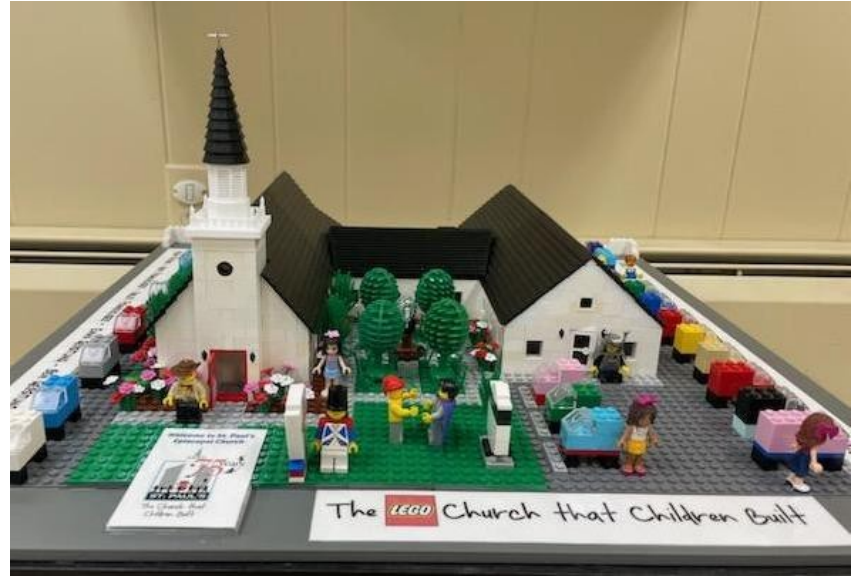


St. Paul's Harris Hill

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

St. Paul's is known as "the church that children built" because of its unique historical start. Forty-seven children and ten adults attended the first session of an ecumenical Sunday School at which "St. Andrew's Chapel on the Hill" – a mission of St. Paul's Cathedral at Harris Hill – began. From the beginning, the Sunday School was too large to be accommodated in one home, so the Sunday School children were distributed among four houses. In 1944, the church's name was changed to St. Paul's Chapel, Episcopal.



In 1986, the congregation selected Judith Burrows as the rector. Pastor Judy was the first woman ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York in 1978. While there were congregants who were initially unhappy with the break in tradition of male-led clergy, Judy quickly won them over and served for over 20 years.

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

Throughout the years, Sunday School attendance remained strong, and outreach activities at the congregation flourished. At various times, the church has supported Habitat for Humanity, Boy Scouts, Trinity Episcopal Food Pantry, Canaan House, Episcopal Community Services, United Thank Offering, Heifer International, Compass House, the Linus Project, Garden of Love, Sleep in Heavenly Peace, and involvement with Harris Hill Elementary School of Clarence and School 6 in Buffalo. In addition, support and care of refugees has always been a main focus of outreach ministry. We partner with our community in various endeavors and are always willing to open our doors to host other groups and provide space.

Since the early days of our growth in a non-traditional fashion to the election of a woman rector to our welcoming stance to all, including those traditionally excluded from organized religion, St. Paul's stands as a beacon of hope for the community. We continue to focus our mission on working with children, since they are the hope for our future. And we always celebrate everything with delicious food – from our semi-monthly dinners to our coffee hours after every service. .

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

Our current vibrant ministries involve our work with Sleep in Heavenly Peace of Buffalo, the Garden of Love at St. Paul's Cathedral, and our partnership with School 6 in Buffalo. Partnering with Sleep in Heavenly Peace, St. Paul's volunteers have helped to build over 150 beds over the past three years, providing the children who receive them a place to sleep that is not on the floor. We regularly collect clothing and toiletries for the Garden of Love ministry at St. Paul's Cathedral, and our high school class makes sandwiches for the

feeding ministry on a rotating basis. Over the past years, we have collected backpacks and school supplies for the back-to-school rush at School 6. In addition, we help to stock the personal care closet and provide warm winter wear. Each Epiphany since 2013, the congregation at St. Paul's has purchased a new book for every student at School 6 to take home. The concept was envisioned as a way to spread the light of knowledge and love just as Epiphany celebrates the spread of Christ.

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?

Recently, a long-time rector of the parish left St. Paul's for another call. As a congregation, we felt lost and drifted. While the daily tasks were completed, the health of the parish declined and we were forced to make difficult decisions about staffing and programming. In our typical way of thinking outside the box, we called a priest in charge who has been responsible for working directly with two very different congregations. Our new pastor has been able to start us on a path to growth, and we celebrate our presence with one another on a weekly basis. St. Paul's is once again working within the community because we were able to discern our path by relying heavily upon our lived history.

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

St. Paul's programs regularly engage with not just parishioners but with the community around us. Each year, we put on a basket raffle and chicken barbecue that draws hundreds of people. Many of our attendees come year after year to enjoy the fellowship and good baskets, but we regularly see visitors at worship after this event. We open our doors to those who do not have children but family members who have four legs for our annual pet blessing. In addition, last year we began offering a pet memorial service for those whose loved animals have crossed over the rainbow bridge.



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

Our youth programming, which we are hoping to grow, has always been open to our neighborhood. We have held events like a yearly Easter Egg Hunt to draw others into our doors and celebrate our faith, even if our participants do not attend our worship services. We hope for the continued growth of a younger generation who finds value in relationship with God and with one another, even if their visions for the future do not always agree. St. Paul's has relied heavily upon the generosity of those who have come before us to sustain us through the hard financial realities of church in the late 20th and 21st centuries, and we look to build our finances to secure the future of our congregation.