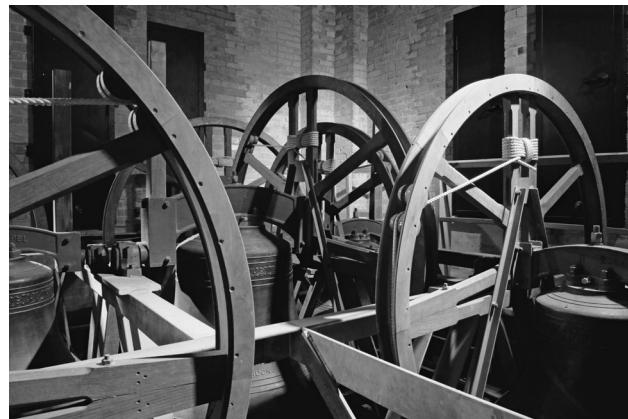


The 21st Century

Great Tradition/Great Future

Thanks to a bequest by Bill Dickey, in 2001 St. Paul's became the first Methodist church in the world with change-ringing bells. These eight bells were installed in the bell tower below 10 stationary bells brought from Milam and McGowen. The stationary bells, renovated in 1995, are rung electronically by a keyboard inside the church.

Change-ringing bells are hung in frames that allow them to swing through 360 degrees. Ropes attached to the bells are pulled in an intricate pattern by a band of trained ringers located in a separate ringing room inside the tower. The bells are rung after worship services and for special occasions.



Flooding from Tropical Storm Allison followed by the church's approaching centennial in the early 2000s prompted several acquisitions and projects.

- The Sanctuary's exterior was cleaned, and the stained-glass windows were cleaned and restored. The reception center was renovated, a donated Echo Organ was installed with casement to blend with the decor, and more signage and landscaping were added.

- The building on the fourth block was remodeled to house most of the EAC's programs, the church's After-School Program, and other groups. It was named Abraham Station to reflect the Abrahamic faiths represented among the EAC's congregations and proximity to MetroRail's Museum District stations.

- Vacated from moves into Abraham Station the first floor of the Sanctuary Building was remodeled into the Tubbs Youth Center, a gallery, choir robing rooms, and the Fannin Street Courtyard.

- The January 2006 Centennial Celebration at the George R. Brown Convention Center was underwritten, and a beautifully designed and illustrated, award-winning book about St. Paul's was published.

In connection with the Centennial observance, an historical marker was granted. Placed near the Main

Street entrance to the Sanctuary, it was dedicated on May 20, 2007, with third- and fifth-generation members (below right) unveiling the marker. St. Paul's also is registered as an Historical Site by the General Commission on Archives and History of the UMC.

In recent years, St. Paul's has strengthened its international missions through its connection with the Methodist Church in Bolivia. Mission trips to Bolivia are conducted most years, the Youth going in alternate years.

In 2007 the families of the After-School Program formed the core of a growing Latino/a Ministry at St. Paul's, now called *Fe y Esperanza* (Faith and Hope).

Also in 2007, the Sacristy, located under the choir loft, was renovated. Two tiny bleak rooms were transformed into one with built-in glass cabinets to hold candlesticks, crosses, and other metalware on one side and built-in wooden cabinetry on the other. The centerpiece is a custom-designed chest of drawers in which the paraments, or altar cloths, lay flat. This chest is made of solid oak and topped with a slab of polished soapstone from Brazil. St. Paul's logo, the Jerusalem cross, is inlaid on the top in antique green marble from China. A new sound and recording system and new lamps also were installed.

In 2008 a large classroom was refurbished and dedicated as the Fellers Room in memory of Dr. John E. Fellers and in honor of Bobbie Fellers, a former senior minister of St. Paul's and his wife.

During the summer and fall of 2009, a cadre of volunteers transformed basic classrooms in the basement of the Jones Building into special spaces to accommodate Sunday School classrooms for children in grades two through five.

Planning for the Future

St. Paul's continues to be a spiritual force for its own urban community and beyond, providing leadership in liturgical worship and music, missions and outreach, spiritual formation, and education.

A facilities master plan was developed to support these endeavors. The first major step toward fulfilling that plan began in late 2010 with the **Imagine** capital project to expand and renovate the Jones Building to



accommodate growth, particularly in the children's area. The "new" building was consecrated on August 28, 2011, and the Fine Arts Academy was launched that week. During the summer of 2011, a Chartres-pattern labyrinth was installed on the front lawn at Main and Binz/Bissonnet.

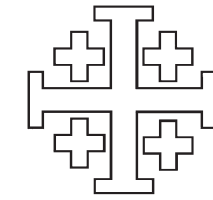
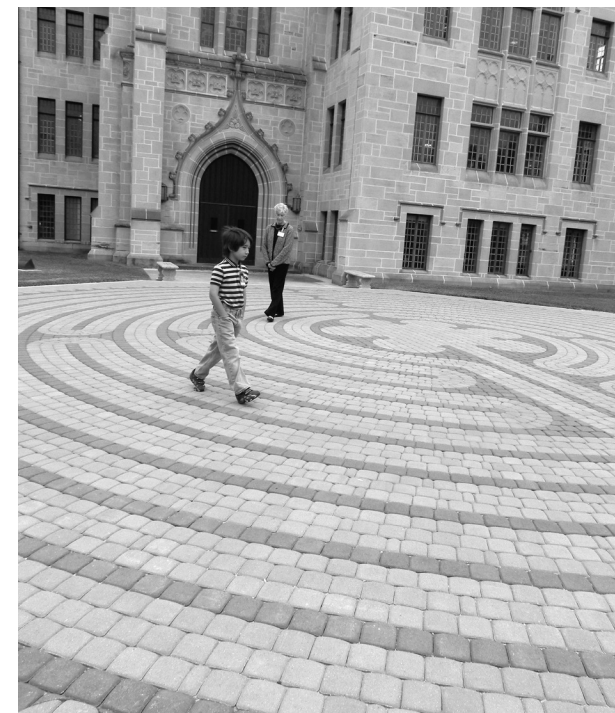
With flood-prevention and safety measures, that lawn was transformed in 2014 into the Bankston Green, honoring St. Paul's former senior minister of almost 20 years, Dr. Jim Bankston, and his family. Linking with the Museum Walk, it makes the lawn accessible and more user-friendly as it surrounds the labyrinth, which is available for all to walk at any time.

Also in 2014, a small renovation was conducted in the music area, and in 2015 the Youth and Activity centers were renovated, the latter including a Triune labyrinth embedded in the floor.

REVIVE

Replace • Repair • Renovate

In the spring of 2018 the REVIVE capital project was introduced to *replace* outdated mechanical equipment with modern, energy-efficient HVAC and electrical systems; address sections of the exterior stone walls requiring masonry work to *repair* damage and prevent water infiltration and to *repair* the signature steel casement windows and parts of the roof, while maintaining the aesthetic of the building; and to *renovate* with a new lift to the lower level, enhanced restrooms, and an accessible entrance from the Jones Plaza into the Sanctuary.



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History of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Houston

ST. PAUL'S
UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH
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Bissonnet
Houston, TX 77004
in the Museum District
713-528-0527 Phone
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www.stpaulshouston.org

Traditional worship
for contemporary people

Since its beginnings in 1905, St. Paul's Church has been a place where people meet God. The St. Paul's family today remains deeply committed to providing spiritual leadership for the city of Houston.

While every new year brings growth and change, and our mission has been restated over the years, the core message remains the same: St. Paul's United Methodist Church is a cathedral for Houston that embodies its diversity, inspires faith, and leads change for the common good of all peoples and communities.

1905 to 1918

From Dream to Reality

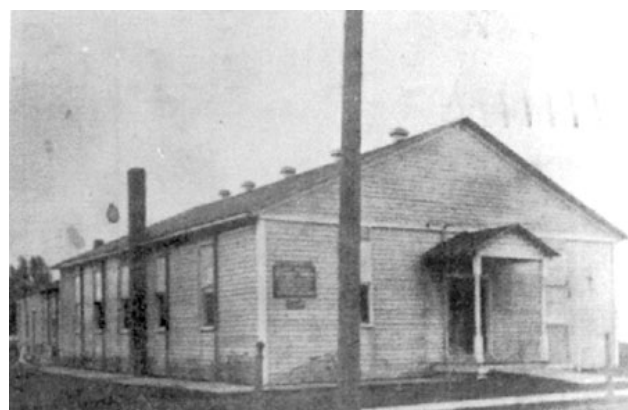
St. Paul's was conceived as an act of gratitude. As an offering to God after her recovery from a serious illness in 1903, Mrs. J. O. Ross contributed property on the corner of Milam and McGowen streets for the establishment of a new Methodist church in what was then known as the "South End" of Houston.

In December 1905, a group met in the Ross home to form the official board of the new church. The first worship service was held on Christmas Eve 1905 in the Winnie Davis Auditorium at the corner of Main and McGowen.

Preaching to 1,000 people in the same auditorium on January 14, 1906, Bishop Joseph S. Key formally constituted the new church with 153 charter members. Foreseeing that "South End" name could become inappropriate, Bishop Key suggested the name St. Paul's.

In the first years, worship services were held in a small frame chapel in the Rosses' yard.

With a membership of 600, St. Paul's opened its first sanctuary building at Milam and McGowen on January 31, 1909. The architecture was Grecian with a Byzantine-style dome. The sanctuary was dedicated in 1918 when the building debt was paid.



1927 to 1930

A Brand New Building

After much growth it was determined that further physical expansion was not feasible, so in 1927 the Milam/McGowen property was sold to Second Baptist Church, which worshiped there for 34 years.



Land was purchased from the Hermann estate for the present Sanctuary Building at 5501 Main and Binz/Bissonnet. The architect was Trustee Jesse H. Jones' protégé Alfred C. Finn, who also designed the San Jacinto Monument and the Gulf Building, the latter now part of the Chase Bank complex in downtown Houston.

After groundbreaking in April 1929, Sunday School classes met at San Jacinto High School, and the congregation worshiped in the synagogue of Congregation Beth Israel. Both buildings are now a part of Houston Community College.

As reported in the *St. Paul's Church Magazine* of that era, "Our Jewish friends refused to make a charge for rent, light, or fuel, requesting only that we employ and loan them our janitor to assist in properly keeping the buildings."

The first worship service in the new Sanctuary Building was held on February 2, 1930, in the Gymnasium of the Education wing. The first worship service in the new Sanctuary was held on November 2 of that year. Membership in those years reached almost 1,700.

1930s through 1940s

Years of Struggle & Growth

Soon after the Sanctuary Building was completed, the effect of the Great Depression arrived in Houston. Although Jones, W.W. Fondren, and J.M. West each had provided \$50,000 toward construction,

times were difficult for St. Paul's, and retiring the debt for the building became a major challenge.

The congregation worked for the next 20 years to pay off the building debt. Funds were often so tight that if a buyer could have been found for the massive, elegant structure, the mortgage holder might have foreclosed.

But the people of St. Paul's persevered, often having to knock on doors for pennies at a time. Through all the years of financial struggle, the congregation continued to grow in membership and to support a full range of programs and activities. Finally, in November 1951, the debt was retired and the building was dedicated.

1950s through 1960s

Today's Church Takes Shape

St. Paul's Church flourished throughout the 1950s and 60s, gaining citywide recognition for ministries such as the Coffee Club, one of Houston's first and most successful church singles programs.

Designed by St. Paul's member David Baer, the Jones Youth Building was completed in 1958 on land given by Jesse Jones and his foundation, Houston Endowment.

The church established its own foundation in 1960 as a permanent endowment to provide the church with a solid financial base.

In 1963, a third block was purchased at Fannin/Binz/San Jacinto/Calumet for use as a parking area.

1970s through 1990s

Serving our Community

As the neighborhood around St. Paul's changed with suburban growth, the church's central urban location provided an ideal opportunity to serve the people in the surrounding community through children's programs, music, and outreach.

The weekday Mothers Day Out program became into a full-fledged nursery school in 1973, then St. Paul's School. In 1986, St. Paul's School was the first preschool in Houston accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs; that accreditation has been maintained.

Building on a solid foundation, the quality music synonymous today with St. Paul's was fortified with new leadership during this period. In 1981, a 76-rank Schantz pipe organ was donated by David Farnsworth. Later improvements increased the ranks to 84 and pipes to 4,569.

In 1983, a tiny group of dedicated St. Paul's members that had been making sandwiches on a desk-top for several years, evolved into the Emergency Aid Coalition (EAC), an interfaith organization of more than a dozen mid-town congregations. It serves thousands of clients a year through a Food Pantry, a



Clothing Center, and the Aid to Families and Books and Backpacks programs. The Food Pantry and Aid program operated from St. Paul's Sanctuary basement until 2004 when the EAC moved to new facilities in St. Paul's Abraham Station.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, St. Paul's focused on maintaining and expanding its strongest ministries – music and worship, mission and outreach, and programs for children, Youth, and families – and providing facilities to support them.

Capital campaigns funded the Jones Building's Murfee Center, Wilson Prayer Chapel, and Marr Dining Room as well as extensive renovations and repairs to the Sanctuary Building. Individual gifts provided for the renovation of the stationary tower bells (1995) and the organ (1996).

In the mid-1990s, a fourth block of land with a building on it was purchased, providing the base for future expansion on that property.

Key projects of the late 1990s included the purchase and reconfiguration of Calumet Street between the Jones and Sanctuary buildings into the Jones Plaza, named in memory of the Jones family of charter members whose descendants continue to worship here. Designed by Jesus Moroles, the Sunshine Fountain in the middle of the plaza was built through individual gifts in memory of Anne Jones Brice.

Also in the late 1990s, plans were begun for a Columbarium for the interment of the ashes of St. Paul's family members who choose cremation. It was completed and dedicated in 2002. Through a wrought-iron door designed especially for the entrance, the Columbarium holds 1,000 marble-covered niches, a small chapel area with benches and stained-glass windows, and a statue of the angel Gabriel.