

Parson to Person by Pastor Dave

Every February I seem to either write about Valentine's Day or President's Day; the twin plums of love and politics are always full and juicy for a writer. But this year I feel like revisiting a topic I seldom talk theologically about; and since I am writing this on the morning of February 2nd, perhaps we should talk about Groundhog Day?

Historically speaking, Groundhog Day is a direct descendent of *Candlemas*, which, for early Christians, was a day to bless and distribute candles—a hot commodity in the days before electric light, especially during the cold, dark, wet winter. This celebration, halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, had been founded by the pagans and eventually given a new spin by the Church, marked by the blessing of candles by the

local priest, and giving them to all the parish homes. Together they would kindle the Christ light, chasing the cold and shadows of winter temporarily away. Nice custom, yes?

Seasonal Affective Disorder and candle-sharing notwithstanding, the early Christians stumbled upon another way to make the dismal season a bit cheerier: they communally decided that clear skies on Candlemas Day foreshadowed (if you will pardon the pun) a longer winter. There may have been some wagering; there was probably a certain amount of partying. By the time this tradition reached Germany (where, let's be honest, the Lutherans were no strangers to either wagering or partying), the groundhog and his shadow had entered

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Our Purpose
To ENGAGE people in joyful relationships with God and with each other, so we will GROW in Christ-like compassion, and SHARE the blessings of the Holy Spirit.



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the story. When the Germans came to Pennsylvania, they brought their traditions—including the groundhog—with them. The quirky fun developed into what we now celebrate as Groundhog Day.

Here's the theological part: it's a strange bit of whimsy, the idea that, if things are gross now, they will clear up soon, but if they are bright and cheery now, watch out, because bad weather is on the way. Doesn't really make much sense in the clear light of day, now, does it? Sounds like a way of thinking *too superstitious* for modern people, and yet, this kind of reasoning is all around us. We don't tell others of our good fortune or recent love interests for fear that we will 'jinx' them. We assume that the current badness (in whatever arena) will be counterbalanced by another election, or another relationship, or a different town or job or church family. It is a skittish way to live, nervous of losing the good or of incurring the wrath of some greater power if we enjoy things too much. But for all the goofy fun of Punxetawny Phil and his followers, the deeper symbolism of light and shadow, cold and warmth, has unmistakable religious overtones. Helping one another through the coldest and darkest times is absolutely what we strive to be about.

I am all for a bit of partying, some innocent wagering, and any way we can devise to lighten the burden of winter. I am not impressed, though, when silly thinking goes mainstream. Both religion and science have worked too hard, for too long, to have much tolerance for a superstitious culture. And so, my advice is pretty much what it is every Sunday; live in faith, not in fear; live beyond superstition into certainty. Enjoy the crazy aspects of a culture or a holiday, but keep a sense of balance. My life hero, Jesus of Nazareth, claimed that his yoke was easy, and his burden was light... doubtless it seemed so, since he maintained such extraordinary balance throughout his earthly days. On a lighter note, my magic hero Harry Anderson says, "Keep an open mind, but not so open that your brains fall out" ... which is good advice, whether there are shadows to be seen in Pennsylvania this morning or not! Happy Candlemas!

United Women in Faith (UWF)

Our January Saturday meeting/baby shower was a great success!! We were delighted to visit with Chelsea Peterson and her darling little Celeste. We all got to know Chelsea a little better and finally were able to warmly welcome her to our church.

Ideas for Christmas Bazaar 2025:

Do you or someone you know like to do **simple woodworking projects**? We would love to add such items to our Christmas Bazaar! Toys, puzzles, decorative items – whatever you think may be appropriate to our event. Also, we'd love to add **plants for sale** again. Now is the time you might want to take some cuttings and start some new plants. We will look into helping people clean out their supply of small pots to help us out in this endeavor!

At our meeting next month (Wed. Feb. 19th at 10 am), we will be discussing plans for the **Spring Rummage Sale!** We are aiming for the first weekend in March – **March 7/8** to hold this event. Start working on your spring clean-outs!

Submitted by Katya Yarosevich

Save the Date for Our “Love the Church” Event!

Church (n): 1. A building for public and especially Christian worship.

2. the clergy or officialdom of a religious body
3. a body or organization of religious believers.

(Merriam Webster dictionary)

When you think of the definition of church, does your mind lean toward the first definition above or the third? I must confess that mine often leans at first toward the first definition, but when I think about it carefully, church to me refers to the group of people I worship with and fellowship with. And I often think about the future of our gatherings.

Do *you* have a vision for the future of our church? Please come and share it on **Thursday March 27th from 6-8 pm**, at the **“Love the Church”** event. We will share what we love about Trinity and what we hope for it in the future. Molly Knappen has graciously agreed to moderate the discussion. Dessert will be provided. If you have any questions, please contact Katya Yarosevich or Leatha King.

Submitted by Katya Yarosevich

VOLUNTEERS FOR SAFE SPACE DINNERS

Help us reach out to our cold, hungry neighbors who will stay at Trinity overnight the week of Feb.9 - 16.

Sign ups have begun to prepare dinners for **Thursday, Feb. 13** and **Saturday, Feb. 15** for about 50 people.

You can make preparations at home and bring food to church by 6pm or make arrangements for someone to pick it up and deliver it for you. Guests arrive 6:30pm. Stay if you can to help serve.

Here is what we have so far. (Tip: Foods should be soft and easy to eat)

February 13, Thursday: We could use another item for about 20 people in each category.

Mac'n'Cheese with tuna- Lily Loughlin, Suellen

Green salad, potato salad, bread - Eleanor Calvert

Green beans - Pamela Beeman

Desserts - Lucille Wanee, Katya Y. (cookies)

Rolls - Lucille

February 15 Saturday

Main dishes - Elizabeth Bergthold, soup?
Katya - pasta casserole

Salad

Veggie

Bread, rolls - Lucille

Desserts

Questions? Contact Suellen, 408-710-1762, text ok, suellen@garlic.com

Submitted by Suellen Rowlison

Thank you to my loving church family for the many examples of caring and love during my recent illness and recovery. Your concern and thoughtfulness truly made my recovery quicker and more complete.

Submitted by Coleen Schloman

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ENGAGE

GROW

SHARE



WORSHIP IN FEBRUARY

Sunday, February 2 Epiphany 4

Our time together today re-introduces Simeon and Anna, great faith-filled folks who encourage the new parents of Jesus in mighty and very helpful ways. Holy communion will be enjoyed today, and the message will be called “The consolation of Confirmation”

Sunday, February 9 Epiphany 5

Luke 5:1-11 leads us into worship today, with a famous story about trust and faith leading to a miraculous catch of fish. Special music featuring Caroline Fairchild, and a lovely message called “Eye Rolling and Back Pedaling”.

Sunday, February 16 Epiphany 6

Of all the stories made famous in the Gospel of Luke, the one that offers the most incisive food for thought is the Sermon on the Plain, found in Luke 6:17-26. We enjoy the luxurious guitar playing and singing of Chris Wenger today, as well as the homily “The Double-Edged Sword of the Gospel”.

Sunday, February 23 Epiphany 7

The Sermon on the Plain continues its advice and invective, changing hearts and encouraging hands as it endlessly inspires. The portion we explore today will be Luke 6:27-38, and the sermon is aptly named “A Bushel and a Peck”.