

The Gospel Truth

A publication of St. Paul's Episcopal Church

April 2024



From the Editors:

Our goal is to share parish news, introduce each other, and foster community. If you know of news, events, or information of interest to the St. Paul's community, please email us. Feel free to toot your own horn! We want to hear all the news that's fit to print. We welcome your ideas and suggestions and will try to incorporate as many of them as we can.

Contributors:

Gay Clyburn gclyburn49@gmail.com

Melinda Plue melindaplue@gmail.com

Nicci Brown brownlot65@gmail.com

IN THIS ISSUE



News You Can Use

St. Paul's in Action

Presiding Bishop Nominees

Musical Notes

Vestry Reports

Loaves and Fishes

Getting to Know You

Foyer Groups

News You Can Use



Is Someone in Your Family Graduating?

Share your good news! Let us know who's graduating so that we can list them in the service bulletin (end of May) and in the announcements. You can fill out the information [online](#) or email the office with the details. Please provide your graduate's name, school, and degree (if applicable.)



The **Day of Pentecost** commemorates the beginning of the Church. Tongues of flame descended upon the apostles and other followers of the risen Christ to help them proclaim the good news (Acts 2.) It takes place on the Seventh Sunday after Easter (May 19 this year.) We customarily wear red to church that day in recognition of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

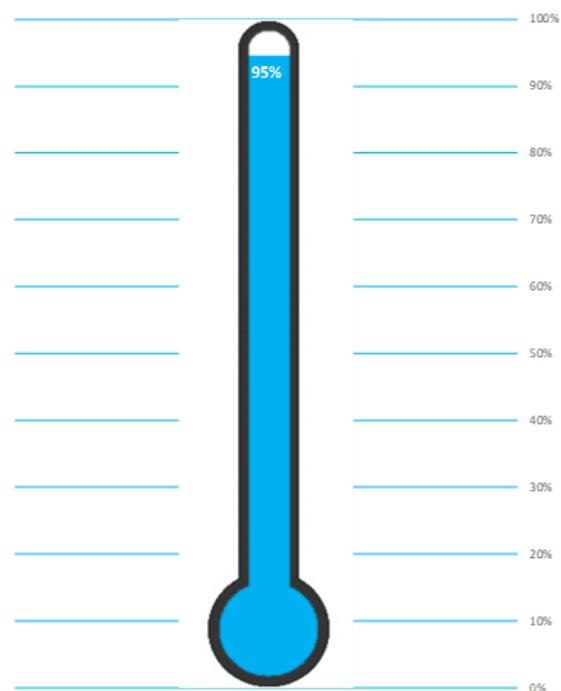


CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

As you can see, we are very close to reaching our capital campaign goal! We still have some money pledged that we are waiting to come in, which will get us a little closer.

The outside painting will begin very soon and we are starting to look at flooring companies. We have had an unexpected capital expense of the heating/cooling unit for the Loaves and Fishes/Guild Room/youth room/nursery areas. So it is important to get your pledges in for the capital fund so we can see if we can shift some money to this unexpected expense.

Fundraising Progress



Goal:	\$65,000.00	100%
Goal Achieved:	\$61,500.00	95%

St. Paul's in Action

The 10:30 Easter service was made even more joyous by the baptism of two very sweet babies, the very engaged and musical Elijah James Byrd (Ashley Churchill and Travis Byrd, parents) and the angelic and sleepy Brynlee Ann Price (parents Kaylee and Tim Price).





A Most Powerful Woman!



Congratulations to Senior Warden Lisa Hilbish who was honored recently by *Union County Weekly* as one of the 100 Most Powerful Women in Union County. The newspaper has published the list for a few years now to spotlight women in leadership roles within business, education, government, nonprofits, and other sectors of the community.



Do you recognize this guy? Robert Heath entertains at the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper (February 13) as Roy Orbison. The likeness is uncanny! Go to the [St. Paul's Online Picture Gallery](#) if you would like to see a recording of Roy in action. In addition to singing, Roy tells pancake jokes. Who doesn't love a good pancake joke?



Attendees at the Super Bowl Party held on February 10 enjoy Reba belting out the national anthem prior to kick-off.



Our Social Media Pages
Are you following St. Paul's on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#)? We would love to have parishioners and friends of St. Paul's interact with us. Please share with potential visitors, too.

Election for New Presiding Bishop

Bishop Curry to Step Down on October 31, 2024

The Episcopal Church's [Joint Nominating Committee for the Election of the Presiding Bishop](#) has announced the names of the bishops it will nominate to succeed Presiding Bishop Michael Curry.

Its nominees are:



From left to right: The Rt. Rev. J. Scott Barker, Diocese of Nebraska; The Rt. Rev. Daniel G. P. Gutiérrez, Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania; The Rt. Rev. Sean Rowe, Episcopal Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania (and provisionally Episcopal Diocese of Western New York); The Rt. Rev. Robert Wright, Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

Videos of each nominee discussing a biblical image or metaphor that resonates with this moment in the life of the church and the role of the presiding bishop are available on the [General Convention website](#). This page also includes photos and links to each bishop's biography on their diocesan websites. The four names will be formally submitted to the General Convention during a joint session on June 25, a day before the House of Bishops is scheduled to elect the 28th presiding bishop.

Following the Convention Eucharist at 8:30 a.m. on June 26 in the Kentucky International Convention Center, the bishops with seat, voice, and vote will travel to Christ Church Cathedral in downtown Louisville, where the election will take place during a sequestered session in the context of prayer and reflection. The House of Deputies will then be asked to confirm the election.

The Rev. Maureen-Elizabeth Hagen, a deacon who chairs the nominations subcommittee, added, “We felt the Holy Spirit’s presence during this process and are prayerfully thankful for the guidance we received.”

The announcement of the nominees opened a 13-day period during which any bishop or deputy to the 81st General Convention may indicate their desire to nominate a bishop not on the committee’s slate. All nominees, including any nominated by petition, will address General Convention attendees from 4-6 p.m. EDT on June 21. That session will be livestreamed and available for on-demand viewing. The nominees’ names will be formally submitted to the General Convention during a joint session of the two houses on June 25. Any petition nominees will be submitted during that session as well.

Bishop Curry’s nine-year term concludes Oct. 31, 2024. The presiding bishop-elect’s nine-year term officially begins Nov. 1, 2024.





MUSICAL NOTES

A Man of Many Hats

Choir member Robert Heath wears many hats at St. Paul's. He sings tenor, records the livestream of our Sunday services, keeps our technology up-to-date in the front office, and provides entertainment every year for the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper.

Where did you grow up?

My late wife Joy and I grew up in Monroe together. We were married at St. Paul's.

How did you end up in Monroe?

After we got married, Joy and I lived in Raleigh for two years, and then in Columbia, South Carolina for 30-odd years. We decided to move back to Monroe when we got five signs from Heaven:

- 1) Our house in Columbia burned down.
- 2) Joy lost her job.
- 3) I lost my job.
- 4) Her mother (in Monroe) became too feeble to live alone.
- 5) I could not find more work in Columbia.

When did you first start singing?

I started singing in Alice Brainard's youth choir at St. Paul's in the 1950s. I sang in chorus in middle school. I always sang to the radio while driving. When I worked in China, I sang karaoke with people who wanted to improve their English. A few years ago I sang karaoke at clubs around Monroe. During Shrove Tuesdays at St. Paul's, I impersonated Willie Nelson and Roy Orbison.

How many years have you sung in church choirs?

Let's see: maybe five years with the youth choir. Starting with the time I inadvertently put on Dot Lewis' choir robes, I have sung eight years with the adult choir. So that's roughly 13 years.

How did you end up in the Episcopal church?

Well, I'm a cradle Episcopalian. When Joy and I moved back to Monroe, I knew I wanted to be back at St. Paul's.

Tell us about Gail?

Gail and I were also married St. Paul's -- five years this month. Gail has a daughter and a grandson. Together we have two poodles and three cats.

What are your favorite hymns?

"Joyful, joyful we adore thee" (#376); "The King shall come when morning dawns" (#73); "Welcome, happy morning" (#179).

~Kathleen Prevost

A Little Hymn History

One of Robert's favorite hymns, "Welcome, happy morning' age to age shall say," is also known as *Fortunatus*, after Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus (*whew!*), who wrote these hopeful Easter lyrics. While the exact date of the poem's composition isn't known, we can assume Fortunatus wrote it somewhere between 540 and 600 A.D. It was translated into English and set to music in the late 19th century, and has since become a cheerful Easter favorite.

Fortunatus, a Latin poet, received a classic education in rhetoric, grammar, and law in Ravenna, Italy. According to legend, while a student in Ravenna, he suffered from an eye disease and was nearly blinded. He was miraculously healed by rubbing his eyes with oil from a lamp burning before the altar of St. Martin of Tours. Around 565, he went on a pilgrimage to Tours to give thanks at the tomb of St. Martin. He subsequently settled in Poitiers, where he became active in a local religious community. He remained in Gaul (France) for the rest of his life, eventually becoming the Bishop of Poitiers in 599.

A prolific writer, he was encouraged by his friend, St. Gregory of Tours, to publish his work. While his life's work, "Hymns for all the Festivals of the Christian Year" has been lost, we still have many of his hymns, including "Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle," (*Pange lingua*, Hymnal 165 and 166,) and "Hail thee, festival day," (*Salve festa dias*, Hymnal 175, 216, and 225.)



Image of Vanantius H. C. Fortunatus



VESTRY NOTES FROM FEBRUARY AND MARCH MEETING MINUTES

- The annual Parochial Report has been submitted
- We had good attendance at both the Super Bowl party and the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
- A hinge on the South Transept door has been replaced
- Discussion of starting Foyer groups up again
- Loaves and Fishes is trying to open on Tuesdays again [Note: they were successful in finding volunteers; they are now open from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays]
- The Mary and Martha Episcopal Sisters cooked a meal for Turning Point
- The Sesquicentennial team is meeting once a month
- Gay Clyburn (Junior Warden) is getting quotes for painting the outside of the church; painting will begin in May
- Discussion of Lay Eucharistic Visitors; we have a list of parishioners to visit
- We have put a map of circuit-breakers and devices into Google Drive
- The recipe book is gaining momentum; people are contributing

VESTRY UPDATE

Your Vestry continues to work hard for St. Paul's. We held a Vestry retreat in January to discuss opportunities and challenges that we face and where we hope to see St. Paul's this year. Increasing membership, awareness and pledges, community outreach, visitor follow-up, and pastoral care for those that are sick or no longer able to attend church were common themes. We continue to gauge our progress in these areas at our monthly meetings.

We implemented a new church management database, Servant Keeper, that will house our member and visitor data, automate our Sunday counting process, and will soon enable online giving options. There are many other benefits of this database that we are still exploring.

The Vestry decided recently to switch our banking relationship from Truist to First Citizens. We continually look for ways to increase the interest we earn on our money and also increase the customer service we receive from the bank.

Many years ago (in the 1980s), St. Paul's entered into a contract with the City of Monroe for the use of our parking lot near the church office in exchange for the upkeep of the lot. We met with Mark Watkins, the City Manager, to discuss this contract and he was in agreement that the lot was never kept up by the City. They agreed to repave the lot, which will take place in the next month. The contract will no longer be valid at the end of this year as the City does not need our lot any longer since they have built a new public lot.

2024 is an important year for St. Paul's as we will be celebrating our sesquicentennial in November. We will keep you updated on the events planned for this event.

Loaves and Fishes: Hope for the Hungry

“... Give ye them to eat.” Matthew 14:16



Loaves and Fishes volunteers come from all over Union County and are often recruited by hearing of the positive experiences from current volunteers. St. Paul's parishioner Sylvaine Moore, who has volunteered since 2010, says she loves it. "I see people coming in who are sad and they leave smiling and laughing," she said. "Of course it isn't just the food; we're a pretty funny group." Pictured are the chief buyer and food transporter Tim Orrey; Judy Roggenkamp, former president and volunteer since 1997, Henry Morris; and Moore.

In April 1983, with the simple goal of distributing food staples and groceries to the hungry people of Union County, Loaves and Fishes opened its doors at St. Paul's. The idea was spearheaded by the then rector, the Rev. Dan Riggell, and supported by an energetic board of directors that included Herb Joyner, Honore McMeekin, June West, and Marian Helms, with Paul Painter as the first senior director.

The call to volunteer was also simple and continues to this day: "We need lots of people who can give of their time by helping to buy, package, and distribute food." St. Paul's not only provided the space, utilities, and volunteers, the church donated several thousand dollars and later wrote and received a \$10,000 grant from the Diocese of North Carolina for the program. The board of directors grew as did support from other local churches, individuals, businesses, and civic organizations.

Nutritional groceries for one-week are provided to Union County residents in crisis; with proper referral, up to three times in a 12-

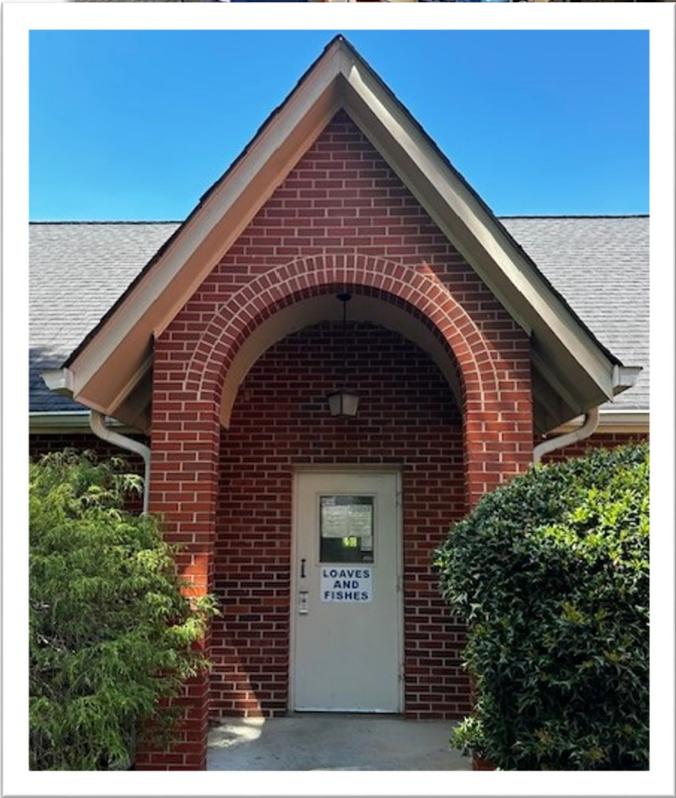
month period. Referrals are made from agencies like Crisis Assistance, Red Cross, social services, and area churches. A board of directors with representatives from the community and other churches continues to manage Loaves and Fishes.

Elaine Clark is both a volunteer and the vestry liaison. “It’s amazing to see the community at work to help feed others in need,” she said. “Our little church provides the walls for this makeshift grocery store.” Volunteers come on Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 10 to noon to help pack the food following the guidelines of a certified nutritionist. There are behind-the-scenes volunteers that donate, buy, and stock food as well. “It is truly the feeding of the 5,000,” Elaine said. “It is a miracle that is just so humbling to be a part of.”

Food insecurity is just as prevalent in our community as it was when Loaves and Fishes started. To volunteer, donate, or if you just want more information, contact Elaine at elaine@theclarkshome.net or 704-619-9289. They are especially looking for Tuesday volunteers to expand the service hours.



One of the rooms next to Loaves and Fishes serves as a stockroom. At any given time, it contains jars of peanut butter, jam, and applesauce, boxes of cereal, mashed potatoes, and pasta, and cans of fruit and vegetables, among other items familiar to anyone’s pantry. Loaves and Fishes also has a refrigerator and freezer for perishable foods like milk and meat.



Many community members step through this door to warm greetings and leave with a week’s worth of groceries. In addition to pantry staples and fresh food, many people also are in need of basic items like toothpaste, toilet paper, paper towels, and pet food.

Nearly 80% of the food Loaves and Fishes distributes has been donated directly to the pantry. They couldn’t do it without community support. Visit their [website](#) to find out how to donate.

Getting to Know You: Nicci Brown

Parish Admin Plus



Nicci with her new puppy, Kailua Seven Brown (Lua for short.) She (Lua) is of indeterminate breed, straight from the mutt factory. The Brown children insisted their parents get a new dog, and then promptly went back to college (Wyatt is at NC State, Isabelle at Furman.)

Nicci Chen Brown sometimes finds that her name brings with it a conversation deeper than what is generally expected by someone meeting a person for the first time. Many times, she is asked to explain its genesis (Is it Italian? Is it a nickname?) and ends up having to provide a bit of family history. To set the scene, she's a third-generation Californian, a real rarity, and she was born in the 1960s in Los Angeles. Her parents were stereotypical Californian free spirits in their college years. They named her after the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who among many other questions, contemplated the basis of good and evil. Her much more traditional grandparents strongly suggested that her parents change the spelling to something more palatable to them, thus the name Nicci. Pronounced correctly, it shares the soft "ch" sound with the name of Italian fashion designer Gucci. Chen is her maiden name from her mother's second husband, who is Chinese American and who adopted her when she was a child.

As Nicci Chen, she grew up in a very "Ozzie and Harriet" home. Her father was an engineer for Burroughs computers, where he met her mother. She has a half-brother and sister. They moved around the country quite a bit for her father's job. She finished her senior year of high school in Huntsville, Alabama, and that's where she met her husband, Rhett Brown. She had just graduated with a degree in English from Sewanee, The University of the South, and moved back to Huntsville. She was working part-time in a wilderness camp for kids and her co-counselor talked her into going out with her to a bar to dance. Going out dancing was not within her comfort zone, but she didn't want to disappoint her friend. She was and

is more the quiet, introverted type who would rather be home reading. She admits that the rest of the story is a cliché. She met the love of her life in that bar. Rhett Brown was hanging out with his Navy reserve buddies that night, in Huntsville to serve with the Seabees from the Navy Reserve as a veteran of Desert Storm. He introduced himself. She spent the rest of the evening in a non-stop conversation and found that they liked the same music, read the same books, were interested in many of the same things. She was immediately convinced that she had met the man she was going to marry. He met her parents right away (required) and within a year she and Rhett were married at All Saints Chapel at Sewanee. He was working at Wingate University as the director of a volunteer service organization, and maintaining a long-distance relationship might have fast-tracked things.

Shortly after moving to North Carolina, Nicci got a job in the Registrar's Office doing degree audits, becoming the Registrar several years later after working her way up. "It was the perfect job for me," she said. She enjoyed working with a small team that supported students, alumni, parents, and faculty, touching on pretty much every aspect of the academic experience. During her years at Wingate, she and Rhett had two children—Wyatt and Isabelle. She also went back to school to earn a master's degree in English (which allowed her to serve as an adjunct instructor.) It was sometimes tough juggling work while raising two kids, but eventually she settled into what would turn out to be a very traditional marriage when Rhett stayed on the hamster wheel and she got off. When Rhett was promoted to the presidency of Wingate in 2015, she had to step down. There would have been the appearance of opportunities for conflicts of interest. As she puts it, "he got hired and I got fired."

This gave her an opportunity to take some time off. She knew she wanted to continue work that would be of benefit to her community, volunteer-adjacent, and still not take on the hours of a full-time position. St. Paul's was her choice. She had been a member since moving to Union County in 1993 and Father Henry had counseled Rhett and her as preparation for their wedding. In 2016 she took on the role of parish administrator and very quickly has become indispensable. She has been an essential part of the crew for the parish newsletter, *Gospel Truth*, since its inception. She does the design and layout and contributes a good part of the articles. She has been a choir member for 15 years, taking a bit of a break at one point, but coming back at the insistence of the Pluses. Covid allowed her the time to delve into her joy of music even deeper; she taught herself to read music during those quarantined months. The Browns are regular coffee hour hosts and say yes to many, many asks from the parish. She has the same hopes for St. Paul's as many of us—more families, a return to even greater vibrancy, and a solid financial position.

She is such a constant presence and deserves our heartfelt thanks. Remember, it's Nicci, like Gucci.

Join a St. Paul's Foyer Group

Food and Fellowship



What is a Foyer Group?

The word *foyer* comes from a French word meaning "hearthside."

Foyer Groups have been a tradition in Anglican and Episcopal churches for many years. Basically, Foyers is a home-based supper club for three to four couples and/or a number of individuals from the same church. Groups normally consist of around eight people total who rotate suppers at each other's homes over a period of a year. Groups are shuffled at the beginning of each school year. At St. Paul's, we also have an option for a group that meets at a restaurant monthly.

Why join a Foyer Group?

Foyers is a wonderful way to get to know other members of the St. Paul's community in a different setting. Whether you are new to St. Paul's or have been a member for many years, having supper in each other's homes (or at a restaurant) can create new bonds of friendship or strengthen existing relationships. Think of it as an extended and more intimate coffee hour (with different food and beverages, of course!) The purpose is purely social.

How will Foyers work at St. Paul's?

Each year, new groups will be formed from everyone who has signed up. Groups will be expected to meet at least four times (more if you wish!) over the course of the year, rotating amongst homes as volunteered (not everyone has to host). One couple/individual from each Foyers will be designated as the convener, who will be responsible for getting the initial communication started and organizing the first meeting. Each group will decide its own schedule. The hosting party will provide the main dish and others in the group will bring side dishes (e.g. appetizer, salad, bread, dessert, wine). The host will make suggestions for each member couple/individual.

If the host couple would like for their group to meet at a centrally-located restaurant, this is also a great way to host Foyers; in this situation, everyone would be expected to pay for his/her own meal and beverages.



Why is St. Paul's starting up Foyers again after a hiatus during COVID?

St. Paul's has changed a lot in recent years. St. Paul's had a robust Foyer Group for many years. Many of us remember it very fondly as being the primary way we got to know other church members of all different age groups and interests. It was a fantastic way not just to put a name to a face, but to really know and understand something about other people in the pews.

What are the rules?

Each Foyer Group, each year, will be as unique as its members. Each group will largely determine how it wants to operate, e.g. how many times it will meet, when it wants to meet, where it wants to meet. Foyer Group members should follow the normal rules of any social gathering, i.e. avoid topics centered on politics or hot-button issues. Each meal should be started with a simple prayer.

Questions? Please contact Melinda Plue (melindaplue@gmail.com).



2024 IMPORTANT DATES

May 26: Parish Potluck

August 11: Parish Potluck

November 10: Annual Meeting & Parish Potluck

Sesquicentennial

November 15 - hors d'oeuvre drop-in

November 16 - public open house

November 17 - Bishop's visit with light luncheon after combined service

November 22-23: Diocesan Convention