

# *St. Paul's Episcopal Church*



## *Parish Profile 2021*

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## *What we are looking and praying for*

Our church was once part of the heartbeat of Gardner. We have a vision to reestablish that presence in the Greater Gardner Community of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Through a process of discernment, prayer, and in consultation with the Bishop and his staff, St. Paul's is seeking a full time **Priest in Charge** to lead us in the fulfillment of that mission.

By the Grace of God St. Paul's has recently become the recipient of a substantial endowment. It is our prayer and desire to utilize those funds, along with our annual income, in an efficient and effective way to redevelop the Church. We are looking for an individual that has a passion and priority for mission to community involvement and outreach. An individual that enthusiastically conveys the life changing message of Scripture to all that they encounter, and who would actively pursue opportunities for developing ministries beyond our current membership and program.

We seek a candidate that connects with people of all ages. Put simply, "we want to be wanted". We are looking for a leader who wants to come to a small church and have an impact. A candidate that demonstrates excellent ability to convey the Gospel in a meaningful way to a modern world. A person that cares about people.

We seek a candidate who wants to be part of the Gardner community. We care about our neighbors and want to be a positive force in the community. We seek Clergy who will help us draw in people of all ages looking for a spiritual home. We understand that will mean change. We also understand that change is not easy but we are committed to a fair and open minded evaluation of new ideas and methods. The last 20 years have brought many changes to our country and to our faith, and we would be naive to think the next 20 will not do the same. We seek someone who recognizes that fact and will partner with us to find a path into the future. No one is perfect and we are not looking for the perfect Clergy. We are looking for someone who is open and loving and will help to guide us in ways to navigate the world following God's love.

The parish is open to diversity and would joyfully and seriously consider any Clergy that meets the criteria for this position as enumerated by the Diocese of Western MA and our Bishop.

If you are a Clergy with energy and passion for the work of redevelopment in a parish setting, we promise to listen with open hearts, learn with open minds, and be willing to try new ideas. We look forward to welcoming you with open arms and the love of God.

## *Our Vital Statistics*

Our average Sunday attendance is 38 and our number of pledges over the last three years has varied from 33 to 38.

St. Paul's has been remarkably stable financially. For the five-year period 2015 to 2019 annual income ranged from \$100,000 to \$109,000 with pledges accounting for 61% of the income. Expenses have been in line with income resulting in a balanced budget over this time period.

St. Paul's rents its Rectory which typically generates about \$10,000 in net income annually. The Rectory income is used as needed to support Operations.

Despite the highly unusual circumstances associated with the Covid Pandemic, pledge giving has remained strong in 2020 and 2021 resulting in a net income above expenses during the past 18 months.

The Church has no outstanding loans or debt at this time.

Our balance sheet as of April 30, 2021 shows \$148,145 which includes cash in all accounts of \$73,145 and an endowment of \$75,000. The endowment is invested with Trustees of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts.

In November 2020 St. Paul's was notified that we will be the beneficiary of an estate bequest that will endow the church with an unrestricted gift of approximately eight hundred and sixty thousand dollars. The anticipated proceeds of this gift, by the fall of 2021, have allowed us to dramatically rethink our congregation's vision and revise our search for leadership.



## *Our History*

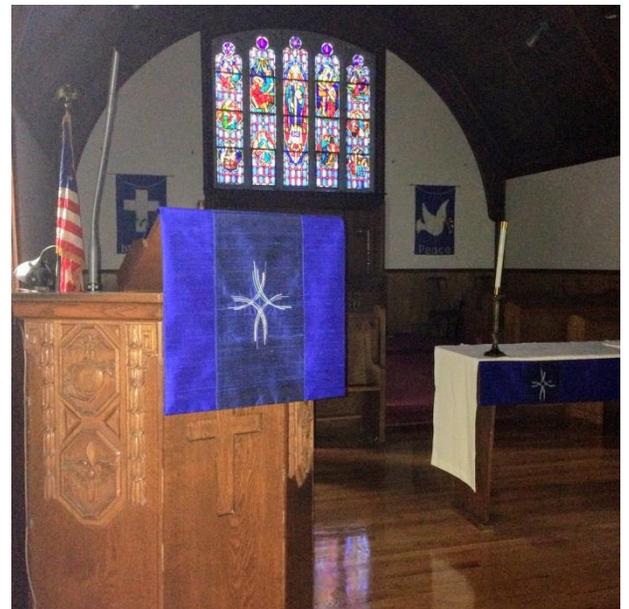
St. Paul's traces its roots back to December 10, 1882 when the first Protestant Episcopal Church service was held in Gardner. A few months later, on February 9, 1883, a Protestant mission was formed and St. Paul's celebrates this date as its founding. In August of that year the mission took its name after St. Paul's, New Castle-on-the-Tyne, and

England, where a member's father was buried. Meetings were held in public buildings including

the Lower Town Hall and then the Upper Town Hall. In short order a new church that seated 300 people was built on the corner of what is now City Hall Avenue and Pleasant Streets and on June 21, 1885 the first service was held at the new church. St. Paul's organized as a Parish on January 4, 1905 and on May 9, 1906 St. Paul's was admitted into union with the newly formed Diocese of Western Massachusetts. It was the first new parish to be admitted since the formation of the Diocese.

As the area around the church became more commercial, St. Paul's searched for a new location and hired Henry Vaughan, noted church Architect, to design it. The Vaughan design showed three buildings in a Victorian Gothic style; a rectory, a parish house and a granite church with a tower. The granite church was never constructed and the parish house became the church. An article from 1909 described the church as follows: the woodwork is cypress and the flooring maple. The windows are of diamond paned, leaded cathedral glass. The ceiling is 18 feet in height. The gallery is capable of seating 75 people. The approximate cost to build the parish house was \$14,000. On February 1, 1909 the first service was held at the parish house which remains the present location of the church to this day.

In 2003 the Church completed a \$300,000 major renovation project that replaced the original slate roof, reinforced the structural integrity of the roof, made major improvements to site drainage, added a new main entrance, Narthex, and moved the altar forward.



## *Worship and Mission*

*We the people of St. Paul's are committed to live and journey together as followers of Christ through worship, discipleship and mission.*



While our Sunday worship is typically a traditional Rite 2 Sung Service, the Congregation has proven very open to different forms and music for worship. Whether new music, like a quarterly Blue Grass Service, or alternate words of liturgy, the people of St Paul's have proven to be open and willing to broaden their experience of God in worship.

We currently employ a dedicated organist and choir master with over 30 years of experience serving

churches from California to Massachusetts in a variety of economic and ethnic communities. As a long standing established presence in the Gardner Community, St. Paul's Mission is multifaceted. We work to bring meaningful and faith affirming worship to a dedicated but aging congregation. At the same time, we strive to be active in the Community, showing and modeling Jesus's Love to those around us. Parishioners are active on a weekly basis with the Community Action Council (CAC), the VNA diaper pantry, and annually in an Ecumenical backpack program. Most recently, St Paul's sponsored and organized a local "feed my sheep" food program that packed and distributed thousands of meals for the needy in a single day.

The leadership of St. Paul's is acutely aware that simply waiting for people to discover and visit our church is no longer a path to growth and vitality. We need to reach out to people of all backgrounds, ages and life experiences, to engage them in living with us the good news of the Gospel of Jesus. We are therefore seeking leadership to assist us in new efforts of community engagement and outreach, spending at least half of their time in ministries beyond the current membership of St. Paul's. St. Paul's is looking to reestablish ourselves as a vital faith community, visibly engaged in the issues and needs of the Greater Gardner Community, in cooperation with ecumenical partners well into the future.

## *Where we are now*

A dedicated core group of Parishioners have in the past and continue to make St. Paul's a caring, nurturing and supportive community of faith.

This group of lay leaders, including the Vestry and others, take on many roles throughout the year including organizing and running special events, outreach programs, serving as, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, worship leaders for morning and evening prayer, licensed Lay Preachers, Altar Guild members, choir members, financial oversight and so much more.

In addition to the lay leadership group, St. Paul's currently employs a part time Office Manager and a part time Sexton.

Below we have included questions and responses from the Diocesan Transition Manual to give a brief overview of how we see our current status:

In our baptism we promise to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ, seeking and serving Christ in all persons. You are invited here to reflect on your ministry by responding to the following questions:

Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry that you recognize as one of success and fulfillment. **We organized and spearheaded an ecumenical effort that included the majority of churches in the Gardner area. Working with a national company, workers prepared and boxed thousands of prepackaged meals to be distributed to those facing food insecurity.**

How are you preparing yourself for the Church of the future? **Vestry is very aware of changes in the culture that have reduced the numbers of people actively engaged in church membership and worship. Members have sought out and participated in a variety of workshops, written guidance, and internal discussion, to educate ourselves in ways to invite others into Christian community and stay current with worship and outreach practices locally and nationally.**

Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship in your community. **Traditional with a commitment to the Book of Common Prayer, but the parish is also open to new language and forms of worship. We have experimented with music and liturgy from other traditions with some success.**

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry? **We make a general invitation and encourage all parishioners to participate in church positions as they are called. We make personal invitations to members demonstrating particular gifts such as Vestry, Choir, Readers, LEMS, etc.**

As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being? **We pray for one another and for needs in our community in our weekly worship. Especially during the pandemic, we have stayed connected through telephone calls, emails, our website and Facebook page. We have gathered for worship using Zoom, including a weekly “Zoom Coffee Hour” after worship. Our musician and choir create seasonal CD’s of music and devotions for homebound members. We have recently offered a weekly Zoom Bible Study.**

How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community? **We are looking to do a better job in this area. Both from a membership and clergy perspective, we seek to strengthen and embolden this essential ministry.**

Describe your worshipping community’s involvement in either the Wider Church or geographical community. **As a small community church we are involved with the local Community Action Council, supporting and working on several community projects each year. In the past we have also supported a sister parish in Africa and supported the ARC program for feeding and providing farm animals to communities in need.**

Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past 5 years. Who can be contacted about this project? **Organized Feeding Program; providing leadership and logistics that pulled together five ecumenical partners to prepare and distribute thousands of prepackaged meals (contact Senior Warden).**

What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community? **We experience stewardship in the joyful giving of our members over many years, members who have generously given monetarily and of their time and talent in a way that has kept up with the increasing cost and demands of the modern church. In recent history we have employed various annual stewardship programs including guest speakers and personal testimonials.**

What is your worshipping community’s experience of conflict? **Conflict has not been a predominant theme in our community. On occasion conflict has sometimes been handled successfully through discussion and compromise and at other times individuals have left the Community over differences in opinions and practice. A relatively recent example of conflict occurred when a new member of the congregation asked if they could assist the Altar Guild at the completion of Sunday Service. The answer she received was perceived as hurtful an exclusionary. Numerous efforts to reach out to the individual were not successful and the person moved on to another church. We used the opportunity to discuss, in Vestry Meetings, and with the Congregation about the importance of every member making a sincere effort to welcome new members and have better awareness and understanding of what our fellow members bring to weekly Services.**

What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn? If you were to identify the gifts/skills you need in leadership as you move into the future, which words would you use to best describe these? (100 words max): **As church and worship practices have changed over the years we believe that**

**the overarching lesson that leads to successful resolution of issues revolving around change is communication. Transparent communication with the congregation and the willingness to listen to all opinions, concerns, fears, and to acknowledge all voices, has proven to be the key to resolving change issues. When effective communication and listening happens decisions involving change go well. When communication and listening are done poorly decisions involving change also tend to go poorly.**

**We are looking for leadership that is, enthusiastic, effectively communicates at a personal level, and is sincere in their call to God's mission.**

### ***What you can expect from us***

We are a welcoming and excited group of parishioners, eager to move forward and actively participate in a new chapter of the history of St. Paul's. Our members recognize and embrace the realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology and culture.

We are situated in a small historic New England setting located in Central Massachusetts, serving a regional population of approximately 60,000 people, living in Gardner and six surrounding Towns. The City of Gardner is located approximately 50 miles from Boston and 30 miles from Worcester. The Gardner community features a vibrant Community College, proximity to nature, mountain vistas, and ocean beaches.

The Gardner area is home to numerous churches representing a wide variety of worship practices. An ecumenical Clergy group is active in the Community.

We are prepared to offer a fair compensation package of salary and benefits including, a housing allowance, health insurance, time off, and sabbatical time based on the guidelines provided by the Diocese of Western MA.



