

The Judy Property and the Story of St. Paul's Parish

(This talk was given by Margaret McGee on behalf of the Campaign Committee for the Judy Property at St. Paul's Stewardship Event on Oct. 5, 2011.)

The purpose of the Capital Campaign is to retire the Judy Property Debt, freeing our resources for expanded ministries today and giving a great gift to St. Paul's future.

We're a people of story, here at St. Paul's. We tell stories to discover and talk about our faith. So I'm going to tell a short version of the story of our parish.

From its earliest time, the story of this parish has been one of home-grown community service, worship, and celebration.

The seed for St. Paul's parish was planted by a Sunday School, started in a private home to serve the children of the town's pioneer settlers, and leading to worship services for the parents of those children.

Our church building was built by a member of the congregation, Alfred Tucker. The first wedding celebrated in that little church was Alfred's, in the summer of 1867.



St. Paul's church at its original location.

Thirty years later, as 19th Century turned into the 20th, and Port Townsend's economy was severely depressed, St. Paul's rector was Dr. Brooks Baker. A physician and priest who practiced each of his callings while at St. Paul's, Dr. Baker ministered to both the spiritual and physical needs of the community.

These are just some of the seeds, the tendrils, from which this parish grew, and is growing today. Their story is connected to our story. In fact, it's all one big story.

When I joined St. Paul's in 1995, the campus configuration was quite different from what it is today. Our current parish hall didn't exist. Instead, there were two small stand-alone buildings behind the rectory and church: McCleary Hall held the church offices & a meeting room, and another venerable building served as the parish hall.

I met Dale and Florence Judy at the Lenten soup suppers in the old Parish Hall. I ate their soup, which they had carried the few steps from their back porch to the Parish Hall, and in their voices I listened to the wisdom that grows from years and years of prayer.

Soon after, St. Paul's embarked on a Capital Campaign, to build this Parish Hall. I contributed my mite to the campaign, which felt good, and in the home-grown tradition of the parish, I also sanded the two sets of double doors and applied the layers of finish. Felt good then, and it feels good today.

Building this Parish Hall created a new configuration of space between the church and Fenn House, which was eventually made into the courtyard with the labyrinth. The courtyard was built mostly with volunteers from the parish, with the technical help of a young man

named Aragorn Deane, who was just setting up his landscape business.



Margaret McGee, Peggy St. Clair, Gary DeGregorio, Ray Steinberg, and Cajsja DeGregorio, making the labyrinth.. Photo by Keith Fleming, © St. Paul's 2005.

I was involved in the courtyard project. During its planning & implementation, I liked to imagine that space a hundred years into the future. After all, we worship in a building built by a parishioner more than 100 years

ago, so why not add 100 more? I pictured the finished courtyard a century from now, with a young couple, and their baby being baptized at the center of the labyrinth. I wanted to build the courtyard for that baby.

When it was all done, we celebrated. We had a party. Now it happened that Aragorn's first child was born the week before we

installed the labyrinth. In fact, his baby delayed the installation by a week. Aragorn came to the party with his baby, and he walked the labyrinth with his new son in his arms.

The baby's mother and I stood to one side watching. She introduced herself to me, then said, "This was a good project for Aragorn, right now in his life, to build a labyrinth."

And it was like a revelation – it was like my eyes were opened. *There was the baby!* We'd built the courtyard for the future, sure—but we'd also built it for this moment and for *that* baby. The story was bigger than I thought.

So here we are now, at this particular moment in the story of St. Paul's. Dale and Florence Judy have joined the communion of saints, and their home and property have joined this corporate body of St. Paul's parish.



We can look ahead a hundred years, and picture a beautiful church building on that corner. I like to imagine the first wedding in that church, with Alfred Tucker present in spirit, blessing the bride and groom.

I don't know whether I'll be around to help build that church, and to be honest, I don't need to know. I've got enough on my plate right now. Besides, what's happening today with the Judy property, along with ideas of how we might use *that house*, are plenty to get me motivated.

The ink was barely dry on the paperwork, when the house was transformed into a pantry for Just Soup, a rehearsal space for the Children's Choir, Women's Movie Night. And a home for Vacation Bible School – I can see Florence and Dale smiling down on that one, joined by the founders of that first in-home Sunday school.

Other ideas for the house are percolating – exciting conversations about:

- working with the diocese to use it as a satellite location for diocesan events (I bet Dale, who received the Bishop's Cross for his service at St. Paul's, would be interested in that idea), and
- developing a spiritual education center that offers home grown classes that reach out to the region (Florence, who helped start the Women's Spiritual Growth Group here at St. Paul's, would be interested in that), and
- starting a parish nursing ministry serving both the parish and community, maybe tied in with Just Soup on Wednesdays (I can picture Dr. Brooks Baker, our physician priest, smiling down on that one) and
- more ideas percolating that I haven't even heard about yet.

We've received great gifts from those who came before – countless others who brought spirit to life in this place. Alfred Tucker may have built that church so he'd have a place to get married, but he also built it for us, people he would never meet, not in this life, anyway.

Now we can give a gift – a gift of possibilities, free and clear. Everyone in the parish will receive this flier that tells a bit about the Judy property, and about the debt, and has this nice little form at the end to fill out.

Bottom line: thanks to generous donations and pledges, we were able to make a substantial down payment when we purchased the property. Thank you.

The diocese loaned us the balance, which we are currently paying off monthly, with interest. Details are on the flier.

Our goal today is to retire that debt as soon as possible, save the interest, and get on with the mission.

We need everyone to make this happen. If you have not yet been able to contribute toward the purchase of the Judy property, now's your chance. If you did make an earlier contribution, *thank you*, and please consider taking part again in the effort to retire the remaining debt.

To help us in planning, we ask for these pledges to be returned by mid-November.

Clearing the loan is our gift is to whoever ends up building that church on the corner, and also to those right now dreaming of expanded missions. It's a gift to anyone who will be touched by those missions, and to folks and missions that we don't even know about yet. Because if there's anything I've learned in my time here, it is that the story is bigger, much bigger than we can ever imagine.

We are players in a story of new creation. A story of a broken world, a world redeemed and healed by the grace of God, lived out in the people of God. That's our story, the one we tell every Sunday in that church that Alfred Tucker built, and we are all in it.

With the flier you will receive a prayer card. We ask that you pray first. Then please help us turn the page on this debt and move ahead into the next adventure. Thank you!

