

**ST. PAUL CHURCH
UNITED METHODIST & BUDDHIST CHRISTIAN
INTERSPIRITUAL**

1860-2011



Sacred Activism: Open Welcome and Outreach Programs

In the late 1960s, St. Paul's forged a connection with the Gay and Lesbian community by hosting choir concerts with the Metropolitan Community Church. At this time the Rev. Lawrence Robinson, the husband of the late Ruth Robinson, was pastor. Later, many GLBT groups met at our church.

The church also became a member of the Capitol Hill Improvement and Conservation Association. The church hosted The Boarding House Club which provided support and social activities for persons who were put out of psychiatric institutions during governmental cutbacks. That is when Wayne Freeman came to St. Paul's, and his prayers for the world every Sunday always touched our hearts. The church sponsored a Children's Tutorial Program as well as a Native American congregation and with their pastor Rev. Marles Moore, worshipped in the sanctuary on Sunday evenings for about ten years. We have always been diverse in our community outreach. We were founding members of the Capitol Hill United Ministries and the Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, setting up a booth for many years at the People's Fair where we offered free water (until the soda pop concessions decided to sell bottled water and our free water was no longer allowed.)

In 1981, St. Paul's took another step. The Rev. Julian Rush, a United Methodist minister, had just been ousted from the First United Methodist Church in Boulder for being gay. Bishop Melvin Wheatley asked St. Paul's to consider having Julian appointed on the staff. Though the church already had a minister and very little money, they voted to welcome Julian as a public gesture of support for the gay community. The congregation was small but feisty. One elderly member of the congregation, Frieda Miller, recalled, "If we hadn't said "yes" to Julian, I would have left the church." A few other members did leave for the opposite reason. While Julian worked at St. Paul, he led the development of the Colorado AIDS Project, which moved to its own location while Julian served as its director for many years.

In a movement to resist several actions of the United Methodist Church to severely limited participation on the basis of sexual orientation, in 1984 St. Paul's became one of the first three churches in the nation to join the Reconciling Congregation Program, a network of people who believe that it is part of our Christian path to welcome into our midst all the children of God, and that means gays and lesbians, bisexual and transgendered persons, as well as those with a heterosexual orientation.

St. Paul's community was still courageous but also very small in October of 1986, yet when they noticed that there were no places for hungry people to find a free meal on Sunday mornings, they decided to do something about it. Troy Epperly and Jerry Taylor helped start our Sunday Meal Program. The first day, no one came, so our volunteers walked over to Colfax and invited people to the church for a sandwich and a cup of coffee. While they were gone, the food cart was stolen. As the weather got colder, they made hot food and opened the fellowship hall on Sundays so that people might come in, get warm, and sit down to a hot meal. It continues as a great program with volunteers from the congregation. Brad Jeske, as Food Coordinator, made the program stronger and better than ever. Volunteer coordinator Trude French says, "We now serve an average of 100-300 plates every Sunday morning."

In 1988, after church attendance had dropped to around 15 people, the minister walked out and threatened to close the doors. The people responded passionately and kept them open because they believed the church offered an important alternative to people looking for a spiritual community. There was a spirit here that was needed. Rev. Toni Cook came as pastor in June of 1989 and helped the congregation in many new forms of outreach to the community. For example, she introduced contemporary services of "wild worship," and had a weekly talk radio broadcast on station WTLK.

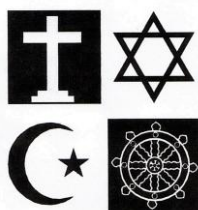
In January of 1991, the Colorado AIDS Project asked St. Paul's to take over their furniture and housewares program. For ten years, our volunteers worked long and hard to deliver beds and blankets, couches and kitchenware to people with AIDS who otherwise might slept on a cold floor, people whose families had abandoned them. We called the Program PDQ – named by the late Jerry Taylor to mean Pick-Ups and Deliveries Quick—although we were not always so quick.

At the same time, spearheaded by Rev. Toni Cook, St. Paul's started a youth shelter, Safe at St. Paul's, at the request of the City of Denver to help care for the burgeoning numbers of young people homeless on our city streets. We knew we could not turn away from this need to help and protect those young people who were very much at risk. We operated the shelter for nearly two years—in 1991 and 1992—with young people sleeping in our downstairs fellowship hall, developing case management and referral services. Then Urban Peak took over management of our shelter until they moved to their new building in 1998 where they combined the night shelter with daytime support services for youth.

Continuing our commitment to use as much of our building as possible for the good of others, New Genesis Workingman's Shelter moved in when Urban Peak moved out in 1998. We continue to open our doors every night to 25-30 people in transition and need. This, like all of our outreach at St. Paul, is a natural expression of our call to Sacred Activism.

In 2001, the Catholic Worker Soup Kitchen, after losing their building, began using the kitchen at St. Paul Church twice a week to prepare a wonderful homemade meal that they transport and serve at the St. Francis drop-in center for the homeless.

Buddhist Christian InterSpiritual Community – 1995



In October of 1995, St. Paul's developed a new kind of outreach program--The Buddhist Christian InterSpiritual Service (if you look at our stained glass windows with Jewish and organic spiritual symbols, you see the open spirit that has always been part of St. Paul's). The Buddhist Christian InterSpiritual Service is an opportunity every Sunday evening for people from various faith backgrounds, including people from our Sunday morning community, to gather together and share a time of meditation, learning and dialogue. Once again, we didn't really know what we were doing when we started this new service, but it is one more way that we are faithful to the spirit of St. Paul's—the spirit of compassion and openness that nurtures a shared sacred space that honors our evolving sense of Divine Presence.

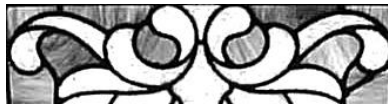
The Buddhist Christian InterSpiritual Service was founded by Rev. Dr. Toni Cook with the support of Sister Mary Luke Tobin and Professor Jose Cabezon. It has been co-sponsored by The Insight Meditation Community of Colorado, the Center for Spiritual Transformation, The Shambhala Center, The Denver Zen Center, and The Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temple. The breath of inspiration shared by the ongoing teachers and the engagement of the BCI community members have been a true gift. We are very grateful for all of our many spiritual teachers through the years, and for the recent teachers: Sister Rose Annette Liddell, Venerable

Claude d'Estree, Dr. Bob Mischke, Don Morreale, Imam Ibrahim Kazerooni, Dr. Lloyd Burton, Dr. Andrew Holecek, Rabbi Tirzah Firestone, and Andrew Harvey.

As a BCI Community, we were honored to take part in the organization of MEDITATE "08, an interfaith meditation series offered in an outdoor Denver Park during the Democratic National Convention.

At St. Paul UMC & BCIC, we are people of all faiths, perspectives, orientations, ethnicity, class, age, and political leanings. And if there are diverse points of view expressed at the Buddhist Christian Interfaith Service, there are probably just as many in the morning Christian service. Yet we sit side-by-side and worship together, humbled by the mystery and profound Presence of God. We are joyously determined to keep our minds and hearts always open. When we gather together, we listen to beautiful music, find spiritual nurture, explore our life paths, share hopes and prayers and silence, make good friends, and bask in the beauty of the windows.

Stained Glass Window Restoration



The Stained Glass Windows are of considerable historic and aesthetic value. They were installed in the church building soon after its construction around 1910, and are an integral part of the church architecture. The church building is an important part of the neighborhood and contributes to the historical character of the district. The adoption of a neoclassical style is a departure from the dominant gothic revival style typical of the time. The interior has an auditorium arrangement centered on the pulpit and influenced by theatre design with radial seating, including a proscenium arch. The function of the windows is not to tell stories or offer images, but to provide a beautiful and centering environment for worship. This is the role of the prevailing green color, a calming shade rare in churches even of this period. The design includes pleasing geometric forms, and the majority of the surface area is purely decorative, lacking human figures or large symbols. Many of the rosettes in the window design are derived from similar elements found in classical Greek and Roman architecture, as are decorative elements in the building itself. The symbolic elements that appear are minimal: small central insets in the rose windows. The windows bring joy as the light shining through them changes throughout the day.

The exterior of the church building benefited from a huge effort by our Trustees who worked with the Colorado Historical Society to complete the first of many stages of restoration in 2002. The entire Trustees Team worked long and hard to be good stewards of this amazing yet always maintenance-challenged building. But this is the place we call our spiritual home.

Now we are moving into a major Stained Glass Window restoration project. Conservation and protection of the windows is essential to preserving the historic character of the building. We are grateful that the restoration work on our beautiful stained glass windows is about to commence, thanks to the generous donations of congregants and friends for the matching funds needed to receive an amazing grant from the Colorado Historical Society!

Into the Future

A healthy home nurtures the members of the family while opening out into the world with compassion. We don't know our future. No institution or person does. We simply respond to the urgings of the Divine Spirit as well as we can. And we surrender ourselves and each other and our troubled world into the hands of God as we pray, "Thy Will Be Done." Then, we work as hard as we can to realize the vision to do justice, to love others, and to walk humbly in the presence of the Sacred that surrounds us. And how do we do that? We do it together! Always together!

Early Roots of our Community

In the gold rush of 1859, when Colorado was still part of the Kansas Territory and Native Americans still defended their homeland, here on the banks of Cherry Creek there was only a small settlement of shacks and saloons, alongside an encampment of Ute tepees.

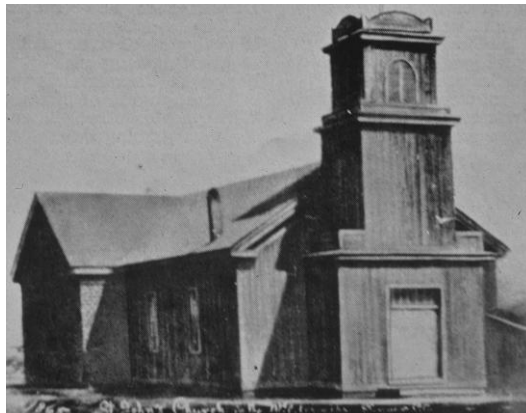
Historian William B. Vickers wrote: “While it cannot be said that Denver, in the earliest years of its history, was essentially a religious community, it is none the less true that, like all the great mining camps of the West, it always extended a hearty welcome to the genuine Christian minister. Even...the most notorious outlaws...[listened patiently] to the man of God, and in many instances business was suspended in bar-rooms and gambling saloons to give the preacher a chance...and more than once the wanton disturber of religious [services was silenced] at the muzzle of a revolver.”

According to the Rocky Mountain News of July 9, 1859, a Rev. Mr. Porter had held a preaching service at Gregory’s Diggings on July 3 (and some say he had already been preaching around these parts since June). The News also reported other events of the day: such as “a fine flock of sheep passed through here a few days since,” and “on the bachelor table [set up for the single men in the mining camps] as fine a bottle of pickled gherkins as ever we tasted [was set out], a gift from our old friend Gen. William Larimer, Jr.”

Rev. Hezekiah H. Porter, from Georgia, was a preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. A minister friend said that he was a barkeeper who closed shop, poured all the alcohol down the drain, and asked to be accepted by the Methodist Conference. Rev. Porter came to Denver and helped to give momentum to what became St. Paul’s United Methodist Church. He was in Colorado only briefly, but "H. H. Porter" is listed as a delegate to the convention that drafted the territorial constitution of 1861.

Rev. Porter was one of many missionary preachers who traveled to this frontier territory. At the same time, there were Methodist Episcopal preachers from the North (who founded First Church, later called Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, and other churches), an Episcopal preacher (who founded St. John’s), and a Roman Catholic Priest (who founded the church that eventually built the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception on Colfax).

Making History - The First Church in Denver - 1860



History was made in 1860 when Rev. William M. Bradford and the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in Denver built a small brick church on the southeast corner of 14th and Arapahoe, “the first building erected for church purposes in Denver,” about where the Auraria Campus is today. It had a belfry tower. A bell arrived for it by wagon in December: the first church bell in Denver. All other church communities in Denver used empty buildings at the time, or schoolhouses, or rented theaters, but our ancestors in the faith built the first church building.

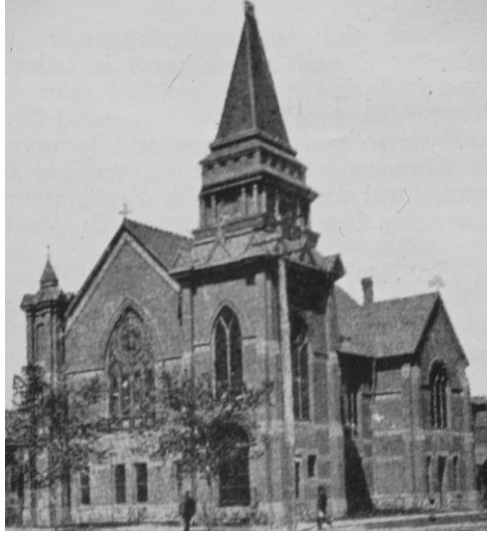
However, a year after the church was built, the Civil War broke out. Union sentiment was high in Denver, and Rev. Bradford and most of the able-bodied men of the church, who were Methodists from southern states, left to fight for the Confederacy. Many soldiers from western states fought for both the North and the South. Today most Coloradoans tend to think that the North was right (fighting for the U.S. as One Nation and against slavery) and the South was wrong, but the issues even among Methodists were more complicated than that. In 1862 it was Union soldiers under the leadership of Colonel John Chivington—the presiding elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) in Denver—who won the battle of Glorieta Pass in New Mexico by attacking the Confederate supply train. Two years later the same Colonel Chivington planned and executed the massacre of 200 peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians at Sand Creek in southeastern Colorado.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South had been formed in 1844 by a split in the Methodist Episcopal Church over the issue of slavery. John Wesley, the English founder of the Methodists, was strongly against slavery and an ally of the abolitionist William Wilberforce, who led the successful campaign to get Parliament to ban the slave trade in 1807, and to abolish slavery in the British Empire in 1833. At its founding after the Revolutionary War in 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America opposed slavery, and its clergy were expected not to own slaves. In time, however, many rich Methodist landowners in the South had acquired slaves. Bishop James O. Andrew of Georgia had a slave, and his wife owned another. The General Conference of the church demanded that he release his slaves or be removed from office. He refused on the grounds that he was prohibited by the laws of the State of Georgia from setting them free, and in any case he could better care for and protect his slaves if he kept them. The General Conference voted to depose him, following which most of the southern Methodist churches, claiming that the General Conference lacked the authority to remove a bishop without trial, severed their connection with the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) and founded a separate organization. Therefore, the roots of our church history carry some very negative karma. And we are conscious of that as we dedicate ourselves to a much more inclusive vision of human community.

The Civil War years were hard years for everyone. The church was almost empty, and when the Rev. Bradford departed, he left the property in the hands of the northern Methodists, who held services and Sunday School in it. In 1862, the building was sold to the congregation that later built our neighbor church, St. John's Episcopal Cathedral, then called "St. John's Church in the Wilderness." The Rev. Learner B. Stateler, sent to replace Bradford, found himself without a church building, and then received news that his house in Kansas had been destroyed by arson and his wife and child were narrowly rescued. He ended up with no home at all. He brought his family to Denver, where he continued to preach and his wife ran a boarding house for a while, but having little success in this town that was under Union martial law, Stateler went on to minister in Montana. There isn't any record of how the women of the congregation kept things going during the war, but we believe that they did, and that they must have continued to gather for prayer.

In 1871, the Southern Methodists who had remained or returned built another church under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. A. A. Morrison. This building, a frame structure, stood at 1846 Arapahoe Street.

In 1872, this building was exchanged for a larger one at 20th and Curtis Streets, which had belonged to St. Paul Presbyterian Church. Our church did not assume the name "St. Paul" at that time, however, but became "Curtis Street Methodist Episcopal Church, South." There we started our first mission, the Lawrence Street Mission for the Chinese workers who were building the railroads, working in the mines, and starting their own businesses. It seems that our mission to reach out in the spirit of justice and compassion has always been important. This Lawrence Street Mission stayed open until the Chinese community, which was flourishing by 1896, was able to organize a church.



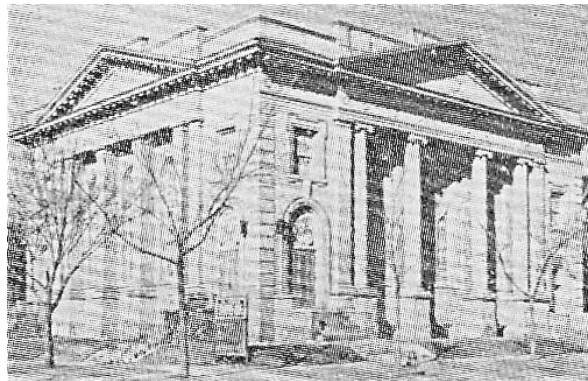
Our Fourth Church – 21st & Welton – built in 1887

In the 1880s, downtown Denver began to boom, and the commercial growth pushed the congregation all the way out to 21st and Welton Streets, where the cornerstone for a new church was laid on July 23, 1887, and we officially took the name “St. Paul’s.” The church was St. Paul’s Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and there were then 140 members. They provided a Chinese Sunday School for as many as 50 children.

The Epworth League, the Methodist organization for youth, was endorsed by both the northern and southern churches, and St. Paul’s had a league from 1894 onward. In the central rose window on the west side of the present church building are the letters “E. L.” which stand for “Epworth League,” and the design is the emblem of that organization, which later became the Methodist Youth Fellowship.

As Denver grew, so did the Sunday School and so did the church.

Our Current Church – 16th and Ogden – built in 1910



In 1910, we purchased four lots at 16th & Ogden for \$7,400. A noted architect, James B. Hyder, designed the present building and it was built for \$100,000. The Rev. Dr. R. E. Dickinson was the minister when the St. Paul’s Methodist Episcopal Church South was dedicated here and the cornerstone of the old church was laid at this site. The congregation grew to 800 people. It was very active with many women’s classes like the Gleaners, who provided the kitchen in the new church, and the Triangle Club (that became the Hyder Class), who during World War I made bandages for the Red Cross, and during World War II sponsored the Save the Children Federation. Over the years, children and socializing and music have always been important. Originally, the church even had a pipe organ. And the stained glass windows are remarkable.

In 1910, the Methodists in the United States were very divided. But in 1939 there was a great reunion of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Protestant Church, forming The Methodist Church. The Rev. Dr. Charles O'Dell Thibodeau, a northerner, was appointed as pastor of St. Paul's. Some of the members were uncertain about this change, especially the Daughters of the Confederacy who belonged to this church; but in the end, the congregation with southern roots ended up loving their "northern" minister during his 14 years of service. "Dr. Thib" once quoted these words (by Dr. House) on a Sunday Bulletin: "Absence from Religious Services means inevitable and lamentable moral decay. To play golf, to take a ride in an automobile, to go to some pleasure resort may from the animal standpoint be more bracing, to write letters may be more pleasant, to read a newspaper or a novel may be for the time more exhilarating and informing, to visit your friends more congenial, but a man who is engaged in building himself, and who is trying to realize God, cannot afford to come down to such a life." People came to church in unprecedented numbers..

St. Paul's celebrated 100 years of ministry (because they included their pre-history with Rev. Porter) with great fanfare in 1959. Our motto then as now was that we are a "friendly and welcoming church."

Then in 1963, St. Paul's thought about moving to the suburbs. After all, that was where people were moving. Church attendance was dwindling. So the congregation went so far as to purchase land at the corner of Evans and Havana (the later site of Mountain View Community Church). It took another beloved pastor, the Rev. Guy Twyman, to lead the church through this tough decision. Thankfully, in 1965 the church voted "no" to a move to the suburbs and "yes" to remain in mission in the midst of the city. Rev. Guy Twyman was the husband of our beloved Maryan. And under his leadership, St. Paul's started many outreach programs. Rev. Guy Twyman grew ill from cancer and died while still pastor here. Yet his courage and his love strengthened the congregation. It was for this reason that they dedicated the room behind the sanctuary as the Twyman Chapel or the Twyman Room. Maryan Twyman said: "I have stayed at St. Paul's because it is very important that St. Paul's is where it is. It has such an impact on our part of the city."

In 1968, the Methodist Church made another historic merger, joining with the Church of the Evangelical United Brethren and becoming The United Methodist Church.

MINISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED THE EVOLVING CHURCH OF ST. PAUL

The Methodist Episcopal Church South (*1944 the MEC South was formed when it split from the Methodist Episcopal Church – so in 1860 the founding clergy and members of St. Paul were MEC South or Southern Methodists*)

The Methodist Church (*1939 – The Methodist Episcopal Church and MEC South merged w/ The Methodist Protestant Ch*)

The United Methodist Church (*1968 – The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Churches merged*)

St. Paul United Methodist Church & Buddhist Christian InterSpiritual Community (*from 1995 onward*)

1860-2011

Rev. William N. Bradford

Rev. Learner B. Stateler

Dr. A. A. Morrison
Rev. E. M. Mann
Rev. W. H. Warren
Rev. W. C. Hearn
Rev. W. G. Miller
Rev. W. Harris
Rev. W. J. Phillip
Dr. C. B. Riddick
Rev. J. D. Bush
Rev. J. M. Major
Dr. J. G. Morris
Dr. F. B. Carrol
Dr. W. F. Packard
Dr. Warren T. Bolling
Rev. J. M. Crowe
Rev. J. A. Duncan
Rev. J. H. Ledbetter
Rev. W. P. Rippey
Rev. O. M. Rickman
Rev. W. E. Edmonson
Rev. J. T. Leggett
Rev. W. T. Thompson
Rev. P. T. Ramsey
Rev. R. E. Dickenson
Rev. R. J. Waldraven
Dr. A. Normal Evans
Rev. W. W. Richardson
Rev. S. M. Williams
Rev. J. Wesley Smith
Rev. T. S. Wheeler
Rev. T. S. Hickman
Rev. F. R. Poage
Rev. H. D. Marlin
Rev. C. P. Jones
Rev. C. M. Crowe
Rev. F. L. Meadows
Rev. Dwight McCree
Rev. E. W. Parker
Dr. Charles Odell Thibodeau
Rev. J. F. Holmes
Rev. D. L. Morris
Rev. Guy N. Twyman
Rev. Austin Vick
Rev. Frank Brown
Rev. Lawrence H. Robinson
Rev. George Christie
Rev. Julian Rush
Rev. Dr. Toni Cook, 1989-2011
Rev. Jessie Nelson, July 2011-

History Contributors: Dr. Jean Saul, Rev. Dr. Toni Cook, and Prof. Donald Hughes