

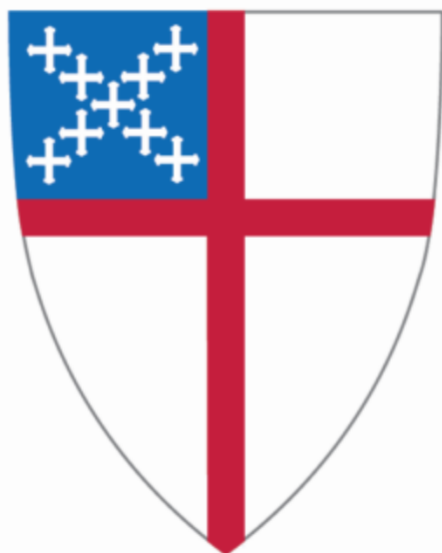
ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ST. JOSEPH, MICHIGAN

St. Paul's is a parish that experiences unity without uniformity. We seek the freedom to question and explore as we affirm that the world and human beings are good because they are God's creation. Our promise to members and visitors is that "all are welcome" regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and belief.

We are a church that is learning how to grow beyond traditional paradigms and assumptions of what it means to be the Church. We seek to be the hands and feet of Christ in our community and we seek a rector who shares that vision.

In this document we provide a profile of our parish and our community. We believe the Holy Spirit will provide a rector to join us in our walk with Jesus. We pray for your discernment and ours in this process, and we welcome you.



Welcome!

St. Paul's Episcopal Church is a loving and affirming faith community. We seek to serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves and respecting the dignity of every human being. We welcome all... no exceptions.



Worship

Worship at St. Paul's is central to who we are. We are a multi-generational parish and our style of worship flows easily between traditional and more contemporary Episcopal practices. We use Rite II, Enriching Our Worship, and Planning for Rites and Rituals. We utilize Eucharistic Prayers A, B, C, and D, and have begun using more gender-neutral language in our prayers.

Everyone is welcome in our worship and at the Eucharistic table.



Parish members, including several children, serve as Acolytes, Lectors, Greeters, Eucharistic Ministers, Officiants, and Eucharistic Visitors. All participants are licensed and have completed Safe Church and Dismantling Racism training.

Our parish enjoys music. We employ an organist for Sunday services and other special services. He works in collaboration with the Rector and parishioners to select music.

Throughout the year we hold special services to commemorate Holy Week, All Saint's Day, Christmas Eve, and an annual Gun Violence Reduction Candlelight Vigil. In 2023 we collaborated with two other Episcopal Churches and hosted our first "Sandy Mass" along the shores of Lake Michigan. The Garden of the Saints Chapter of the Daughters of the King assist in planning many of these special services.

Learning the Word of God and how to live through the example of Christ is the bedrock of what we strive for in our worship experience.





Social Justice & Outreach

Sharing our faith and living our commitment to “be the hands and feet of Christ” are important elements of what makes us Episcopalians. The pride flags and banners hanging outside the church communicate that everyone is welcome here. We have a long history of ministry and outreach in our community. Our outreach ministries reflect how the Holy Spirit is at work at St. Paul’s. The following ministries and social issues are among the most important to our parish at this time:



- Serving at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen each month
- Assisting with the food pantry at St. Augustine’s twice a month
- Living out a commitment to healing racism
- Supporting Interfaith Action of Southwest Michigan-- an ecumenical organization that supports migrant affairs, reduction of gun violence, and support of the LGBTQ+ population
- Partnering with our neighborhood elementary school to provide school supplies
- Collecting items for area harvesters and migrant workers
- Sponsoring a booth and participating in Benton Harbor’s Pride Fest
- Hosting an annual candlelight vigil for the reduction of gun violence
- Supplying clothes for hospital emergency room patients

“Being a Christian is not essentially about joining a church or being a nice person, but about following in the footsteps of Jesus, taking his teachings seriously, letting his Spirit take the lead in our lives, and in so doing helping to change the world from our nightmare into God’s dream.”

Most Rev. Michael Curry,
Crazy Christians: A Call to Follow Jesus





Christian Formation & Spiritual Growth

We are a parish with a strong appetite for learning. We value excellent preaching, and we believe that the education of adults and young people is an important part of the mission of the church. We are a highly educated parish and our educational opportunities are well-attended. Recent offerings include:

- Parish-wide reading of Canon Stephanie Spellers “The Church Cracked Open”
- Sacred Ground: A film- and reading-based dialogue series on race, grounded in faith
- Lenten soup suppers and study of “The Way of Love”



Hospitality & Parish Life

We are a parish that enjoys spending time together. We are a community, and we recognize our need for fellowship and mutual support.

We send Eucharistic Visitors weekly to those who are not able to join us on Sundays. We host a weekly coffee hour after worship, a weekly book discussion group, and a monthly luncheon for women from all of the neighboring Episcopal parishes. We host luncheons for baptisms, funerals, and other special services. And we share our annual Shrove Tuesday pancake supper and our Lenten soup suppers with our friends at St. Augustine of Canterbury.





Administration & Organization

The parish office is typically open Monday-Thursday from 9am-12pm, and the Interim Rector is available by appointment on Sunday-Wednesday.

The parish supports the following paid positions:

- Rector
- Administrative Assistant (12 hours/week)
- Organist



A newsletter is emailed to members and friends each week, and meeting notes, financial reports, and other information are posted in the church hallways.

The Vestry at St. Paul's consists of 7 elected members who each serve a 3-year term. The parish currently has one representative serving on the Standing Committee, one representative on the Diocesan Council, and one representative participating in the College of Congregational Development.





Stewardship

At St. Paul's, we think about stewardship as a way of life and recognize that stewardship is much more than just financial support. We host a formal stewardship campaign each Fall and invite parishioners to share personal stories about why they give and how it makes a difference in their spiritual life. Our vestry is conscientious regarding its role as stewards of the parish's financial resources, and operates from a mindset of abundance, not scarcity.



Vital Statistics

St. Paul's membership consists of approximately 55 families and 65 members. Of our members, 74% are age 65 or older, 71% are married or partnered, 68% are retired, 55% have been attending for over 20 years, and 24% have been attending for 1-5 years. Our average Sunday attendance is 34 people. Members of the parish value education and have diverse personal, professional, and educational experiences.

Our parish operates with an annual income of approximately \$110,000. Membership numbers and pledge income have grown following the pandemic. The parish has no debt, and it has an Endowment Fund for Outreach of approximately \$130,000.

Our lives are a gift From God.
We measure our lives in time, and the gift of time is truly a gift of our lives to our parish and our community.





Building & Grounds

Our parish is located in the city of St. Joseph, Michigan, not far from where the St. Joseph River meets Lake Michigan. The building is situated on land once inhabited by the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi Nation.

Our church building and grounds fill a full city block. The green space is abundant. Within a walled area adjacent to the church building is our memorial garden. The cremains of many of our saints who have gone before us are now part of this garden. Our memorial garden inspired the chapter name of the Order of the Daughters of the King: Garden of Saints Chapter.



Our building is more than 70 years old, and quite traditional, with a chapel on the North side of the sanctuary. The sanctuary, nave, and chapel are filled with Charles Connick stained-glass windows. These windows, along with the Stations of the Cross, wood carvings, and icons serve as visual reminders of the communion of saints and the rich history and traditions of the Episcopal Church.

The building is spacious, with multiple rooms, a large social hall on the lower level, and a well-equipped kitchen. An elevator makes both levels of the building accessible.

A building inspection was completed in 2023 in order to assess maintenance needs and consider how our building is equipped to meet the needs of our future ministries.





Parish History (1800-1995)

Episcopal worship began in Southwest Michigan in the early 1800s. In 1893, the Episcopal Society was started in St. Joseph. In 1897, property was obtained on Niles Avenue and St. Paul's Memorial Church was built. In 1930 The Rev. A. Freeman Traverse began 18 years of service. The church moved to its current location on Lane Avenue in 1938. Ten years later, in 1948, the church burned to the ground. On Easter Sunday 1950, services were held in the newly constructed church, where services continue to this day. The Rev. Stewart Ross was the assistant rector at the time of the fire and oversaw the construction of our current building. He served as rector for 18 years, from 1950 to 1968. During this time, members of St. Paul's who lived east of the St. Joseph River were directed by Bishop Bennison to join with members of St. Stephen's in Benton Harbor to form St. Augustine of Canterbury, a mission church. In 1968, The Rev. Robert Andrews was called and served at St. Paul's for 12 years until 1980.

Throughout the next several decades, we were served by multiple rectors who each brought unique gifts to our parish. Rev. William O'Leary, interim rector, focused on Bible study, which resulted in a new openness to renewal and increased outreach activity. It was at this time that our parish began its involvement with the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. Rev. Gerald Skillicorn (1981-1987) encouraged parish retreats and small group work and introduced our parish to Cursillo. This was a time of spiritual growth. Membership grew during this period. The next rector, Rev. Douglas Hadley (1988-1994) had a controversial leadership style and made the charismatic style of worship the norm for the parish. This led to deep divisions in parish membership and a decline in attendance. The interim, Rev. Kenneth Davis, helped heal some of these divisions.





Parish History (1995-Present)

Under the leadership of The Rev. DeLiza Spangler (1995-2005), St. Paul's experienced positive changes and rekindled our commitment to God and community. She was a gifted preacher and St. Paul's grew in its knowledge of the Trinity and of Christ's ministry. Parish membership nearly doubled and spiritual growth flourished. During this time, the parish was also served by two Assistant Rectors, the Rev. Jason Fout, followed by the Rev. Valori Shearer. In October 2005, Rev. Spangler answered the call to be the Dean and Rector of St. Paul's Cathedral in Buffalo, New York, and the Assistant Rector, Rev. Valori Shearer, while well-loved by the parish, left in accordance with church protocols.

The Rev. Pam Sten served the parish from 2006-2011. During this time, the parish fractured. Many parishioners moved to other Episcopal churches, while others simply left. In January of 2010, Bishop Gewart declared St. Paul's a "parish in distress" and disbanded the Vestry. Several interims served during this period. Many devoted parishioners stepped up into meaningful lay leadership positions and continued to do so over the next eight years, ensuring that St. Paul's remained a viable community. After considerable work by the parish, Bishop Wayne Houglund restored our vestry and our standing in the diocese.

In 2019, we entered into an agreement with two other parishes, St. Paul's in Dowagiac and Trinity in Niles, and formed the Southwest Michigan Covenant of Episcopal Parishes. The Rev. Diane Pike served as Rector of the Covenant. The Covenant was disbanded in 2021 due largely to ramifications of the pandemic, the closure of St. Paul's in Dowagiac, the geographical distance between the parishes, and the retirement of Rev. Pike.

Currently, Rev. Karen Joy Kelly is serving as our interim rector. Under her guidance, we are exploring what it means to be the Church of the future, and we are transforming the way we approach leadership and ministry.





Community Profile

St. Joseph, with its quaint downtown and a lovely setting on the shore of Lake Michigan, is a place of beauty. The town's residents prize their hometown and -- when summer rolls around -- so do thousands of visitors drawn to its golden beaches and spectacular sunsets. Located just 90 miles from Chicago, residents have easy access to the city's theatres, museums, sporting events, airports, and other attractions.

Berrien County, the heart of Michigan's "fruit belt," is filled with fields of fruit and vegetables. Farm stands abound and vineyards create award-winning wines. The region is known for producing peaches, pears, grapes, plums, apples, and tart cherries. Unique to our area is our weeklong Blossomtime Festival, starting with the Blessing of the Blossoms and culminating with the Blossomtime Parade, a tradition that began in 1906.

St. Joseph is a vibrant community year-round. It has an abundance of locally-owned small businesses, outstanding public schools, as well as a solid base of industrial and white-collar jobs that help keep the town on firm financial footing year-round. Whirlpool Corporation, a multi-national maker of household appliances, is headquartered locally. LECO Inc. provides analytical and scientific instruments worldwide. Corewell Health has a 240-bed hospital with Level 2 trauma care. The city of St. Joseph is the county seat for Berrien County's 150,000+ residents.

Michigan's Great Southwest





The *Episcopal* Church welcomes you!

Proclaiming by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.

Seeking and serving Christ in all persons.

Loving our neighbor as ourself.

Striving for justice and peace among all people.

Respecting the dignity of every human being.

