



THE EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL'S

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A LETTER FROM DEAN VANG

My Dear People and Friends of Saint Paul's:

In our more youthful years, educators sought to the best of their ability to challenge our minds and imaginations in varieties of disciplines. Do you remember the courses associated with mathematics? Algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus. Problem solving was key. Test after test, we were instructed to find the value of "x" the unknown?



While serving as a young priest in Bergen County, New Jersey, I vividly recall a suburban parish where someone erected a significant outside sign. It read, "Put Christ back into Xmas." But the X of Xmas is not a puzzle – the X is not unknown. In fact, it is the absolute opposite of that, for it is God making himself known in the most powerful way he could to human being, by becoming human. The X is Jesus Christ who, as Saint Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians, is the image of the invisible God (1:15).

In Jesus we see God. In Jesus we can come close to God because he came close to us. And because he came close to us, he brought all of humanity together within the reach of his loving embrace on the cross. Moreover, it is the presence of Jesus Christ that allows his brilliance to reflect the glory of God, for we are all made in his image.

We live in an age when many who celebrate Christmas do not know the story of the one whose birth they are celebrating. We, who call ourselves Christians, bear his name; we are part of the X that is Christmas, and we pray that our lives will make a difference in our world so that Christ will recognize us when he comes again.

Listen to words from the Third Letter of Saint John: The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. (1b-2)

A Blessed and Happy Christmas to each of you!

Most cordially and faithfully,
Dean Vang



ST. PAUL'S LEADERSHIP

Parish Priest:

Dean Marshall Vang

Deacon:

Alicia Butler Todaro

Rector Emeritus:

The Rev. Leslie C. Hughs

Organist-Choir Director:

Steven L. Rosenberry

Office Assistant:

Nelson Moore

Sexton:

Kyle Walker

Sunday Childcare:

Jescyka Thompson

Wardens:

Denise Mason

Mark Lowery

Vestry:

Jonathan Bell

Eric Chan

Bill Harrison

Karen Hibbert

Melvin Hitt

Tristan Lowery

Kate Storms

Rachael Thomas

Barbara Walenta

Secretary for the Vestry:

Sandie Feck

EPISTLE Newsletter Editors:

Susan Harwood

Kate Storms

Kelly Dalton-Trotter

THE WARDENS' MESSAGE

Writing this letter over Thanksgiving provided a good opportunity for both of us to ponder how thankful we are for the St. Paul's clergy, staff, musicians and volunteers who work to ensure that St. Paul's continues to serve not only our parishioners but the larger community, both here and abroad. Of course, Thanksgiving means that we are approaching Advent and Christmas, and we are reminded of these familiar words:

“And she gave birth to her firstborn, a Son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Luke 2:7

Having heard the Christmas story so often, we know it by heart. Sadly, as much as we love to hear the story, we too often put it out of our thoughts as soon as we put up the calendar for the New Year. Like the infamous innkeeper, we cannot find room for the newborn Baby.

Do you have room? By his grace, God will warm our cold hearts and give us the desire to be his stewards with room in our day to serve him, room in our finances to give what is needed, and room in our lives for him to work his will in and through us.

On November 23, we celebrated St. Paul's with our annual stewardship brunch, and many parishioners returned completed pledge cards that specified their financial commitment to our parish for 2026. However, the opportunity to make the same commitment has not passed.

Pledge cards, including information on proportionate giving, were mailed to every parish household for arrival in November. If you have not yet returned a completed card, we urge you to review the information provided, to consider the proportion of your income you can contribute and to return the completed pledge card as soon as possible. The vestry and treasurer are working on the 2026 parish budget now, and your pledge could not be more important to their efforts to sustain St. Paul's.

Your commitment to support God's work at St. Paul's serves two important purposes: It helps you grow and develop a mature faith as a Christian steward, and it provides critical financial support to St. Paul's and the community it serves. Without that support, St. Paul's cannot continue. It is critical that every household pledge its support for 2026.

We wish you and yours a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy 2026!

Blessings,
Your Wardens
Denise Mason
Mark Lowery



EXCITING CHORAL MUSIC FOR CHRISTMAS EVE AT 7 PM

Herbert Sumsion – Mass in A & D
Harold Darke – In the bleak mid-winter
Michael Praetorius – Today is born Emmanuel
Michael Harrison – There is no rose
Bob Chilcott – O little town of Bethlehem
Bryan Kelly – On Christmas Night
Plus favorite carols for congregation and choir!



MUSIC AT ST. PAUL'S UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2026

Sunday, February 15 at 3 PM

Returning to St. Paul's again will be the exciting young organist Brian Glikes in a program of music by composers old and new.

Sunday, March 22 at 3 PM

BACH AT ST. PAUL'S. The great organ works of Bach will be performed by two accomplished local organists: Brian Hoffman (organist at St. Pius RC Church) and Justan Foster.

CABARET FUNDRAISER: A NIGHT IN CASABLANCA AT MC EWAN HALL



Music, Community, and Generosity Shine at the Annual Event

On Saturday evening, October 25th, McEwan Hall came alive with the spirit of Casablanca, drawing a near full house of enthusiastic guests to the annual Cabaret fundraiser.

This year's event was a resounding success, raising nearly \$2,000 to support both Music at St. Paul's and The Loaves and Fishes Ministry.

Under the masterful direction of Music Director Steven Rosenberry, the evening's entertainment transported guests to the golden era of the 1940s. Master of Ceremonies, Bill Harrison, set the tone with witty banter and a warm welcome. The program presented by both current and past choir members featured a lively mix of solos, duets, and ensemble numbers, echoing the iconic sounds of music of the 1940s and beyond.

Hospitality was expertly orchestrated by Barb Walenta, who ensured the buffet overflowed with delicious offerings and beverages. As guests mingled, the clinking of glasses and cheerful conversation underscored the community spirit at the heart of the evening.

Bill Moll, the event's sound engineer, flawlessly balanced microphones and music, letting every lyric and note fill McEwan Hall without missing a beat. Room decorations, coordinated by Bill Harrison and Candy Deisley, seamlessly blended Casablanca glamour with a touch of local charm.

Volunteers played essential roles throughout the evening. Special thanks to The Hallorans and the Lowerys who volunteered with ticket sales.

Thanks to everyone - performers, hospitality team, technical support, and volunteers - for making the Cabaret fundraiser an unforgettable success!

-Submitted by Bill Harrison

THE REVEREND ALICIA BUTLER TODARO

Deacon Alicia became our deacon in early May of 2025. After visiting Saint Paul's for several months, she found us to be the kind of church she was seeking: one with good people and good music. Having served for sixteen years with Fr. Michael Gorchoy until his retirement from St. Paul's, Troy, she missed proclaiming the gospel. We are fortunate to have her now serving with us!



I had the privilege of speaking with Deacon Alicia recently, when she kindly shared some of her life story. She grew up in Ballston Spa. Her maternal grandfather was a Wesleyan Methodist minister. Her brother is a retired United Methodist minister. After being brought up in that denomination, she discovered the Episcopal Church, where, she says, she felt "at home." Her call to the diaconate began when she was a young mom and continued for twenty years. She was ordained at All Saints Cathedral, Albany, in 2008.

After earning her BA in Chemistry at Russell Sage and her Ph.D. at RPI, Professor Butler Todaro taught organic and inorganic chemistry at Siena College for 28 years, teaching whatever chemistry courses were needed. She worked briefly at Albany Medical Center as a nurse.

Married to a retired physicist, Alicia and her husband are parents of one daughter, who is also a physicist. She lives in Oxford, England, with their grand-dog Remy, a poodle/bichon mix. Alicia and her husband enjoy hiking in the Adirondacks during 10-day vacations at St. Peter's on the Lake, in Old Forge. They also hike on the Isle of Wight, England, when visiting their daughter.

Deacon Alicia describes her mission as being the point person for ministry outside the church, particularly for the poor and homeless. To this end, she is getting to know the neighborhood around St. Paul's, becoming acquainted with the Head Start folks who share our building and the Charter School next door. I learned from her that there are three things a deacon cannot do, known as the ABC's: Absolve sins, Bless, or Consecrate.

Deacon Alicia is good with a needle. She has repaired her vestment called a Dalmatic, worn by the Deacon. She is also learning to embroider. And, I am pleased to say, she has agreed to author her own column in upcoming editions of the Epistle.

One parishioner has referred to Deacon Alicia as a "Firecracker." Her positive energy seems to abound as she preaches the Gospel, leads a Sunday Bible Study, seeks to serve the community, and identifies ways she might lead us in fulfilling our mission in the world. Welcome, Deacon Alicia, and thank you!

-Submitted by Susan Harwood

TENDER HEARTS, FIRM FOUNDATION

A report on the 157th Convention of the Albany Diocese

The 157th Convention of the Diocese of Albany was held at the Christ the King Spiritual Life Center in Greenwich from October 9-11. Bishop Jeremiah, Canon Meaghan Keeghan and all the Management, Staff and volunteers (including Kelly Dalton-Trotter) are to be thanked for their outstanding hospitality and excellent organization during this first diocesan convention held there. Convention Delegate Bill Harrison and Alternate Delegate Candace Deisley were present representing St. Paul's in Albany. Dean Vang and Deacon Alicia were in attendance as voting clergy.

A variety of workshops, worship services and social activities kept the convention lively, and it was wonderful to see representatives from across the Diocese in attendance. The Rev. Scott Gunn, Executive Director of Forward Movement, was a Special Guest and Presenter whose ministry and presence were well received. Loaves and Fishes Executive Director, Gail Truchard, along with Duncan Calhoun and Russell Gibson, were there to share insights into the ministry through workshop offerings and to meet and share with attendees.

(Continued on page 5)

At the Business meeting the following Proposed Resolutions as presented were adopted.

- The Constitution of the Diocese of Albany (DOA) - 2026 version was amended, bringing the governing documents of the DOA up-to-date and into alignment with those of The Episcopal Church. The Constitution will lie over until the next meeting of the Convention, and if then approved, be amended accordingly
- Clergy Compensation and Benefits
- Loaves and Fishes Outreach recognized as an official ministry of the DOA
- DOA Budget 2026
- Christ the King Center Budget 2026
- Adopted with Amendment that the Diocese will form a Task Force to explore concrete ways the DOA can continue to be welcoming to immigrants, refugees and strangers among us

-Submitted by Bill Harrison



STRENGTHEN US IN ALL GOODNESS



As I was reading the daily office this morning, my mind caught on a small phrase tucked, often unnoticed, in the prayer that follows our confession of sins: "...strengthen us in all goodness..."

It's a prayer we hear often, spoken by Dean Vang or Deacon Alicia on Sundays, by the narrator of the Morning at the Office podcast, or by me in my own morning office. Because it is so familiar, I admit I often drift through it without really listening. But today, this simple line stopped me as if I were hearing it for the very first time.

It made me pause and ask myself: What are we truly asking of God when we pray to be "strengthened in all goodness"? Do I even want to be strengthened in all goodness? Am I allowing God to do that work in me? What would a life strong in goodness actually look like?

When given a moment to sit with this phrase during my contemplative prayer time, I sat quietly with God and asked for guidance. After some silence, I began to list the kinds of goodness I sensed God inviting me to grow in: reaching out to friends I haven't seen in a while, being more intentional with my donations and in my aid to the poor, managing my kitchen better so there is less food waste. These are definitely ways I can strive to be stronger in my goodness toward my neighbors and toward the Earth.

As I sat longer, I felt a nudge to go deeper. What goodness, beneath the surface, does God want to strengthen in me? I realized I needed to be more honest. I could work harder to remember that every person is made in God's image. This includes those politicians I disagree with, the person in the news who is accused of doing hurtful things, those kids who always gather in the road while I am driving, and my relative who never has anything good to say. God loves them all and He calls us to do the same. Scripture tells us this plainly. Jesus shared meals with outcasts and criminals, taught and healed with compassion, and loved and forgave all, even those who crucified Him.

So I added to my list: resist gossip, refuse to assume that one harmful act defines a whole person, offer grace even to those who don't extend grace to me, and give myself more grace too. God's grace is endless, and He loves each of us without measure.

After a few more minutes of quiet, I ended my contemplative prayer by reciting the Lord's Prayer. And I felt a familiar closeness to God settle in. Through corporate prayer, sacred reading (lectio divina), bible study and centering prayer, I continue to deepen my relationship with God and am more willing to offer up my shortcomings and struggles to His help and guidance.

If you've ever wondered what Albany Blooms is all about, this is an example of the spiritual practices we teach and support through this diocesan ministry, and how these practices can deepen your relationship with God.

May God bless you as you seek to draw closer to Him, and may He indeed strengthen you in all goodness.

-Submitted by Kelly Dalton-Trotter
Your Parish's Albany Blooms Coach

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

We continue to work to keep the church as clean and well-organized as possible, prepare the rectory for a new rector's family (fingers crossed) and to advance two major facility upgrades.

As we had announced to the parish, Sexton Kenneth Ryer experienced a heart attack in June and notified us that he would no longer be able to serve as sexton. Pierce Dalton filled the role, with help from a few volunteers, notably Jon Bell, until Pierce left for college in August. Kyle (Breeze) Walker took on the position in October. In addition to routine cleaning and upkeep of the church, Breeze opens the church on Sunday, sets up coffee, generally helps with coffee hour and clean-up and supervises hall rentals.

The vestry has approved a \$1000 contract to repair and replace damaged vinyl siding at the rectory and to install gutter covers on the upper story gutters. Watch for announcements of opportunities to assist with painting the rectory interior.

During most days, the nave and sanctuary receive a significant amount of sunlight through the south-facing windows, but if you have attended an evening service, you no doubt noticed how dark our main worship space can be. In fact only about a third of the 74 overhead bulbs are currently working. Because all 74 were replaced about 15 years ago, we can expect the remaining working bulbs to expire relatively soon. Unfortunately, accessing the bulbs, which hang 38 feet above the floor is challenging. Any lift that would fit through the doors and down the aisles, without requiring removal of pews, would not provide a safe working platform.



To allow our electrician, Excel Electric, to confirm they could maneuver a suitable lift into the nave and to allow visible inspection of the light fixtures, the vestry approved a \$2,610 contract to rent the lift for one day. Although the electrician was able to access the rear lights, we determined that the lift would not allow access to the front rows behind the reredos. We have now identified a larger lift that will allow access to all the overhead lights but will be more expensive and require removal of at least some pews. The vestry is now considering two contractual options, one of \$19,205 to install incandescent bulbs and one of \$30,000 to install LED bulbs. We anticipate undertaking this project in early 2026.

As reported in the August Epistle, an initial energy survey recommended replacement of the current boiler, which provides all heat in the church building, with a high-efficiency condensing-type boiler and installation of a new heating control system. The vestry has approved a \$46,510 contract with CHA Consultants to design a new boiler and control system, provide drawings for use in bidding, cost estimates and support during the bid and construction phases. CHA has already been onsite to take detailed measurements, but we do not anticipate actual construction to begin until the summer.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

-Submitted by Mark Lowery

SAINT PAUL'S PRAYS FOR A NEW RECTOR

Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a rector for this parish, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer

FROM THE CHURCH HISTORIAN



Holiday bazaars were a fixture at St. Paul's during the mid-twentieth century. Organized by the women of the parish, and generally held in November or early December, they produced significant income for parish programs. We are lucky to have newspaper photographs of the Christmas Holiday Festival and Bazaar held on December 4, 1961.

The first photo shows women preparing items for sale. Standing on the left is Virginia Eells, who twenty years later would become St. Paul's first woman warden. Standing on the right is Ismena Grant, long-time chair of the altar guild. St. Paul's beautiful "Creation" altar frontal was given in Mrs. Grant's honor.

The second photo is of women preparing the bazaar luncheon in the church kitchen. Three months later, the parish would learn that the Lancaster Street church building would likely be demolished for construction of the South Mall, now known as the Empire State Plaza.

-Submitted by Paul Nance



AUTUMN MICHAELMAS FAIRE: A COMMUNITY FUN DAY

The 2nd Annual Autumn Michaelmas Faire took place on Saturday, September 27, bringing the community together for a day filled with activities and fellowship.



Highlights of the Event:

- Over a dozen craft and food vendors offered a variety of goods and treats to enjoy.
- A special blessing of the animals was held, inviting community members to celebrate and honor their pets.
- The fall mum sale provided a seasonal touch, sending guests home with beautiful autumnal flowers.
- Complimentary children's face painting was organized by Girl Scout Troop #2037, adding color and fun for younger participants.
- Traditional bangers and mash dinners were served, contributing to the festive atmosphere.
- The Loaves and Fishes ministry hosted a bake sale, offering homemade treats and supporting their outreach efforts.



Building on the success of the previous year, the Autumn Michaelmas Faire served as an opportunity to highlight the diverse ways St. Paul's ministries support our community. The event raised nearly \$2,700 in support of St. Paul's Outreach Ministries, strengthening ongoing efforts to serve the community.

Sincere appreciation is extended to the more than twenty dedicated volunteers whose hard work and commitment were essential to the event's success.

-Submitted by Bill Harrison

WRITING HOME FROM COLLEGE

Our scholarship recipients, hard at work

(Submitted by Gillian Conover)

Brock Murry attends Albany College of Pharmacy

My name is Brock Murry and I am attending Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. I am 6 months from graduating with a Doctorate of Pharmacy and Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Sciences. I am on my year of pharmacy rotations where I shadow pharmacists in the field and participate in clinical settings. Currently I am shadowing Dr. Thomas Smith, the ICU pharmacist in Glens Falls Hospital. We are in charge of every patient on the floor and determine the appropriateness of the medications the patients are receiving. If there are any concerns, we bring them up during rounds to the hospitalist or attending physician. Additionally pharmacists manage electrolyte imbalances and practice antibiotic stewardship to make sure each patient receives the best care possible. It is a very rewarding experience and I am very thankful to St. Paul's for assisting me in achieving this.



Pierce Dalton attends Clarkson University

Hi. This is Pierce. I go to Clarkson University in Potsdam, studying Electrical Engineering. I am in various clubs in campus like a weekly bible study on Saturdays. I am also in the Outing Club where we go for hikes, rock climbing, and camping.



Paige Conover attends Utica University

I am a freshman at Utica University and I am majoring in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. I am also on the Pre-Med track. I am currently taking Calc 1, Biology, Chemistry and an English class. I am playing the cello in the orchestra here on campus. I am also in the Biology Club and the Pre-health Club. I spend most of my time on campus in class, studying, practicing, or hanging out with my friends. On the weekends sometimes I come home or I'm in the library studying or hanging out with my friends.



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Lizzie Andrus attends Ithaca College

At Ithaca College I am a Television, Photography, and Digital Media Production Major with a minor in Politics. I recently added a Media Literacy minor as well! I continue to perform well in my coursework and look to challenge myself by taking 18 credits (the max) each semester to utilize my tuition to its fullest degree. I plan to take my studies abroad in Spring of 2027 and am currently applying for programs in places such as London and Italy!

Outside of classes, I recently joined the rugby team on campus and play as a forward. In addition to that I have been a producer for the live news show “Newswatch” on the Ithaca College Television network, ICTV. I’ve also had the opportunity to anchor some of our shows, most notably I hosted our election coverage this fall. All past episodes are available to watch on ictv.org and next semester the show I produce, Newswatch Tuesday, airs live on the website at 7:30pm. Also on campus, I work as an Admission Host giving tours to prospective students and families.



At Ithaca College I’ve continued to be involved Christian ministry on campus with Ithaca College’s Christian Lighthouse Fellowship. This is an organization I joined last spring and have many quite a community from. The Christian clubs have really blossomed here on campus this fall and it’s lovely to see people from different sects of the faith come together for worship.

I look forward to being with you all again during the holiday season!

Opportunities to contribute to anti-hunger programs



Loaves and Fishes Outreach Ministries

Loaves and Fishes Outreach Ministries is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany, serving two of Albany’s most underserved neighborhoods. At the heart of our work is a weekly meal program that offers more than just food; it offers connection, compassion, and community. St. Paul’s is one of the major supporters of this ministry.

Powered entirely by volunteers from sponsoring parishes across the Diocese, we provide nutritious meals, essential supplies, and supportive services to neighbors facing food insecurity and hardship. <https://loavesandfishesalbany.org>

St. John’s/St. Ann’s Food Pantry

St. Paul’s provides food items and toiletries which have been donated by the parish congregation. Donations are acknowledged at the offering during the 10:30 a.m. church service. If you would like to make a monetary contribution, go to <https://give.regionalfoodbank.net/give/420462/#!/donation/checkout>

Regional Food Bank of Northeastern NY

The mission of the Regional Food Bank is to lead a network of partners to alleviate hunger, prevent food waste, and nourish the communities we serve. Their vision is that all people have the nutritious food they need to thrive. <https://regionalfoodbank.net>

-Submitted by Bob Englert

NEW PRINCE, NEW POMP

Behold, a silly tender Babe
In freezing winter night
In homely manger trembling lies.
Alas, a piteous sight!

The inns are full; no man will yield
This little pilgrim bed,
But forced he is with silly beasts
In crib to shroud his head.

This stable is a Prince's court,
This crib his chair of state;
The beasts are parcel of his pomp.
The wooden dish his plate.

The persons in that poor attire
His royal liveries wear;
The Prince himself is come from heaven;
This pomp is prized there.

With joy approach, O Christian wight,
Do homage to thy King;
And highly praise his humble pomp,
Which he from heaven doth bring.
-Robert Southwell



Christmas Eve Music at St. Paul's

**4:00 PM Family Creche and
Carol Service**

With Organ, Bells, and Viola

6:30 PM Carillon Concert

7:00 PM with Saint Paul's Choir

SINGING

Music by Suneson, Darke, Praetorius, Chilcott, Kelly, Harrison

Familiar Carols for Everyone to sing!

Organ Music by Messiaen, Dupre

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 21 Hackett Blvd, Albany NY

December 24, 2025 Streamed Live on Facebook & YouTube

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Albany, NY 12208

Church Website:
www.StPaulsInAlbanyNY.org

Church email:
stpausepalbany@gmail.com

Believe 
OUTLOUD



St. Paul's celebrates the Holy Eucharist on Sundays at 8 a.m. (Quiet Holy Eucharist in All Saints' Chapel) and 10:30 a.m. (Choral Eucharist in the Nave). Midweek Holy Eucharist is celebrated on Wednesdays at 12:15 in the Chapel. Morning Prayer is said at 10 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday in Chapel.