

St. Paul's Church Uxbridge Ontario

The Early Years: 1834-1913

The Anglican presence in the Uxbridge Valley began modestly, with the first service being held in the barn of Mr. T. Shier in 1834. 50 people were in attendance as three children were baptized by the Rev. Adam Elliot, a travelling Church of England missionary. Rev. Elliot, who stated that the number of Anglicans “though small, was larger than I expected,” returned one year later to conduct a second service in the log schoolhouse. In 1840, monthly services were being held in the schoolhouse under the leadership of Reverends R.J.C. and Richard Garrett.

By 1849 it was clear that a proper church was required, and in 1851 a wooden frame structure with a bell tower was built. Workers had to clear the bush not only for the building but also for a Church of England burial ground, which was located north and west of the church. St Paul's was still very much a “missional” church, and the various pastors who ministered in Uxbridge were often also in charge of churches in Port Perry, Greenbank, Mt. Albert, Whitby and at times even Oshawa. As the town and the congregation grew, it was decided in 1870 that a rectory be constructed. Land was bought on Brock Street East and the house was finished in 1871. Fortunately for St Paul's, the first occupant and first resident rector was the tireless Rev. John Davidson.





In 1881 further growth led to discussions about a new church building. At the first meeting to discuss the project, it was decided that when \$4,000.00 was raised, a plan to build a new church on the same property would be started; \$3,500 was pledged that night. By 1884 the required money had been raised, with the Davidsons being one of four families donating the sizeable sum of \$500.00. A building committee was formed and by 1887 work had begun. Stone and lumber were obtained from the farm of Abraham Bagshaw. Bodies were exhumed from the cemetery and re-located in Uxbridge Cemetery. The chancel of the old church was moved and became part of a house west of the rectory on Brock Street. The men of the Vicars family, long time parishioners, were fine craftsmen who completed both the stonework and the woodwork on the ceiling. Because of the work of the men of the parish, including Rev. Davidson, the new Gothic St Paul's was completed in 1888. It featured a basement, which included a small chapel for Wednesday and Lenten services (now the nursery) a library and a kitchen with cook stove and a tank for hot water.

The legacy of the Davidson family could be found throughout the church. The baptismal font was a thanksgiving offering by Rev. Davidson's wife, Susanna, for their daughter Mary's recovery from typhoid fever. Mrs. Davidson also chose the hand-painted stained glass windows, including the beautiful large west window given by the Sunday School. One of the memorial windows was given in honour of their nephew who died in Toronto. A new pump organ was installed, the collection of funds being overseen by another Davidson daughter, Georgiana.

St Paul's prospered during this time period, both financially and in numbers. The mortgage was paid off in 1907. The average Sunday school attendance was 59 and the library grew to 240

books. A Chancel Guild, brother of St Andrew's, a Young People's Society and a Literary society were started. It was decided in 1899 that the morning service should start at 10:30 and not 11:00. After much discussion and controversy, the choir was officially allowed to wear cassocks and surplices in 1909. Mission work flourished, with a focus on native communities in the north. A number of the priests ministering at this time at St Paul's were quite gifted, including Rev. Adam du Pencier, the future Archbishop and Metropolitan of New Westminster, BC, and Rev W.H.A. French, whose dramatic abilities were called upon for the official opening of the Uxbridge Music Hall. This era concluded with the twentieth anniversary service of the new church being held on 29 November, 1908 and the much delayed official consecration of St Paul's on 14 February, 1909, lead by Bishop Reeve.

The War Years: 1914-1945

In September 1914, newly selected rector, Rev R.S. Mason, chaired his first vestry meeting and promptly discovered that he had stepped into the middle of a hornet's nest. In 1909, St Paul's had bought the property south of the church from the Nation family for the building of a new rectory. Yet the construction depended on the sale of the old rectory, and this had not occurred. The vestry decided in May 1914 to change direction and repair the old rectory and sell the Nation property. The decision was not popular, and after protests a special vestry was held and the sale was nullified. The church mortgaged the property and began construction of the current rectory in 1918.

Like all church communities, St Paul's was greatly affected by the First World War. In an attempt to conserve fuel for the war effort, services during the winter months were held in the basement using the lower chapel. There was a shortage of clergy, and for the first year of the war the parish was lead by a visiting priest from Ireland, the Rev. Charles Robinson. 33 men from the parish enlisted in Canadian Expeditionary Force, and six did not return:

Harry Newton	(1897-1916)	died of illness while training in England
William Chapman	(1876-1917)	died of wounds Ypres
Kilby Hickling	(1897-1918)	KIA Battle of Arras
William J Bell-Boddy	(1889-1918)	KIA during the battle of Canal du Nord
George Cooper	(1897-1918)	KIA by HE shell at Vis-En-Artois
Fred Stephens	(1890-1917)	RCF pilot. Possible mid-air collision

The war also took family members of a number of former St Paul's clergy. Rev. R.S. Forneri lost both his son David in 1917 and his eldest daughter Agnes, a nursing sister, in 1918. Rector Rev. Edgar Taylor lost a son at Courcelette in 1916.

Other events at St Paul's during this time mirrored changes in society. Women began to take more leadership roles in the church. For the first time records indicate numerous female vestry members making or seconding motions. In 1921, the first female vestry clerk was appointed. In that same year, it was mandated that a representative from the Woman's Auxiliary be made a member of the Advisory Board (a youth member -AYPA - was also invited to join). One female

parishioner, Ms. Barbara Peare, bequeathed a sum of money for the purchase of a new organ in 1926.

The Depression curtailed further spending. The minister during this economically difficult decade was Rev. P.G. Powell, and he oversaw many important events and celebrations. He arranged a visit of the choirboys from the Chapel Royal in England, though because of the size of crowd the venue had to be changed to Trinity United. He welcomed to the pulpit a visiting professor from Wycliffe College, Rev. Donald Coggan, who later became the Archbishop of Canterbury. Most importantly, in 1938 Rev. Powell oversaw a week-long celebration of the Golden Anniversary of the building, which involved guest speakers (the Archbishop of Ottawa among others), a congregational picnic, sporting events, a garden party, an anniversary supper and a concert provided by 15 musicians from Toronto.

As in the Great War, St Paul's saw a sizable number of its parishioners enlist with the outbreak of the Second World War. 53 men volunteered to fight, and two did not return after the conflict.

Harvey Bice
Kenneth MacDonald

The Post War Years 1946-1995

The decade of the 1950s was a good one for St Paul's. Under the leadership of Rev. Ormiston Twiss, both the finances and the numbers on the parish register were the strongest they had ever been. Both the church and the rectory were structurally sound, though parish records indicate that maintenance work, especially on the furnace, floors, windows and roof, was constantly being carried out. Though Rev. Twiss forbid the use of raffles, dances, cards or draws to raise money, he took a leadership role in forming a couple's club called "Chi Rho Club," which featured dancing, games and sing-songs, often led by Twiss himself. Like many rector's wives, Grace Twiss worked generously and faithfully behind the scenes, taking care of all the children in the rectory while their parents enjoyed themselves next door in the parish basement.

During this time period, the Nation family donated carillon chimes in memory of their father. The church purchased an amplifying system so that the chimes and pre-recorded hymns could be broadcast from the tower before the 10:30 service began. The innovation was received positively by the homes surrounding the church, though one morning when the morning service was mistakenly linked to the loud speaker, and Rev. Twiss' sermon boomed throughout south Uxbridge including the Presbyterian Church, St Paul's had some explaining to do!

A number of new organizations were created in the 1960s and 70s to serve the congregation. The Server's Guild, Anglican Church Women and Take-A-Break guild were very active during this time period. A huge change occurred in Anglican circles with the introduction of the Book of Alternative Services and St Paul's, which prided itself on the use of the Book of Common Prayer, avoided division by introducing a second Sunday service at 8:30 for the traditionalists. The new hymnal "Common Praise", was introduced with raised hardly a ripple.

The Present Era: 1996-2023

As St Paul's moved into the increasingly secular 21st century, the parish was confronted by a number of issues. While the building itself remained aesthetically and acoustically beautiful, the 110 year old edifice was becoming inadequate for the needs of its existing parishioners and for attracting new members. The walls were actually bowing out, and during extreme wind-shear the creaking of the building was so bad that the congregation had trouble hearing the service. The stairs to the basement and the bell tower were dangerously narrow and steep. The minister's office had to be placed in the rectory, for an attempt to place it in the bell tower permanently did not work. The washrooms and small kitchen were deficient. Even in the interior, the stairs to the communion rail presented a problem for some of the more elderly parishioners.

As a result, on Palm Sunday, 31 March, 1996, the congregation voted to proceed with renovations and expansion. The construction went relatively smoothly, especially considering the project was beset by two serious complications. Firstly, Murray Ross, the chief architect who worked very closely with the expansion committee, died unexpectedly as building began. Secondly, construction was halted suddenly during the excavation of the new foundations when two bodies were discovered on the site. The fact that this section of the church property had once been the site of the Church of England Cemetery was well known, but all of the bodies were supposedly relocated to the Uxbridge Cemetery in 1886; two were obviously missed. In rapid succession the police, the coroner and finally an archaeologist arrived. Speed was essential for part of the wall was exposed and in a precarious state. The identities of the bodies were unknown, but based on their clothing one was a wealthy man and the second a much poorer woman. It was also clear the remains of the woman's body had previously been disturbed during the laying of the 1887 foundations; her skeleton revealed that her shoulders had simply been pushed out of the way to lay the foundation stones. No sooner had construction resumed than a third body was found in the front of the church close to where the current St Paul's sign now stands. Work continued this time, however, for the body was not near the walls. The remains of all three parishioners were eventually reburied at the rear of the church, in a special enclosed area of the yard.

Despite these challenges, the project was completed on 1999. Amazingly, the church was only unavailable for worship for three weeks, a problem that was solved by a generous offer from St Andrew's Chalmers Presbyterian across the street to use their church for Anglican services. The result exceeded all expectations. The exterior of the expansion fit seamlessly into the original building. The roof and walls were reinforced with metal plates, flat beams and steel cables that were hidden and invisible to the untrained eye. Attention was then focused on the interior. The altar was moved to the front of the sanctuary in accordance with modern Anglican practice. As the 1924 organ was nearing the end of its life-span, a fund raising drive resulted in the purchase of a new Phoenix PD 346 46 stop Electronic organ in 2000. The organ was the first built by the British company for North America, and St Paul's received a good price in return for the use of the church as a showroom for new customers. The purchase allowed choirmaster Bill Seymour to expand the repertoire of the growing choir and establish a sizeable junior choir. The new kitchen was outfitted with industrial calibre equipment, allowing for larger and more efficient annual

fund raising dinners: Pancake Tuesday, Roast Beef, Ham and Lasagna suppers. A vestry motion mandated that all money raised from these dinners went exclusively to Outreach.

It was doubly difficult for the parish, therefore, when the Rev. Paul Kett and Bill Seymour, whose combined energy and leadership had led to such growth, announced their retirements within ten months of each other. Fortunately the next incumbent, the Rev. Dana Dickson, continued to bring innovations to St Paul's. For the first time, services were projected onto a screen on a regular basis. A new sound system was installed. "Messy Church" and NCD (National Church Development) were instituted. In co-operation with the new music director, Soo Young, the third service of the month became a contemporary service that featured a "praise" band. It was a family affair; Dana's husband Stuart played drums, Sooyoung's husband played flute and Art Mathews and his mother-in-law Barb Taggart played guitar. The ensemble was rounded out by Dr. Peter Noble on clarinet and Dave Rehill on trombone.

Under the leadership of the the Rev. Canon Mark Kinghan, St Paul's has begun to look outward and numerous new ministries engaging the community have begun.

Rev. Randolph Williams is the present interim Priest.

Rectors at St. Paul's

- Rev. Adam Elliot (1834)

Born in England and ordained in Quebec; missionary throughout Upper Canada, including Manitoulin Island and Six Nations; married an aunt of Pauline Johnson and buried at Six Nations.

- Rev. Robert J.C. Taylor (1840)

Born and ordained in Ireland; sent to Upper Canada by SPG to conduct missionary work; ministered in Uxbridge and Peterborough

- Rev. Richards Garret (1845)

Born in Durham, England. Ordained at St James Cathedral, Toronto; missionary in Brock Twsp, ministered in Cannington, Osnabruck, Barriefield.

- Rev. G.P. Vine
- Rev. William Grant
- Rev. John Pentland (1864)

Born in Ireland and became military officer in 21st Regiment; ordained, moved to US, entered Diocese of Toronto in 1841; ministered in Uxbridge and founded St. John's Whitby.

- Rev. J.D. Gibson (1865)

Born in the U.S. Ministered in Rome, Georgia, Bovina, Mississippi; entered Diocese of Toronto, 1863; ministered at Penetangushine, Uxbridge; returned to U.S. to New Jersey and Alabama.

- Rev. Richard S. Forneri (1866)

Born in Belfast, Ireland and ordained at St James Cathedral, Toronto; ministered in Penetang, Uxbridge, Belleville, Adolphuston, Merrickville and Kingston (St Luke's).

- Rev. John Davidson (1873)

Born in New Brunswick and ordained in Montreal; ministered in Papineauville, Newboro, Woodbridge, Tecumseth, Uxbridge, Colborne

- Rev. William S. Westney (1889)

Born in Scarborough, ordained at St James Cathedral, missionary in Saltfleet, Brock; ministered at Streetsville, Pickering, Whitby, Uxbridge, Alandale, Bolton.

- Rev. Alfred J. Reid (1894)

(St. Luke's), Nelson B.C, Uxbridge, Clayton N.Y, Campbellford, Born in Canterbury and ordained in Fredericton; ministered Toronto Ontario, West Toronto, Earls court.

- Rev. Adam U. de Pencier (1899)

Navan, Toronto (St Albans cathedral), Uxbridge, Toronto (St James Born in Burritts Rapids and ordained in Brockville; ministered in Cathedral), Brandon, Vancouver (St Paul's), elected Bishop of New Westminster

- Rev. William H.A. French (1901)

Born in Surrey, Eng. and ordained in Toronto; missionary in Coboconk, Cameron, Cookstown; ministered in Grafton, Uxbridge, Fenelon Falls, Shanty Bay

- Rev. Henry R. Young (1907)

Born in Port Dalhousie and ordained in Niagara for Toronto; ministered in Claireville, Elmvale, Uxbridge, Toronto (St Hilda's and St Michaels, Fairbank)

- Rev. Charles A. Robinson (1913)

Born in Ireland and ordained in Clogher, Ireland; ministered in Donaghmoine, Kilmore, sent to Uxbridge, returned to Magheraculmoney and Donaghmoine.

- Rev. Ralph S. Mason (1914)

Born in Hamilton and ordained in Toronto; ministered in Toronto (St. John's), St Catherines (St. Thomas), Uxbridge, became assistant to the General Secretary to the General Board of Religious Education

- Rev. Fred Robertson (1916)

Born in Toronto and ordained in Rupert's Land; missionary at Carmen and Stayner; ministered at Fredericton (Holy Trinity and St Stephen), Uxbridge, Etobicoke.

- Rev. Thomas O. Curliss (1920)

Born in Bolton, and ordained in Diocese of Algoma; ministered in Seguin Falls, Bruce Mines, Streetsville, Markham/Stouffville, Uxbridge, Toronto (Church of the Incarnation)

- Rev. Edgar B. Taylor (1922)

Born in England and ordained in Toronto; missionary and founder of St Pauls, Washago; ministered in Holland Landing, Allandale, Uxbridge. Retired in Washago and buried in Uxbridge.

- Rev P.G. Powell (1929)

Ordained in Rupert's Land; ministered in Moore Park, Pilot Mound, Gorrie, Ridgetown, Toronto (St Stephen's, Centre Island), Cartwright, Uxbridge

- Rev. Ormiston Twiss (1940)

Ordained in Niagara; missionary in Hornby; ministered in Baltimore (USA), Woodburn, Toronto (St Martins), Georgina, Uxbridge.

- Rev. A. Gordon Baker (1956)
- Rev. Douglas Lattimer (1958)
- Rev. G. Ernest Hobson (1964)
- Rev. William Myles (1966)
- Rev. Gordon W. Ray (1972)
- Rev. Paul Kett (1991)
- Rev. Dana Dickson (2007)
- Rev. Canon Mark Kinghan (2017)
- Rev. Randolph Williams (2023)