

Recent History of St. Paul's Anglican Church 1963-2013

God made known through His people – Working through His Spirit

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of St. Paul's Church in Almonte, we are celebrating more than just a building. A review of the story of our church illustrates how we, the current group of people who make up the "Parish of St. Paul's in Almonte" hold this church in trust. We hold this church for those who came before us and have entrusted it to us. We hold this church for those who will come after us, even if we sometimes wonder if we will have left the church ready for the changes they will bring. But at every stage of our history we have also held this church for the people of Almonte/Mississippi Mills who want to find out about their God and his Grace. Our history is really the story of our continuing efforts to keep this church ready for each and every person who, with eager expectations and a bit of apprehension, walks through our doors for the first time.

The story which follows is a testimony to the incremental yet relentless process of renovation and innovation by which we have ensured that St. Paul's continues to meet the needs of our community through constantly changing times. In so many ways the day-to-day life of St. Paul's today is very different from that of 1863; yet despite its 150 years, the sense of beauty, joy, duty and relevance remains undiminished.

Centenary

In 1963 the Parish of St. Paul's both completed its first 100 years of dedicated service to God and commenced its 101st year with a celebration of the church's centenary which featured:

- On Sunday April 14th Easter Day: 99th anniversary of the first service in the church
- On Sunday May 5th: 100th anniversary of the first stone being laid on May 7th 1863 by James Rosamond
- On Sunday May 12th: Festal Evensong sung by Archdeacon R. Eric Osborne and the Choristers of St. Matthew's Church under the direction of Mr. Gerald Wheeler, F.R.C.O.
- On Sunday May 26th: Special Children's and Parents' Service
- On Saturday June 8th: Centennial Sunday School picnic on Church grounds
- On Saturday June 15th: 100th Anniversary of Laying of Cornerstone by Dr. W.M. Mostyn, Worshipful Master of Mississippi Lodge No. 147; Garden Party on the Church Lawn to meet old and new friends of St. Paul's. The Bishop of Ontario and the Masonic Lodges were represented
- On Sunday June 16th: Choral Eucharist and Thanksgiving, the Bishop of Ottawa Rt. Rev. E.S. Reed presided. During the Offertory there was a dedication of the new church lighting given to the Glory of God as a Thank Offering by Joan and Robert Rivington.

- On Sunday June 30th, the 99th anniversary of the consecration of St. Paul's: Choral Eucharist and service of Consecration of the congregation to the next 100 years of Christian service, conducted by Archdeacon G.H.L. Sadler (Archdeacon of Lanark) and Rev. R.S.V. Crossley, Rector of Stittsville (Rector of St. Paul's 1943-1951).

Buildings

Parish House

In 1965 St. Paul's acquired the picturesque building now known as the Parish House. It was probably constructed in 1856, which would make the Parish House older than St. Paul's itself! The Parish House's last full time occupants were Susan Elizabeth and James Savage, long time parishioners of St Paul's. Susan (who is memorialized in the "Good Samaritan" stained glass window) passed away in May, 1959. James passed away in June, 1965 at the ripe old age of 96 years (at the time of his passing he was thought to be Almonte's oldest living citizen). St. Paul's purchased the building and the frontage on the Mississippi River from James' estate for the sum of \$7,000. Rt. Rev. E. S. Reed, Bishop of Ottawa, blessed and officially opened the Parish House in 1966.

For many years the Parish House was used mainly as storage and meeting space. In the 1980s it was rented out to the Lanark County Board of Education for use as the Almonte Alternative School. At that time, the Rector's office was located in the Rectory; there was no separate Parish Office and no full time church secretary. The library was located in what is now the coat closet by the side entrance to the Parish Hall. In the early 1990s it was decided that the Parish House should become more integrated into the daily life of St. Paul's and in 1992, the Parish House started to undergo a series of renovations (including a new roof and gas furnace) which resulted in the creation of a new Rector's office and a new Parish Office. Elizabeth MacPherson was hired as St. Paul's first paid Parish Secretary.

In 1994, a library space was completed and in May 1994 (thanks to the efforts of Madeline Moir, Grace Williams and Jean Barr) all the books were moved from the back entrance of the church to the Parish House.

With work having been done in most of the rest of the Parish House, by 2004 the Parish House kitchen was in need of sprucing up. In that year members of the Senior Youth Group: Sascha Wionzek, David Burd, Trevor Davis and Matthew Miller (with help from Doris Wionzek, Dianne Gale, and Brian Fallak) painted the impressive Genesis Creation Story Mural in the kitchen.

In 2008 the Church Office was upgraded with new furniture and fresh paint. Then in 2010 new carpeting was installed in the office, library, lobby and interior stairs. The library and lobby also received fresh paint and the bathroom was totally renovated. When all the dust had settled the library shelves had been moved into the lobby and the former library was transformed into a cozy meeting and fellowship space thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Knit and Natter group. On August 29th, 2010 this room was officially dedicated as the Grace Brown Fellowship Room

to honour Grace Brown's valuable and tireless work in our church, not only during her husband Harry's tenure as Rector, but also afterwards when the couple retired to Almonte.

The Rectory

As with the other buildings, the Rectory has undergone upgrades and repairs to ensure that it is kept in good repair and remains responsive to the Rector's needs. In 1985 it was decided to move the Rector's office from the main floor to the basement, with an entrance off the river side of the building. This allowed for the kitchen to be expanded and the laundry room moved up to the main floor. This necessitated not only the actual relocating of the rooms, but also improvements to the basement level entrance facing the river, including a covered walkway at the side of the building. The estimated cost of that work was \$18,000. The parish must have been very proud of the final product!

Both the Church and the Rectory were selected as the "Almonte Town and Country House Tour" property for 1986. The tour was held on June 18th 1986 and if the Parish Council minutes from July 1986 are to be believed, 750 people toured the Rectory and the church grounds!

As already stated, the Rector's office was moved to the Parish House in 1992. Shortly thereafter the exterior walkway cover was removed as it was in a state of disrepair.

By the 1990s the Rectory's porch (facing the river) was also in a poor state of repair, so at a Special Vestry meeting held in October 1998, it was decided that it should be replaced with a new two-story porch. Peter Mansfield was hired to create the design for the porch. His final design, which was based on photographs of the Rectory's original porch, was accepted by Parish Council and work was completed in 1999. The next year landscaping was done around the Rectory which featured the creation of the tiered flower beds and refurbishment of the stone steps of the exterior walkway. In 2003 it was decided to renovate the porch at the front entrance of the Rectory. Again, a design was created based on photographs of the Rectory's original porch and the work was completed on that porch in 2004.

The Church

One of the most enduring aspects of the life of St. Paul's is the amount of care, upkeep and renovation that a late nineteenth century stone church requires, not only to remain structurally sound, but also to accommodate the changing needs of its congregation. To list every bit of work done on the church in the last 50 years is outside the scope of this History, so what follows is a brief listing of some of the more important or interesting work items.

The figures which make up the St. Paul's Crèche were donated to St. Paul's in December 1974 by the artist Doris McCarthy of Scarborough Ontario. Doris McCarthy was well known for her painting of landscapes from Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains to the arctic. In addition, her applique banners are to be found in several churches and public buildings throughout Ontario. Miss McCarthy originally carved the Crèche figures in pine for her own church, St. Aidan's in Toronto. From these carvings Miss McCarthy cast sets in plaster which she then painted in oils.

The figures have become an integral part of St. Paul's Christmas celebrations. Miss McCarthy passed away in November 2010 at the age of 100. For many years the figures were set up inside the Altar, which was turned around after the last service on the Third Sunday in Advent with the help of study volunteers.

In late summer 1980 two new front doors installed. One of the features that made the new doors an improvement over the old doors was that the new doors open outwards, in compliance with the Ontario Building Code. These doors are now painted bright yellow to enhanced the theme of welcoming.

In 1993, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous parishioner, the church's exterior was improved by the installation of new flood lights and a new church sign. That church sign was repaired and moved from the "near" to the "far" side of the walkway in 2007. In 2011 the current sign was ordered and by 2012 it was fully installed along with a raised garden.

In June 1994 a Special Vestry meeting held in July approved a major renovation of the Parish Hall Kitchen at a cost of \$19,000. Local cabinetmaker John Brathwaite won the contract and the renovations took place over the rest of that summer. The Vestry Report from that time indicates that the Anglican Church Women (ACW) was heavily involved in this project, both in contributing funds and also providing "a vast input of discussion and ideas."

1994 also saw the installation of a new sound system in the church. This new system was an important improvement to the sound quality of our church. It featured microphones in the choir area and the ability to record services. A hearing "loop" system was installed a few years later. In subsequent years the sound system was the subject of periodic (and piecemeal) upgrades, especially after the lightning strike of 1998 fried a good portion of the equipment. Finally, in 2012 the increasingly patchwork sound system was upgraded with improved microphoning of the choir area and the acquisition of a new mixing board, amplifier and wireless microphone system all integrated in a single new mixer cabinet from which the laptop computer and projector could also be operated, housed in a cabinet constructed by Derek Mavis.

In February 2012, under the leadership of the Reverend Patricia Martin, Vestry authorized the installation of two "barrier free" bathrooms, one on the main floor of the church and one on the hall floor, provided that funding for the project was available. While the need for an accessible main-floor washroom had been acknowledged for many years, by 2012 Vestry was confident that we were finally in a position to get the work completed. Much of this confidence arose from the fact that, thanks to some outstanding fund-raising, we already had \$18,000 collected towards the estimated cost of \$55,000 to \$60,000 for the two bathrooms. In March of 2012 St. Paul's was approved for a grant in the amount of \$49,000 from The Trillium Foundation, thanks to sterling work by Gary Pollock. The most striking feature of the plans for the upstairs bathroom was the oak-framed, smoked glass wall that would be constructed to separate the narthex from the worship space. The installation of a fully accessible bathroom off the Parish Hall required a change to the entrance to the Parish Kitchen. Once the plans were approved, in order to reduce the total cost many members of St. Paul's took on the parts of the work which did not require a

licensed professional. Work started in April of 2012 and was mostly completed by the end of June of that year.

Missions

The year 1980 was notable as the year St. Paul's helped respond to the crises of the Vietnamese "Boat People." Between 1978 and 1981 over one million Vietnamese people fled their country. Most escaped by boats and found themselves settled in crowded, ill-equipped Asian refugee camps where an entire family would be crammed into a single one or two square metre living space. In response to this humanitarian crisis, the Government of Canada introduced a process which allowed private groups to sponsor a single refugee or a family for resettlement in Canada. In 1980 St. Paul's assembled a group who, on behalf of our Parish, applied to sponsor a refugee family. In the spring of 1980 Try Tray Tan and Huoy Kim arrived in Almonte from a refugee camp in Thailand. Not much was known of the young couple except that they were each the last survivors of their respective families. They had met and were married at the refugee camp. Upon arriving in Almonte they lived in the Rectory with Rev. Harry and Grace Brown and family. By Christmas of 1980 they had completed their first English lessons and were looking for work. By early 1981 they were both working and in March 1981 they moved into their own apartment. In September of that year Try and Huoy were fully contributing members of the congregation and were received into the Church in the sacrament of Baptism. In 1991, Try, Huoy (and their two boys who were born in Almonte) moved into Kanata to be closer to Try's place of employment.

By 1987 there was still money in the Refugee Fund so it was decided that St. Paul's would officially submit a second Application for Refugee Sponsorship. As a result, in June 1989 Than Phok and her six-month old daughter Chantha arrived in Almonte from a refugee camp in Thailand. Than had lived in the refugee camp for 10 years. They were met in the Ottawa airport by a small group including Try and Huoy Tan. Than obtained an apartment and a job as a dishwasher at JR's Restaurant. She and Chantha became Canadian Citizens in 2000 (and they also corrected a clerical error by having their last name changed to "Mok") and by 2007 Than had worked her way up to an assistant cook. Than still resides in Almonte and Chantha has now graduated from the University of Ottawa.

In October 2002, St. Paul's underwent a process of spiritual renewal by way of a Parish Mission. The "Spirit of Life" Mission was celebrated at St. Paul's with the help of John Bowen and a team of students from Wycliffe College in Toronto. Events included special worship services, a pub night and youth video project.

St. Paul's has been fortunate to support three organizations with ties to our church:

In 2005 three members of St. Paul's (Patricia Matheson, Katrina Ayling and Denise McIntyre) visited the Vidas mission in Quinoa Peru. Vidas is a project started by a native Quechuan Indian named Raquel Yupanqui and her husband Max Candia. Raquel is a trained nurse who is dedicated to serving the poor people in this region located 31km north of Ayacucho. At that time Vidas was composed of four parts: a kindergarten run out of Raquel and Max's home; a Bible School; a medical clinic which is housed in Quinoa (but which also serves as a base from which Raquel and her team travel to many small remote communities in the region). Thanks to Patricia,

Katrina, and Denise, St. Paul's became involved in supporting Vidas in various projects including the expansion of the clinic and the purchase and transportation of an ultra-sound machine. We received a blessing in turn when, the fall of 2009, Raquel and Max visited St. Paul's.

In 2006, a young man from Almonte, Tom Affleck, went to Central America with one desire: to try and help someone. While in a tiny village in Northern Nicaragua Tom gave two young girls a notebook and a pencil. One of their fathers, seeing this simple gift smiled broadly and said 'Now that you have a notebook and a pencil you can go to school this year.' This simple statement profoundly impacted Tom and eventually led to the creation of SchoolBOX. St. Paul's became a supporter of SchoolBOX in 2007. Since that time, SchoolBOX has helped thousands of Nicaraguan children go to school.

In 2007 parishioner Charles Gale, somewhat disillusioned with the high-tech industry he was working in, went hunting for a project he could feel good about. He stumbled upon a fellow with similar skills and background who had been sent by his company to set up some donated computers in Costa Rica, recognized a need, fell in love with the people, and started a non-profit group to train children and adults to use computers in remote communities. Charles started working with that program, and then after a bit of planning, and using a few years supply of vacation, he and his wife Dianne headed off to spend 8 weeks helping out in Cahuita, Costa Rica in 2008. During this amazing adventure they learned a lot about the needs of the community. When they returned they started "Friends of the Cahuita Technology Centre" to collect, repair, refurbish and store computers and related equipment, which they shipped to Costa Rica for distribution in remote communities. They are currently working on preparing their third shipment of refurbished computers which will bring them up to a total of 1200 computers shipped. They have been one of St. Paul's Mission Partners since 2011.

In the spring of 2007 St. Paul's embarked upon a new adventure to be stewards of God's creation. Recognizing the need to look after the world around us, we wanted some way to extend our reach to the wider community. Through the County of Lanark's Adopt-A-Roadway programme, we adopted a two-kilometre stretch of County Road 29 (old highway 15) from Scott Street to Rae Road, which we clean up twice a year. For our first clean up, our crew of eight volunteers spent three hours cleaning up the roadside. After two years, (or four clean ups), the county erected a sign which declares to our neighbours that St. Paul's has adopted the road. Our commitment to this ministry will continue as long as we are able to come up with volunteers and we feel that our efforts are well spent.

During March Break 2010, 12 youths from St. Paul's along with their four chaperones set off on an adventure to Leon, Nicaragua. The team of 12 teenagers: Alison Aldred, Matthew and Andy Bassett, Juan and Emily Clapperton, Stuart Douglas, Rachael Gardiner, Claire Hunter, Derek and Gillian Mavis, Nathan Rosevear, and Cassie Smith; 2 young adult chaperones Moira Davis and Jeff Semple, and 2 older adult chaperones Bob Bassett and Sara Cardona worked very hard for nine months raising money and enlisting the support of local organizations.

Organized through our mission partner SchoolBox, the team helped construct two new classrooms for Ruben Dario School while interacting with the local children. While there our youth were inspired by the generosity, joy, and resiliency of the Nicaraguan people. After their return the team made presentations at a number of different schools, churches and other venues. They also helped support a team from Carp who travelled to Nicaragua with SchoolBox in March 2011.

Our Worship

In 1971 the “red hymn book” was introduced to replace the blue “Common Praise” hymn books which had been in use since early in the last century. The red hymn book continued in use until it was in turn replaced with the current version of the hymn book in 2011.

The next key change to the way worship was conducted at St Paul’s was the introduction of the Book of Alternative Services. The “BAS” (AKA “the green book”) was the first new prayer book approved for use in Anglican Churches in Canada since the 1962 revision of the Book of Common Prayer. In 1984 St. Paul’s Parish Council voted to spend \$8.95 for one Book of Alternative Services for “evaluation and further discussion”. Finally, after much discussion and consultation, the “New Canadian rite for Holy Communion” from the BAS was used on a trial basis over four Sundays in the summer of 1985. The response to this trial was “mostly” favourable, and in the fall of 1986 the Book of Alternative Services was fully integrated into St. Paul’s worship.

Changes to our worship continued in 1988. One change introduced that year was the responsorial singing of the psalms. Another change involved having the prayers of the people prepared and lead by members of the congregation. Initially six members of the 10 a.m. service volunteered to undertake this ministry two Sundays a month.

For most of the period covered by this history of St. Paul’s, worship consisted of two types of services: a spoken word service and a choral service. In August 1995, under the leadership of Rev. Robert Davis who guided us through an extensive consultation process, Parish Council decided to change the format of Sunday worship at St. Paul’s on a trial basis. Beginning in September 1995, there would be three styles of worship services offered each Sunday: an 8:00 a.m. *Book of Common Prayer* Communion Service, a 9:15 a.m. BAS-based choral service, and a new 11:00 a.m. contemporary worship service. This pattern of worship continues to this day.

In 2011, the concept of organ donation took a different turn. That year, thanks to the generosity of some living parishioners, St. Paul’s replaced its old Rogers organ with a new digital organ from Phoenix Organs. The new organ came programmed with different voices and was complimented with the installation of a speaker system specifically designed for St. Paul’s church.

In 2012 Parish Council approved a plan to redesign St. Paul’s worship space. A platform with removable kneeling rails was added to the front of the chancel. A new communion table, which would be brought closer to the congregation, either at the front of the old chancel or on the new platform as the occasion dictated, was built by Alex Hughes. The new platform not only

facilitated the moving of the communion table closer to the congregation, but could also serve as a stage for musical and dramatic performances.

Memorable Events

Great St. Paul's Oil Spill. The year 1974 was infamous for the "Great St. Paul's Oil Spill". In mid-July the Rectory's heating oil managed to escape – somehow seeping from the exterior tank into the ground and emerging from under one of the trees behind the Rectory. The oil then ran down the hill and entered the Mississippi River. Once the seepage was detected, our quick-thinking Wardens created a sandbag dyke to contain the spill while attempting to contact the proper authorities. The next few days saw our Wardens (in consultation with the Mississippi River Conservation Authority) trying to make the dyke as leak-proof as possible whilst also trying to arrange for: a donation of logs to make a floating boom, the donation of a pump to remove the oil from the ever-deepening dyke reservoir and some empty oil drums to pump the oil into. Once the boom was put into place it held back 99.9% of the oil which managed to leak through the dyke. A pump was found but the pumping was somewhat delayed after a tense misadventure in the priming, but once operational, it worked so well that a drum was filled in 10 minutes. This brought immediately to mind the shortage of empty drums! Finally, the level of the oil in the dyke was reduced to about one-half inch deep after a day of work (which was interrupted by a violent thunder storm). An inspection the next day confirmed that no oil was escaping the log boom. Pumping resumed once more oil drums were obtained, however, the drums were filled so full that while being driven in the back of a truck to the oil dump, some oil sloshed out, seeped between the floor boards of the truck bed and onto the truck's hot exhaust pipe. The ensuing smoke convinced anyone who saw it that the truck was on fire! For subsequent trips there was more head room left on the oil drums and one of the passengers in the truck carried a fire extinguisher. Within a few days more the final clean-up was completed and what could have been an ecological disaster was averted. Although the Wardens of the day, Ed Winslow-Spragge and James Blair obviously deserve our enduring gratitude for the many days of care and attention they paid to this problem, they would be the first to thank the many volunteers and the crew sent by the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority for their help. As fate would have it, our Rector, George Bickley, was away on vacation at the time.

Heritage Properties Designation. In 1987 Parish Council made a formal application to the Town of Almonte to have our three church buildings designated as heritage properties.

125th anniversary. In 1988, St. Paul's celebrated its. Among the celebrations were a Parish Dance, a Sunday School Picnic at the Mill of Kintail, a large Parish Fair and the production of an Anniversary Video. The Corporation of the Town of Almonte presented the church with a commemorative plaque bearing the Town crest and a congratulatory message. The creation of new altar rail cushions was undertaken as a longer term project. The cushions were finished and dedicated in 1990.

Lenten Lunches. In 1994 the first "Lenten Lunch" was held. Parish Council declared it a rousing success for both raising \$400 and for doubling the number of people who attended the Wednesday morning Lenten Eucharist services.

Pentecost Power. The feast of Pentecost generated quite a bit of excitement in 1998. The Praise Team was leading the congregation in the opening praise song “Show Your Power” at the 11:00 a.m. service. As the congregation sang the chorus: “Show your power, oh Lord” lightning struck the church. The strike zapped some light switches, 2 amplifiers, a computer modem, a telephone and our security system. All together the damage amounted to \$1,800. At Rev. Davis’ urging, the song “Show Your Power” was not played again for quite a few years.

Time to Rock 3:16. In June 2004, Time to Rock 3:16 (our first contemporary Youth Band comprising of: Sascha Wionzek, Bob Gale, Nicholas Wionzek, Tyler Williams, Anna Swimmings, Jordan Fallak, Dan Gale, Devin Fallak, Moira Davis, Michele Krech and Jeff Semple) recorded a CD at Valley Recording Studio in Perth. The Youth Band had formed a few years before and by 2004 had been leading worship at the 11 a.m. service on a regular basis as well as ministering to other local youth groups with their music. The recording of the CD was a “last hurrah” as many members of the group prepared to head off to post-secondary education. That was not the end of our Youth Band however, as two other iterations of the Youth Band continued in their footsteps, playing at special events and leading worship until 2011.

Harvest Supper. In 2005 the co-coordinators of St. Paul’s Harvest Supper (Sarah Robertson and Collin Gibson) decided to move the supper from St. Paul’s church hall to the larger Civitan Hall. The event was promoted in the community and the turn-out exceeded all expectations: over 700 people braved a cold, windy and rainy evening to enjoy a hot turkey dinner. The attendance record for that Harvest Supper has yet to be surpassed.

There are a great many people whose names are not memorialized in this brief article, yet who have been a vital part of our Parish’s history. The maintenance of both our church and its ministries testifies to the selfless generosity of those who were able and willing to give money and materials whenever need arose; as well as the hard work and skill of those people able and willing to give of their labour. Of these people St. Paul’s will always have a need and to these people we will always be indebted. But it also true that our Parish is no less built upon the countless “widow’s mites” and the many hours of prayer which have been and will be the contribution of many of the people who have looked to this Church as their spiritual home. St. Paul’s church has, for all of its 150 years, been blessed with people from all walks of life who have made God’s Love a tactile reality through the giving of smiles, handshakes, hugs, songs, stories, tears and/or laughter; people who are still known best by that singular Christian title: “friend”.

Our one-hundred and fifty years of active worship and community service visibly demonstrate that God has the means to take each of us, and what we have to offer, and like raw fibers, to weave us into the rich, colourful and sometimes chaotic tapestry we refer to as “St. Paul’s Church”. The intricate beauty of this tapestry can never be reproduced within the confines of a written history, so we are fortunate that it is evident in the daily life of this Parish. Each and every day we try our best to follow God’s call for us to be bound together by love in the service of our community, knowing that all the while the Heavenly Weaver works yet, and the tapestry’s final design continues to be revealed.