

# the Epistle



**Kristine Blaess**  
Rector

## A Physical and Spiritual Presence

Several decades ago, St. Paul's considered moving to the suburbs. In fact, the property was already

purchased and drawings for the new building were being drafted. But as iterations of the drawings came to the congregation, a shared consensus grew—"We are not a suburban church. God is calling us to take root as a

downtown church." The property was sold and the properties on our corner of Main Street and Academy Street were acquired to make way for the nursery, nave, and parish hall that we enjoy today.

As our campus took root physically downtown, expanding our buildings to meet the needs of our growing congregation, our congregation took root spiritually downtown as well. Murfreesboro has a diverse down-

town, with its mix of the historic square with its businesses, civic, and cultural events, its several and ecumenically-minded sister Churches, its proximity to MTSU, and its economic and racial diversity. St. Paul's has been blessed by members who are leaders in all these aspects of community life. They have actively and generously served our downtown and have also been instrumental in building St. Paul's connections with our downtown. You'll enjoy the stories our parishioners and a guest or two share in this Epistle.

St. Paul's is in another moment of discernment and growth as we purchased the property upon which Jr's Foodland stands. This is the first time we have purchased a property, not primarily for our own immediate needs, but to serve the needs of our downtown community. This mission-driven purchase allows us to support a family-run grocery that employs downtown residents and provides

*Continued on page 2 ►*



**Michael Whitnah**  
Associate Rector

## Roots

Shortly after we moved in, Joanna and I decided that the old, worn out, mostly dead, crepe myrtle just off our front porch needed to go. It looked terrible, and we wanted to use the space for something else. So we dug around it

a little bit, chopped at the roots some, and gave it a pull. Nothing happened. We dug and chopped some more. Still nothing. We had declared war, but entirely underestimated our adversary . . . who I swear was laughing at us.

Crepe myrtle roots grow deep. And strong. They hold onto the thick clay for all they are worth. In hottest parts of the Tennessee summer, when every other flowering plant is parched, these roots allow this crepe myrtle to bloom. They

are the source of life, even when all the other parts of it are chopped down. Thanks to Tom Collins and his truck, we finally did get this one out. But at best, it's only a draw, because even a year later, the roots still have enough life to keep sending up shoots.

This adventure has brought entirely new meaning to the word root or rooted. "I'm putting down roots," we say, or "The roots run deep." Perhaps even, "We're rooted in Jesus!" But what does it mean to put down roots like a crepe myrtle?

When we talk about St. Paul's being a downtown church, I think this is what we mean. Throughout the generations, we have consistently discerned God's call to be rooted in this particular place, in downtown Murfreesboro. Because of this ongoing faithfulness, our roots are strong, and getting stronger. This strength means that our ministries

*Continued on page 2 ►*

**Kristine**<sup>†</sup> *Continued from page 1*

groceries for those who may otherwise have difficulty bringing nutritious food into their homes. In time, God will show us other ways that this property will bless our downtown neighbors and us. God’s call upon us at St. Paul’s is to continue taking root as a downtown church, learning even more how to gather people and help make Jesus real to them. We are called to be part of God’s work of growing His kingdom in

downtown Murfreesboro. It is thrilling to imagine how God will build upon the faithful ministry that our St. Paul’s members have so joyfully undertaken throughout the decades, and how we’ll continue to grow in sharing Christ in the coming decades.

Peace,

The Rev. Dr. Kristine Blaess  
Rector

.....  
**Michael**<sup>†</sup> *Continued from page 1*

have bloomed even amidst the fiery heat of the pandemic. And what these strong roots also mean is that we are primed for new growth. We’re not starting from scratch! We have new opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ and gather together to celebrate life and be formed as His disciples. All because of the generational faithfulness of this Church and the roots we have put down.

streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; everything they do shall prosper.” Their roots run deep. As St. Paul’s continues to delight in God, through our worship, fellowship, study and prayer, I think we will find that our roots just keep getting stronger. Not just, or even primarily, for our own sake, but for the sake of the community around us.

The Rev. Michael Whitnah  
Associate Rector

Psalms 1 talks about those who delight in God. “They are like trees planted by

The mission of St. Paul’s is to **worship** God, to **bring** all into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ, and to **equip** all for ministry.

“Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”

ROMANS 12:13

## New Beginnings



**Anna Stewart**  
Senior Warden

Your Vestry has recently completed the purchase of 323 E. Main St., the Jr’s Foodland property adjacent to our church campus. We want to thank our church family for engaging with us regarding this decision, undertaken at first in regard to property growth, yet completed with a focus on the advancement of our parish’s heart and mission. The process of town hall meetings, individual and collective communications, discernment forums, and prayer at the altar resulted in a clear focus for the future

of St. Paul’s: to grow God’s kingdom in downtown Murfreesboro.

The potential to purchase 323 E. Main St. was a once-in-a-lifetime and wholly unexpected opportunity. Whereas previous property purchases were made for the benefit of our congregation alone, the decision to purchase this property was made in order to serve our downtown community, where our church is truly rooted. Our Vestry listened to you, sought God’s will, and made a mission-driven decision to purchase. For the foreseeable future, that mission is simple: to maintain a grocery store for our community.

*Continued on page 3* ►

Because the H.G. Hill Realty Company honored communication conducted years ago with Bishop Herlong and Father Gene Wise, we were able to enter into contract with a purchase price well within the range of local comparable commercial properties. While the financial details were important considerations for your Vestry during the discernment process, we also prayed to hear God's will for this property and the future of St. Paul's. We have learned through this process that we are a congregation seeking to make Jesus real to our community, to evangelize, to gather, and to care for our brothers and sisters around us. So the way we think and talk about this property, this purchase, whether within our parish or within the larger community, is important. To our church, this property is not simply an acquisition or a space for future parking. This is a family business which employs our town's residents and provides our neighbors with



access to fresh foods. This is a mission-focused expansion of St. Paul's impact in our community. With the decision to purchase 323 E. Main St., we trust that God is guiding us, as we seek to live our mission to grow God's kingdom in downtown Murfreesboro.

Anna Stewart, Senior Warden



Sarah Callender

Main Street Murfreesboro's mission is to maintain, enhance, and promote the downtown as the heart of our community. The historic Murfreesboro downtown is both the heart of the community and the center for government, arts, churches, and financial institutions. We depend on our neighbors to help us fulfill our mission, and in this partnership, their own mission. St. Paul's presence and involvement is something we rely on.

Every downtown has its challenges. Murfreesboro is no different, particularly as we grapple with meeting the needs of our homeless population. St. Paul's provides shelter to women on freezing nights in partnership with Murfreesboro Rescue Mission and the First Baptist Church, hosting Coldest Nights when the temperatures fall below 32 degrees. To foster awareness of the needs of our homeless, St. Paul's sponsored Take Root, a community-wide luncheon in 2020 to benefit The Journey Home's supportive housing program for the homeless in Murfreesboro.

## A Spiritual Anchor

The musical talent at St. Paul's is always ready to participate in community programs such as the annual Christmas Tree Lighting on the Square. But in 2020, St. Paul's participation in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic was especially appreciated. Our virtual presentation of the community Christmas Tree Lighting was made more personal by their music and singing. On a more somber note, the sound of St. Paul's church bells ringing 400 times on January 19, 2021, reverberated downtown. While it commemorated for us the devastating loss of life from COVID-19, it also reminded us of the spiritual anchors in our community which our downtown churches provide.

St. Paul's has a long history of involvement with Murfreesboro Downtown and Main Street. The second Main Street Executive Director was St. Paul's parishioner Janelee Wise, followed by Kathleen Herzog. Main Street and Murfreesboro Downtown have come to rely on volunteers and support from St. Paul's. The current Saturday Market Manager is Linda Weeks, another St. Paul's member (and my mother).



St. Paul's involvement with The Journey Home and Habitat for Humanity are visible outreaches to our immediate community and the people of Murfreesboro. Downtown is an important community space for any city. It is a vibrant, living space where members of all segments of the community can come together for music events, parades, speeches, and other activities. Main Street thanks St. Paul's for its continued investment and involvement in our downtown.

Sarah Callender  
Executive Director  
Main Street Murfreesboro/Rutherford, Inc.



## Being a Downtown Church

Many parishioners have heard the story of St. Paul's having moved from its original site on North Spring Street in 1929. Imagine watching the church—now St. Andrew's Chapel—being moved on rollers dragged by mules, to its East Main Street location! Author Charles Byron Arnette describes this in his book, *Those East Main Street People and Their Houses*. "... the church was moved on metal pipe and wood rollers to a lot it had bought from the First Baptist Church that would now be next to Jr's Foodland. This author recalls



St. Paul's on Spring St.

this move of the building with wonder and amazement that such a tall narrow building could be moved without tilting."<sup>1</sup>

Arnette describes St. Paul's downtown footprint over the years, "With the purchase of Mr. C. P. Blankenship's property in circa 2000 and the demolition of both this house and the Herman (Charles) Todd Furniture Store, the ministry of this ever-growing congregation was now ready to leap forward in expansion to include almost one third of the block between East Main and College Streets. In its well-planned acquisition program lasting several years, the leadership had already purchased Dr. J. Madison Dill's and Dr. Kenneth Ezell's properties. The people had a will to build, and the beholder or passerby can see the culmination of their efforts. With the sheathing of Sewanee brown-stone on the buildings it looks as if the entire church edifice had been built simultaneously."<sup>2</sup>

Arnette concludes, "So after 97 years of revered service (at the book's 2006 publication date), this rugged, durable, and adaptable house of worship is still on East Main Street accomplishing the work for which it was intended."<sup>3</sup>



Candlelight Open House

And so we continue today, recommitting to our role as a downtown church and growing God's kingdom.

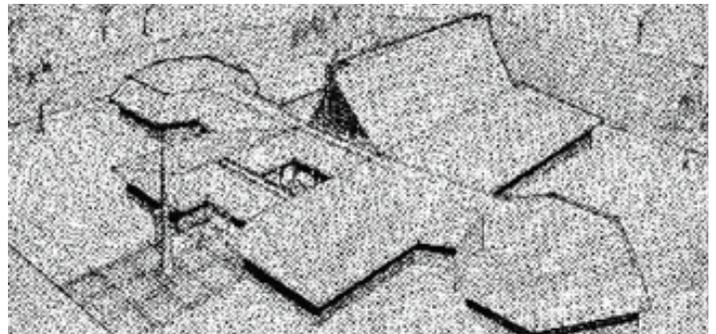
Several of our parishioners have generously shared their memories and reflections on our church's downtown presence and how we came to be where we are today.



Ken Hadley

**Ken Hadley** served on the Vestry from 1967-69, after arriving at St. Paul's in 1964. Ken recalls the civil manner in which the potential move to Clark Boulevard evolved in the congregation. While there were differing opinions—one being that we all love our church and the other being,

*yes, but* we are boxed in and can't grow—he remembers that the church culture was quite respectful. In the end, an architect's drawing ended up being the deciding factor. It was poorly received—too modern for the congregation's taste—and was rejected; thus the church stayed at its current location. Ken also recalls that Jr's Foodland was closed on Sundays, leaving its parking lot available for churchgoers.



Clark St. Church rendering



John and Martha Worley

**John Worley** reflects that downtown was the chosen home of St. Paul's from the beginning. "We always wanted to expand, build a Sunday school, nursery, and parking, but how? We purchased the Clark Boulevard property in 1967, but few of us wanted to leave downtown. We still pushed outward, sharing Hill's (grocery) parking lot when they were closed on Sunday. We

*Continued on page 5* ►

abandoned the Clark property to purchase two houses behind us on College Street (now our parking lot), then the Todd furniture store for the church school and meeting hall, and we remodeled the old narthex, adding transepts and a new(ish) organ, and expanded the old parish hall. While we caught up on payments, other opportunities opened along the way—too many to count. The new properties on Academy Street were the start of a different era for us, but it naturally arose from what went before.”



**Nave Construction 2002**



**Nave Construction 2002**

**Martha Worley** adds, “At every step along our history, we have always had the right people and Rector for that time. I served more recently on the vestry and as senior warden, signing notes for scary amounts and watching everything unfold among us. We changed the skyline with energy as the new buildings were planned and the best talent stepped up to consult and contribute construction, acoustics, materials and coordination of all the moving parts, and we were thrilled with the outcome of structure, outreach, worship and music, and stewardship. We are glad to remain here where we are planted.”



**Maria Knox**

**Maria Knox** has lived in the downtown area most of her life and witnessed our growing campus. She and Kerry came to St. Paul’s in 2007-8 due to our burgeoning youth program which their children enjoyed for years. And now

she helps lead the Catechesis program that is, again, bursting at the seams. The Knoxes still live nearby and are so happy to be able to walk to church. Maria is ecstatic that the church purchased the Jr’s Foodland property and is equally happy the store is staying in business, as they shop there several times a week.



**Mary Jane Young**

**Mary Jane Young** came to St. Paul’s at the end of 1992. During her time at St. Paul’s, which has included service on the Vestry, she feels “God led us to where we are today. I didn’t have an idea of how much we could be of service in the downtown area. We are where we can serve best!” Mary Jane is especially proud of our role in the Coldest Nights ministry, noting that “we are where they (the homeless) are!”



**Jerry Redditt**

**Jerry Redditt** does not remember exactly when she first heard from her friends Dick and Mollie Gleaves that St. Paul’s Episcopal was staying on East Main, close to the Square. “They were excited, and I listened to their talk of remodeling and expanding the worship space and Parish Hall. I had attended the ‘quaint stone church with the red door,’ occasionally, mostly for weddings, funerals, and baptisms for various members of the Gleaves family.”

Jerry began attending St. Paul’s in 1976. “I found it to be a sanctuary, a place of worship and healing . . . It was not until after I was confirmed in 1979 that I became part of the community of faith known as St. Paul’s . . . I was now a part of a larger community who took God’s work in the Kingdom seriously. We were growing, and our time, talents, and treasure were to be used purposefully.”

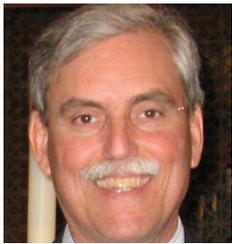
As Jerry recalls, “During one of several discernments regarding buying property and launching building programs, a consultant showed us data on the changing demographics of St. Paul’s location; we grappled with what it might mean for us to be a downtown

*Continued on page 6* ►

## Downtown Church *Continued from page 5*

church. Additionally, I was on the Vestry when we made the difficult decision to lock the church as it was being disrespected by those who were sleeping inside the Nave, making it unsafe for various parishioners, especially the Altar Guild, to do their work. We were seeing some of the downside of being a downtown church.”

“Being part of a downtown church did not receive much traction until we had people who were dedicated, passionate, and willing to work and to recruit others inside and outside the church to provide their time and talents,” Jerry says. “We went from simply having a line item in the budget supporting community programs and having food drives, to becoming front line volunteers at efforts including Coldest Nights and The Journey Home, and opening our campus and our worship to all. I am thankful for those who have worked so diligently to move us further toward our mission of being God’s kingdom in this time and place.”



**Ed Arning**

Ed Arning, in looking back over the past 45+ years, reflects: “My view of our church property is that St. Paul’s always moved in a forward-thinking fashion with a great deal of faith-based common sense. Our congregation has been a faithful steward all along, never reckless in its discernment. When unforeseen hurdles surfaced—like asbestos and flooding in Ferguson Hall—the parish calmly addressed the issues and moved onward. We have come so far from the many discussions about the fate of the beloved magnolia tree in front of



**Parish Hall Construction 2014**

<sup>1</sup> Arnette, P. 50, <sup>2</sup> Arnette, Pp. 48-49, <sup>3</sup> Arnette, P. 50

St. Andrews Chapel—thankfully! It is my hope that future St. Paul’s congregations will continue on this path of being forward-thinking.”



**Parish Hall Construction 2014**



**Polk Van Zandt**

Our former Rector, the Rev. Polk Van Zandt, reflects: “The rumors are true about my blessing a fire engine! Although I was asked only once (by a fire captain) to bless a new fire truck, which I did, I was asked to participate in numerous city-wide organizations’ meetings by providing the blessing at a meal or a benediction. I always said yes to those requests. More important, in my estimation, was (and still is) our commitment to outreach in Murfreesboro. Not only is St. Paul’s deeply involved (Coldest Nights, Habitat for Humanity, etc.), but St. Paul’s also has provided leadership in almost every ecumenical outreach ministry in town. That is the heartbeat of St. Paul’s as the Body of Christ. Purchasing Jr’s is a continuation of the vision of St. Paul’s being a vital downtown parish in Murfreesboro.”

As Jerry Redditt so eloquently states, “The decision to be a downtown church was made a long time ago; it has been reaffirmed many times and in various ways. It is now our time with discerning hearts, in all humility, compassion and grace, to continue to live into what God is calling us to be as that downtown church, now and in the future.”

▷ **GINA URBAN**

*Thanks to Newton Molloy and the Archives Committee for many of the photos in this issue.*

*“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.”*

PROVERBS 3:27

---

## DOWNTOWN OUTREACH

*"Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."*

JAMES 2:14-17

St. Paul's is active in many outreach ministries in our downtown community. A recurring theme in the following stories is that our outreach ministries serve a dual purpose: while they provide important support to the less fortunate, they also offer priceless grace to those who minister. It truly is more blessed to give than to receive.

---

### COVID-19 Bell-Ringing Commemoration—A Call to Prayer

In January, Kristine+ told me that Bishop Bauerschmidt had asked parishes in the diocese to ring their bells in conjunction with a Washington, D.C. vigil commemorating the 400,000 U.S. COVID-19 deaths. Kristine+ described this as an opportunity for a moment of prayer and solidarity with people of all faith backgrounds across the nation, and she wanted St. Paul's to participate.

Because I live with the keeper of the choir email list, I began by asking a few choir members if they'd like to participate. Most said yes, and there were a few non-choir parishioners who heard what was happening and contacted me to volunteer. Because of the limited space and concerns over social distancing, we were unable to use everyone who expressed interest.

Nancy DeGennaro reported on the event in The Daily News Journal (January 18, 2021), quoting Kristine+: "The purpose is to call people to prayer and remember . . . all those who have died because of the coronavirus. People can pause in their day and pray for people they know who are sick and people they lost and people they don't know, too, around the nation."

At 4:30 p.m. on January 19, a small group of parishioners and neighbors gathered in the courtyard. After Mi-

chael+ read from the Book of Common Prayer, seven bell ringers donned their masks and went into the narthex. We took turns pulling the rope and rang the bell four hundred times, one for each thousand deaths. By the time we were finished, about fifteen minutes later, a small crowd had gathered on the sidewalk in front of the church, and several hundred watched on the Facebook livestream.



▷ DALE TIPPS



## CONNECT Ministry

The CONNECT program allows St. Paul's parishioners to share their abundance with people who are struggling to pay their bills. Any resident of Rutherford County is invited to complete an application and meet with the committee to make their request. CONNECT services our clients on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month. We try to keep distribution to around \$1000 per session.

Clients come to us embarrassed, ashamed, and having trouble finding the words to ask for help. They tell us stories of losing jobs, exorbitant medical bills, utility bills, eviction notices and losing family members. COVID-19 has not helped the situation. In 2020, this ministry distributed over \$24,000 to assist people in need by providing funds towards their utility bills and rent payments.

The funding for this ministry comes from three sources: the first Sunday of the month's loose offering; a line item on our parish budget; and designated funds from church members in remembrance of loved ones. We have also received a \$15,000 grant from the United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties and \$1,000 from the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee.

The CONNECT ministry affords blessings to its committee members as well. As one committee member says, "CONNECT puts me in touch with real people who have real problems and allows me to do more than just put a check in the collection plate. From it I have learned so much, received such great blessing, and shared love with the clients and the others who are working alongside me." And another, "I feel the people we help appreciate a kind word, a hug, a friendly smile just as much as the financial



help. It's a gift for me to think that someone's day has turned around because we took the time to listen and care. I feel St. Paul's is showing LOVE IN ACTION by loving and caring for our neighbors."

As Christians, we are called to serve Christ by serving others. The Book of Common Prayer helps us to pray, *"Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord."*

▷ DAN FELCIANO



*"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'"*

MATTHEW 25:44-45

## Coldest Nights—Caring for Our Neighbors in Need

---

Confession . . . when our family moved to Murfreesboro almost three years ago, I knew I wanted to become an active member of St. Paul's, but my time was limited. Between working and raising our son Will, I was not sure how much time or energy I had to dedicate. I chose to volunteer with Coldest Nights because it fit with our schedule.

Now, it is Coldest Nights that often dictates our weekly or daily schedule, and we love it that way. Whether it is moving donated items from the church to the shelter or organizing supplies—it really has become a family ministry.

Traditionally, Coldest Nights provides homeless men and women with shelter on nights when the temperature falls below 32 degrees. This past season, due to COVID-19, the shelters were open every night from November 15 until mid-March. Here at St. Paul's, we housed an average of 15 women each night. After being served dinner, our guests sleep on cots in St. Margaret's Hall. They can bathe and rest, while overnight staff provide them with support and ensure their safety.

One of the most amazing things about the Coldest Nights ministry is the fact that it is enabled by the coming together of several downtown churches and nonprofit entities. St. Paul's houses the women, while First Baptist Church houses the men. The program is orchestrated by

Murfreesboro Rescue Mission and utilizes volunteers from the Murfreesboro Cold Patrol. Additionally, volunteers from other churches donate meals and supplies. It really is a community project.

In past years, most supplies came from just a handful of churches or volunteers. As the ministry has matured, support has become more widespread. This past year, students from Scales Elementary School held a supply drive. Two car-loads full of soap, shampoo, hairbrushes, hot cocoa, snacks, and more were donated. Another student at a downtown high school held her own supply drive and a young girl here at St. Paul's hand-knits beautiful scarves for the women.

The full scope of this ministry—of all these individuals, schools, churches, and community organizations coming together—is amazing. Just in this past year combined, the shelters were open for 116 nights, and the dining room served 3,752 meals, with many guests over 60 years old. An average of over 45 souls stayed with us each night.

Coldest Nights is a downtown ministry serving some of our most vulnerable neighbors with grace and love.

▷ SUSAN SEVERN



## The Journey Home

---

*... for I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me . . .*

MATTHEW 25:34-35

The Journey Home is a Christian ministry that serves the homeless and disadvantaged of Rutherford County by helping to rehouse and provide resources and relationships that encourage faith, economic stability, wholeness, and reintegration into community life.

TJH began in 2006 and last year served 1,200 individuals, providing them with basic needs with the ultimate goal of rehousing to foster stability and independence. Their Community Cafe feeds the homeless seven days a week and is run completely by volunteers. St. Paul's is in charge of serving on the



second and third Fridays, as well as the second Sunday, of each month.

▷ DEBBY JAMES



## Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is an international, nonprofit organization, founded in 1976 and devoted to building “simple, decent, and affordable” housing. It is a self-described “Christian housing ministry,” and has addressed the issues of poverty housing all over the world. The watchword for Habitat is that it “Provides a Hand Up, not a Handout” for partner families struggling to find decent and affordable housing.

The Rutherford County Habitat affiliate was established by a group of volunteers in 1989 and initially was housed in a broom closet at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Murfreesboro. Although the local Habitat affiliate shares the mission, goals, and values of Habitat for Humanity International, it operates independently and is responsible for raising its own funds. While individual parishioners have volunteered with Habitat over the years, St. Paul’s began its more official ministry and involvement with the local affiliate in 2011.

As of March 2021, the Rutherford Habitat Affiliate has built 169 homes for families who meet its criteria. These prospective homeowners have also attended 30 weekly home buyer education courses and devoted 300-400 hours of sweat equity toward their home, which acts as their down payment. While these homes have certainly benefited the homeowners, they have also had a positive impact to their neighbors by adding a well-built and well-maintained home in the area.

St. Paul’s has hosted Panel Builds in 2017, ‘18, and ‘19 and typically has 70 to 90 volunteers involved over four shifts during the day. Each shift begins with instruction for that

shift and a prayer asking God’s blessings. The day’s activities have also involved birdhouse builds for the children. Volunteers have participated with the children and cooked hot dogs for the noon meal.

In addition to Panel Builds, St. Paul’s has contributed volunteers for work on a home on Saturdays over the years. Usually, seven to eight parishioners participate in this effort.

St. Paul’s has yet not collaborated with other churches on a panel build, although in 2018 we did collaborate with the Murfreesboro City School Children during that year’s Panel Build. Approximately 15 children worked alongside adults to build the wall panels.

As St. Paul’s moves forward with this ministry, collaboration with one or more of the downtown churches might work very well for two reasons: 1) the price of building materials is skyrocketing (in the past \$3,000 to \$5,000 was required to sponsor a Build; now that cost has risen to \$10,000); 2) the other downtown churches have chosen to remain downtown and may share our vision in ministering to our neighborhood footprint.

▷ NEWTON MOLLOY



## Inspiritus Healthy Garden Program

When I tell people the story of Inspiritus and how the garden program came to be, I start with the 12. In May of 2011, 12 women living in the public housing community of Cheatham Place Apartments in North Nashville tried something new. They said yes to the notion of planting a garden right outside their door, learning how and when to water, committed to weeding, and opened themselves up to the possibility of something new.

When I look back on that group, I consider them instrumental to all that has happened in the years since. The willingness of each of them to grow as a person led to the growth of Inspiritus as an organization. In 2015, donations and volunteers from St. Paul's allowed us to bring the program to 11 families in Murfreesboro Housing Authority's Oakland Court community. In the years since, volunteers and donations from St. Paul's parishioners helped us expand to 87 gardens in three other housing communities in Murfreesboro. In 2020, 148 low-income families in three counties grew fresh produce in 204 gardens, harvesting more than 20,000 fresh tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, greens and more.

Along the way, St. Paul's parishioners have been instrumental. Liz Huber provided many hours of planning and implementing Plant Days. John Callow introduced us to resources through the Community Development Department. Anne Davis, Libby Willis, and others in the Charity Circle provided funds for a much-needed truck for the program. Thomas Rowe, executive director of Murfreesboro Housing Authority, said yes to allow us to reach the families in public housing. Delia Goodman introduced us to the Soil Conservation District which helps us buy supplies needed to run the program. The Owen family jumps into action each spring to help plant a whole neighborhood. Don Clayton provides educational materials to help further mentor our gardeners. And MANY of you, too many to name here, continue to support this work with yearly contributions, labor, and love!

So, great things start with 12 committed people, whether on the shores of Galilee or in alleys of North Nashville. These little gardens have changed the world of so many families living in low-income communities; it has changed their



Barbara, Brenda, and Gloria (3 of the 12 original gardeners)



Cathy in Murfreesboro



The Owen Family and their employees on Plant Day 2021

minds and given them the strength and confidence to take control over their food. And it has changed me. I can see Jesus working throughout all of it and in all of you. I am truly grateful to have that view and share it with you!

▷ JANET ARNING

## Partnership with the American Red Cross

Last Spring, when COVID-19 required quarantining and social distancing, the Red Cross (ARC) was forced to scramble. Not only was its collection site on Memorial Blvd. too small to provide the necessary space to accept whole blood donations under COVID-19 restrictions, but community drives hosted by businesses and organizations were also cancelled as people worked from home and communal spaces closed. Even the community at St. Paul's was affected by this since we had to cancel our Lenten blood drive as part of the quarantine. Unfortunately, the need for blood doesn't vanish because of quarantine. The ARC turned to St. Paul's for help.

Last summer we partnered with the ARC to serve as a donation site for downtown Murfreesboro. Once a week during July and into August the ARC used Christian Ed Room 1 (on the North side of the Parish Hall) as a donation site. While members of the St. Paul's community were encouraged to take

advantage of these donation opportunities, the primary service to the community was simply to provide space for this important life-saving effort.



Kristine+ donating blood

Though many of the COVID-19 related restrictions have lifted, we continue to partner with the ARC by providing a convenient downtown location to donate blood. Though we will always encourage members of St. Paul's to take advantage of these opportunities, each donation event is open to the public. Consequently, in addition to the good work of providing blood to those in need, we are creating a portrait of St. Paul's that identifies us as a parish that serves the community.

We will continue to host blood drives in the future. As you are able, please take advantage of this opportunity to donate.

▷ ELLEN DONOVAN

## Enriching our Cultural Life



St. Paul's is involved deeply in the cultural life of our downtown community. For many years, the choir has participated in the annual Christmas tree lighting on the Square—even 2020's virtual event. Before COVID-19, St. Paul's and First Baptist united for a special Sunday morning service, and our two choirs combined for an anthem. Pat Parris and I played some lovely piano-organ duets for the prelude and offertory.

On July 4th, 2017, the organists from First Baptist and First Presbyterian joined me

for an Independence Day Hymn Festival. The nave was packed with an ecumenical crowd, and the singing of patriotic hymns was glorious. Pat, Valerie, and I regularly help each other out by playing funerals or non-Sunday services for each other when conflicts arise.

When the organ was installed in 2012, we hosted a series of concerts to which the public was invited. We will commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Letourneau in 2022 with a similar concert series, inviting organists from Christ Cathedral, St. George's, and Sewanee to give recitals.

As a member of the MTSU faculty, it pleases me greatly that St. Paul's maintains a special relationship with the School of Music. I am grateful to Kristine+ and the Vestry for their continued support of this ministry. This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions

on audience attendance, St. Paul's was particularly busy with student recitals and concerts. George Carlson generously volunteers his time coordinating these events, meeting the performers for rehearsals, and making sure everything runs smoothly on the concert day. Students and their instructors are most grateful for this venue, and they often remark on how rewarding the acoustics are in our nave.

In April, my choral conducting class gave its final "exam" in the form of a concert at St. Paul's. The students (who are juniors) conducted a lab choir of freshmen and sophomores in the pieces they'd been rehearsing all semester. The students sang from the pews, socially distanced and masked. Only a few visitors (family and friends) could attend, and we live-streamed the event. It was a lovely concert, and now these freshmen

*Continued on page 14* ▶

## Angel Tree

*“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

ACTS 20:35

It truly is more blessed to give than to receive—something I have experienced firsthand in my work with the St. Paul’s Angel Tree. Since 2013, I have been blessed to serve as chair for this ministry. We partner with Mercury Court Preschool and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Rutherford County to provide Christmas for their students and program participants, none of whom would experience Christmas without St. Paul’s stepping in as the hands and feet of God. Every year, I am overwhelmed by the generosity of our parish. We have never had to turn an Angel away—even when a new student or need arrives at the 11th hour. And while I have experienced too many blessings to count from being involved with Angel Tree, my biggest blessing has come from my children, Molly and Ben. They have become active and enthusiastic participants—helping both publicly and behind the scenes. Here is what Angel Tree has meant to them:

**Molly:** “Angel Tree has taught me that even the smallest things can make the biggest difference. When Santa visits those little kids, it brings them so much joy to simply tell him what they want for Christmas. It’s the little things like this that really make a difference and really make someone smile.”

**Ben:** “It has taught me how to give back to our community. It has helped me better understand how I can help people in need.”

**Molly:** “I enjoy participating in Angel Tree because it brings me so much joy to give back to others. It makes me so happy to see (and know) that those kids will have a great Christmas.”

**Ben:** “I like knowing that I’m helping people every time I pick out a gift or help others choose an Angel to adopt.”

**Molly:** “We have children of all ages. Many people think that we only have little kids, but that’s not true. In fact, just this year we had several teenagers. My family adopted them, and I honestly had a lot of fun picking out gifts for them because they were around my age!”

**Ben:** “The gifts go directly to the school and then the parents. The children never actually see the gifts until Christmas Day.”

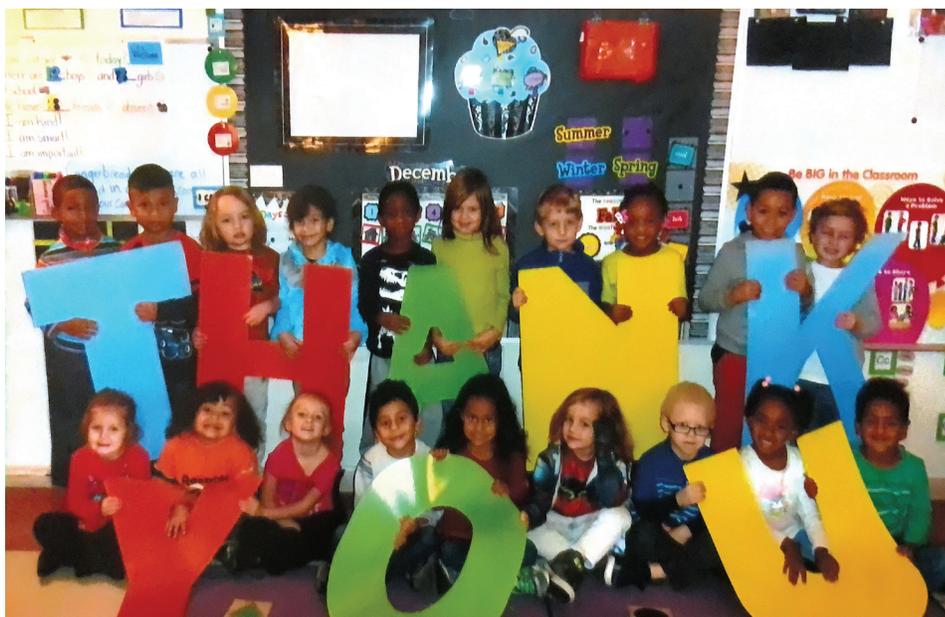


What is the best way for others to get involved with Angel Tree?

**Molly and Ben:** “Adopt an Angel! Or you can donate money for the committee to shop for you.”

Angel Tree 2021 adoptions will begin at the end of October!

▷ DEANNA BARTSCH



## St. Paul's Little Free Pantry

*"Give what you can. Take what you need."*

Such was the inspiration for the Michael Kyriakouides's Eagle Scout project through BSA Troop 1108. Michael researched, designed, and, with the help of his fellow scouts, built the St. Paul's Little Free Pantry, which was installed on May 30.

Michael, a recent graduate of Siegel High School bound for The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, had three goals for the St. Paul's pantry:

- To provide nonperishable foods, personal care items, undergarments, and socks for our town's homeless population on a self-help basis;
- To engage parishioners in an easy-to-maintain distribution system for homeless people, encouraging greater awareness among St. Paul's parishioners of the problem of homelessness; and
- To maintain the pantry in a manner that is neat, clean, and contributes to the beauty of the St. Paul's campus and surrounding neighborhood.

Michael's project involved many facets, including securing approval from the City of Murfreesboro, designing the pantry to coordinate with the building materials on the St. Paul's campus, acquiring approval from the church's Artistic Design Committee, and working

with Kristine+ and others to determine the site for the pantry.

Located next to St. Margaret's Hall on Academy St., the pantry is a resource for those with a need for food and an outlet for those with a need to give. Anyone in the parish or neighborhood may donate items at any time by simply placing them in the pantry. Desired items are non-perishable foods and personal care items, including canned foods, pasta, socks, toothpaste (but no glass items or razors). These items are available free to anyone passing by who needs them.

Michael has lined up several groups within the church and neighborhood to take two-month stints keeping an eye on the pantry. The Outreach Committee will oversee the pantry's maintenance and stocking and ensure that it continues to serve its purpose in our ministry to Murfreesboro's homeless community.

This is not Michael's first project benefiting the homeless in our community. During the 2020 pandemic, he helped his family prepare over 300 bagged meals for distribution at The Journey Home. "With each meal I prepared, I felt like I was making a real difference



Michael Kyriakouides (right) leads BSA Troop 1108 members Grady Knox, Jacoby Lokey, and Spencer Burritt in building the St. Paul's Little Free Pantry.

to someone," Michael told his mom, Lisa Eveleigh. He continues to make a difference today. Thanks be to God.

▷ LISA EVELEIGH AND GINA URBAN



## Enriching our Cultural Life

*Continued from page 12*

and sophomores are anxiously awaiting their turn at the podium!

Each semester I have two or three organ students—piano majors who want to explore the instrument as a part-time vocation. A part of the vision behind installing our Letourneau organ ten years ago

was the ability to train future organists and church musicians. Since 2012, I have taught my students at St. Paul's, and they have access to the building for practicing through the week. This would simply not be possible in the extremely busy Wright Music Building's Hinton Hall. In turn, these students have played our preludes and postludes from time to time, and one of my students is substituting this summer while I'm on vacation!

I am extraordinarily lucky that St. Paul's has always fostered a relationship with the downtown churches, the downtown community, and the "Town and Gown" community of MTSU.

▷ ANGELA TIPPS  
Instructor, MTSU School of Music

## Scouting at St. Paul's

Since 1910, Scouting in America has prepared its youth to develop leadership skills and make good choices in life. St. Paul's has played an integral part in this program since 2008.

In the fall of 2007, Fr. Matt Greathouse, Ed Arning and Fant Smith began talking about forming a Cub Scout Pack at St. Paul's. Others involved—and please forgive any omissions—were Alice Gibson, Bill and Susan Emory, Bonnie Black, Philip Martin, and David Kirkham. These leaders paved the way for a thriving program.

St. Paul's Pack 108 quickly became the feeder Pack for the newly created Discovery School, a fertile recruiting ground, and developed into a leading program. We often overflowed the old Parish Hall, with over 100 adults and youth at pack meetings.

St. Paul's had ample volunteers contribute time and talent to the cause, including Tom and Barbara Collins, who built the first Pinewood Derby track and hosted the entire group for a swim party in 2009. Dr. Alex Hollis was the keynote speaker at the Blue and Gold Pack 108 Banquet in the early 2010s. The Rev. Polk Van Zandt's arrival as Rector afforded a seamless transition for the program, as Polk was involved in scouting as a youth and was an enthusiastic supporter.

In the spring of 2011, Ed Arning, David Kirkham and Fant Smith decided to ask St. Paul's to further the mission of scouting and start a Boy Scout Troop, soon to be Troop 1108. David Kirkham took the reins of the Troop, starting with a shell of seven boys. By the fall, they had added another eight scouts and had a viable troop. St. Paul's purchased a trailer for the Troop, which was filled with supplies through fundraisers, dues, and contributions. Troop 1108 began camping monthly, attending summer camp annually and planning for summertime high adventure trips. Service projects and Merit Badge work became routine tasks.

Within a couple of years, Troop 1108 had over 50 boys registered and was considered a flagship troop in the Trail of Tears District (Rutherford and Cannon Counties) and a shining star within the entire Middle Tennessee Council. Seizing on the success of the St. Paul's programs, the Council tapped Ed Arning to be District Chair for two years in the mid-2010s. During Ed's tenure, the District began meeting twice per month at St. Paul's, bringing leaders in from north Rutherford county, Cannon county, and of course



Pack 108, 2008



Troop 1108 10th Anniversary, 2021

Murfreesboro, to our downtown campus. Fant Smith served as District Chair in 2018 and 2019.

Both Pack 108 and Troop 1108 have participated in many service projects over the years, including several benefiting St. Paul's—most recently, Michael Kyriakoudes's Little Food Pantry Eagle Scout project. Other endeavors have included mulching the church grounds for many years.

Troop 1108 had its first two Eagle Scouts in 2016—Callum Hay and JonByron Kirkham. Since that time, the Troop has produced a total of 23 Eagles, annually ranking the troop in the top 5% of units nationally for producing Eagle Scouts.

Thank you, St. Paul's, for fourteen years of steadfast support for these programs. The youth of Pack 108 and Troop 1108 are grateful to the parish for supplying the solid foundations to these organizations.

▷ FANT SMITH



Fant Smith, Jameson Martin, Matthew Schneider, 2009

# St. Paul's

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

116 NORTH ACADEMY STREET  
MURFREESBORO, TN 37130

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
PERMIT 189  
Murfreesboro, TN

Return Service  
Requested

## A Community of Downtown Churches

St. Paul's is an active partner with our downtown church community on occasions large and small.

**First Baptist Church** and St. Paul's have worked together on many occasions. We have partnered with their church on guest speakers. We have used the baptistry at First Baptist for some of our parishioners who wanted to be baptized by immersion. And several years ago, there was a ministry offered by members of the downtown churches coordinated by First Baptist called *Operation In As Much*. We would spend a day going to area nonprofits helping them with whatever needed to be done. This was an annual ministry for several years.

We used **Central Christian Church** for our over-70 Senior lunches during the building of our parish hall in 2014-2015.

We have shared song books with **First Presbyterian Church**.

We have partnered with **Main Street Murfreesboro** on our Sunrise Ecumenical service for Easter.

**East Main Church of Christ** allows us use of their parking lot for weddings and funerals.

Several downtown churches have worked with us to offer Coldest Nights for Women. First Baptist hosts the nightly meal before the women come to St. Paul's for the night. The other churches have also helped stock the needed items to care for these women.

In past years we have partnered with the above churches, and First Cumberland Presbyterian Church and Antioch Primitive Baptist Church, for Holy Week services and lunches.

We also work with our neighbors on the more mundane issues of church life. First Baptist generously allowed us the use of its printer when the Wall Building was being remodeled in 2018; Greenhouse Ministries has volunteered the use of its copier during the time we were installing our new one in 2021, and anytime we have been in a bind.

We stand ready to help our church neighbors, just as they help us.

▷ **KATHY WARLICK**  
Co-Administrative Assistant