

A Brief History & Self-Guided Tour
of Old St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Baltimore, Maryland



Church Building

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Welcome

Welcome to St. Paul's Church, affectionately known as Old St. Paul's, in downtown Baltimore. We hope you find your time here to be historically stimulating and spiritually refreshing. Old St. Paul's is a special place, a parish with a rich history and a vibrant present, and we are pleased to share this sacred space with you. We offer this self-guided walking tour so that you can experience the beauty and history of the parish at your own pace.

Before you begin the tour, you may wish to take a moment to acclimate yourself to this historic place of worship. You may find it helpful first to take a seat in one of the pews and read the following history of Old St. Paul's. As you set out on this journey through the church building, we hope you enjoy your tour.

A Brief History

Old St. Paul's began as one of the original 30 parishes established in Maryland by the Church of England in 1692 and predates the founding of Baltimore City itself in 1729. The first church building was a log cabin structure on the banks of Colgate Creek near present-day Dundalk in southeast Baltimore County. By the 1720s it became clear that the major population center of the colony would be further north and west, so the Maryland Assembly was called upon to lay out what they termed Baltimore Town. At this time the parish vestry purchased a lot for a new church building in the newly formed village. The site was a choice piece of property encompassing the highest point overlooking the harbor. The current church occupies the northwestern-most corner of this original parcel. The second church was constructed in the 1730s in the same block as the current building, but in the middle of the block facing Lexington Street.

As the city grew, it became increasingly clear that the church was inadequate to accommodate the growing population. In 1784 a new church building was completed in the same place as the previous church, but still resembling what we would today consider a small country parish. The church's graveyard surrounded the church and a brick wall encompassed the property.

In 1791 funds were secured to build a suitable rectory to house the parson and his family. The Historic Rectory now sits one block west of Old St. Paul's on the corner of Saratoga and Cathedral Streets and is the oldest continuously occupied residence in the City of Baltimore. In 2018, the Church did a major restoration of the Historic Rectory so that the parish offices could move into the second floor, and the first floor could be used for meetings, groups, and fellowship events.

The parish cemetery was moved in 1800 to what was then the western edge of the city, now the corner of Redwood Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, behind the University of Maryland Hospital. Among the many notable Marylanders buried there are Samuel Chase, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and General George Armistead, commander of the garrison at Fort McHenry during the War of 1812. *[The cemetery is open to the public by appointment through the parish office.]*

The fourth building to be called St. Paul's Parish was erected in 1817 and designed by the noted Baltimore architect Robert Cary Long. As the city continued to grow into an urban center it became clear that a rustic church building with a courtyard seemed out of place. The new building was moved to the corner of Charles and Saratoga Streets and was neoclassical in style and offered

an imposing façade of Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns abutting Charles Street. This massive, 1,600-seat structure served the parish well until it burned tragically in 1854. Several notable items survived this fire which you will read about later in the tour.

The vestry wasted little time securing the funds and design for a new church structure which would become the fifth and current building of St. Paul's Parish. The new building was built on the foundation of the 1817 church and was designed by the famous English-born architect Richard Upjohn. Upjohn created an impressive Italian Romanesque building that was consecrated in 1856.

We have several names—from our incorporated name, “The Vestry of St. Paul's Parish of Baltimore County” to “Old St. Paul's” and even “The Mother Church.” As the sponsor of St. Paul's Chapel in 1875 (which became Church of St. Paul the Apostle in 1957), it became necessary to distinguish between the two churches, thus the “old” in our name. The parish has been dubbed “The Mother Church of Baltimore,” a reference to its being the first church in Baltimore. Though Old St. Paul's was established over 300 years ago, our mission of sharing the Gospel of Christ is not by any means antiquated or turgid as the “old” in our name might imply. Ours is a vital community dedicated to the service of God and our neighbors, and we hope you will find your time in our church uplifting and rewarding.

Uncovering the Hidden History of St. Paul's Church, Baltimore

by the Rev. Mary Luck Stanley, Co-Rector

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland invited me to research the history of St. Paul's Church in relationship to chattel slavery, and to present at the Trail of Souls Pilgrimage. Thanks to John Henderson, civil rights attorney and judge, and former Sr. Warden, for his research into the story of Reverdy Johnson.

Tobacco

When the Diocese of London founded St. Paul's Parish in 1692 as an established member of the Church of England, people living within the parish boundaries were taxed forty pounds of tobacco per year, paid to the Church. For the first hundred years of this congregation's life, tobacco income was the main source of support. The clergy of St. Paul's were granted “glebe land” to grow tobacco, thus providing for their income. Typically, enslaved people farmed the tobacco. St. Paul's Church was built on the labor of enslaved people.

Baptisms and Marriages

Beginning in the 1790s, and for the following hundred years, more than one hundred people of African descent were recorded in the parish register as being baptized by the clergy of St. Paul's. A slave balcony was included in the third church that seated 1700 people, before it burned down in 1854. The parish register lists “slave, mulatto, negro, and free black” names both for baptisms and marriages up until the 1830's. Presumably, the opening of St. James' Parish for African Americans, founded in 1824, caused the drop off in baptisms.

Clergy Responsibilities

“Under the wing of St. Paul's: In 1873, when St. James' Church had been greatly weakened by withdrawals and other causes, the vestry requested Rev. Dr. Hodges, rector of St. Paul's Parish, to

assume charge of the spiritualities of the parish. Hence, from then until the end of 1888, the priests in charge of the parish were assistants of the Rev. Dr. Hodges. The last priest furnished by St. Paul's was a colored clergyman, Father B. W. Timothy." —*St. James Church: History 1824-1949, Anniversary Pamphlet from 1849*, page 5.

As part of a diocesan ministry, at the request of the bishop of Maryland, the clergy from St. Paul's also took on some of the pastoral ministry for the Johns Hopkins Colored Orphan Asylum. There are almost fifty names of girls at the Colored Orphan Asylum who were listed in the register as being baptized in the twenty years that St. Paul's was in charge of their care.

Abolition

"In 1789, leaders of St. Paul's Church organized the founding of The Maryland Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and the Relief of Free Negroes and Others Unlawfully held in Bondage. This was the fourth anti-slavery society in the United States and the sixth in the world. Founding members included Judge Samuel Chase, Attorney General Luther Martin, and Dr. George Buchanan, all from St. Paul's." —*St. Paul's Parish Baltimore: a chronicle of the Mother Church*, by Francis F. Beirne, page 47.

"The manumission of slaves, which a decade before had received stimulus from Dr. George Buchanan and the anti-slavery society, was creating a problem. The freed men found much difficulty adjusting to their new condition for they had virtually nowhere to go. A possible solution which attracted many people was the proposal to establish a nation for them in Africa. Again some members of St. Paul's took an active interest in the plan. John Eager Howard was vice president of the Colonization Society which was organized on a national scale with headquarters in Washington." —*St. Paul's Parish Baltimore*, page 84.

Reverdy Johnson

In 1931, the children and grandchildren of vestryman Reverdy Johnson (1796-1876) had a brass memorial mounted on a wall in the nave of St Paul's. Inscribed on the plaque are the words, "lover of the Anglo-Saxon Race, of North and South, of Justice and of Peace." The life of Reverdy Johnson reflects the fact that Baltimore was caught in the crosshairs of issues swirling around slavery and the Civil War. Johnson epitomizes these complexities, arguing, as an attorney, a pro-slavery position in the ruinous Dred Scott case, but also advocating for the 13th Amendment (ending slavery) a decade later. He favored the Union, and called the Confederates traitors, while also advocating for state autonomy. He condemned slavery and gave up the slaves he inherited, though he campaigned against extending citizenship, equal protection of the law, and voting rights to the freedmen, opposing both the 14th and 15th Amendments. Johnson regularly opposed Lincoln, but also became an ally in the war, ending up as a pallbearer at Lincoln's funeral.

Desiderata & Old St. Paul's, Baltimore

"Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence." So begins the popular poem known as Desiderata, which has comforted and inspired millions of people throughout the world. Known for its words of reassurance, Desiderata has been reprinted in national magazines such as Reader's Digest, been recited at countless weddings and funerals, and was recorded as a hit pop song in 1972.

Over the years, the source of this well-loved poem has been shrouded in mystery. Legend has it that the Desiderata was inscribed on a wall at Old St. Paul's Church in the late 17th century. In reality, it was written in 1927 by Max Ehrman, an Indiana attorney, poet, and author. Old St. Paul's is in no way accountable for the poem.

So how did Desiderata become associated with Old St. Paul's? To find the answer we must trace back to the season of Lent in Baltimore in the mid 1950's. The Reverend Frederick W. Kates, rector of Old St. Paul's from 1956 to 1961, plays a key role in this story. During Lent it was Reverend Kates' custom to distribute inspirational poems and quotations to his parishioners. One particular Sunday, he placed Desiderata in the pews on parish letterhead, which contained the church's founding date of 1692. One can only surmise a visitor then copied the poem, along with the misleading credit line, and distribution began in earnest. Even today it is rare to find a copy of Desiderata that fails to include the line "Found in Old St. Paul's Church, Baltimore, Dated 1692."

The parish has received inquiries on this piece of poetry from every state in the Union and from countries throughout the world. Desiderata's popularity endures and so does its mistaken association with Old St. Paul's.

Desiderata

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit.

If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love, for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams,
it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

The Tour

Please refer to the diagram on the back cover of this brochure and use the corresponding numbers to guide you through the building.

We begin our tour at the back of the church in front of the **Great West Doors** (1). As you walk down the nave of the church toward the altar, one of the first things that catches your eye is the **Great East Window** (2). This window was designed by Maitland Armstrong of New York, installed in 1902, and refurbished in 1994. The lettering in the panel at the bottom of the window “O Ye Spirits and Souls of the Righteous, Bless Ye the Lord: Praise him and Magnify Him Forever” is taken from the canticle, *Benedicite omnia opera Domini*. It depicts the River of Life and shows men, women, and children from all walks of life praising God and offering gifts.

As you walk down the **Nave** (3), across English Minton floor tiles, look up to see the large circular **Roundels** (4) between the arches on either side of the nave. They contain the symbols of the four evangelists found in the Book of Revelation. Matthew is represented by the winged man, Luke by the winged creature with the head of an ox, Mark by the winged lion, and John by the soaring eagle. Above the Roundels you will find a series of **Clerestory Windows** (5) fashioned by both Clayton & Bell and Tiffany Studios.

Continuing toward the east end, you will notice a depiction of the *Agnus Dei* (6), the Lamb of God triumphant, a traditional symbol of the sacrificial and saving Lord, above the Great East Window. Below it is written “Behold the Lamb of God” and above is written “Glory in the Highest.” In the panels on either side of the window are representations of **Early Greek Christian Symbols** (7): *Chi Rho*, the first two letters of the word “Christ” in Greek and the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, symbolizing the beginning and end of all things. The decorated cross in the midst of these symbols is adapted from a Celtic cross dating from the time of St. Columba in sixth century Scotland.

Below the Great East Window you will see the mosaic **Reredos** (8) designed by Tiffany Studios of New York in 1902. The stones in the center panel are unpolished peridots, the August birthstone. Quite prominent is the depiction of two peacocks, symbols of the resurrection in ancient Christian art. The two side panels show passion flowers, symbolic of Christ’s death, and grapes, representative of the wine used at communion. Just below the Reredos sits the **High Altar** (9), made of imported white marble and set in three sections, symbolic of the Holy Trinity.

To the left of the High Altar is the **Bishop’s Chair** (10), saved from the 1817 building which was destroyed by fire in 1854. With its gilded crosiers and miter the chair has served numerous bishops over the years and is used today whenever the current Bishop of Maryland visits the parish.

Before leaving the chancel area, turn around and look up to the back of the church. In front of you is a Tiffany **Rose Window** (11) depicting the Holy Spirit. Beneath this is another Tiffany window showing the **Suffering Christ** (12). The small portion of the window representing Jesus’ head with the crown of thorns was another item saved from the fire of 1854 and incorporated into the design of the new building.

To the right of the chancel and sanctuary area you enter the **Lady Chapel** (13). This worship space is dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus. The two Tiffany windows depict Saint Anne (Mary's mother) with the Blessed Virgin Mary on the left, and Saint Augustine with his mother Saint Monica on the right.

The **Organ console** (14) rests on an elevated platform between the Lady Chapel and the nave. The **main body of the Organ** (15) is located in the northeast corner of the church, with the Antiphonal Organ located on the west wall. The main console operates both the front and back organs. Although parts of the instrument, including the front organ's case, date from the original 1859 installation by Roosevelt, the present organ largely dates from the work of three builders in the 20th century. Redesigned and greatly enlarged by Ernest M. Skinner in 1916, additions were made by the Austin Organ Company in 1970, and it was again mechanically rebuilt and tonally enlarged by the M. P. Möller company of Hagerstown, Maryland in 1981. The present instrument consists of 68 ranks, totaling 4,077 pipes. It is used for all major services as well as for recitals and concerts. The Antiphonal Organ with its **Trompette Royale** (16) *en chamade* (mounted horizontally) was added in 1991 in anticipation of the tercentennial celebration of the parish in 1992. Also in anticipation of the tercentennial year, the 23-bell **Harrison Carillon** was added in the North Tower as a gift to the city through the generosity of a number of prominent Baltimore corporations and Mr. George T. Harrison.

As you walk down the steps of the Lady Chapel you will see an historic **Baptismal Font** (17) saved from the 1854 fire. Carved out of Italian marble and then shipped to Baltimore, it was designed by the French architect Maximilien Godefroy, who also designed the Unitarian Church at Charles and Franklin Streets. Directly across from the font you will notice steps rising to the wooden **Pulpit** (18). The cross and orb on top of the pulpit symbolize the reign of Christ over the whole earth.

Moving toward the back of the church you will pass the **South Wall Windows** (19), a series of smaller stained glass windows. Walking from east to west, these windows depict the following:

The Good Samaritan. Clayton & Bell, 1903.

The Transfiguration. Clayton & Bell, 1899.

Angel of Hope. Tiffany Studios, 1903.

Angel of Faith. Tiffany Studios, 1903.

St. Luke the Evangelist. Tiffany Studios, 1892.

St. Paul the Apostle. Previously above the High Altar from 1856–1902.

The South Tower includes **St. Peter's Chapel** (20). There are two windows in this tower: the west window depicts an Angelic Ministering Spirit, crafted by Tiffany; the south window is a Clayton & Bell work showing Christ and Child.

Walking along the west wall you will encounter a black walnut wooden structure that was the building's **original Reredos** (21). It was moved to the back of the church after the Tiffany Reredos was installed in 1902 and placed on either side of the Great West Doors.

The **North Tower** (22) serves as the usual entrance for the church and houses the 23-bell Harrison Carillon. The four stained glass windows, done by Connick studios, depict St. Paul, St. Luke, St. Christopher, and St. Francis of Assisi.

Continuing down the north aisle of the church you will encounter the **North Wall Windows** (23) with six more stained glass windows. From west to east these windows represent the following:

Life of David. Clayton & Bell, 1890.

Saint Michael the Archangel. Clayton & Bell, 1890.

The Ten Talents. Clayton & Bell.

The Resurrection. Clayton & Bell.

The inscription reads, “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” (top) and “Why seek ye the living among the dead” (bottom).

The Annunciation (top) and **Christ in the Temple** (bottom).

English Glass, late 19th century.

Three Marys at the Tomb. Tiffany Studios.

The inscription reads, “He is not here. He is risen.”

Bearing to the right, you will now come across the large four-sided stone **Baptismal Font** (24). On the four sides it has the words: “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One Father,” a paraphrase from the Ephesians passage used in the baptismal liturgy. To the right of the font is the **Eagle Lectern** (25) that symbolizes the spreading of the Gospel. Above it hangs a brass fixture that was converted from gas to electricity.

Throughout the building you will notice a number of memorials given on behalf of parishioners and clergy. Several are of particular note. On the North Wall is a memorial dedicated to Samuel Chase, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and his father Thomas, rector of St. Paul’s from 1745–1779. To the left of the lectern you will find a memorial to The Right Reverend James Kemp, rector of St. Paul’s from 1812–1827 who later became the second Bishop of Maryland (1816–1827).

To the right of the pulpit is an ornate marble memorial dedicated to The Reverend John Sebastian Bach Hodges, rector of St. Paul’s from 1870–1905, who founded the Men and Boy’s Choir in 1873. On the South Wall is a memorial to The Reverend William Wyatt, associate rector of the parish from 1814–1827, then rector from 1827–1864, who helped found St. Paul’s School for Boys in 1849. You will also notice several war memorials dedicated to parishioners who gave their lives in the service of America’s armed forces. While there are no memorials to him in our building, it should be noted that the famous author, Edgar Allan Poe, is rumored to have been secretly married here to his cousin, Virginia Clemm. Poe himself was not a member of Old St. Paul’s, but another Edgar Allan Poe, a relative of the author, was a vestryman and parishioner.

For perspective on the exterior of the building it is helpful to exit the church and cross over Charles Street. From this vantage point you catch a strong sense of the architect’s style and purpose. To the left of the gracious triple-arched portico rises the **North Tower** (26), originally designed to be a much taller 150 feet. Directly above the portico you will see two stone **Panel Friezes** (27) salvaged from the burned 1817 church building. On the left is a depiction of Moses and on the right a representation of Christ, both by sculptor Antonio Capellano. To the right of the building, through the iron gates and fence saved from the 1817 church, sits the parish’s **Garden Columbarium** (28).

We hope you have enjoyed your tour through Old St. Paul’s. While this building is a treasure to our parishioners and the City of Baltimore, it is through our worship in it that we are best able to express and partake in God’s glory. We welcome you to join us for services at any time, and we wish you godspeed on your journey.



Sundays at Old St. Paul's

**10:00 a.m. Sunday Worship
in person and live-streamed**

**11:00-11:45 Community Sundays
a party for all ages on 2nd Sundays of each month**

**11:00-11:45 Education Hour
on Sundays other than 2nd Sundays**
The Forum for adults
Youth Group for teens
Sunday School for children

9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Nursery Care

Old Saint Paul's

Baltimore, Maryland

