

## *WELCOME TO ST. CHRISTOPHER'S CHURCH*



The tenets of our Catholic faith, the history of Catholicism on Kent Island and the history of our parish are depicted in the structure by art and design. Established in 1954, our present building was dedicated on January 18, 2009, and within the present structure is the original 1950's building.

From the outside as you approach the front doors, to the right of the entrance portico, braced on a covered base, is the original church bell, once located in the steeple and originally dedicated to Saint Edith, a favorite saint of the donor.

The outside wall of the original church encases the present front doors. Our gathering space was the middle interior of the original church.

### **The Gathering Space**

In the gathering space, on your right are the Men's and Women's Rooms, Bride's Room and Sacristy. The Men's room was the stairwell to the choir loft (now containing the HVAC equipment), the Women's Room was the site of the old confessional, the Bride's Room was the original vestibule and the wooden frame around the current mirror was the original frame of the old church front doors. The Sacristy was the site of the Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. To your left is the Chapel and inside is our present daily chapel. Everything (except the pews and votive candles) inside the chapel is from the old church. Notice on the left wall a list of benefactors of the original church

## **The Main Church**

As you open the inside doors to enter the new church, again you are going through the wall of the original church. Immediately inside your eyes are drawn to the tabernacle-the centerpiece, depository of Our Lord in the Eucharist-guarded by two adoring angels etched on the doors.

In front of the tabernacle, our marble altar with its centerpiece – a sailboat – in religious art a symbol for the church (the Apostles being fishermen), a sailboat-in recognition of Kent Island.

Above the altar, suspended from the ceiling, our crucifix with a life-size figure of Christ. Note the nails in the wrist-an accurate depiction of crucifixion.

In the sanctuary, to the left of the altar, is the marble pulpit decorated on its front with the Chi Rho-the Greek abbreviation for *Christ*. The Crucifix and marble items were all hand crafted in Peru by Dom Bosco Artesans and are unique to our church.

To the right of the sanctuary is the organ and choir area; and further to right in the alcove is our statue of Saint Christopher, the only item from the original church included in the new addition.

To the left of the sanctuary is the Baptistry containing the marble baptismal font, the Paschal Candle, glass-encased depository, for the sacred oils, and the Holy Water container.

In the alcove to the left is the hand carved and painted statue of the Holy Family, also done by Dom Bosco Artesans.

The stained glass work is the artistry of Lynchburg Glass of Virginia. The two lintel windows above our side doors, and the two stained glass windows in the sanctuary are designed to complement our huge rose window design above the back wall of the sanctuary.

## **The Stained Glass Windows**

are scenes from the life of Christ. In honor of Saint Christopher, the patron saint of travelers, with the theme “modes of transportation in the life of Christ.”

Thus, parallel from front to back you will see depicted:

Nativity and Ascension-Christ “coming and going”

Flight into Egypt and Palm Sunday - transportation by donkey.

Walking with the Apostles and Walking on Water.

Preaching from a boat, calming the storm in a boat.

Between the windows are the fourteen Stations of the Cross, depicting Christ’s passion and death. These are also hand carved and painted.

As you exit the church, on the back wall are the three coats-of-arms of the three religious groups that have administered Saint Christopher during its existence.

On your left -the Carmelite Fathers-who started the parish and built the original church.

On your right-the Redemptorists Fathers-who managed the parish for 38 years.

In the center-the coat-of arms of the Diocese of Wilmington.

On the exterior wall of the confessional is our mural of our newest American Saint: Kateri Tekakwitha , a reminder that Fr. Altham came to Kent Island with Native Americans as his mission goal.

Before you exit the new church interior-to your right, is our fourth painted mural,“the Saints of Maryland”.

Surrounding our state flag, 5 individuals (2 Saints, 1 blessed and 2 currently under investigation for future sainthood)-all of who lived and worked in Maryland

St. John Neumann, C.Ss.R., who died in Philadelphia, was pastor of St. Alphonsus Church in Baltimore.

St. Elizabeth Seton, from New York, started the American chapter of the Sisters of Charity in Baltimore, then moved and died at Emmitsburg.

Bl. Frances X. Seelos, C.Ss.R., who died in New Orleans was pastor of St. Mary’s Annapolis and St. Peter and Paul, Cumberland.

Ven. Michael McGiveny, a Connecticut priest, founder of the Knights of Columbus, did his seminary training at St. Mary’s Seminary, Baltimore.

Sr. Mary Elizabeth Lange ,a free Haitian, emigrated to Baltimore, foundress of the first Catholic religious order for Afro-American Women in the United States in Baltimore.

**Back in the gathering space** on both sides of the chapel door are two of our new church’s four painted murals.

On the left-many churches honor Saint Christopher, we however have a one-of-a-kind depiction-“Saint Christopher on Kent Island”: a traditional scene of Saint Christopher and the Christ child, but here with the Bay Bridge, a sailboat, and the brown land mass, actual island coast line, in the background!

On the right is the story of “Catholicism on Kent Island”.

1635-Fr. John Altham S.J. arrives to work with the Native Americans trading at Claiborne’s Outpost.

From the 1640’s to the 1780’s Catholicism was outlawed in Maryland-an underground church held services inside homes, thus the white colonial house.

1860's-Before, during and after the Civil War the Redemptorist Fathers came by boat from Annapolis-mass at home-no church built.

1953-In the early 50's, Saint Martin's Parish in Baltimore had a summer camp on Love Point at the tip of Kent Island named Camp Saint Martin. The camp, which had a chapel, was often used by the islanders during the summer in lieu of driving to St. Peters in Queenstown. In this chapel a committee was formed requesting a new parish on Kent Island.

1954-Permission was granted and, until the first church was built, a store-front next to the Kent Island Pharmacy in the Kent Island Shopping Center was used for weekend Masses.

1955- The completion of the original church, in which you are standing at the moment.

1991- The completion of the hall, classrooms, kitchen, offices and conference room.

2009 - Completion of our present church.

The two parallel yellow scrolls depict the two names for the Bay-the English in the 1600's called the Bay "Chesapeake" the Indian name for it; however, the Spanish actually discovered and mapped the Bay in the 1500's and they named the Bay "Bahia de Madre de Dios" ,the Bay of the Mother of God, the first European name for the Bay.

The church murals were designed by Father Paul Jennings and painted by Father, and parishioners, Linda Haney and Christine Eck.

***In the gathering space before you exit the building notice the gold box with the new church and date of dedication etched on it embedded into the wall between the sacristy and Bride's room. Grasp the lever, open the book, and observe the list of items and donors of the new church listed by alphabetical items. These individuals, along with the many donors to the building fund, brought about the structure you just toured. We thank God and them for our sanctuary, our church, our house of God.***