

# St. Paul's Church in Vergennes

## A Space for Community

St. Paul's Episcopal Church has always been an active congregation in the "Little City" of Vergennes. Our congregation started meeting in 1811, and our historic church was built in 1834. During this early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Vergennes was experiencing some of the first fruits of growth and commerce, the congregation planted St. Paul's where it stands today, centrally located on the town green. Helping to define the architectural character and beauty of downtown Vergennes, St. Paul's has always stood firmly throughout the city's long history, during periods of both growth and decline. In fact, the St. Paul's bell has been ringing continuously throughout that history. Some of the very first residents in Vergennes would have first heard this same bell ringing from the old state house where the Vermont State Legislature met in 1798, the only year the Legislature convened in Vergennes.

Vergennes has changed quite a bit over two centuries, but St. Paul's central location on the town green and community-focused ethos has not. *We are seeking partners and collaborators* to share our buildings to advance our shared commitments to food security and support of families. While our buildings are primarily an historic place of worship, they are also assets for service that can help fill needs in our community in new ways.

### **A Central Church on the City Green**

St. Paul's historic campus comprises three buildings on the city green in Vergennes, in the heart of a bustling downtown full of retail stores, restaurants, apartments, and offices. Vergennes citizens and visitors gather on the green for concerts, parades, farmers markets, and civic conversation.

- Built in 1834, the early Gothic Revival-style church, with brick body and a whitewashed clapboard bell tower, is the place of worship for the congregation. It dates to Vergennes' early days as a center of commerce for the surrounding communities.
- The brick federal Parish Hall (c.1835) was originally a law office but acquired in 1890. Since 1900, it has served as meeting space and occasional chapel. Its open interior, with full kitchen, is perfect for education and fellowship.
- Built in the 1790s, the Rectory was acquired by St. Paul's in 1890. It is currently occupied by our clergy.

Our central location and varied spaces offer many opportunities to partners. Future collaborations and initiatives may require rethinking or adapting some of our historic interiors which we are excited to consider with new partners.

### **Supporting Families**

St. Paul's has always been a place for families to gather and worship. An active Sunday school in the 19<sup>th</sup> century took place in the church itself, and our large 19<sup>th</sup> century baptismal font was actually a gift from the Sunday school. Today, our Sunday school brings together young children whose families live in Vergennes and nearby communities.

We are very interested in supporting families throughout the community, beyond our congregation and worship. Our Parish Hall is well-suited to a number of programs, including educational gatherings and nutrition-based initiatives. This space is regularly used by Alcoholics Anonymous and a local Girl Scout troop.

### **A Church with a Mission: Food Insecurity**

The Episcopal Church has a long history of service to local and global communities. St. Paul's is an inclusive church that accepts people wherever they are socially and spiritually. We are committed in supporting the people in our community, loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Locally, we focus on food insecurity, and welcome potential partners committed to this mission. The following list highlights some of our current efforts and their estimated public value:<sup>1</sup>

- **Vergennes Community Food Shelf:** The food shelf is located at the United Church of Christ church in Vergennes and staffed by volunteers. St. Paul's supplies weekly volunteers and contributions, an annual public value of approximately \$29,000.
- **Community Garden:** The St. Paul's community garden is located in Vergennes, on the Northland Job Corps property. Each summer, about 15 volunteers tend the vegetable garden and send the harvest to the food shelf, an annual public value of about \$19,000.
- **Table of Grace:** The Table of Grace is a free community meal for families in economic need and seniors who live alone. It is offered at the United Church of Christ church on the fourth Friday of each month. St. Paul's contributes an annual public value of roughly \$5,800.
- **Boys and Girls Club Snacks:** Once a week, St. Paul's volunteers provide afternoon snacks to the Boys and Girls Club in Vergennes during the school year. The food and time amounts to an annual public value of \$25,860.
- **Memorial Day Parade Fundraiser:** Memorial Day in Vergennes would not be the same without St. Paul's concession stand, which for over thirty years has served the crowd that assembles on the city green during Vermont's largest Memorial Day parade. The event is a fundraiser for St. Paul's local and global outreach efforts. Including the dozen volunteers and average funds raised, the annual public value is approximately \$3,062.

Our outreach dollars also directly support other local organizations, including the Addison County Open Door Clinic, the Boys and Girls Club of Vergennes, and the John Graham Shelter. Internationally, we give to Episcopal Relief and Development and Doctors without Borders.

### **Partnerships to Ring throughout Vergennes**

Our historic bell rings every Sunday, and reminds us of a church with a long and continuing history of community service. Whenever you hear it, consider our invitation to partner with us and share these historic buildings in new and exciting ways. This might include cost-sharing, rental, or a range of other possibilities. We are eager to meet with you and hear your ideas!

---

<sup>1</sup> The public value figures were determined using a tool developed by Partners for Sacred Places and the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy and Practice. It is a nationally recognized tool for determining the public impact of congregations throughout the United States. [http://www.endowedparishes.org/download\\_file/view/2154/](http://www.endowedparishes.org/download_file/view/2154/)