



A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF

# ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

IN THE CITY OF WILMINGTON  
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF EAST CAROLINA

**OPEN DOORS. OPEN HEARTS. OPEN HANDS.**

WE WILL WELCOME ALL TO LIVE GOD'S MISSION,  
TEACH CHRIST'S LOVE AND TRANSFORM OUR COMMUNITY BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

## A brief history

Bishop Thomas Atkinson began services in a borrowed Methodist Protestant church at 4<sup>th</sup> and Orange streets in 1856. St. Paul's formed as a parish in 1858. The congregation had Episcopal and Methodist Protestant freed and enslaved black members and white members. There was a black choir and Sunday School. Pews were free; all were welcomed for worship. During the Civil War and Yellow Fever epidemic, services were suspended. In 1865, the Bishop instituted an Episcopal Freedman's Commission school and "St. Paul's Colored Mission" in the church. The congregation and school soon outgrew the space; wanting their own church building, they purchased property and established St. Mark's Church in 1871. St. Paul's was re-organized by the previous white membership and by 1888 underwent significant remodeling. Beautiful Charles Booth stained-glass windows were installed at the time.



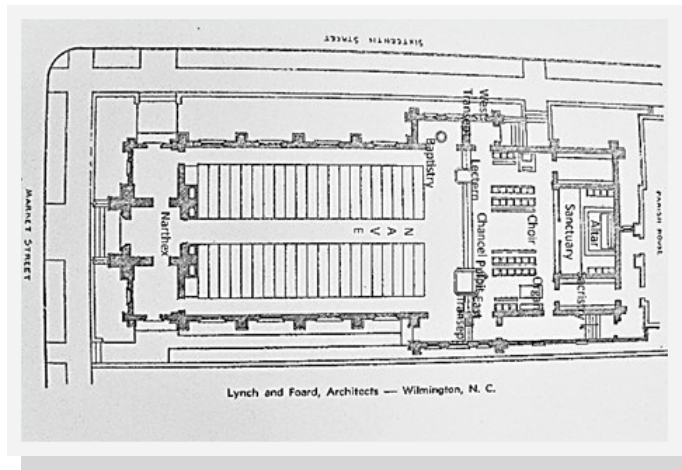
Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, St. Paul's moved to the "streetcar suburbs" at 16<sup>th</sup> and Market streets. Two buildings on site became a parish house and rectory and a church was constructed, known as the "little brick church." The stained-glass windows, carefully removed from the old church and stored, were installed. The baptismal font, a memorial brass lectern, and other ecclesiastical furnishings were also brought from the old building.

It had long been the vision of St. Paul's to grow. Plans for a cathedral church and parish house were obtained in 1918 from Cram and Ferguson, Architects, of Boston. Ralph Adams Cram had studied medieval English churches and was known for his contributions to American Gothic Revival architecture. While those papers have been lost, the original design of our buildings reflected Cram's ecclesiastical style and work. The plan for a cathedral was confirmed by Ethan Anthony of Cram and Ferguson in 2017.

Foard and Lynch Architects of Wilmington were employed in the mid-1920s. The parish house was built as a memorial to Bishop Robert Strange. In 1936, the rectory was moved and enlarged, designed to match the parish house. World and local events delayed the building of the church until the late 1950s. Our present cruciform church was constructed as a memorial to Bishop Thomas C. Darst. First services were Easter, 1958.

# Touring the Church

1. Entering the church **narthex** through traditional red Market Street doors, visitors and worshippers are greeted and welcomed. Pictures of St. Paul's earlier buildings hang on the wall. A brass rubbing portrays the commemoration of Marguerite d'Escornaix's election as the Abbess at Sainte-Gertrude Abbey Church at Nivelles. As Abbess. Symbols of the 4 Evangelists are in each corner: Matthew (winged man), Mark (winged lion), Luke (winged ox), and John (the eagle).
2. From the narthex, you enter the church's **nave** where the congregation sits. The pews and other furnishings were made by Page Church Furnishings, Albemarle, North Carolina. The narrow stained-glass windows were created and installed by A&H Art and Stained Glass, Harmony, North Carolina. The ceiling is high and arched, characteristic of Gothic Revival architecture; it resembles the hull of a ship purposely.
3. As you move forward down the main aisle, you approach the area of the **transepts**. This "crossing" aisle to the left and right of the main aisle creates the **cruciform**, or shape of the Christian cross, in the building's architectural design.
4. Above the main aisle at the transept crossing, and very difficult to see, is the trap door to the **steeple**. The original steeple was much taller but was destroyed by an electrical fire as the roof was being finished. The present steeple has the same stained-glass as the nave windows. Restoration of the steeple lighting is in progress.
5. To the left, or west transept, is the **baptistry**. The baptismal font there is original to the church at 4<sup>th</sup> and Orange, and may date back earlier than 1858 to when the building was a Methodist Protestant chapel. The small altar area has an icon of St. Paul, gift of St. Paul's youth after a pilgrimage to Greece in 2001. Another significant treasure is the statue of the Madonna and Child. It was carved from a single piece of wood by a Prussian monk, ancestor of a parishioner.
6. Looking above the prayer candles, there is a stained-glass rose window presumed to have been created by Charles Booth for the first church building. In the companion windows, repeated patterns of a stylized passion flower of nails, thorns, crowns, and rays symbolizes the Passion of Our Lord.
7. The **east transept** leads to the hallway going to the parish house. Looking up, there is another early stained-glass rose window. The Bible stand near the steps is a 19<sup>th</sup> century Gothic Revival brass lectern, also used for the Advent wreath each December. It is a memorial to the Bishop's wife, Josepha Atkinson, whose years of support and assistance to St. Paul's were acclaimed by all who knew her. It appears in the J & R Lamb Studio catalog for church metalwork from 1887.



8. Turn and look to the back of the church at the **gallery**. St. Paul's second Goulding and Wood organ is there. It is a nine-rank antiphonal organ with a magnificent festival trumpet rank and cymbelstern. The gift of the Hazel Audrey Jordan Savage estate, it can be played from the gallery or from the main organ console.
9. Above the gallery, the **Bishop Thomas Atkinson** memorial windows are by Charles Booth. The figure of Paul preaching at Ephesus is modeled after original artwork by E. Le Sueur (1649). The mitre and keys are symbols of a bishop. Pomegranates symbolize the hope of resurrection; seeds within symbolize the church and many blessings. The windows were the persevering effort of Marianne Poisson Cutlar as a memorial to Atkinson. The Cutlars were founding members of St. Paul's in 1858.

Over those windows is another rose window by Booth, a memorial to the Gause family, also founding members. All the windows above the gallery were first installed at 4th and Orange, then in the Little Brick Church, and finally in the present building. Each time they were moved, they were dismantled, wrapped, and stored by faithful members.

10. Turning toward the front of the church, you are facing the raised area of the **chancel** and **sanctuary**. It is characteristic of ecclesiastical designs of the high church Oxford Movement embraced by Cram. The chancel is larger and deeper, characteristic of cathedral style buildings where more room is needed for the Bishop's chair. The high altar is raised and given more visibility to emphasize the importance of the eucharist.
11. The **chancel** is also where the choir sits. Furnishings and carvings are all by Page Church Furnishing, most likely the work of Walter Furr. The lectern to your left is where a lay person reads and leads the prayers of the people. The pulpit is to your right, where the sermon is preached. Each is placed to give a clear view of the altar. Angels and decorative woodwork appear on them and the bishop's and clergy seats.

12. The **organ** was the gift of Isabel Clark James Lehto. It is a 38-rank, 30-stop Goulding and Wood instrument, installed in 1995. Ornamental frontal pieces with faux pipes face the congregation. There are 1,800 pipes made of wood or zinc; they range from 17 feet tall to the size of a pencil. St. Paul's welcomes the community throughout the year for organ concerts and recitals. At Halloween, Wilmington's Dorothy Papadakos creates organ magic with her accompaniment to classic silent horror films.
13. A communion rail separates the chancel from the **sanctuary** and **high altar**. The needlepoint kneelers with Christian symbols were a project of the altar guild.
14. On the wall behind the altar is the wooden reredos on which there are carved symbols for the **four Evangelists**: Matthew (the winged man, top right), Mark (the winged lion, top left), Luke (the winged ox, lower left), and John (the eagle, lower right).
15. In the center of the reredos is the **Cristus Rex** or Christ the King. He is portrayed in an uncommon image of Christ on the cross. The earliest crucifixes, dating as far back as AD 742 in Italy, set the image of Christ as King and Priest, royally crowned and robed, arms spread wide on the transverse of the cross, and feet supported.
16. Under the reredos is a **super-altar**. The brass cross is from the oldest church, a memorial to founding member, Marianna Cutlar. Under the cross is a small tabernacle box which holds the reserved communion. Two 7-branch candelabras are on either side as are vases holding floral arrangements.
17. The **high altar** once stood against the wall at the foot of the reredos, but was brought forward so that the priest would celebrate communion facing the congregation. It is covered with fair linens and an embroidered frontal with Christian symbols. The two tall Eucharistic candlesticks were a gift to the parish on the first anniversary of St. Paul's on this site. The chalice and paten used during communion date back to the first church at 4th and Orange.
18. Above the reredos is the **Agnus Dei**, the Lamb of God, rose window by Charles Booth. It was the gift of the Little Workers of St. Paul's during the renovations of 1888. Little workers were the girls and children who used creative ideas and needlework to fundraise the money.



## Memorial and Cremains Gardens

The landscape around the church and parish house has changed over time. In the 1970s, parishioner and Market Street neighbor, Mrs. Beverly Bellamy worked with J. D. Causey to plan and install the Bellamy Memorial Garden in memory of her husband, Clayton Giles Bellamy. The landscaping extended along 16th Street from the rectory on the corner of Princess Street and included the area in front of the Parish House entrances. The Bellamy's own gardens had been featured on earlier annual pilgrimages by the Cape Fear Garden Club.

Replanting along the parish house entrance was done in 1998; it was renamed Dorothy's Garden.

The rectory no longer stands at the north end of the property. It was a play area for a while. Then, in 2016, a Cape Fear Garden Club grant provided the seed money for new landscaping plants. The Rectory Garden is now a gathering space for receptions and special services.

In 1990, the parish established an internment garden on the 16th St. side of the church. The iron work and gate, steps, flagstone path, markers and a bench came from memorial funds for Col. James O. Roseberry. His ashes were the first interred there. Shortly afterwards it was named the Clayton Giles Bellamy memorial garden. The Cox Angel Memorial was installed on the church wall a few years later. Names of those interred are engraved on a plaque.

On the east side of the parish house is a small garden in memory of James Salmon.

# The Parish House

St. Paul's is home to a remarkable 1928 edition of the Book of Common Prayer, displayed in the hall exhibit cabinet between the church and parish hall. An accompanying letter (1932) explained:

*At the direction of Mr. John Pierpont Morgan, I am forwarding to you by express a copy of the Standard Book of Common Prayer, according to the revision of 1928, which he desires to present to St. Paul's Church, Wilmington. Mr. Morgan is giving a copy of this book to all the Cathedral Churches in this country, but as the Diocese of East Carolina has no Cathedral organization, St. Paul's church has been selected as an important Church of the Diocese.*

Built in the late 1920s, parish house blueprints were drafted by Lynch and Foard Architects, putting to paper the vision of the Rev. Alexander Miller and the vestrymen who would have seen the Cram and Ferguson designs. Based on similar parish house designs by Ralph Adams Cram and parish memory of the designs sent by Cram and Ferguson in 1918, we believe that the blueprints represent the original Cram concepts.

The building served both the parish and the community with Sunday school and meeting rooms, an assembly hall with a stage, a full-sized gymnasium and shower rooms on the lower level, and a projector room on the upper level. A few Wilmingtonians recall attending their earliest grades here before transferring to neighborhood public schools. The gym has served local community basketball teams for decades.

