

OTHER  
ANGLES  
ON THE CATHEDRAL

# INTRODUCTION

The Church of England recently held its first National Cathedrals' Conference. In the days just before the conference, the BBC radio program "Prayer for the Day" focused on various aspects of cathedral life and work which are not often thought of. Inspired by this, I offer these reflections on "Other Angles on the Cathedral."

I hope it will deepen your appreciation for all that goes into a cathedral – not only those things which we might normally think of, but also those essential things without which the rest could not happen. Some of us will be among the more visible, others (maybe most of us) less so. All of us are important and necessary in the working, praying, and giving which make the mission of the Cathedral of Saint Paul possible.

Financial support is one of those less visible but essential things. Yes, we are an endowed church, but we cannot exist on endowments alone and, if we did, they would someday be depleted. Our current giving as well as our own planned giving for those endowments are our responsibility during our days as Cathedral members and friends.

As you ponder the whole life of the Cathedral, including its "other angles" I hope you will be inspired to give in support of its mission. If you have not already done so, please make a pledge using the form included in this booklet or pledge online at [cathedralofstpaul.org](http://cathedralofstpaul.org). And do remember the Cathedral in your will, whether the gift is large or small. We want those who come after us to enjoy the same gift we have received from those who came before us at the Cathedral of Saint Paul.

- The Very Rev. Dr. John P. Downey, *Dean*

# CATHEDRAL TIME

The Cathedral of Saint Paul building, the actual church itself, was built in 1866. It was the second building after the congregation rather quickly outgrew the original one built in 1832. As cathedrals go, this is really not that long ago, but the stones of St. Paul's have stood in the center of Erie for most of the city's history. Originally a neighborhood parish, the stones have witnessed growth, decline and change in the surrounding streets over the years. Built during the Civil War,



St. Paul's, approx. 1850

they have also stood through the great events of national and local history. Today they stand, in excellent condition, in a time of renewed energy in the city. Time looks different from the stable perspective of the Cathedral's stones – less rushed, less anxious, perhaps more purposeful.

Within the stones is another kind of time, also distinct from the ordinary experience of the passing years. This is the liturgical time proceeding year by year through Advent to Christmas, Lent to Easter, and all the ordinary Sundays in between. Gathering through Baptism to the Lord's Table at the Eucharist, reading the biblical story, praying and singing the faith. The individuals change, but the community of faith persists, inhabiting a practice of time that fulfills and give sense to the time of clocks and calendars. Sometimes many, sometimes fewer, the members and friends of the Cathedral of St. Paul offer this witness in stone and worship in the center of Erie.

# CATHEDRAL STONE



*I once met a man cutting blocks of stone. He was taking a break, so I stopped to chat. “What are you doing?” I asked. “Cutting stones for my master. I get paid every week, and get breaks and holidays, so I can’t complain.” Then I met a second man, even busier than the first. “I can’t stop,” he panted – “I get paid by the number of blocks I can cut, so I mustn’t waste time chatting.” His blocks seemed a bit haphazard to me. Then I met a third man, who’d cut more and better blocks of stone than either of them. “I’m building a cathedral.” he said. “My grandchildren’s grandchildren will see it, so it needs to be perfect.”*



The work of building a cathedral is slow and careful work. It is work with the future in mind, not just the present. It is the kind of work that anticipates things the builder will never see but will nonetheless be a part of. We likely don’t craft the stones but building the Cathedral of Saint Paul continues as we receive the work of the past, maintain it now, and pass it on to a future we will not see but will share in because of our work today. What would it mean to look at our working, praying and giving from the perspective of our grandchildren’s grandchildren?

The Cathedral Crest on the exterior south-facing wall of Downey hall.

# THE CATHEDRAL BACKSTAGE



Bob Guerrein, Cathedral historiographer and Verger extraordinaire, gives countless hours working with the Altar guild.

Certain aspects of cathedral life are very visible – liturgy and music, sermons and classes, time together over coffee, programs that serve the needy. But there are a multitude of things that are less visible, but no less significant, even essential. Alongside beautiful stone, glass, art, and music are things like electrical and heating systems, plumbing and painting. And for all the people who are in visible roles of ministry, there are others who carry on quiet but vital work – cleaning, counting, setting tables and altars, giving sacrificially and praying individually. All kinds of things, all kinds of people, are needed to make the life and work of the Cathedral possible.



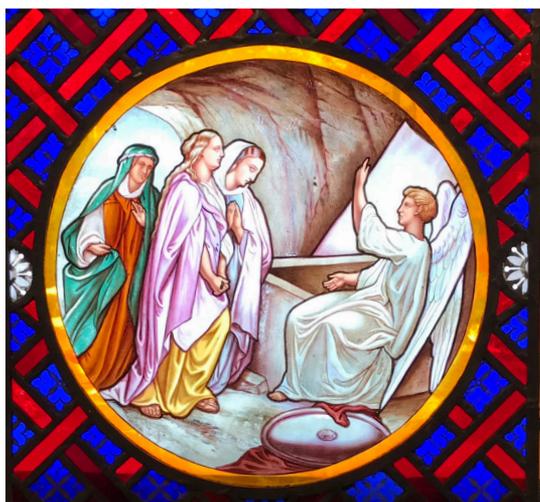
Sexton Terry Bishop (right) takes care of all Cathedral maintenance. Chris Fausti (left) volunteers many hours each week helping Terry.

Indeed, each of us and those around us are complex, we might even say complicated, beings of many factors, visible and invisible. It is all worth a few minutes (or more) of reflection as we ponder gratefully the many aspects of life and work at the Cathedral of Saint Paul, perhaps especially those that are done backstage.

# THE CATHEDRAL AND THE STORY



Cathedral buildings tell stories. They tell the history of the community and the congregation, especially in memorial inscriptions of various kinds. But most of all, the stone and glass and other art tell the biblical story, the great narrative of creation and fall, redemption and fulfillment; the story of the people of Israel and of Jesus and the Church. Much of this reflects long ago centuries when few people could read, and the language of worship was not “understood of the people.” (39 Articles of Religion). The Reformation reacted to this and emphasized texts and teaching, downplaying imagery and ritual. The years since have seen a healthy recovery and balance in many traditions toward a “both and” rather than “either or” approach to these things. Our cathedral and chapels are filled again with color and images and a renewed



appreciation of ritual. All together tell the story and, even more, involve us in the story in multiple ways that speak differently to different people and say more than any one of us can take in. These things are not unique to cathedrals, but they are characteristic of them and of growing importance these days.

# THINGS OLD AND NEW

Rooted in the past and persisting over time, cathedrals are not just museums of something that has passed away. Like the rings of a tree, they keep growing and adding new structures and expressions of the story of faith. The Cathedral of Saint Paul kept its historic church building but otherwise built a new facility in the 1990's, updated just few years ago. Our stained-glass windows include representations of significant



people since biblical times, even up to fairly recent ones. Among others, we can find Strong Vincent, Harry T. Burleigh, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and two portrayals of Albert Schweitzer in our windows. The Cathedral holds traditional Orthodox Icons, striking modern art, and a new outdoor statue of Jesus, challenging all who pass by to see him among the poor. In all these ways and more, the Cathedral of Saint Paul stands in the center of Erie, bearing witness not only to the past, but to an ongoing faith and mission that continues today and into the future.



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