

# Stories from St. Paul's

## Where “Church is alive & active in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”

I am a newer member of St. Paul's since July of 2021. The story I would like to share about my experience as a member of St. Paul's is a recent one. I was in the hospital for two months from August through October of 2021 and was referred to an assisted living facility where I stayed for about four months. I let Deacon Pat know that my name was nearing the top of the Public Housing list in February of this year. She was like, “Todd, make a list of everything you need to get started in your new apartment and I will put a call out to the church.”

On March 10th, Deacon Pat along with other members of St. Paul's were waiting in the parking lot as I was finishing up signing my lease. They helped haul furniture and all the donated apartment items up to my apartment. They put together my bed and everything. A couple members stayed and helped organize everything so that all I had to do that evening was relax in my new space. I remember thanking God for the generosity of the members of St. Paul's before retiring to a good night's sleep.

This generous act by the members of St. Paul's is a great reminder to me that the Church is alive and active in the 21st century. I am proud to be a member of St. Paul's, whose members have set an example for me to follow in the years to come.

Todd A. Christlieb

## Saints lending support during a time of loss

Marilyn Halverson death at home with family and Essentia Hospice: presence, help, abundance. But in the “it happened as well as it did,” there is a black void or pall on all.

Thanks to Saints of St Paul: Heidi choir, Rev. Barbara Elliott, Tom Hamilton, Tim Metcalf, Altar Guild, ushers... more Saints in COVID-masked shadows of our church.

Looking back at the video, I am still amazed to have had the St. Paul's family apply the rubrics and culture of the Episcopal Church of Minnesota.

Thankful,  
Dr. Joel TM Bamford

## Creating community by asking and being asked

I first attended services at St. Paul's in the fall of 1997, after moving to Duluth to start a new job. I had just finished grad school and gone through a divorce, ending a painful custody dispute that meant only one of my children moved with me. I had virtually no network of friends or family in town, and had to begin building that for both of us. The clergy and people in the pews were friendly and welcoming enough, but one elderly woman who sat near where I was staking out "my spot" made a point of initiating conversation over several months, and I shared a little of our story about the recent move. One Sunday after the final blessing, she turned to me again to chat, and this time offered a business card with her name and a flowery border, with the title "Substitute Grandma" under her name. She said, "I've noticed you and your son coming here lately, and just wondered if maybe you might need somebody to fill in as "Grandma" once in a while. I'd be happy to do that!" That lovely lady was Evelyn Hunt...in whose memory the altar flowers are still given once a year. I always remember her unsolicited and perceptive act of kindness!

Again, early in my time here at St. Paul's, even though I attended services regularly and began pledging right away, I was a little hesitant about volunteering or becoming active in any of the committees. Another of St. Paul's sweet saints, Dee Hedman, approached me and *invited* me to be a part of the altar flower delivery team. She was gently persuasive and frankly, I appreciated that someone directly asked me to help do something, however small and insignificant. I quickly found out how much this simple ministry is appreciated by the recipients – whether in celebration of some joyful occasion, or offering comfort and support during a hardship or a loss. After a few cycles on the schedule, Dee then asked me if I would take over *scheduling* altar flower delivery. Who could say no to Dee, especially after she pressed a manila envelope into my hands, stuffed full of previous quarterly schedules, contacts, and her handwritten notes about who could serve when? I did that scheduling for probably close to 15 years, until someone else asked me to consider serving in another, more demanding capacity...

It has been my experience, both on the "asking" and "being asked" side, that people are usually happy, even honored, to be personally invited to be a part of the community in specific ways. Dee was the first person to invite me into serving at St. Paul's, and I am grateful for that.

Nancy Schuldt

## An active engaged community ready for renewal

When my husband and I retired to Duluth in September 2013, one of the first things we did was look for an Episcopal church. We had been active at our previous church, Trinity Cathedral in Little Rock (choir members, lector, chalice bearer), and looked forward to joining another Episcopal congregation. As it happens, St. Paul's is only a few miles away from our house, so proximity alone made it an obvious choice. But we soon found a welcome, nurturing place and discovered so much else that appealed to us,

including a large and vibrant congregation, an emphasis on outreach, a mature music program, enrichment and Bible Study classes, communal meals, celebrations of all kinds, and a commitment to environmental stewardship, social justice, inclusivity, and ecumenism.

There was so much going on it's hard to pick out specific events because everything knit together to form the Spirit of St. Paul's. But if I had to pick one thing, it might be the photo taken at the service on St. Paul's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary with several hundred church members of all ages smiling at the camera. What a viewer cannot know is that they include couples, young families, teenagers, grandparents, single and widowed folk, those who identify as LGBTQ, and so on.

Despite staff leave-takings and retirements in 2020—not to mention the challenges posed by the pandemic—St. Paul's has held together, first with online services and other offerings and now with in-person services and, bit by bit, other activities. The Vestry has put in countless hours and individuals have stepped up during this transition phase. When the new rector arrives, he or she will find an active, engaged community ready for renewal. How apt that this rector may come on board about the same time that we are ready to resume life after the worst of COVID has passed!

Zabelle (and Bob) Stodola

## **Baptismal memories across the generations**

I love the joy of baptisms at St. Paul's!

Our daughters (born 1984 and 1986) were baptized at St. Paul's, as were our two granddaughters (born 2018 and 2020). I loved hearing and singing "All Things Bright and Beautiful" and "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God" for those occasions.

Our family has a four-generation history at St. Paul's. In 1986 (or '87?!) two cousins were baptized together. Two second cousins in the family were baptized in 2019....they were held TOGETHER in both arms of the priest as he carried them down the aisle of the church, introducing them to the congregation. THAT is a picture we treasure!

The youngest in the family was baptized in our backyard, 2020, during COVID. We read words, had godparents on Zoom, sang to a recording...all with parents, grandparents and great-grandparents of the newly baptized sitting on our deck in lawn chairs. All such good memories.

Brenda Sederberg

## My people – An extension of my family

The very first time I came to St. Paul's, I was searching for the right faith community for me and my two daughters (ages 5 and 3 at the time). As we walked in, Sue VanOss approached us. Sue was a familiar face to me though I didn't know her well and probably didn't even know her name, but our children were on the same softball team. Sue welcomed us and focused on the kids, letting them know they should join the Children's Church when it was announced during the service.

The girls were escorted out to Children's Church and I was left alone to experience the service. Ironically as the Rector entered the sanctuary, I realized he was the coach of the girls' softball team. It was encouraging to me that he was so involved in the community and in his child's life. I found the service very comforting, the sermon thought provoking and, not having grown up going to church, I was very relieved to be able to follow along with a printed program. The service did seem like it might be a bit too formal for my liking, so I still wasn't sure it was the right fit for me. However, when my girls returned from Children's Church the first thing Emily did was to ask me if we could come back to this church again. She enjoyed the Children's Church so much, she couldn't wait to come back.

We were invited to join the coffee hour and in doing so, Sue made a point of introducing me to a couple of other moms. As it turns out one of them was Beth Fait, who is now my best friend. I am so grateful for St. Paul's incredibly welcoming spirit. People made sure on our first visit that we were welcomed and connected. I have felt the same ever since. These are "my people" - an extension of my family.

Leslie Brunfelt

## Incarnate Gospel at the center of worship

St. Paul's is a very beautiful church in the classic Anglican Gothic style. The chancel is especially beautiful, having floors of hand-made tiles, embroidered cushions in the choir stalls, oak wainscoting behind the stalls, and a raised lectern and pulpit, each carved of oak.

My favorite place is reading from the lectern during the Christmas Eve service. After I read the first two lessons, the gospel is read from the center aisle by the rector while the parishioners hold lighted candles and the electric lights are shut off. It is a magical moment. I look out over the congregation gathered in candlelight and feel the arches of the nave sheltering everyone. While the scene is much more opulent than a stable in Bethlehem, it seems like the Incarnation is taking place once again, as it does every year.

John Pastor

# A place of spiritual hospitality and depth

St. Paul's is a place where thinking, saying, and doing reinforce one another as facets of the same gem of embodied spirituality. The worship is reverent, yet not affected. Worship reflects "The Way of Love" as it is embodied in the life of the community. The best of catholic and evangelical spirituality co-exist and reinforce each other in this community.

When I say "community," it is because there is a sense of true caring and connection during Coffee Hour after service. Established elders reach out to and engage with young adults who are searching for a spiritual home. Children are embraced by caring adults who are "family" and members of God's larger household – even though they are not part of the children's nuclear families. Wednesday church nights are abuzz with preparation and sharing of a nutritious meal, whetting one's appetite for a feast of multi-generational spiritual sustenance.

Celebratory gatherings punctuate the passing of seasons in northern Minnesota: a Valentine's dinner that blends agape love with romantic love, Shrove Tuesday pancakes before the youth put on a talent show, summer worship on the shores of our Inland Sea (Lake Superior), Rally Day as leaves begin to turning gold and crimson, a Live Nativity that gathers winter wear to share with neighbors in need.

I first came to St. Paul's while representing a community nonprofit that was involved in a challenging turnaround process. I had reached a point of crisis with the organization and needed to leave, yet felt a tremendous sense of loss. Trying to find meaning in the experience and a path forward, I had a number of conversations with our previous pastor. There was one particularly poignant and healing moment of prayer that reinforced my sense of St. Paul's a place of spiritual hospitality and depth.

This is a parish that encourages and supports a priest who can be a pastoral presence, role model, and support for all of us to embody God's love through Jesus. St. Paul's strives to put God's love at the center of human experience – within our church community as well as within the larger regional community.

David Clanaugh

## To the new Rector: Broken glass and beauty

For the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Paul's, Barbara Elliott recorded an interview with Robert Sederberg, long-standing member of St. Paul's. When you have time, I encourage you to view/listen to this entire recording on DVD. You would learn about Robert's tenure as financial advisor and investor for St. Paul's and his experience with the church escrow and endowments, the Hartley and McGiffert Funds, and the Adams Fund (which has an interesting history!) You would also learn a bit about an amazing

man very appreciative of his many years at St. Paul's. In his words about our church: "A person takes it for granted. You get used to coming. You don't see the beauty of the church, the history, the traditions."

Below I've written out Robert's words from the interview, one story of a broken stained glass window. I think it's a story that is important and would be of interest to children (and adults as well!) as they grow up in, and come to know our church.

"One day we came to church and vandals had thrown rocks through the beautiful window alongside the baptismal font. It was a terrible mess. They hired an artist from NY to come in here and you don't know that that happened unless someone tells you. You can look at that window and you don't see what happened.

"There's about 20 places that were repaired, so don't be happy if you see only one or two! Keep looking! The light blue pieces are the repairs. There were many rocks that came through. After that they put a screen up, maybe in front of all the windows, because those windows are priceless."