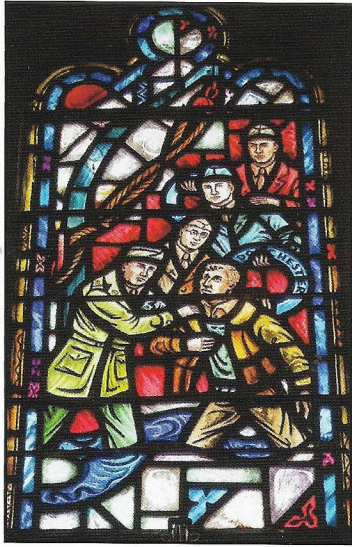
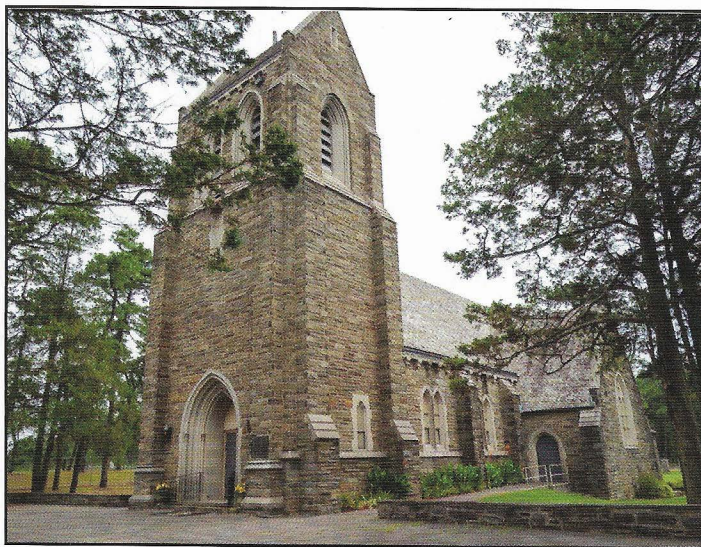


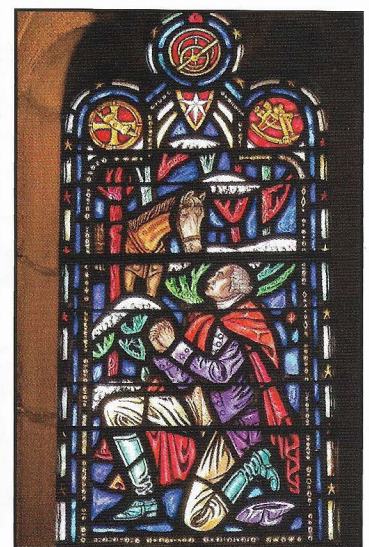
CATHEDRAL OF THE AIR CELEBRATES AVIATION HISTORY WITH STAINED GLASS WINDOWS



A stained glass window portrays the heroism of the four U.S. Navy chaplains who gave up their life vests to save others when the S.S. Dorchester sank during World War II inside the entrance of Cathedral of the Air, Lakehurst, N.J. (U.S. Air Force photo by Susan Moriarty)



Cathedral of the Air, a nearly century-old chapel styled in Norman-Gothic architecture, stands out from its surroundings in Lakehurst, N.J., July 25, 2024. Located near Naval Support Activity Lakehurst's main gate, the chapel contains 18 unique stained glass windows displaying the history of aviation along with other poignant moments in American history. (U.S. Air Force photo by Susan Moriarty)



President George Washington is shown praying in the snow at Valley Forge on a stained glass window inside Cathedral of the Air, Lakehurst, N.J., July 25, 2024. Located near Naval Support Activity Lakehurst's main gate. (U.S. Air Force photo by Susan Moriarty)

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Immersed in shade from a surrounding canopy of trees not far from Naval Support Activity Lakehurst's main gate stands a striking, nearly century-old stone building known as Cathedral of the Air. It is a building steeped in history and meaning – providing a place of worship for service members and the surrounding community beginning during World War II to the present.

While Cathedral of the Air's outer appearance stands out for its Norman-Gothic architecture in lush green surroundings, it is what is exhibited along its walls that may be its most distinctive feature - a one-of-a-kind collection of stained glass windows presenting the history of humanity's quest to take flight, from its inception to the mid-twentieth century. A total of 18 stained glass windows designed and executed by the Willet Studios of Philadelphia portray images symbolic and meaningful to those that the chapel was built to serve.

Just inside the chapel entrance is the "Four Chaplains in World War II" window picturing the four heroic U.S. Navy chaplains who perished on the S.S. Dorchester when the ship sank from a German torpedo during WWII. The chaplains were awarded the Purple Heart posthumously for giving up their life jackets to save others and for offering comfort to Sailors while the ship was sinking. A ceremony honoring the four chaplains is offered at the chapel each February.

Further inside the chapel, windows depict images such as Sir Isaac Newton demonstrating Newton's Law, the first hydrogen balloon, the earliest known design of the jet airplane and a chronological history of lighter-than-air aviation. These aeronautical themes are combined with reflections of poignant moments in our country's history including President George Washington praying in the snow at Valley Forge and President Abraham Lincoln in prayer to free slaves.

U.S. Navy Capt. James Howell, NSA Lakehurst commander and Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst deputy commander, has made maintaining Cathedral of the Air one of his priorities since taking command.

"The joint base is aware of and appreciates the value of the building and what it means to both the military and the community," Howell said.

Conceived in 1929 by Gill Robb Wilson, the National Chaplain of the American Legion, as a place of worship for the nearby military base, ground was broken for the chapel on June 26, 1932. Designed by architect Paul Cret, the cornerstone was laid Nov. 6, 1932, by Secretary of the Navy Charles Adams III and the structure was completed the following year. With the interior not yet complete, the first Sunday service was held Feb. 16, 1941. At the conclusion of WWII, efforts resumed to complete the installation of the altar and pews and on Oct. 26, 1947, a multi-faith dedication service took place, and the chapel keys were presented to Vice Adm. William M. Fechteler, Naval

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