

Introduction to Magnolia Springs, Alabama and the Parish of St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel

Magnolia Springs, Alabama, is located on US Highway 98 between Fairhope (16 miles to the northwest) and Foley (6 miles to the east) at the junction of Baldwin County Road 49. Magnolia Springs was incorporated as a town in 2006, but an organized and relatively affluent community has existed here since the 1800s.

St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel (1902) is listed on both the Alabama State and the National Registers of Historic Places. It sits on live-oak-canopied Oak Street next to the Magnolia Springs Community Hall, which has been a hub of community life since it was built in 1894. The Magnolia River (part of the Weeks Bay Watershed and named an Outstanding Alabama Water for its purity) flows through the town, with two public access points for fishing and canoe/kayak launching. Residents along the "River Route" receive their USPS mail by boat on the only year-round water delivery route in the USA.

Fewer than 800 people live within the town limits, but some 5,700 people live within 3 miles of the chapel. For extensive demographic and trend information, see the ExecutiveInsite Report compiling information from the U.S. Census Bureau, Synergos Technologies, Inc., Experian, and DecisionInsite/MissionInsite made available through The Episcopal Church at <http://pr.dfms.org/study/StaticPDFs/1/1093-6789.pdf>.

For more information about Magnolia Springs, visit townofmagnoliasprings.org.

Worship and Service Times

St. Paul's celebrates Eucharist twice on Sunday and once each Wednesday, typically using Rite II, as well as the traditional program of Holy Week, Easter, Advent, and Christmas services.

Service times are 8am and 10am on Sunday and 10am on Wednesday. The 8am Sunday and 10am Wednesday services do not include hymns; the 8am Sunday service does include organ accompaniment for the processional, communion, and recessional.

Lay Ministries

Members of the congregation serve as Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Lay Readers, with the LEMs also serving as acolyte and crucifer for some services. In March 2017 an acolyte program began for youth in the church, beginning with two participants.

Music

Music at St. Paul's is traditional, accompanied by organ and a choir ranging in number from 2 to 8 members. We employ an organist who also directs the choir.

Christian Education

We have children/youth and adult Sunday School classes. The children participate in Godly Play, with older children helping with the younger. All the children and youth present a pageant at Christmas. Adult Sunday School is led by a congregant, and for the past many months has studied books with video accompaniment (*Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters* by N. T. Wright (we studied the section on Philippians) and, during Lent 2017, *John: The Gospel of Light and Life* by Adam Hamilton. Bible study led by the rector is held each week after the 10am Wednesday service.

In summer 2016 we held our first Vacation Bible School in several years, which was successful and which we intend to hold again this year.

Staff

In addition to a full-time rector, the paid part-time staff of the Parish includes

- Organist
- Administrator
- Communications/Development
- Sexton
- Treasurer
- Groundskeeper

A deacon is also affiliated with our parish.

Physical Facilities

The chapel was completed in 1902. The current parish hall and office addition, completed in 2002, includes a lobby library space, a vesting room, sacristy with storage, a nursery, a Godly Play classroom, two offices, two storage rooms, the rector's office which doubles as the adult Sunday School room and vestry meeting room, a commercial grade kitchen, and parish hall facilities. The shared parking lot behind the church and community center contains about 35 parking spaces.

Programs

In addition to worship and education, St. Paul's carries on a number of service and outreach programs, which are listed below in the results of the parish survey. Our after-service meals—both breakfast and lunch—are an opportunity both to welcome visitors and to get to know one another better. Our annual speckled trout fishing tournament in October is a successful fundraiser that brings together people who might not otherwise come into contact with St. Paul's to experience the friendliness and fellowship here. Joining with the community in the Magnolia Springs Independence Day parade and welcoming all to a free Sunday afternoon crawfish boil in the spring are other ways we join with community in fellowship. Our many other programs reach out in various ways, including: Caring Cooks providing meals for sick or post-surgical parishioners, giving backpacks filled with school supplies to children in the local Head Start program, and contributing to the Ecumenical Ministries Food Pantry.

Parish Survey 2017

In March 2017, we surveyed congregants regarding

- their reasons for first coming to and then remaining at St. Paul's
- their participation in parish programs over the past three years
- how well informed they felt about four aspects of parish life
- the frequency with which they consulted parish communication instruments
- what they would like to stay the same about St. Paul's
- how they would like St. Paul's to change
- what qualities they would like to see in our new rector
- some demographic, attendance, distance, and background questions

Starting with the last: Our 2016 Parochial Report notes that we have 176 adult communicants and an average Sunday attendance of 108. We received 78 responses to the survey. Here are the characteristics of the respondents

- 26% have been attending for 2 years or less; 31% for 3-5 years; 14% for 6-10 years; 29% for 11 years or more
- 8% are aged 23 to 35; 2% 36-49; 35% 50-65; 35% 66-75; 20% over 75
- 23% attend 8am Sunday; 71% attend 10am Sunday; 6% attend 10am Wednesday
- 13% attend services 1-2 times a month; 31% 3 times a month; 49% 4 times a month; 7% 5 times a more or month
- 41% live within 5 miles of the chapel; 26% between 6 and 10 miles; 25% between 11 and 15 miles; 8% between 16 and 22 miles
- 95% are resident in the area full-time
- 17% are "cradle Episcopalians", the majority of the remainder come from Catholic (21%), Baptist (24%), or Methodist (30%) faith traditions
- 4% of the respondents do not identify as Episcopalian; 20% have been Episcopalian 5 years or less; 8% 6-10 years; 12% 11-15 years; 20% 16-25 years; 36% 25 years or more.

Our respondents said they came initially to St. Paul's because of

- clergy (64%)
- location (57%)
- friendliness (53%)
- sermons (49%)
- friends (41%)
- after-service meals (13%)

They said they stay because of

- friendliness (58%)
- friends (57%)
- location (49%)
- sermons (47%)
- clergy (44%)
- after-service meals (9%)

We listed these programs of St. Paul's and asked in which ones they had been involved **in the last three years:**

- 94% attend worship services
- 56% Presenting after-service meals
- 53% Christmas Shoeboxes
- 42% Trout Tournament
- 30% Ladies' Luncheons
- 27% Crawfish Boil
- 25% Sunday Suppers
- 23% Lector
- 23% Chili Cookoff
- 22% Usher
- 14% e-mail Prayer List
- 18% HeadStart Backpacks
- 17% attend Sunday School
- 15% LEM
- 13% Altar Guild
- 12% Vacation Bible School
- 10% Under-50s Get-Togethers
- 10% sing in choir
- 9% Presenting Christmas Pageant
- 9% Wedding Liaison
- 9% Wednesday Bible Study
- 9% 4th of July Parade
- 9% Caring Cooks
- 8% Children attend Godly Play
- 3% Shawls (prayer & baby)
- 1% Sunday School teacher (adult or children)

We asked how well informed they felt about

a. St. Paul's services, meetings, volunteer opportunities, and activities?

- 73% Informed
- 26% Somewhat informed
- 1% Not informed

b. the parish's financial conditions and needs?

- 25% Informed
- 54% Somewhat informed
- 21% Not informed

c. policy decisions, such as vestry actions?

- 21% Informed
- 48% Somewhat informed
- 31% Not informed

d. the 2017 stewardship process that began in November 2016?

- 29% Informed
- 46% Somewhat informed
- 25% Not informed

We asked often they read or refer to five sources of information at St. Paul's. Frequently (at least once a week)? Sometimes (at least once a quarter)? Rarely (once a year)? Never?

a. Sunday bulletin

- 94% Frequently
- 5% Sometimes
- 1% Rarely
- 0% Never

c. St. Paul's Weekly News eNewsletter (emailed on Tuesdays)

- 78% Frequently
- 10% Sometimes
- 1% Rarely
- 11% Never

b. Parish Hall bulletin boards

- 68% Frequently
- 27% Sometimes
- 4% Rarely
- 1% Never

d. Our website: stpaulsms.org

- 14% Frequently
- 38% Sometimes
- 32% Rarely
- 16% Never

e. Our Facebook page: St. Paul's Chapel, Magnolia Springs

- 10% Frequently
- 32% Sometimes
- 28% Rarely
- 30% Never

We asked an open-ended question: what would congregants like to stay the same about St. Paul's? Eleven of 78 respondents skipped the question. The answers fell into these general categories:

- 49% Feeling of community and friendliness
- 21% Sermons that were both heartfelt and intellectual
- 19% After-service meals
- 13% Service times
- 3% Outreach
- 6% Intimate feeling of parish
- 2% Youth activities

We asked another open-ended question: what would congregants like to change about St. Paul's? Twenty-seven of 78 respondents skipped the question. The answers fell into these general categories:

- 24% Don't change anything/Don't know
- 10% Have afternoon service, activities that working people can attend
- 10% Draw more young people into the church
- 8% Increase youth activities
- 8% Increase outreach activities
- 6% Better business organization and transparency on financials
- 6% More Bible study, adult education
- 4% Reduce the extent to which children are allowed to disrupt services
- 2% Prioritize activities for children

We asked what qualities respondents would like to see in our new rector. The highest scoring qualities were

- has strong preaching skills
- creates a sense of community within the congregation
- is a spiritual guide, leads others in formation and development of a spiritual life
- is actively involved in supporting religious education for all ages
- is actively involved in the growth of children and youth ministries
- is actively involved in pastoral care and counseling
- encourages volunteerism and lay ministry

St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel in Magnolia Springs is a vibrant and engaged church. We are seeking a rector to join and lead us as we continue in worship, spiritual growth, community, and service.