

The History of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Mishawaka, IN

On April 20, 1837, the Rev. Charles B. Stout and the Rev. H. S. M. Whitehead of Michigan held an organizational meeting and conducted services in a schoolhouse on the outskirts of the village of Mishawaka. Thus started St. Paul's, the oldest parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Indiana.



The Early Years

There is no record of the persons on the first vestry (i.e., church council), but by 1842 property was purchased at the corner of First and Spring Streets and conveyed to Hiram Doolittle, John H. Orr, J. E. Hollister, Samuel P. Knight and Norman Eddy, who were listed as "vestry" and "wardens" of St. Paul's Church. A year later, the church building which came to be known as the "Church on the Hill" was completed (see photo above).

This church contained the first belfry bell in Mishawaka, which was cast in 1836. (According to one source, the bell was later sold for junk when the church was sold in 1906.) The church's first organ was reportedly brought here from Saratoga Spring, N.Y., sometime before 1850. Later a Van Dinter pipe organ, manufactured in Mishawaka, was installed. This organ, which was operated by a hand air pump, was eventually moved to the new church, along with some of the stained glass windows.

Finally, the original structures were rounded out by a rectory, donated in 1872 by John T. Niles (the senior warden), and completed in 1876.

What little is known about the early years of the parish reveals that they were not without difficulties. In 1883, for example, members of the congregation were calling for the closure of the parish, and there had been no vestry election for five or six years. Despite this, Bishop Knickerbocker sent the Rev. Augustine Prentiss to serve St. Paul's (along with St. John's in Elkhart). No one even came to meet Rev. Prentiss when his train came to town; yet he nevertheless did have a full congregation at his first service on Sunday, March 9th, preaching on the "Duty of the Hour," text St. John XXI.e. Rev. Prentiss revitalized the congregation, and by the time of Bishop Knickerbocker's visit on Sunday, July 15th, sixteen persons had been prepared for confirmation. (Later that year, the bishop moved him to Indianapolis.)

In October of 1885, Rev. J. Gorton Miller, B.D., assumed charge of St. Paul's, Mishawaka and St. John's, Bristol. The working organizations of the parish

consisted of the Wardens and Vestry, a Ladies Society, and a Young Ladies Altar Guild. The Ladies organizations devoted themselves to the work of raising funds for current expenses, repairs, improvements, etc. In addition, Rev. Miller organized a Sunday School.

At the beginning of Lent 1886, the custom was established of having a celebration of the Holy Eucharist with every Sunday morning service (which was much less common in the 19th century Episcopal church than it is today). Also introduced into the Eucharistic celebration at that time were Eucharistic vestments (plain white linen), wafer bread, the mixed chalice (a little water with the wine), and the custom of the "Eastward position."

On January 1, 1899, the Rt. Rev. John Hazen White, D.D., Bishop of Indiana, sent the Rev. Hamilton D. B. MacNiel to take charge of St. Paul's. The parish was free from debt and independent. During the next year, extensive improvements were made in the building – electrical lights installed, the choir was enlarged, and a new altar, the gift of Mrs. J. A. Roper and Mrs. E. A. Jurnegan, was installed. The rectory was also supplied with a new furnace and bathroom. (During 1898 to 1902 some of the wardens and vestry of St. Paul's included H. H. Hosford, H. G. Eggleston, E. T. Reys, E. G. Richards, Jr., C. A. W. Ostrom, S. G. Todd, M.D., Harvey A. Foroots, Harvey A. Martling, G. G. Eggleston, F. J. Sytz, W. M. Dickinson, S. P. Wilson, W. E. Roe, G. S. Pomeroy and Ralph H. Jernegan.)



A New Place

The Rev. H. D. B. MacNiel resigned on February 12, 1902, and was succeeded that same year by Rev. John Addams Linn (nephew of Jane Addams of Chicago Hull House fame), who was rector when the decision was made to build a new church building. (Rev. Linn was later killed in action in France in 1918 - the first of the "fighting chaplains" to meet death in World War I. This is commemorated by [a plaque in the sanctuary of the church.](#))

In 1905, the "Church on the Hill" on Spring St. was sold, and plans were made to build a new church and rectory on Second Street (now Lincolnway East), near the new Cedar Street Bridge. (The old church was removed to S. Union Street and eventually remodeled into a residence).

The construction of the new church was largely due to the untiring efforts of Rev. Linn and the progressiveness of the congregation. The complete cost of the structures was \$15,000. Schneider & Austin, of South Bend, were the architects,

and the contract was awarded to Hess & Hiner of Mishawaka. The Rector laid the cornerstone on July 17, 1906.

The goal was to have the work sufficiently completed to hold the dedication on St. Paul's Day, which at times required up to 20 workers. The final services were held in the old church on January 20, 1907, and the first service in the new church was held on Easter Sunday of that year.

The Right Rev. John Hazen White, Bishop of Michigan City, dedicated the church. The windows on either side of the new church were brought from the old one, and remain a splendid example of 19th century stained glass. The windows over the entrance, commissioned for the new church by Mrs. E.G. Eberhart, depict the conversion of St. Paul on the road to Damascus. The window above the altar, given by Mrs. J.A. Roper, represents the Risen Lord. The present altar is a larger copy of the original first altar, and is adorned with the original symbols. Members of the Bishop Knickerbocker guild erected the rood screen, designed by Mr. Oscar Brubaker, in memory of Mrs. Nancy E. Sherman Jernegan in 1916. The figures, hand carved in Switzerland, were added in 1960 by Mr. Alfred S. Ostrom and Mrs. M.H. Goodman in memory of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Ostrom. The statue of St. Charles I of England, king and martyr, carved in Italy, was given in memory of Mr. Alfred S. Ostrom in 1964.



Interior of St. Paul's - early 20th century

In 1908, the Rev. Lewis C. Rogers started his twenty-five years as the rector. It was during that quarter century that the parish experienced a significant change when Bishop Gray named St. Paul's his Pro-Cathedral in 1925, an honor it would hold until 1951. The Bishop had somewhat grandiose plans to build a new cathedral on the corner of Cedar and Lincoln Way, but the great depression of 1930-1936 and subsequent World War defeated any chance of realizing this dream. The parish did acquire the corner lot as a result of these plans, however: J. Alvin Scott donated it with the provision that it revert to his heirs if not built upon in 25 years, though his heirs later released this provision.



The Rev. Lewis C. Rogers

The depression hit the church so hard that when Very Rev. Lewis C. Rogers retired in 1933, the bishop took over as rector and had his salary paid to the Diocese to make up St. Paul's arrearage (debt) in its diocesan assessment.



St. Paul's, early 20th century

St. Paul's started its recovery with the Very Rev. Archibald S. Drake. Dean Drake was a very dramatic personage who did much to start rebuilding the parish. His personal problems forced him to resign, but he had laid a solid foundation for the recovery of St. Paul's. (As an interesting side note: Rev. Drake went to the Holy Cross monastery in New York where he edited the St. Augustine's Prayer Book and became the national chaplain of Alcoholics Anonymous.)

A boy's choir was organized under the direction of Miss Winifred Wonderlick, the music teacher at Bingham School.



St. Paul's Boy's Choir, circa 1920

The Very Rev. Russell R. Ingersol and the Very Rev. Erland T. Groton continued the work of building the parish. During their tenure, the organ and the choir was moved from the front inside the rood screen (behind where the pulpit stands today), to its present location at the rear of the church, enlarging the sanctuary. The Van Dinter organ was replaced by one of the early electric organs, and a later model donated by Miss Neitzel subsequently replaced this. Also during this time, a boys' choir was organized under the direction of Miss Winifred Wonderlick, the music teacher at Bingham School, and the Ladies Service League was especially active in their ministries.



Very Rev. Russell Ingersol



Fr. Tracy, Bishop Gray, and Fr. Groten at the 150th anniversary celebration

Many of the members of the church served in the armed services during World War II. Two members were killed, Charles Butz, serving in the army and Elizabeth Richardson serving in the American Red Cross. A plaque in the church nave remembers their sacrifice.

St. Paul's continued as the Pro-Cathedral of the diocese until Bishop Mallett, Bishop Gray's successor, chose to move the bishop's residence to South Bend, and in 1950 removed the title Pro-Cathedral from St. Paul's. In 1957, he was formally enthroned in the new cathedral christened St. James in downtown South Bend, which remains the Cathedral of the Diocese of Northern Indiana today. In 1952, the Rev. Wilbur B. Dexter became rector of St. Paul's. His first years were marked with the continued growth of the parish. A new rectory was purchased on Edgewater Drive, across the river from the church. The old rectory next to the church became the Church School and a Chapel. The parish hall was refurbished and paneling added; a new nursery was added; a new roof was put on the church and connecting building.



Fr. Wilbur Dexter and Family

Fr. Dexter was one of the first to adopt the Holy Eucharist Rite Two of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer as the regular service of the parish. He encouraged women members of the vestry and girl acolytes, although he opposed women

priests, as did most of the clergy of the diocese as well as its bishop.

A serious illness followed by a broken hip kept Fr. Dexter from his duties at the church for over a year, and led to his retirement to Florida in 1984, after 32 years as rector. During the last years of his tenure, St. Paul's saw a sharp decline in attendance.

Tithe Rev. Bruce Mosier, a retired priest from Goshen, served came as a supply priest following Fr. Dexter's retirement. With the encouragement of his wife, Dorothy, the declining trend of the parish was turned around. The Rectory, which was run down, was sold and those funds used to start the renovation of the church buildings. Father Mosier gave new hope to the members of St. Paul's, and membership increased to the point where Bishop Sheridan was able to obtain the Rev. Paul Tracy to take over.

In the period following Father Tracy's retirement, the Vestry of St. Paul's wrote the following mission statement, *"The people of St. Paul's Church celebrate the Good News of Jesus Christ and serve as witness of God's love through worship, fellowship, and outreach, daily living the promises made in our baptism."* This statement was instrumental in the search process that led to the call of the Rev. David K. Ottsen to St. Paul's in 1996 as its Rector. He had been previously assigned to the Christ Church mission by the Bishop Frank Gray, grandson of Bishop Campbell Gray.

Working with the Vestry, Father Ottsen's hard work and leadership brought new vitality to the parish as it sought to live out this mission statement. A successful capital campaign allowed for many improvements to be made to the physical plant, including a new roof on the church and the parish house, a new heating and cooling system, a new sound system, new windows in the parish house, refinishing of the floors, restoration of the pews, renovation of the undercroft, and the remodeling of the kitchen. On the outside, all new landscaping was done to the front of the buildings and a beautiful memorial garden added to the river frontage in the back.

In addition to its physical improvements, St. Paul's has brought energy to its commitment to minister to the community at large. Programs such as the Food Pantry and Thanksgiving Baskets expand each year in their ability to provide food as goals for participation are set and exceeded. In August of 2007, St. Paul's was the site of a gun buy-back program in collaboration with area police departments, which resulted in over 250 guns being exchanged for gift certificates to area businesses (read about it [here](#)). As observed by the current Bishop of Northern Indiana, Edward Little, St. Paul's is unique in its ability to combine its concern for social justice with a zeal for evangelism. Attendance has more than doubled during Father Ottsen's tenure. The congregation now has a wide variety of people of all ages attending, from senior citizens to college students as well as a growing number of young children due to several recent births.

In October 2007, Fr. David announced that he had accepted a call to be the rector at St. Peter's in Brenham, Texas, and celebrated his farewell Eucharist on

Epiphany 2008. While the church searched for a new rector, Bishop Frank Gray, now retired, served as its interim priest at the church in which he was baptized when his grandfather was bishop of Northern Indiana.

On June 11, 2008, the Search Committee formally recommended a candidate to the Vestry, who on June 28 unanimously agreed to call Rev. Susan B. Haynes, formerly Assistant Rector and later priest-in-charge of the Cathedral of St. James in South Bend, to be the new priest. Mother Susan accepted the call and officially took up the Rectorship on September 1, 2008, and was installed by Bishop Little on October 10.

We anticipate in faith and with great excitement the new directions in which in which God will lead our parish under Mother Susan's leadership, as God has done for over 170 years.

Chronological List of St. Paul's Clergy

Name	Dates
Rev. Richard S. Andrews	1840-41
Rev. Foster Thayer	1842
Rev. Richard S. Andrews	1843-45
Rev. Benjamin Halstead	1846-52
Rev. Steven Douglass	1852-53
Rev. Martin Sorenson	1854-56
Rev. Elias Birdsell	1856-58
Rev. Colly A. Foster	1858-60
Rev. Joseph Adderly	1861-66
Rev. Richard Brass	1867-71
Rev. John Gierlow	1871-73
Rev. M.C. Stanley	1874-79
Rev. A.T. Perkins	1879-80
Rev. Sherwood Roosevelt	1881-83
Rev. Augustin Prentiss	1883-84
Rev. S.F. Myers	1885-86
Rev. J. Gordon Miller	1886-88
Rev. Frederick Thompson	1888-90
Rev. Augustin Prentiss	1890-92
Rev. Deloy Burke	1893-98
Rev. D.B. MacNeill	1899-1902
Rev. John Addams Linn	1902-08
Rev. Lewis C. Rogers	1908-33
Rev. James B. Coxe	1933-35
Rev. Dean Drake	1935
Rev. Russell R. Ingersoll	1938
Rev. Erland L. Groton	1941-51
Rev. Wilbur Dexter	1952-86
Rev. Paul Tracy	1986-95
Rev. David K. Ottsen	1996-2007
Rt. Rev. Francis (Frank) Gray	2008
Rev. Susan B. Haynes	2008-