

**SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**  
**FEBRUARY 28, 2022**

Meet Paul Laurence Dunbar. Paul was born June 27, 1872 at the home of his grandmother Elizabeth Burton. Both of Paul's parents had been slaves. At the onset of the Civil War his father had enlisted in the 55<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Volunteers, Company F as part of the U.S. Colored Troops. Both parents placed a high value on education and reading. They taught Paul to begin to read by age 4. They also related the stories of slavery and of the Civil War. Paul was active in the church and on May 17, 1885 joined the Eaker Street African Methodist Episcopal Church. His mother hoped that he would become a minister, but that was not to be.

Paul was dedicated to completing school and while in high school he became familiar with the writings of Wadsworth (a local author). He recalls that as he walked home from school he began to think of phrases that "had a jingling sound." He began writing poems when he was almost twelve years old and published his first poem at fourteen. This was followed by frequent recitations at school assemblies where his reverent demeanor earned him the nickname of Deacon. Paul was a member of the debate and drama clubs in the school. Paul and the Wright brothers had a life-long friendship. Following graduation from high school he was unable to find work that utilized that education. He got a position of elevator operator at \$4.00 per week. With his earnings from his job and the sales of publications he purchased a house for his mother (now on the national registry). His first book of poetry, *Oak and Ivy*, was published in 1892. It was the turning point. It was Fredrick Douglas who befriended him during that time. His travels took him to England and then to work at the Library of Congress in Washington.

Paul married Alice Ruth Moore on March 6, 1898. He resigned from the Library on December 31, 1898 and devoted his time to travel related to work. While in New York in 1899 he collapsed with what was diagnosed as pneumonia. It would later be diagnosed as tuberculosis. He was advised to travel to Colorado where he spent several months before returning to Dayton. Paul died of his illness on February 9, 1906. He is buried in the Woodland Cemetery in Dayton, Ohio. Many schools and libraries have been named in his memory.

*Lord, thank You for the gift of creativity that has blessed many. Amen. Pastor Louise*