



# THE Epistle

Growing our Legacy: Past, Present, Future

FALL 2024



## ▶ Growing our Legacy

by Kristine Blaess, Rector



Since St. Paul's decided to remain a downtown church in the 1970s, we have embarked on a 50-year mission to build a substantial Christian witness in the heart of our city. Thanks to your generosity, we joyfully retired the debt on our nave and parish hall just this month! Your generosity reflects God's awe-inspiring love made known to us through Jesus Christ, and I am deeply grateful.

Building on this strong legacy, God is calling us to boldly pursue our mission: *We are forming people into the body of Christ.* This mission includes all of us—lay and clergy, newcomers and long-time leaders. Our vision is to grow as a *teaching parish*, investing in our laity and clergy for both today and tomorrow.

I am thrilled to share two new initiatives that will help us grow as a teaching parish: **Alpha**, and a **Pastoral Residency**.

### Alpha

Starting Sunday, September 8, Alpha offers a space where people can come together to eat, listen, and explore life's biggest questions. With its friendly and informal atmosphere, Alpha is for everyone. Come with questions, enjoy great food, and bring a friend to meet new friends. Our incredible team of lay leaders has been praying, planning, and preparing for you, and it's not too late to join! Check out the St. Paul's website for details and to sign up.

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## ▶ You are a Gift

by Michael Whitnah, Associate Rector



You are a gift.

Yes, you, the one reading this article in yet another incredible edition of the Epistle. You are a gift. How do I know this? As the Sunday school song goes, "The Bible tells me so."

In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul lays out the world-changing message of the Gospel. In chapter four, he starts describing the Church, who we are, how we came to be, and what our purpose is. We are to grow up in every way into Jesus Christ, building each other

up in love. That's our mission, and it's a glorious one. To become more and more like Jesus, and to love each other just as he loves us. That's exciting! That gets me out of bed every morning.

So, how are we to do this, to live into

*Continued on page 3* ▶

### Pastoral Residency

Beginning in June 2025, the Pastoral Residency will prepare newly ordained clergy for leadership in the Episcopal Church. Just as teaching hospitals offer medical residencies for new doctors, *teaching parishes* offer pastoral residencies for new priests to grow as dynamic teachers, preachers, ministers in the community, and leaders of God's people. St. Paul's will hire one new priest every three years, providing opportunities in youth ministry, pastoral care, worship, and formation before they move on to lead other congregations. This initiative benefits St. Paul's, the Resident, and the wider Episcopal Church.

### Three-year pro forma funding plan

Our vestry and financial team have prayerfully developed a three-year pro forma budget that outlines a plan to support our growth and new ministries as a teaching parish. Our Senior Warden Brad Miller and Treasurer Don Whitfield offered an excellent presentation on this funding plan on Sunday, August 18. It is summarized on page 4 of this issue. We welcome any questions you may have.

We plan to update and share this three-year pro forma rolling budget annually, and hope that this level of transparency is helpful to you as you prayerfully consider how you will financially support St. Paul's in 2025.



God continues to call us to share his love in downtown Murfreesboro and form people into the body of Christ. People are healed and transformed as we joyfully share the Good News that Jesus loves us to the cross and back! This bold vision God has given us for St. Paul's future will take all of us, and I am grateful you are part of it. ■

Yours in Christ,

*Kristine +*

The Rev. Dr. Kristine Blaess  
Rector

## Embracing Generosity

*by Jennifer Kropog, Annual Giving Campaign Chair*

St. Paul's has a long history of practicing gratitude as a spiritual discipline. This thankfulness and appreciation are evident throughout our church campus and our community as a whole. Most recently, our faithful and generous giving in response to God's call led to the retirement of our main campus debt!

In His great wisdom, God has now presented St. Paul's with two new opportunities for ministry. First, St. Paul's has been called to grow as a teaching parish. The **Pastoral Residency** program will mentor newly ordained Episcopal priests for healthy, long-term service in the Episcopal Church. St. Paul's will choose and hire one new priest for a three-

year term who will learn from our clergy as they assist with our youth, pastoral care, worship, and formation ministries. Second, the **Alpha** program, beginning this month, will explore Christian faith and life with Christ through sincere, open conversations in small groups.

The Vestry and financial team have developed a three-year pro forma budget to support these new opportunities and we are seeking **100% participation** from our parish to support our Operating Fund. We specifically request that annual giving not be restricted to one fund or another, as this best allows the Vestry to meet both the church's spiritual mission and its worldly needs.

*Continued on page 3* ►

this calling? The good news is that our God always *equips* those whom he *calls*. And so, Paul tells us, Jesus Christ has given gifts to his church in order to equip it for its life and ministry. And, the gifts that Jesus gives to his church are *people*. Paul lists off a number: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. Note two things. First, although our English translations sometimes obscure this, Paul doesn't say that *apostleship* or *prophecy* or *evangelism* is a gift . . . but rather, the *people* themselves, with all their capacities, are the gift. Second, it's a comprehensive list. Yes, the people are different and have different roles, but everyone is included. Which means . . .

You are a gift. Yes, you. Whether you have been at St. Paul's for decades or weeks, the Holy Spirit has gathered you into this communion because you are a gift for the whole body of Christ. You have an essential part to play so that we might all grow up into Jesus Christ together. You have been called to build others up in love just as you are being built up in love. Henri Nouwen writes, "When we give ourselves to planting and nurturing love here on earth, our efforts will reach out beyond our own chronological existence."

So, join in! Come to Alpha and invite a friend. Pray for our discernment for a new clergy resident. Joyfully consider



how great our Savior's love is for you, and ask how you can be a blessing to his Church. Jesus loves you and has called you to follow him, to grow up into him, and to bless his Church.

You are a gift, and I thank God for each and every one of you. ■

*Michael†*

The Rev. Michael Whitnah  
Associate Rector

## Growing our Legacy



*Continued from page 2*

Our 2025 Estimate of Annual Giving Cards will be mailed out soon and you are encouraged to turn them in at any time. We would be delighted if you would join us on **Gratitude Sunday, October 27**, for an altar blessing of the Estimate of Annual Giving Cards and a reception following the service.

We look forward to your spirited and faithful support of St. Paul's!

Jennifer Kropog,  
Annual Giving Campaign Chair



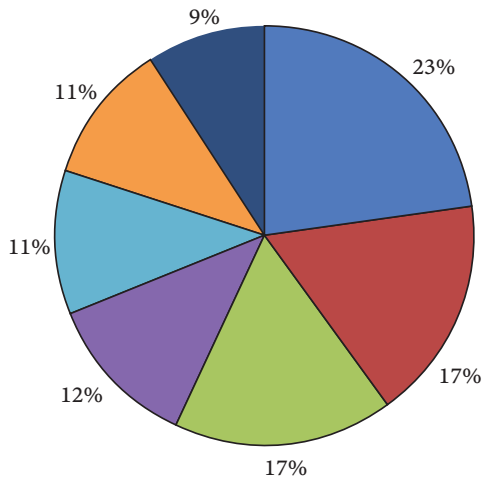
# — GROWING OUR LEGACY —

## 2024 Approved and 2025–2027 Pro Forma Operating Budget

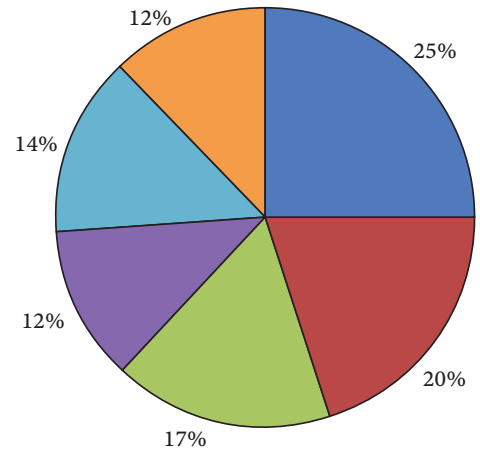
St. Paul's Vestry has approved a three-year pro forma budget which sets forth our financial needs for the meeting of our goals, answering the call for a bold investment in the development of our people and spiritual leaders for the future. This reflects the current year and the first three-year commitment to a pastoral residency. To support these goals, the Vestry has two very important objectives:

- Fully fund the FY 2025 operating fund budget from parishioners' Estimates of Giving; and
- 100% parish participation in the 2025 Annual Giving Campaign

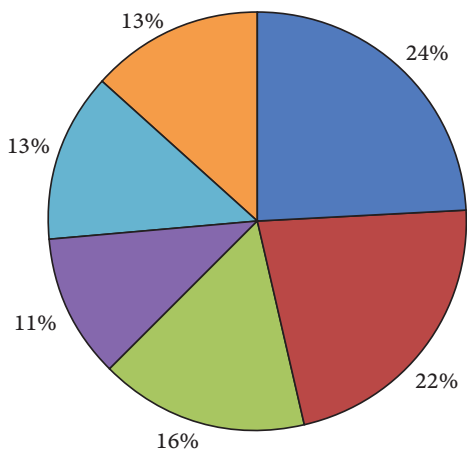
2024 Approved Operating Fund Budget \$1,050,421



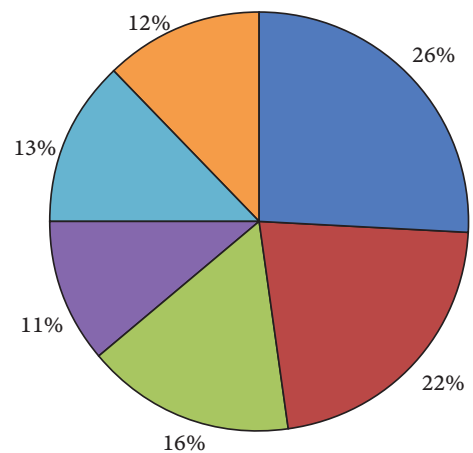
2025 Pro Forma Operating Fund Budget \$1,093,974



2026 Pro Forma Operating Fund Budget \$1,195,442



2027 Pro Forma Operating Fund Budget \$1,249,844



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|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ■ Administration                  | ■ Discipleship & Formation      |
| ■ Worship                         | ■ Pastoral Life & Pastoral Care |
| ■ Buildings Grounds & Maintenance | ■ Debt Service                  |
| ■ Outreach & Mission              |                                 |

# Proclamation, Service and Witness

St. Paul's kicks off Alpha this month. Alpha invites us to live our lives with Jesus through proclamation, service and witness. Our church has had a long tradition of community involvement, including building homes with Habitat for Humanity, serving meals at The Journey Home, hosting Coldest Nights, and helping those in need through the CONNECT program.

In this issue of the *Epistle*, we celebrate several of our laity who are moved by their faith to serve our community and the greater world.

*“For just as the body without the spirit is dead,  
so faith without works is dead also.”*

JAMES 2:26

## ► Capetown Pilgrimage | Kelly Moody and Natalie Blaess

by Anna Stewart

St. Paul's recent pilgrimage to Capetown, South Africa, was a chance to witness Christ's work in another part of our world. Kristine+ and Natalie Blaess, Kelly Moody, and Janet and Wesley+ Arning served as pilgrims on this voyage.

Natalie described the pilgrimage as follows: “We went to Cape Town not to actively help by painting houses or giving out food, but to learn. We sat with South Africans and heard their stories and learned how God had shaped their lives and called them to action. Through their eyes, we got to understand how to talk about injustice and what we could do in our own lives to combat it.”

Kelly went as a participant alongside other leaders at St. Paul's, as well as in conjunction with a seminary requirement to engage in a cross-cultural experience of the Anglican communion, through a grant from the Seminary Commission on Ministry. The pilgrims' role was to learn from those in South Africa and immerse themselves into their experiences in justice. Kelly noted, “Each of us who joined the pilgrimage went with a desire to deepen our understanding of the kingdom of God and spend time with folks who were practiced in building faithful relationships in the midst of racial, cultural, political and even theological differences.” The first week was planned with the support of leaders in St. John's Parish (a collective of Anglican parishes



Kelly Moody, Natalie Blaess, Kristine+ Blaess, Janet Arning

in Cape Town) and their outreach arm (called The Warehouse). The second week, Kelly took more opportunities to shadow priests working in different contexts in the diocese (schools, hospitals, and Anglican parishes shaped by the impacts of colonialism and apartheid), and in the third week Kelly had space for reflection and conversation with theologians like Dr. Selena Headley and Dr. John Degruchy.

One meaningful experience for Natalie was watching a student-produced documentary that switched perspectives between a woman living in Bishop's Court (a wealthy

*Continued on page 6* ►

neighborhood), a man from Protea village (the land Bishop's Court is built on), and an artist in Langa (one of the townships). Natalie noted, "It was very moving to listen to their stories, knowing the history of the land they live on; the juxtaposing way the documentary was filmed really put into perspective what we experienced on our trip to Cape Town."

Kelly was struck by a video clip viewed at the Desmond and Leah Tutu Foundation. She said, "A couple of the leaders I met mentioned that they had been asked at least once why they still have faith and claim Christianity after all the evil that has been done in the name of the Bible and the church. This question is especially poignant in South Africa because Christians used the Bible to justify apartheid, just as some did with segregation in the United States." The video clip showed Archbishop Desmond Tutu's response to a similar question. Kelly said his response could be paraphrased as, "If they didn't want us to read the Bible, they should have not brought it. It is the most radical book! I'm sorry but it is here, and while it has been used to oppress, it also contains the most powerful seeds of resistance."

Kelly and Natalie are both motivated to serve the greater world due to their faith. Kelly said, "The more I read the words of Jesus and pray the ancient prayers of our church, the more I am convinced that being part of the body of Christ and claiming Jesus as Lord means I am accountable to and for my neighbors, whoever they may be. It slowly breaks me of my tendencies toward self-absorption and self-sufficiency, and gives me eyes to see a bigger, more joyful reality. I am most whole when I am participating in that joyful, heavenly reality!"

After this experience, Kelly noted, "I was so energized from meeting others across the globe whose faith inspires them to live countercultural lives and to continually be transformed by the gospel they preach. That is my hope for all of us: that we would have a similar courage to hear and respond to the gospel anew as it continues to work on us throughout our lives."

For Kelly, part of responding to the gospel relates to tithing to church. She noted that she gives "because giving financially is part of discipleship and being formed into the body



Natalie Blaess



Kelly Moody

of Christ as a community. Just as it was with the disciples, when we give what we have, Jesus takes it, blesses it, and breaks it into abundance for a broken and hungry world."

Regarding her inspirations from Scripture, Kelly said, "This week, I've been in Mark's version of the feeding of the five thousand, and I've been struck by the way Jesus invites the disciples to participate in his ministry and trust in the abundance that comes with giving what they have. Here's a piece of it:"

*"When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.' But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' They said to him, 'Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?' And he said to them, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' When they had found out, they said, 'Five, and two fish.'" Mark 6: 35-38*

"I think we all know how the story ends," Kelly said. "But even in its familiarity, isn't it amazing!?! Isn't this pattern still miraculous—that when we offer what we have to Jesus, blessings abound?"

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## ▶ Oakland Court | Thomas Rowe *by Gina Urban*

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Just a few blocks north of St. Paul's on Academy Street, behind the Oaklands Mansion, is the Murfreesboro Housing Authority's latest neighborhood—Oakland Court. Originally a community of 76 units built in 1959, the neighborhood's brick-and-block buildings were once in great need of repair and updating.

The new neighborhood, opened this spring after a two-year planning and five-year construction period, includes 150 new residences—a mixture of single-family, duplex, and triplex homes—and streets, parking courts, walking trails, and a community building. The homes were designed in historic architectural styles found in the neighborhood to provide a cohesive look, and have features including front porches, washer and dryer connections, and Wi-Fi capabilities.

Thomas Rowe, St. Paul's parishioner, is CEO of the Murfreesboro Housing Authority. The motivation for the Oaklands project, Thomas said, was “to create homes people could be proud of.” Thomas has done this type of work since 1980, and was with the housing authority in Fort Mill, SC, for 18 years before coming to Murfreesboro for his current position in 2013.

The mission of the MHA is to provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing. “It's very hard to find affordable housing in Rutherford County and the surrounding area,” Thomas said. “We maintain a waiting list of 1,000 who need housing, and an additional waiting list of 500 for our voucher program, which currently provides 950 families with rent assistance.”

Residents of Oakland Court qualify with income at or below 60% of the area median, and pay rent based on their income.

A particularly moving moment for Thomas came at the grand opening of the Oaklands neighborhood, when a resident spoke and said, “I have lived in Murfreesboro all my life. I never dreamed I could live in such a nice place.”



Michael+ Whitnah, Terri Donovan, Thomas Rowe, Kristine+ Blaess

There are other neighborhood redevelopments in the works, including Parkside (behind Patterson Park), and the Mercury development on the north side of Minor Street. “And we just received a tax credit award for 29 units which will be in the Mercury development off Hancock Street,” Thomas said.

While Thomas has a degree in accounting, he said his work in public housing comes from a passion to help people. “Your faith helps you want to do that,” he said, “because you see such need.”

Thomas takes inspiration from his favorite scripture verse, Phillipians 4:13: “*I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.*”

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“I give to St. Paul's to see our ministry in the community.”

—Thomas Rowe

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## ► Inspiritus | Janet Arning *by Gina Urban*

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Janet Arning is Executive Director of Empowerment Programs at Inspiritus, a nonprofit organization focused on guiding individuals and families who have experienced disruption on a path from surviving to thriving. The organization serves refugees, victims of natural disasters, low-income individuals, those with disabilities, and families and children. Janet's responsibilities include the Inspiritus Food Bank, a pantry that feeds 2,000+ each year; a raised bed garden project with more than 200 gardens in Middle Tennessee; the Building Healthy Families program—a women's empowerment program of women in public housing who meet weekly; and a therapeutic arts program to help children deal with their emotions. Janet has been with the organization and its predecessor, Lutheran Services in Tennessee, for nearly 14 years.



Inspiritus Building Healthy Families Group

Inspiritus recently announced it will build an Innovative Live-Thrive-Give Campus in North Nashville. Inspiritus Senior Housing is a \$31M campaign that will break ground by the end of this year. The five-story building will offer 80 units of affordable housing for seniors and individuals with disabilities, catering to their lowest-income families. The first floor will feature the organization's offices, a food pantry, and a therapeutic art studio.

The project is in the pre-development phase; 97% of the funding has already been raised and represents a combination of funding sources, including tax credits and HUD grants. They anticipate opening in Spring/Summer of 2026.

"There is a housing crisis for lower-income people, especially acute in Nashville," Janet explained. "Families who have been living in the area for generations can no longer afford housing, and the neighborhood has experienced gentrification." The 2019 merger of Inspiritus in Tennessee with Inspiritus in Georgia allowed the organization to explore the possibilities, envision the best use of its space, and expand its services to include housing.

"There are so many stories here—some uplifting, some heartbreaking," Janet said. Just that day, Janet had accompanied a woman to apply for an affordable housing apartment. The woman had been in the Building Healthy Families program for quite some time, had earlier lost two children in a house fire, and lost another son last year. "She had lived in different places with friends and family members, but

had been homeless for a long time," Janet said. "We were sitting in a building named for Kelly Smith, the pastor of First Baptist Church of Capitol Hill during the civil rights era. Kelly Smith's granddaughter is a co-worker of mine. I couldn't help but be struck by how God weaves our stories together in mysterious ways." Janet added, "I think she's going to get the apartment. That's why I do this work. It's what I feel called to do."

"My faith permeates everything I do," Janet said. "I have been given a great deal in my life. I had parents who were faithful and devoted to God, and I'm surrounded by so many people at St. Paul's who have been wonderful to me. Every Sunday in the pew revitalizes me, and that's not a one-way street—it motivates me to give back."

Janet is also motivated by the words of 13 Corinthians, which has driven how she approaches her faith. "*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud . . . Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres . . . Love never fails,*" culminating with "*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*"



"I give to St. Paul's because so much has been given to me."

—Janet Arning



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## ► Boys & Girls Clubs of Rutherford County | Nancy Loucky and Marta Van Hoose by Gina Urban

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The Boys & Girls Clubs of Rutherford County have long held a place in the hearts of St. Paul's parishioners. From volunteers to board members, St. Paul's has maintained an active presence with club kids. The local club serves more than 1,200 kids and teens, providing a safe, positive, and engaging environment and giving them a sense of belonging.

Nancy Loucky and Marta Van Hoose have been club homework helpers for over nine years, giving their time three to four afternoons a week and helping 15 to 30 kids on any given day. "I feel that our consistent presence matters," Nancy said. "The better the kids know their homework helpers, the more they'll want to come and get help." Nancy even invited her husband David, an MTSU music professor and professional musician, to come in one day to help some kids who were learning band instruments. "It was a thrill for the kids," Marta said.

Nancy and Marta work with kindergarteners through ninth graders. "The kids who come in to do homework are choosing to do so," Nancy explained. "They know they have a safe place and someone to read to them. Seeing how they flourish is fun—especially when they know someone thinks they are wonderful. We're sharing God's love. That's what we pray for."



Marta Van Hoose

"A boy came in and told us he couldn't read," Nancy said. "I told him, 'You can do it, but it might be hard at first.' I worked with him for a few weeks, then made a list of the books he had read and encouraged him to show it to his mom."

The next day, the boy told Nancy, "After I went to bed last night, my mom came into the room with the list. She asked me, 'Did you read all these books?!' When I said yes, she screamed and burst into tears."

"That's a God thing," Nancy said. "Things like this just inspire us and bring out the love God has for these kids." Nancy cites her favorite prayer for youth: *"God our Father, you see your children growing up in an unsteady and confusing world: Show them that your ways give more life than the ways of the world, and that following you is better than chasing after selfish goals. Help them to take failure, not as a measure of their worth, but as a chance for a new start. Give them strength to hold their faith in you, and to keep alive their joy in your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

"We had another student who was in 4th or 5th grade, who initially was reluctant to come in for help," Marta said. Over the weeks and months, she would start to seek us out. Eventually, she was accepted to Campus School, and told us,



Nancy Loucky

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“Ms. Marta told me I was smart, so I felt confident about applying to Campus School.”

Marta noted that the club staff does an excellent job of watching out for the children’s needs and teaching them to treat each other respectfully. “They go to bat for these kids,” she said. “And we just love on them the best we can.”

“Education is so important,” Nancy said. “The power of seeing kids begin to read is such a thrill.” Marta added, “There is a seriousness about homework now that didn’t exist before COVID-19. These kids know they have lost ground.”

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**“I give to St. Paul’s because God has given so much to me.”**

**—Nancy Loucky**

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Nancy and Marta have been doing this kind of volunteerism for many years, previously at Franklin Heights through the school system. “We started, to a large degree, because we knew math and science at the high school level,” Marta said. After ten years at Franklin Heights, the two began at the Boys & Girls Club in 2015.

Marta began tutoring when her children were young. “I volunteered because I had the skills,” she said. Later in life, she was a substitute teacher in three Connecticut school systems, prior to becoming a teacher in Thomaston, CT. “I missed the shine in a child’s eyes,” she said. “When a kid succeeds, it’s a little jump of joy.”

Nancy shared that, on a recent walk on the Greenway with a friend, she commented that she had cut back on her St. Paul’s volunteerism. Her friend immediately responded, “Your work with the Boys & Girls Club *is* St. Paul’s work.” Nancy’s response: “I hope that our caring for these kids points to God.”

“I was a church sacristy rat for many years,” Marta said. “I came to the conclusion that I needed to be the church in the world.” She added, “One of the things I love about the Boys & Girls Club is I can talk about God. I love having that freedom.”

Marta’s favorite scripture verse is Psalm 91:2: “*I will say to the Lord, ‘You are my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.’*”

“We pray for these kids all the time, entrusting them to God,” Nancy said. “We are asking for something miraculous to happen, and it does. I like to feel that we are participating in God’s healing of all of us.”

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**“I give to St. Paul’s because I believe in what St. Paul’s *is* and *does*. The church is my family.”**

**—Marta Van Hoose**

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*“We are all called to serve with the abundance God has given us.”*

ROMANS 12:8

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## ▶ Board Service at the Boys & Girls Clubs | Gina Urban

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Several St. Paul's members have lent their leadership, strategic planning, and business skills to the Boys & Girls Clubs, along with their volunteer presence and prayerful support. I am honored to follow in the capable footsteps of Bill Whitesell, Jeff Davis, and Cheri Frame in this capacity.

The mission of the Boys & Girls Clubs is *“to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.”* While my background is in business and marketing, I also served as a preschool music teacher when my children were young, and have always felt a call to support the needs of children.

I have served on the BGC board for five years and am on its executive committee. While much of this entails participating in meetings and decisions guiding the club, my favorite activities include reading to the kids and joining them for dinner on school afternoons. (The club served more than 31,000 dinners and 60,000 snacks in 2023.) When I leave the club, I feel tremendously uplifted by interacting with the kids, and my day is always lightened.

Recently, I visited the club when the kids were riding on our new bike track. I realized many of these kids had never learned to ride a bike and would not have had this opportunity without the club. This summer, the club sent 27 teens on a college tour, visiting schools in Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Many of these teens had never been outside Rutherford County; their excitement for this trip and the idea that college was a possibility for them was life changing.



Gina Urban

My faith and upbringing motivate me to serve the community. My parents always encouraged volunteerism and set that example themselves: my dad with United Way and my mother with Commonwealth Catholic Charities and Child Fund International, among other organizations.

My work with the club is inspired by one of my favorite scripture verses: Matthew 19:14, *“Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”*

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**“I give to St. Paul’s in thanks  
for God’s generosity, and  
because our spiritual home  
has temporal needs.”**

**—Gina Urban**

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*“But whoever has the world’s material possessions  
and observes his brother in need and shuts his heart  
against him, how does the love of God reside in him?”*

1 JOHN 3:17

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## ► United Way | Don Clayton and David Urban by Anna Stewart

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The United Way of South Central Tennessee, which serves residents in Rutherford, Cannon, Bedford, and Lincoln Counties, is one organization in which many St. Paul's members are involved. The organization's mission is to help people in our community in three main areas—health, education, and financial stability. The United Way raises money and supports a wide range of community partners. Two of the many St. Paul's parishioners involved in service with the organization are Don Clayton and David Urban.

Both Don and David have been involved with UW for some time. Don got involved more than 20 years ago, through service on its Community Impact Committee, where groups of community volunteers allocated the funds raised by UW to the various programs that address critical needs in our community. Don said, "Seeing the magnitude of the needs in our community, and the effectiveness of the UW partner agencies in addressing those needs, made me a real believer in the organization. Since then, my ministry with United Way has consisted of both financial support and serving in a leadership role, through the Board of Directors, to ensure we are fulfilling our mission." This June, Don completed seven years of service on the board. For most of that time he served on the Finance Committee, and this past year he served as Board Chair.

David started working with UW in Richmond, Virginia, before moving to Murfreesboro in 2013. He said, "I have had many roles in the organization, from hands-on, grass-roots activity to leadership positions. I have always felt that United Way is a highly efficient community servant. In other words, many individual contributions of time, talent, and treasure to the United Way have a broad-based, substantial impact." David has served as chair of three committees, including the Resource Development Committee, responsible for the annual development campaign. He spent six years on the Board of Directors, including a year as chair. Since leaving the board, he has continued as a "senior statesman," supporting UW's impactful work.

Recently, Don led the search committee which found the newly appointed president and CEO, Kristen Swann. Don noted, "What surprised me, and where I truly experienced



"We give to St. Paul's because of the impact it has had in our lives, and in gratitude for all that God has done and is continuing to do through St. Paul's."

— Don Clayton

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God at work in my life, was in how my experiences on two Rector Search Committees at St. Paul's informed my approach to leading the CEO Search Committee at United Way. Those experiences showed me the power of prayer, of listening, and of trusting in God to make the process successful. So many times during our CEO search, I found myself aware of God's hand at work, and an overwhelming sense of trust that freed me from the weight and stress of my role." David and Gina Urban recently hosted a reception which provided an opportunity to get an update on United Way's activities from Kristen Swann. David noted, "Aside from the camaraderie associated with the event, I was very impressed seeing the ongoing support for the UW mission from our community leaders."

Both Don and David are motivated by their faith to serve the community. Don said, "My faith has shown me the vision of the kingdom of God as it should be, such that I am only too aware of the brokenness in this present world, and how we fail to live into that reality. Out of Christ's love for me, I am called to do what I can to help build for that kingdom." David's guiding principle comes from the Gospel of Luke: "*To whom much is given, much will be required.*" David said, "I also know that I am a very independent person, but when I follow the Gospel of Matthew, and I *go into (my) room, shut*

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*the door, and pray to our Father who is in secret,' I sometimes wonder why I have been so richly blessed. Truthfully, I don't know why, but I am motivated to give something back to people who need help. My wife Gina has also been an enormous influence on me because of her service orientation, which reflects the example of her parents. She makes me want to be a better person."*

Working with United Way gives Don a sense of belonging, of "being a part of the ongoing efforts to ensure that this community is a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, as it has been for me and my family." He takes inspiration from Micah 6:8, "*Know, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*"

David has seen firsthand the positive impact United Way has on individual recipients and partner organizations. He said, "I remember visiting the Salvation Army facility to see the logistical challenge associated with the Angel Tree program. It's incredible how many children receive assistance and joy at Christmas due to the work of all the partner organizations, including St. Paul's. Christmas is about the Christ Child and other children worldwide, and Angel Tree is a significant priority for my family." He added, "The Bible overflows with stories of thankful people. One example is the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with a jar of costly ointment. Another is the humble woman who put two coins into the collection box in the temple, causing Jesus to say, '*Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.*' All of us should give according to our ability."

David's favorite scripture verse is the "Parable of the Talents" in Matthew 25. "It tells of a master who left his house to travel and, before departing, entrusted his



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*"We give to St. Paul's because it is our Christian responsibility. We offer our support unconditionally, and we believe that having a giving spirit is a way to express gratitude for God's beautiful blessings."*

— David Urban

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property to his servants," he said. "According to each person's abilities, one servant received five talents, the second received two, and the third received only one. The first two servants made the most of the talents they received and received praise from the master. The third servant did nothing with his talent, mainly because he feared taking a risk. The master called him wicked and slothful, took his talent, and gave it to the most productive servant. Then he threw the wicked servant out into the darkness, where there was '*weeping and gnashing of teeth.*' It reminds me that although we have differing gifts, our challenge from God is to maximize what we have."

*Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this grace of giving.*

2 CORINTHIANS 8:7

# | Book Review | A Teaching Parish |

by Dr. David L. Rowe

Christian formation has been an essential part of St. Paul's mission for many years. It began as a commitment to raise our children as Christians and in the 1990s expanded to include a concern for forming adults. The result was a systematic program of Christian education for all ages beginning with the nursery. In the mid-90s we added to our scope the mentoring of seminarians and newly ordained priests and deacons as assisting clergy who came not only to lighten the rector's workload but also to be disciplined in parish ministry.

We long accepted this as simply one of several important functions of a parish's work, but in the light of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) this multi-layered discipling effort takes on greater significance. Indeed, Jesus charged his Church from the outset to "make disciples of all nations," not only baptizing them but "teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Formation is thus at the heart of the Church's purpose.

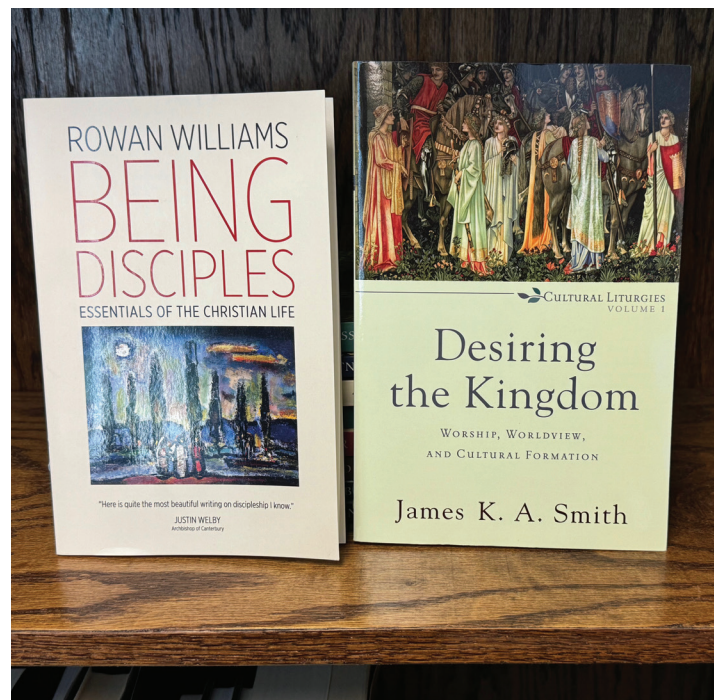
Two books available in our library focus directly on this essential nature of the parish's purpose. Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams delineated Jesus's marching orders in *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans, 2016). Being disciples, he says, is "about how we as a Church go on being a learning community, how we grow in depth of relation with each other and God." Instilling disciplines of faith, hope, and love with Jesus, parishioners share them with each other and take them into the world to grow God's Kingdom.

To James K. A. Smith (*Desiring the Kingdom: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2006*), the congregation is the essential teaching and learning community where worshipping God recalibrates us away from the habit-forming lures

of secular culture and institutions back to the spirit-building habits of the holy life. "We are what we love," he says, and what we love shapes us and impels us, for well or for ill. "[T]he sacramental intensity of liturgical practices," he writes, "provides a center of gravity that then orients and nourishes other Christian practices, which are extensions of latent possibilities for practice in Christian worship."

Consciously or not, St. Paul's has been living out this ethos for decades, and this year we take another giant step forward in the mission to "form people (including first of all ourselves) into the body of Christ." ■

For more information about the parish library and how to use it, please contact David Rowe at [drowe@bellsouth.net](mailto:drowe@bellsouth.net).



*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

MATHEW 28:19-20

# Upcoming Events

by Chase Benefiel

## Sunday Evenings, September 8–November 17, 5:00 p.m. | Alpha

The Alpha Course at St. Paul's offers participants a space to ask questions, share a meal, and rest in Jesus Christ with their community. Sign up today on the website!

## Tuesday, September 10 |

### Over 70 Birthday Celebration

Seniors age 70+ enjoy a delicious luncheon with celebration of birthdays occurring this quarter. Birthday celebrants receive a card, birthday cake, and an opportunity to win a door prize. Lunch is at 11:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall.

## Sunday, September 29 |

### Undie Sunday

Donations of socks and fresh underwear will be distributed by The Journey Home to the homeless population in Murfreesboro. If you plan to make a monetary donation, please put "Undie Sunday" in the memo line of your check or online donation through Realm.

## Sunday, October 6 |

### Blessing of the Animals

Bring your pets—leashed or crated, please—to the courtyard at 4:00 p.m. for a blessing.

## Saturday, October 12 |

### St. Paul's Ken Sloan Memorial Golf Tournament |

### Champions Run Rockvale

Sign up as a foursome, a twosome, or as an individual for this annual golf tradition. Food and festivities will follow the competition. Golfers of all ages and skill levels are welcome!

## Friday, October 18–Sunday, October 20 |

### Parish-wide Family Campout | Henry Horton State Park

Join your St. Paul's family as we enjoy a beautiful fall weekend at Henry Horton State Park! There are options for tent sites, a lodge, cabins, and RV campsites. You may also choose to make a day trip! Check the weekly eNewsletter for more details and a sign-up link.

## Sunday, October 27 |

### Gratitude Sunday

After the 10:00 a.m. service, we will host a picnic to thank you for your generous support of the church's ministries.

## Thursday, November 28 |

### Thanksgiving Service and Potluck Dinner

Join us for a longstanding St. Paul's tradition: Thanksgiving service at 10:30 a.m., followed by Thanksgiving luncheon. Bring your favorite Thanksgiving dish to share.

## Sunday, December 1 |

### Advent Wreath Party

On the evening of the first Sunday of Advent, we will make Advent wreaths and enjoy dinner together. Please keep an eye out for more details and RSVP instructions in the eNewsletter.

## Sunday, December 22 |

### Lessons and Carols

Weaving together biblical readings with seasonal music, this service prepares participants to hear the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ.

## Tuesday, December 24 |

### Christmas Eve

Join us for the children's Christmas Pageant at 4:00 p.m. and Choral Eucharist at 10:00 p.m.



## TREASURER'S REPORT

YEAR TO DATE THROUGH JULY 2024 (OPERATING FUND ONLY)

	ACTUAL	BUDGET	VARIANCE	PRIOR YEAR	VARIANCE
<b>REVENUE</b>					
Pledges	534,356	456,373	77,983	466,758	67,598
Unpledged Gifts	74,488	37,932	36,556	36,713	37,775
Other Income	45,773	44,041	1,732	47,455	(1,682)
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>654,617</b>	<b>538,346</b>	<b>116,271</b>	<b>550,926</b>	<b>103,691</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>601,346</b>	<b>610,902</b>	<b>9,556</b>	<b>603,843</b>	<b>2,497</b>
<b>NET CASH FLOW</b>	<b>53,271</b>	<b>(72,556)</b>	<b>125,827</b>	<b>(52,917)</b>	<b>106,188</b>

# St. Paul's EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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# St. Paul's EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

### SUNDAYS

**7:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite I**—*in the Nave with Gospel piano*

**9:00 a.m. Christian Education**—*for all ages*

- Nursery for children under 3

**10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite II**—*in the Nave with organ*

- Children's Church
- Nursery available during service
- Available via livestream each Sunday

### WEDNESDAYS

**7:00 a.m.** —*Holy Eucharist in St. Andrew's Chapel*



The Epistle is a publication of St. Paul's Episcopal Church and is shared with members and friends to engage and inform readers about what is happening in the life of our church community.

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**We are forming people into the Body of Christ**