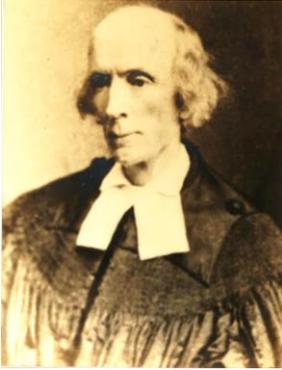


In Praise of Priests I (A three-part series)

I thought we might simply take pause in this summer season of 2014 and give praise to the priests of St. Paul's. We are a parish church established first on the banks of the Stono River in 1707 by act of the General Assembly. While the ruins of that first pre-Revolutionary church and an acre of property still belong to us today, St. Paul's became a church on-the-move and followed the population inland, first to Ravenel, then to the tiny village of Summerville in 1824. Since 1824, thirty-three priests have served as pastors and leaders of our community.



Amazingly, we have the photos of almost all of them hanging on the wall in Skardon Hall. There is our first Rector, the Reverend Philip Gadsden, who served St. Paul's for forty years from 1824 to 1864. He oversaw the construction of the first church building in 1827 as well as the construction of our present building in 1857! Preaching on the topic of the difficulties of unexpectedly having to replace the first structure with a new one in 1857, he spoke these words on the Third Sunday after Easter, May 3rd, 1857, on the occasion of the first use of our present wonderful church building:

When we reflect still further how at this eventful moment of almost insuperable difficulty, a greater mountain was made to arise before us, as if to mock our scheme and laugh us into abandonment of it. I mean the proposition which was suggestedthat we should venture on the erection of an entire new church...we and I said 'who were we and what were our resources that we should dare attempt so huge a work?'.....

Yet it was not to be accounted an impossibility. It was a great thing and it was a good thing; if we should essay to carry it through in a right spirit, and with much labor and patience, and with constant calling upon God without ceasing....

And so we proceeded to cherish and entertain the high project, and we went to work with heart and hands, and God blessed our endeavors, and he opened the heart, and hands, and purses of men and brethren, who poured into our laps of their treasures, and according to their ability...

That our little sum have multiplies, and become thousands and we have been able to accomplish what in the distance seemed, a huge and mighty work, and far, far beyond our utmost ability And now we call upon you this day to praise God with all your soul for making this great mountain to become a plain; and to give Him all the glory and honor thereof.

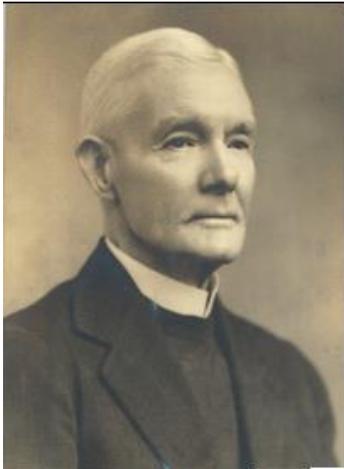
Philip retired in 1865 as our first Rector at the age of 66 years because of his blindness and, I expect, worn down by the massive burden of four years of the War. He died in 1870 and is buried beneath our sanctuary. Others of us have followed proudly in his footsteps as clergy and pastors of the St. Paul's family. Words like his above helped inspire and encourage us when we undertook another 'great thing' by the construction of Doar Hall and the C/Y Building completed in 2002 and 2003 respectively.

More next week.....

Mike +

In Praise of Priests II of III (the second of a three-part series)

After a succession of parish rectors (the Rev's Harrold, Sams, Johnson, Guerry, Whaley, Glass, Jagar and Cornish), Dr. Francis Ambler settled into the role in 1908 and remained as our Rector for 32 years! I know less of him although his daughter, ill and infirm, was still living here when I arrived in 1995 and remained a faithful member of St. Paul's all her days. In more recent years, his granddaughter returned and worshiped with us for a season. Though memories of him have grown dim, Dr. Ambler was revered as a gracious and good pastor. Simply his amazing 32 years of faithful service is a testament to perseverance and leadership.



After 1940, we enjoyed a succession of clergy, who sadly, in most cases, did not stay long. Of recent memory but prior to 1995 would be Steve Skardon, Allan Mustard, Floyd Finch, Winston Charles (who planted St. George's & brother-in-law of Marion and Joy Hunter), Henry Parsley, Sam Candler, Mehrdad Abidari, Jeffrey Fishwick. Each of whom I have heard wonderful and lovely stories of their ministry and service here. Each of these, and current clergy as well, also have their critics, but I give thanks for their desire to faithfully serve the Lord and His people here in this community. Let us remember, we, the people of St. Paul's, are not always easy to get along with either!

In finishing these thoughts, I would like to give special attention and thanks to the priests who have served alongside of me. We are the first era of St. Paul's when we grew sizeable enough to need three priestly servant-leaders. What a blessing has come of varied talent and ability. They seemed to have come always as pairs.

After 1995, there was first the intellectual tour de force, a recent graduate of Oxford with his doctorate, Kendall Harmon. Kendall was here when I arrived and remained until 2001. He led many of you deeper and deeper into Scripture and was a principle voice for our physical expansion. His wife, Elizabeth, was an extraordinary small group leader/discussion leader in her own right.

Mike Szymanowski joined us from the Upstate in 1997 and remained until 2001. Mike brought the grace of laughter to every circumstance. He helped us all to lighten up. Mike, too, had a passion for Scripture and liturgy, blessing us all with his light-hearted but with-depth sermons. He, too, did some heavy lifting making a case for committing to new facilities. Wife Brenda, a busy professional accountant, invested huge amounts of time and talent with our youth and was much appreciated by Oeland and our youth.

We'll conclude these thoughts next week as we come to present times.

Mike +

In Praise of Priests III of III (the third of a three-part series)

....Then during 2003 came the Gray-Coerper duo. Doug, with his evangelistic zeal and his passion for the un-churched and the de-churched, re-launched *Alpha*. He made *Alpha* a primary vehicle of conversion and a doorway welcoming all sorts of peoples into the St. Paul's family. So many have loved Doug's preaching style, too. Tricia, Doug's wife, was a huge blessing in children's ministry.

Becky, our second women priest in our history (Jennie Olbrych was our first), of all of us, was the most systematic, most organized, and even in imitation of Mary (of Mary and Martha fame), the most prayerfully meditative priest. In fact, Becky was the complete package of skills, abilities and spiritual maturity. While us guys were usually ready to 'fire, ready, aim', Becky began each project, each committee or team meeting with extended, listening prayer. That was so-o-o- effective. Doug and I both learned a lot from her. I loved Becky's preaching style (we all have our favorites), and her abilities as a counselor were second-to-none. With Becky came Kip who wonderfully led our choir, arranged great music offerings for Feast Days and was an expert organist.

After their departures in 2009 and 2010 to go serve as parish Rectors, we have once again been incredibly blessed with quite wonderful priestly leadership. Tyler, our faith@home go-to guy, along with Lanier, his perfectly lovely wife, and their five-some, have been exemplary role models of marriage and parenting. Tyler, a young scholar in his own right, was tapped by the Bishop to serve on our Board of Examining Chaplains (Kendall Harmon is there as well). Tyler's own preaching ability and his impact on the young fathers of our parish have been incalculable.

Finally, when John and Toni joined us in 2010, the Lord has given us another wonderful pair of associate clergy. Indefatigable John, who radiates Christ's love in every setting and with every person, softens every heart with his own loving heart. John's love of history suffuses his preaching and makes his preaching rich and dynamic. Toni has brought Parish House Catering, her French horn and her own gracious warmth to our family.

As I prepare for departure, I simply wish to say publicly, from my own heart's depths, 'Thank you and thank you again and again' to these wonderful priests who have been loyalists, fellow travelers, and exemplary servants to us. What a privilege and a joy it has been serving alongside these priests, as different as night and day, each of them from the other, yet each possessing a passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ and a desire to share it and live it. Each one of them has been so effective as preachers and as leaders! I am a blessed parish rector to have served alongside such distinguished priests of this church. Thank you, Lord, for such a privilege.

Mike +

