

## St. Paul's, Holley

### **What are some significant moments in the history of your church that have shaped its identity today?**

Many decades ago, the Marsh family had a dream. Sisters Mary and Kate wanted St. Paul's Church and the Community Free Public Library to be sustained well into the future. A Trust was established for both the Church and the Library and has been wisely invested ever since. The result is continued financial security for both the Church and the Library.

A longtime parishioner had a dream that several years ago led to the addition of the sacristy, office, elevator and back stairway inside St. Paul's church. Newer parishioners cannot imagine the church without those additions!



### **What makes your church unique in the region and the diocese?**

St. Paul's is located at the farthest northeastern border of the Diocese, abutting the Diocese of Rochester. The church was built in 1849, and its parishioners worshiped through the heyday of the Erie Canal, which is nearby. The faith community has survived through the ups and downs of history.

For 17 years, ending just before the Covid Pandemic, St. Paul's hosted and was very involved in the Loaf & Ladle ecumenical ministry through which members from several churches in Holley joined together on Saturday afternoons to prepare and serve a luncheon for anyone in the community to enjoy. During those years, the parish kitchen was enlarged, updated and brought to commercial kitchen standards.

### **What are the most vibrant ministries or strengths of your parish today?**

The most vibrant strengths are the determination, dedication and faithfulness of this small congregation. We work well together, show up at worship on Sundays, and pitch in to take care of the church building, one another, and those in need.

St. Paul's supports the Holley Community Center's Emergency Food Pantry through several outreach collections each year. In addition, a talented parishioner crochets blankets, hats and scarves for children in the community who are served through the Community Center.

The parish also provides financial support for local organizations as well as for Episcopal Relief & Development.

### **Describe a moment in your community's life when you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit moving among you. What made that moment possible?**

Last year the family of a longtime parishioner who had moved away notified the Warden that the parishioner had passed away. The Celebration of Life was held at St. Paul's, including the retired priest who served for many years at St. Paul's coming into town to preside. The church was full to overflowing, the family brought in musicians, the service bulletin, and provided for the gathering afterward that took place in the parish hall. Having so many

people from the “old days” along with a full church brought a sense of “energy” to the current parishioners, who still talk about the significance of that experience.

Also last year, an adult parishioner asked to be baptized. The Sunday service that included his baptism was a high point for the parish and the family of the gentleman who was baptized. His excitement at being baptized was felt by everyone, and there’s no doubt that was the movement of the Holy Spirit.

About 20 years ago the “Clowns for Christ” (a “clown” group of Episcopalians) presented an ecumenical Good Friday service at St. Paul’s. The church was full and the service prayerfully commemorated the events of Good Friday in a way that was reverent and very different from the traditional service. The presence of the Holy Spirit was palpable as the worshipers experienced this very moving service.



### **How does your church engage with the local neighborhood, the civic life of your community, or diocesan and/or Episcopal Church-wide initiatives?**

The parish hall is used by the local AA group and is available for other groups.

On the fourth Sunday of each month, an evening service of Holy Eucharist is held, followed by an ecumenical Faith Sharing Group that gathers for 90 minutes of conversation on a current topic. Many of the Faith Sharing Group members arrive early and worship with the parish community. This ministry is in its seventh year and going strong!

Last year in the Village of Holley, a fire destroyed an apartment residence that caused four families to lose everything. St. Paul’s joined in an ecumenical outreach by providing a large donation to assist those families.

Shortly after, unrelated to the fire, an outside wall collapsed in the only restaurant in the Village, where everyone from the parish frequents. The owner and employees are like family to us. Our parish made a generous donation to the fund to help the employees who were suddenly unemployed.

### **What are the hopes and dreams of your congregation for its next chapter?**

St. Paul’s participates in the Genesee Regional Initiative, which has allowed for consistent clergy presence, as well as assistance with administrative tasks. The hope is that with today’s faithful group of parishioners, the dream of the Marsh sisters from long ago will continue to be realized as St. Paul’s makes a difference for the people living in the Village of Holley.