Bede was so influential for later Christians that the name stuck, and hence Easter remains the name by which the English, Germans and Americans refer to the festival of Jesus' resurrection.

The connection with Jewish Passover

It is important to point out that while the name "Easter" is used in the English-speaking world, many more cultures refer to it by terms best translated as "Passover" (for instance, "Pascha" in Greek) – a reference, indeed, to the Jewish festival of Passover.

In the Hebrew Bible, Passover is a festival that commemorates the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, as narrated in the Book of Exodus. It was and continues to be the most important Jewish seasonal festival, celebrated on the first full moon after the vernal equinox.

At the time of Jesus, Passover had special significance, as the Jewish people were again under the dominance of foreign powers (namely, the Romans). Jewish pilgrims streamed into Jerusalem every year in the hope that God's chosen people (as they believed themselves to be) would soon be liberated once more.

On one Passover, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem with his disciples to celebrate the festival. He entered Jerusalem in a triumphal procession and created a disturbance in the Jerusalem Temple. It seems that both of these actions attracted the attention of the Romans, and that as a result Jesus was executed around the year A.D. 30.

Some of Jesus' followers, however, believed that they saw him alive after his death, experiences that gave birth to the Christian religion. As Jesus died during the Passover festival and his followers believed he was resurrected from the dead three days later, it was logical to commemorate these events in close proximity.

Resurrection.

Fr Lawrence Lew, O.P., CC BY-NC-ND

Some early Christians chose to celebrate the resurrection of Christ on the same date as the Jewish Passover, which fell around day 14 of the month of Nisan, in March or April. These Christians were known as Quartodecimans (the name means “Fourteeners”).

By choosing this date, they put the focus on when Jesus died and also emphasized continuity with the Judaism out of which Christianity emerged. Some others instead preferred to hold the festival on a Sunday, since that was when Jesus’ tomb was believed to have been found.

In A.D. 325, the Emperor Constantine, who favored Christianity, convened a meeting of Christian leaders to resolve important disputes at the Council of Nicaea. The most fateful of its decisions was about the status of Christ, whom the council recognized as “fully human and fully divine.” This council also resolved that Easter should be fixed on a Sunday, not on day 14 of Nisan. As a result, Easter is now celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox.

The Easter bunny and Easter eggs

In early America, the Easter festival was far more popular among Catholics than Protestants. For instance, the New England Puritans regarded both Easter and Christmas as too tainted by non-Christian influences to be appropriate to celebrate. Such festivals also tended to be opportunities for heavy drinking and merrymaking.

The fortunes of both holidays changed in the 19th century, when they became occasions to be spent with one’s family. This was done partly out of a desire to make the celebration of these holidays less rowdy.

But Easter and Christmas also became reshaped as domestic holidays because understandings of children were changing. Prior to the 17th century, children were rarely the center of attention.

As historian Stephen Nissenbaum writes, “...children were lumped together with other members of the lower orders in general, especially servants and apprentices – who, not coincidentally, were generally young people themselves.”

From the 17th century onward, there was an increasing recognition of childhood as a time of life that should be joyous, not simply as preparatory for adulthood. This “discovery of childhood” and the doting upon children had profound effects on how Easter was celebrated.

It is at this point in the holiday’s development that Easter eggs and the Easter bunny become especially important. Decorated eggs had been part of the Easter festival at least since medieval times, given the

obvious symbolism of new life. A vast amount of folklore surrounds Easter eggs, and in a number of Eastern European countries, the process of decorating them is extremely elaborate. Several Eastern European legends describe eggs turning red (a favorite color for Easter eggs) in connection with the events surrounding Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Yet it was only in the 17th century that a German tradition of an “Easter hare” bringing eggs to good children came to be known. Hares and rabbits had a long association with spring seasonal rituals because of their amazing powers of fertility.

When German immigrants settled in Pennsylvania in the 18th and 19th centuries, they brought this tradition with them. The wild hare also became supplanted by the more docile and domestic rabbit, in another indication of how the focus moved toward children.

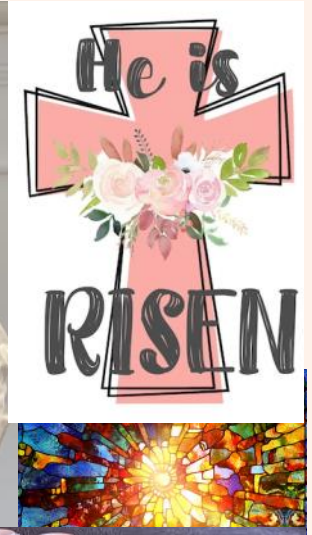
As Christians celebrate the festival this spring in commemoration of Jesus’ resurrection, the familiar sights of the Easter bunny and Easter eggs serve as a reminder of the holiday’s very ancient origins outside of the Christian tradition.



St. Mary’s, Easter Sunday, 2024

Photo: Jackie Ly

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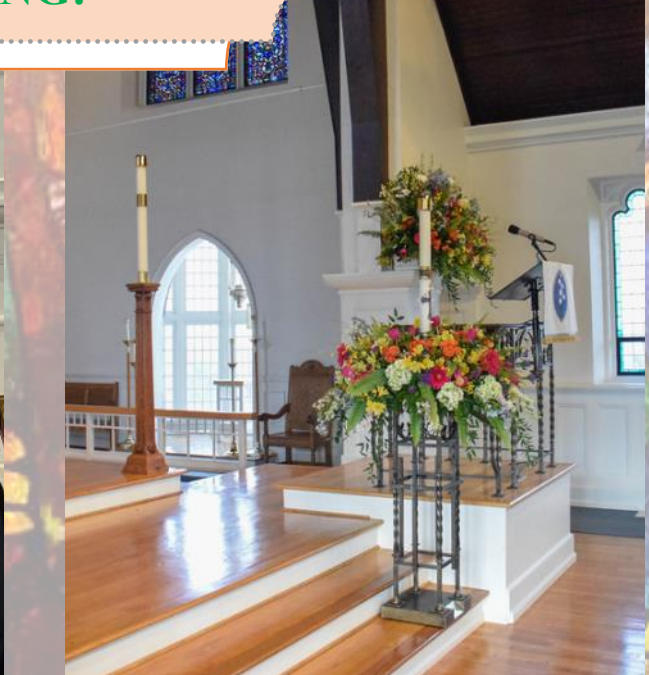




Easter Sunday, March 31

*Father Andrew Merrow
remembered both the passing of
his Father 50 years ago
& baptized his grand son,
William Merrow Paras.*

**A DAY of much
REJOICING!**



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Sunday, April 28th
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