

# *St. Paul's Episcopal Church*

## *The Epistle*

*January-February 2026 Issue*



Greetings St Paul's family!

On Sunday January 25<sup>th</sup> we marked not just our Annual Parish Meeting but also the 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration and official opening of the current St Paul's church building in Oakdale Road. Prior to 1972 for 93 years Episcopalians had worshipped at the former St Paul's site in the downtown area. So for a combined 147 years there has been a church in Modesto offering worship and ministry in the name of the Episcopal Church. Of course, what that has meant and looked like has changed radically over the decades.

Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe last year stated that "Once the church of presidents, the Episcopal Church must now be an engine of resistance." That is a mighty change in course, but it also is not the first time Episcopalians have claimed a stake in resistance. Indeed, Bishop Rowe notes that 34 of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were members of what would become the Episcopal Church, but overall we would need to acknowledge that traditionally, historically, Episcopalians haven't often been in the front rows of social change making, especially here.

In days gone by St Paul's was known as a conservative church, mirroring the strong conservatism of the Central Valley in general and Modesto in particular. Our predecessors spoke strongly against the ordination of women and the ministry (and often existence) of LGBTQ+ Christians. Our pews, still primarily populated by white Americans, were even more monotone and the messages preached and practiced reflected that culture. Much has changed.

Today the most visible evidence of change to those on the outside is the Progress Flag flying outside our doors. That flag makes a powerful statement. But on the inside the changes are even

starker. Each and every week I have open and often blunt conversations with parishioners about politics, theology, gender theory and plain old fashioned social justice, and while we are still – and hopefully always will be – a broad church, the openness of mind and heart I encounter tells me that this is a church willing to use the brains God gave it to listen for what the Spirit is telling us, even when that becomes a challenge.

And that challenge is real. On the same day we celebrated our 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary Presiding Bishop Rowe published another missive. In this one Bishop Rowe, responding to events in Minneapolis included the following statement:

*In the United States, we no longer live in a time when we can expect to practice our faith without risk, and we are confronting what vulnerable communities of faith have experienced for generations. Our right to worship freely as one church, committed to the dignity of every human being, has been curtailed by the fear that too many immigrant Christians face when they leave their homes. Peaceful protests, a right long enshrined in the Constitution, are now made deadly. Carrying out the simple commands of Jesus—feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, visiting prisoners, making peace—now involves risks for the church and grave danger for those we serve. As Christians, we must acknowledge that this chaos and division is not of God, and we must commit ourselves to paying whatever price our witness requires of us.*

These are not the words of the leader of a conservative church of presidents. And it's possible, likely even, that these are not words that fill us with hope or joy. We live, as the old saying goes, in interesting times, and how we respond to these times, as a church and individually, requires discernment and openness of heart and mind. It is clear that whatever is happening in our country is escalating at a rapid pace and the option to remain neutral or disconnected is diminishing equally quickly. Yet I want to encourage us to prayer and pondering and active discernment of our place in this ever-changing context. And fortunately an entirely appropriate time is upon us.

Lent begins on Wednesday February 18<sup>th</sup> and I invite us to make that the beginning of a time of serious and deliberate discernment. Lent is traditionally a time of penitential contemplation, an opportunity to survey our souls and make an honest account of where we are at. As our leaders and others call us to take stands we may or may not be comfortable with let us use this time of soul-searching to find our personal and collective responses, guided always by the call of Micah 6: 8 “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

May that same God be with us in our discernment and our actions, today and always. Amen.

Brian+

## **St. Paul's Episcopal Church**

### **Vestry Meeting Minutes**

**November 23, 2025**

**Members Present:** Joyce Bell (Sr. Warden), Peter Krewko (Jr. Warden), Fr. Brian Dawson, Jose Cruz, Alex Sarina, Courtney Smith, Sarah Hartmann, Nancy Silva, Ann Mootz, Luis Martinez

**Others Present:** Dc. Greg Masztal, Carolyn List (Clerk)

**Call to Order:** 12:07pm

#### **Opening**

- a. Apologies for Absences:** Chuck Sheaffer,
- b. In Memorium:** none
- c. Declarations of Conflicts of Interest.** None
- d. Respectful Conversations:** Read by all

**Approval of Minutes: October 2025:** No corrections nor concerns

**M/S A. Sarina/ C. Smith. Approved**

#### **Matters Arising:**

- a. Annual Parish Meeting Date:** The meeting report must be filed with the Diocese by January 31. Committee and mission reports must be completed for meeting and best started as soon as possible.

Meeting date will be January 25 after service.

- b. Vestry Membership: (6 openings, 1 Treasurer)**

Lora Burnett and Greg Burnett (Treasurer) have submitted their resignations from the Vestry. Two individuals serving temporary assignments (Alex Sarina & Jose Cruz) must formally run for election. One parishioner has indicated interest in serving. Although the Vestry has 11 members, the Diocese only requires a minimum of 8. A new Treasurer must also be found. A likely candidate has been recruited and we are waiting on their final decision.

- c. Christmas Services**

After discussion, a single 7pm Christmas Eve Service was determined best, plus a 10am Christmas morning service.

**d. Gratitude for Volunteers who have saved church significant savings**

Fr. Brian noted that two individual volunteers have dedicated significant time and talent to the church over the past year and would like to recognize them at Christmas with a gift.

**Authorizes Fr Brian to spend up to \$500 for reimbursement for gifts for these key volunteers.**

**M/S C. Smith / J. Cruz. Approved.**

**Rector's Report:**

Fr. Brian advised that he has been appointed to the Diocese Standing Committee and as a Delegate to the upcoming General Convention. He will be conducting the Thanksgiving services at ECCO next week. Fr. Brian will offer two one-day retreats in 2026. Both will have a Benedictine focus on the poetry of Thomas Merton and James K. Baxter.

**STRAND REPORTS**

**Hospitality:**

Coffee and Cocoa will be offered after the Christmas Eve Service.

**Family**

- a. Cookie Walk:** C. Smith: The Cookie Walk is only 2 weeks away. Tickets are available; to date just under 200 have been sold. Articles have been published in the Modesto Bee and other local publications. Music entertainment will include the Fun Strummers at 11a, Chuck and Eric Sheaffer at 12:30, and David West on guitar at 2p. Six craft vendors have confirmed, including Kingdom Coffee. Arrangement are being made so attendees can use the Breeze digital option easily.

**Finance:**

- a. Annual Service Bids:** Annual service bids are included for review. Contracts for required maintenance for roof cleaning /inspection, commercial refrigeration, and window cleaning, (HVAC and fire monitoring are pending) are being sent to vestry for review. These are necessary for safety and repair reduction. They are included in the budget. Discussion expressed some concerns about the amounts required. Fr. Brian noted that the 2025 facility repairs were way over budget. The 2026 budget will be tight, and facility repairs and upgrades must be prioritized and brought to the vestry for approval before making the repair. If emergent, an email approval can be made.

- b. Bank Transfers:** Request is for Vestry approval of a motion to allow funds in savings to be transferred to checking, if necessary, to cover monthly expenditures. The Balance Sheet financial report shows the monthly amount of funds in checking, saving, and CD.

**Motion to approve up to \$10,000 to be moved from savings to checking with approval of the Rector, Senior Warden, and Junior Warden**

**M/S N. Silva / A. Sarina. Approved.**

- c. Clergy Housing Allowance resolutions for 2026.**

Federal tax guidelines allow a portion of a priest's stipend be designated for non-taxable housing when there is no parsonage. The priest must pay the Social Security and Medicare tax (SECA) on that portion. Documents must be signed by the Sr. Warden and Treasurer prior to the tax year. Documents for Fr. Brian and Rev. Kathy Galicia are attached for review.

- d. October 2025 Financial Reports. Approval of P&L for Audit.** No concerns nor questions raised. Fr. Brian noted winter weather has reduced Fellowship Solar to less than \$1000., while MID is now >\$1,400.

**Motion to approve October P&L for Audit**

**M/S A. Sarina / J. Cruz. Approved**

- e. 2026 Draft Budget.** The annual budget for 2026 is being prepared. The review and approval will be the main focus for the December Vestry meeting

#### **Updates:**

- a. Property Sale** The interested party is in talks with Chancellor Michael Glass. Fr. Brian advised that before any sale, the church must have a signed document from the Diocese Council and Standing Committee confirming that the interest and dividends earned by property sale proceeds will be returned to St. Paul's for its use. Any expenditure of sale proceeds themselves will require prior Diocese approval for specific needs. This has been a practice for other parishes in the Diocese.

The Pre-School has been advised that we are seeking to sell this property.

- b. School Lease.** Chancellor Glass has drafted a new lease and Fr. Brian has met with Hazel and Odom Domson, to review the terms. Once final reviews of required documents have been completed, the lease will be sent to Hazel's Preschool for execution.

**Closing Prayer.** Dc. Greg Masztal

#### **Upcoming Events**

- a. Saturday 12/6: Cookie Walk
- b. February 13 & 14: Building Church Leaders @ ECCO
- c. February, 2026: Vestry Planning Meeting, at Fr. Brian's home.

Meeting Adjourned: 1:39pm

Next Vestry Meeting: December 14, after services, in person. Focus: Budget Review/Approval.

### **Golden Corral Senior Luncheon Group**



Come one, come all.... spouses, partners, friends...all are welcome-  
The more the merrier!

Phil and Anita Machado will be hosting lunch at Golden Corral, 3737 McHenry Ave, Modesto, Tuesday, February 10th at 2:30 pm.

No reservation is required.

The price for seniors is \$15, including drinks. Find Phil and Anita around the corner from the dessert station, ready to enjoy good company and good food. For more information, contact Phil at **209-527-2727**.



## Celebrating January Birthdays

Phil Machado	10-Jan
John Cox	12-Jan
Jeff Mountain	19-Jan
Janet Armstrong	21-Jan
Phil Machado	10-Jan
John Cox	12-Jan
Jeff Mountain	19-Jan

## Celebrating February Birthdays

Valerie Peters	6-Feb
Elizabeth Cassagio	13-Feb
Craig Persons	23-Feb
Lisa Bolig	24-Feb
Beatriz Peters	27-Feb
Mary Su	27-Feb



## Celebrating February Anniversaries

Phil and Anita Machado	10-Feb
Niniv and Rossana Tamimi	14-Feb
Craig and Marti Persons	28-Feb



### **Tuesday February 17<sup>th</sup> – Shrove Tuesday**

Pancakes! Pancakes! Pancakes! We will prepare for Lent with delicious pancakes and a friendly team competition. The Scouts will be providing pancakes, and we'll thank them with a free-will donation. Fr. Brian will be conducting a Lenten Quiz.

**Dinner starts at 5:30 pm. Come and be part of the fun!**

### **Wednesday February 18<sup>th</sup> – Ash Wednesday**

There will be Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes services at 10 am and 5 pm, as well as 'Ashes to Go' at the entrance to the church between noon and 1.00 pm.

### **Lenten Studies 2026**

Our main Lenten Studies series will focus on Liturgy and Worship in the Episcopal Tradition. The series will be Sundays, noon-1:30 pm after Coffee Hour. Look for the sign-up sheet in the narthex or through the church office.

### **Other Worship and Study Opportunities**

Noonday Prayer and Bible Study-Noon-1 pm-Guadalupe Chapel (Parish Hall)

Morning Prayer via Zoom-10 am-Contact the church office for the link

Mid-week Eucharist and worship-10-10:30 am-Guadalupe Chapel



## February 2026 Ministry Schedule

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Feb 1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Feb 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Feb 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Feb 22<sup>nd</sup></b>
<b>Clergy</b>	Fr. Brian	Fr. Brian	Fr. Brian Dn. Greg	Fr. Brian Dn. Greg
<b>Acolytes</b>	Joyce B. Alex S.	Judy T. Jim P.	Nancy S. Evelyn B.	Joyce B. Gabe T.
<b>Eucharistic Minister</b>	Stephanie G.	Alex S.	Sarah H.	Linda L.
<b>Lectors</b>	Stephanie H-W. Judy T.	Ann M. Alex S.	Stephanie G. Nancy S.	Linda L. Theresa G.
<b>Intercessor</b>	Alex S.	Carolyn L.	Luis M.	Rosanne M.
<b>Ushers</b>	Claudine R. David L.	David L. Carolyn L.	Carolyn L. Luis M.	Claudine R. Rosanne M.
<b>Greeters</b>	Claudine R. Lynelle H.	David L. Carolyn L.	Carolyn L. Luis M.	Claudine R. Rosanne M.
<b>Vestry Rep.</b>	Alex S.	Carolyn L.	Luis M.	Rosanne M.
<b>Coffee Hour Host</b>	Linda L.			Lisa B.
<b>Sunday School</b>	Sarah H.	Evelyn B.	Ann M.	Sarah H.



## Prayer and Praise

January 26, 2026

Remember those who have asked for our prayers

Cherie	Mike	Hennie	Annamary	Jose
Christine	Susie	Bonnie	Ishmael	Howard
Mary	Judy	Ellen	Karen	Kevin
Keith	Ginny	Bob	Claudine	Ivy
Dorothy	Murray	Darlene	Bill	Lindsay
Jim	Maureen	James	Mindy	Diane
Sandy	Marlene	Stephen	Natalie	Robert
Peter	Susan	Diane	Tyler	Sandra
Fr. Nick	Ann-Marie	Christy	Dean	Gail
Matt	Anita	Rosalie		

Those who have been called back to God

Brian Carmody

Those in the Military

CPT Sam Birch, Army

LTC Nathaniel P. Wallace, USAF

CPT Jenavieve Campbell, USAF

CPT Fred Campbell, USAF

PO 1<sup>st</sup> Class Johnny Olmos, US Coast Guard

SGT Carson Repan, USAF-

Special Prayers The Clergy, Vestry, and Wardens

## **Salvation Army Dinner**

The Salvation Army Dinner Team provided a delicious dinner to over 100 guests and staff, Sunday January 18th. The menu was 3-Bean Casserole, Steamed Vegies, Rolls & Butter, Orange Wedges, Chocolate Chip Cookies (obviously a favorite) and Milk. Through the generosity of many St. Paul's members, we were able to serve everyone a hearty portion of everything, with folks lined up for seconds. When we don't serve all that has been provided, we leave the balance of the meal for the staff to distribute another day.

The next time we will have the blessing to provide dinner will be March 15<sup>th</sup>. We plan to do one of the new favorite dinners-Cowboy Casserole and the many things that make a well-rounded meal. We always take milk and frequently pair fresh fruit with home-baked chocolate chip cookies, although cake with whipped cream is popular too.

The Team is not exclusive; help in a variety of ways is always welcome-prayer, donations of ingredients or funds, preparation either prior to the dinners or the afternoon of the date, serving at the shelter.

Contact Linda Lowe, 209-496-3937 or [lwlowe@outlook.com](mailto:lwlowe@outlook.com), for more information.



*Jesus said,  
"Let the little children come to me.  
Do not hinder them, heaven is theirs."  
Matthew 19:14*

### **Welcoming Nicole into the St. Paul's Family**

*"It is our joy to join with Nicole and Geoffrey, their family and friends, to celebrate the gift of their daughter, born into the world: given to them to love, to nurture and to enjoy." Fr. Brian*





You are cordially invited to  
attend the

*Court of Honor*

»————» **FOR** «————«

**JAYDEN ROBINSON  
&  
MEREDITH BRACKETT**

**Sunday , Feb. 22, 2026 at 5:30PM**

Saint Paul's Episcopal Church  
1528 Oakdale Rd, Modesto, CA 95355

RSVP: Serena (209) 614-6914 or  
Sarah (209) 996-3236



## **Court of Honor**

We have been invited to celebrate with Jayden Robinson and Merdith Brackett as they receive their Eagle Badges, a huge honor for their hard work. Last May we started our part of this Eagle project when Jayden hosted a fundraiser lunch at St. Paul's. We helped him launch the project to improve the yard of the Sierra Vista Center in Modesto.

The Court of Honor will be Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> in the Parish Hall. Let's continue to celebrate Jayden and his fellow Scout, Meredith Brackett, for their leadership and hard work. Jayden's mom, Serena, asked for us to RSVP to her, 209-614-6914 to be part of this celebration.

## **Christmas Eve Service**

A family-friendly Christmas Eve service complete with interactive Christmas story and Holy Communion was held on Wednesday December 24<sup>th</sup> at 7.00pm. Below are a few pictures of the service.



Deacon Greg as the Angel



Christmas Play – Stable Scene



Christmas Eve Play – Players ready



Christmas Eve Play – Narrator ready



Christmas Eve Play – come let us adore Him

## 2025 Cookie Walk Report

The annual Cookie Walk is a long-standing and much beloved tradition at St. Paul's Church. This treasured community event and fundraiser would not be possible without tremendous volunteer support across the parish. Special thanks go to the planning committee including the following:

- |              |                  |                  |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| ➤ Judy Teter | ➤ Sarah Hartmann | ➤ Linda Lowe     |
| ➤ Toni Clark | ➤ Carolyn List   | ➤ Courtney Smith |
| ➤ Joyce Bell | ➤ Suzie Anterien |                  |
| ➤ Jose Cruz  | ➤ Katie Biglow   |                  |

As a constantly evolving annual event, this year incorporated a few updates. Notably:

- Responding to strong feedback from volunteers and vendors, we offered this as a one-day event on Saturday only instead of a two-day event.
- Next, we made modest increases to the ticket price to \$12 (up from \$10) and an increase on the vendor booth price to \$30 (up from \$25). These increases were an attempt to keep in line with the value of the event and approximate market price of similar events.
- Live entertainment was provided by volunteer musicians during the day. This included the Funstrummers, member David West, and our music director Chuck Schaeffer.
- A fun inflatable gingerbread cookie costume for the Scouts America volunteers to wear to help direct guests to the entrance. We heard so many nice comments about this.
- Parishioners volunteered recipes to be collected for the Parish Cookbook, which was offered for sale at the merchandise table. This was a way to encourage early anticipation for the event, offer a value item for sale, and have it as a keepsake for the parish to use throughout the year as needed.

The Cookie Walk is a reliable fundraiser, bringing in almost \$5400 for the one day event. We sold out of the anticipated 400 tickets, with about half of those being sold in advance and another half sold at the door. This year all cookies were



supplied by our volunteer bakers, meaning no outside sourcing was needed to support the volume of cookies and treats needed to make the boxes. All surplus baked goods were donated to local shelters after the event.

Families also enjoyed free pictures with Santa, refreshing drinks from our neighbor vendor Kingdom Coffee, live entertainment throughout the day, kids crafting activities, and a robust and vibrant shopping experience at the vendor booths. This is a lovely way to visit with friends in our local community, meet up with members from our neighboring parishes, and share the Christmas spirit.



# 2025 Stewardship Report

## **2025 Stewardship Report**

The Stewardship Team, led by Sarah Hartmann and Courtney Smith, continues on with our goals of engaging community support within the parish, facilitating the annual Pledge Drive, and collaborating with cross-functional ministries to encourage goodwill throughout the parish region.

### **Pledge Drive**

This parish supports our annual fundraising pledge drive in the fall, bookended by the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi and ending with All Saints/ All Souls Day. This has now become an anticipated call to the parish during a specified five-week outreach campaign and is a consistent reminder of our collective financial goals for this church family. Conducting the annual fundraising pledge drive also fulfills our requirement from EDSJ. We follow the annual theme suggested by TENS, Tell Out My Soul, and utilize the accompanying marketing materials and communications strategies that are provided to us.

We begin the fundraising season by encouraging Paws in the Pews with a blessing of the animals during mass and then a hosted pet social hour on the front lawn. This year saw an increase of pets, including dogs and cats, and it is a fun way to engage with members. Each Sunday we highlight a different ministry and offer speaking opportunities to share opportunities for members to participate. And the final week coincides with a solemn All Saints Day/ All Souls Day Mass, and we encourage members to participate in this cross-cultural feast day.

During the fundraising drive we begin with a direct mail campaign to supply each household with their pledge card promise for 2026. Then we engage with parish members via email outreach through the Epistle, Bulletins, and Prayer and Praise lists and we engage public speaking opportunities during Sunday Mass. Finally, we conduct one on one conversations with members both informally before and after Sunday services and via direct phone calls. Our last step is to send out personalized

thank you to the parish and report our upcoming anticipated promise for the following year's budget.

In 2025 we had a better than anticipated response back to the pledge drive, including some new members who have joined the parish in the past year. We anticipate more than 40 households to pledge \$190,000 for our annual promise which is a consistent goal from the previous year. The personal feedback we receive from members is a deep commitment to our parish ministries, balanced with the reality of an unsure economy and unplanned lifestyle changes. Additionally, the pledge cards are a way for members to indicate ministries they would like to volunteer their time and talents, alongside their planned financial support.

### **Ice Cream Social**

We hosted a late summer Ice Cream Social to coincide with Back-to-School season after celebrating mass, on the front lawn. Parishioners enjoyed ice cream treats, snacks, and cold drinks under the shade to enjoy an early change of seasons. This is part of an ongoing attempt to offer enriching opportunities for our members to engage with each other in unique ways to help foster deeper connections.

### **MoPride at Graceada Park**

Additionally, Stewardship is a consistent participant with the cross-functional ministries that attend our booth at MoPride at Graceada Park every September. Our goals here are again to deepen connection within our membership while being a friendly and welcoming presence to a valuable community event.



## ***St. Paul's Episcopal Church***

### **Pastoral Team**

Fr. Brian Dawson....209-897-1612..... FrBrianDawson@gmail.com  
Deacon Greg Masztal .....deacongreg66@outlook.com  
Stephanie Gilmer, Pastoral Care Coordinator.....mzgilmer@gmail.com

### **Parish Administrator**

Linda Lowe: 209-522-3267..... stpaulsmodestoca@gmail.com

### **Other Important Contacts**

Music Director, Chuck Sheaffer ..... cbshea@pacbell.net  
Hand Bells, Judy Teter ..... jlpt@sbcglobal.net  
Prayer Chain ..... stpaulsmodestoca@gmail.com  
St. Paul's Epistle, Barbara Vassell .....stpaulsmodestoca@gmail.com  
Social Media, Deacon Greg Masztal.....deacongreg66@outlook.com  
Finance Committee, Carolyn List..... carolynlist@sbcglobal.net  
Stewardship Campaign, Courtney Smith..... courtneyvsmith@gmail.com

### **Vestry**

Senior Warden: Joyce Bell -(215) 275-6502 .....bellj1@charter.net  
Junior Warden: Peter Krewko (707) 853-3604..... pmkjfc@att.net

Joyce Bell, Jose Cruz, Peter Krewko, Carolyn List, Luis Martinez, Ann Mootz, Rosanne Mountain, Alex Sarina, & Courtney Smith.

Treasurer: Brandi Anderson

Vestry Clerk: Linda Lowe

### **Sunday Services**

Holy Eucharist at 10 am in the church  
and live streamed on Facebook.

You can find a link to the live stream on our webpage.

Sunday School during the Homily

[www.saintpaulsmodesto.org](http://www.saintpaulsmodesto.org)

Visit and like us on Facebook

St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Modesto, CA

