Welcome to St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Walla Walla, Washington

Where heart meets mind,
friend meets friend,
spiritual nourishment meets the senses,
and congregation meets community.

And where we seek a rector who will shine light onto our journey
as our past meets our future.

When we add brighter lights, we see each other more clearly.

“For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light” (Mark 4:22). This year at St. Paul’s we brightened our dim sanctuary lights. As a result, not only could we more clearly see the Book of Common Prayer and the hymn lyrics without needing to pull out a pocket flashlight, we began seeing each other more clearly and more honestly, too. The process of creating our Profile and discerning about our future with a new rector has helped us cast God’s light in an honest reflection of our story, our patterns, our challenges, and our hopes. Here is what we see:

Heart meets mind:
We are equipped for ministry & eager to see how light can shine on our gifts.

At St. Paul’s, our thirst for spiritual growth matters more than anything else. We are made up of members who are grounded in our theological perspectives, open to others’ understanding of their own faith, and thirsty for an intellectually rich spiritual journey where members’ individual and corporate gifts matter. The unexpected and controversial resignation of our previous rector caused concern and uncertainty. Many among us – guided by our exceptional Interim Rector, outstanding youth and family director, and dedicated staff and Vestry – have stepped up to nurture our collective spiritual growth. We have seen restored trust and energy within our community over the last year, and our mood is uplifted, optimistic, and hopeful. With this momentum, we are excited about the future ways our ministries and spiritual formation can grow so that our gifts may offer light to others.

And yet, we wonder…
We are hopeful for our future, but we worry that our vibrancy is being spread thin. We are eager to hear about ways to nurture spiritual growth, even though we sometimes have trouble finding the time or energy to take part in these formation opportunities. Lately we have been receptive to changes, and we hope our willingness to try new things will continue.

We seek a rector…
who can help members discern their gifts, both individually and collectively – someone who can, with courage, openness, and wisdom, help us identify and address needs, utilize gifts, and resolve concerns as they arise. We seek someone who will partner with us in our lifelong spiritual formation journeys that may touch on multiple issues. For example, he or she may address concerns among our senior members about how faith comes into play in matters of retirement, cross-generational relationships, and health. A new rector may find good ways
to engage with our busy working families about how to be spiritually nourished in the midst of countless demands on time and energy. He or she may spend time with our youth talking about how science, social media, sexuality, social issues, and even Star Wars are all possible to safely ponder as matters of faith and spirituality during a Wednesday evening pizza party or while watching a Walla Walla Sweets baseball game. We imagine a rector who can offer an intellectually rich and captivating sermon that sticks with us throughout the week, and who can engage in an informal coffee hour conversation that may lead to new programming ideas. We want our rector to be joyful and have a deep love of Jesus Christ. Our new rector should be willing to grow spiritually with us as he or she takes on the role of trusted and confident guide and partner on our spiritual paths.

**Friend meets friend:**

**Our relationships with each other sustain us and light our journey.**

The attendance at our pastoral-sized church (average Sunday attendance around 100) has remained steady in the last few years, though the numbers are not what they were in some congregants’ minds as they reminisce about full pews from decades ago. We are an aging congregation (58% of CAT [Church Assessment Tool] respondents were 65+ years old), made up of relatively affluent and highly educated individuals who are disproportionately white. Our congregational community includes several retired priests, a discerning audience who participates in the life of the Church. Like lots of other parishes, many in our midst would like to see an increase in diversity and new people, especially families with children and youth. We’d also like to see fuller pews. And yet, *the people who are here are here because they want to be.* From retirees to youth, from busy working parents to people who are unable to come to church in person anymore, St. Paul’s offers people a place of warmth, welcome, support, and safety. When needs are expressed, they are met. When there’s pain, there is prayer and the provision of support. When there are questions, there are people to talk to in both formal and informal ways. When there is disagreement, we remain friends – and family, really – in Christ.

And yet, we wonder…

We seek new members, including families and youth, and we are also an aging community. We are welcoming, yet sometimes we are quiet about how faith-filled we are to newcomers. We feel comfortable around each other, but sometimes comfort can translate into feeling settled. We are inclusive, open, and diverse in our faith journeys and viewpoints, while we are, in a few ways, demographically homogeneous. We are a pastoral-sized church, yet we retain some programmatic, formation, and liturgical elements of a larger program-sized church and are not sure what to retain of those elements or how best to discern this.

We seek a rector…

who is energetic and compassionate. We seek someone who can discern where energies may best be targeted, nurture our relationships, is a good listener, and will take intentional interest in us as individuals. We wish to build on our momentum to add to our health and vibrancy. We seek someone who can minister to all generations in this time and place. A new rector may direct energy to retirees, families, youth (especially in light of the impending departure of our youth and family minister), students, or others who find themselves drawn to the Walla Walla Valley for wine, food, culture, education, outdoor activities, or employment. We seek someone to find creative ways to enhance cross-generational relations and small group connections, and to offer much-needed ministries of health and pastoral visits for our aging members and shut-ins. Whatever
the work may be, whether it’s among these listed or those yet to be discovered, we seek a rector to be part of what we already are as a community: a gathering of trusted friends who lift each other up and want our own gifts to be noticed, encouraged, and put to productive use. But more than this, we seek someone who warmly invites all into the fold and up to the table at St. Paul’s, whether it’s someone’s first visit as a newcomer, someone’s tentative first visit in a long while, or someone’s visit in a long line of Sundays over many decades.

*Spiritual nourishment meets the senses: Sights and sounds matter, from liturgy to the longevity of our building.*

While our members are intellectually open and diverse when it comes to spiritual and theological perspectives, we are more uniform when it comes to our appreciation of, and love for, the beauty of the worshipful Episcopal liturgy and how it engages our senses. We find evidence of this when we listen to our collective voices singing in our intimate Easter Vigil or reciting a prayer at our Pentecost “Blessing of the Bikes.” We can also hear it in our beautiful choir, organ, and other instrumental music on a Sunday morning or during one of our monthly First Thursday concerts featuring talented musicians from Walla Walla’s thriving performing arts community. Now that we have brighter lights in the sanctuary, we can more readily see the beauty of the myriad stained glass windows, the craftsmanship of the carved wood panels behind the altar, and the hand-sewn stoles on our dedicated deacons. The sensory experience for us does not stop at the carved doors of the sanctuary or in the formal parts of our liturgy. Our building is beautiful, and its aesthetics matter to us beyond our liturgical experience. Among other things, we have remodeled our youth suite, we have a bright and airy atrium, we have enhanced our building entrance security locks, and we have updated plumbing and flooring in our basement. Importantly, we have dutiful and hard-working individuals who tend to the interior and exterior building and grounds. We are a community of people who appreciate aesthetic beauty during worship and beyond, and we pay attention to how what we see and hear supports our spiritual needs.

And yet, we wonder…

We have people – staff, wardens, the Altar Guild, and others – who tend faithfully to the sights and sounds of St. Paul’s, yet we worry about whether this kind of hard work is sustainable as our people and buildings continue to age. We have a healthy financial portfolio (including an endowment and designated funds), and we have opportunities to meet many needs. So we wonder about how best to foster stewardship and attend to day-to-day needs in our congregation. We have a spacious and impressive property (including a rectory that needs remodeling and a clearer purpose), but many spaces are hard to find or access. For the building spaces we use most, we see some threadbare carpet, chipped plaster, hard-to-climb stairs, hidden corners, and dusty curtains. We sometimes see some informality in our worship, like our animal blessing or Christmas morning pajama service. But our usual Sunday liturgy is still relatively formal and requires congregants to choreograph their standing, sitting, and kneeling while holding a worship bulletin, hymnal, and Book of Common Prayer. We wonder how comfortable all of this may feel for newcomers, even though it is what we love and are used to doing. Spaces and objects both reflect and affect relationships. In light of this, we wonder just how accessible our building and all of its contents are (and by extension, perhaps, how accessible we are) to new and old friends who may wish to join us.
We seek a rector…
who is mindful of the sensory and aesthetic experience of meaningful worship and pays attention to all of the
corners of our building and grounds that need care. We seek someone who recognizes and shares his or her
liturgical gifts, whether it’s joyfully leading the congregation in chanting or incorporating visual elements of
worship or preparing sermons deep with spiritual direction that stretch us as they honor the liturgy that we
have come to love. We want a rector who understands the physical needs of our space, including how to guide
us in using it creatively and safely to meet the needs of our people and programs. This, of course, is not limited
to aesthetics. The sights and sounds of any church also require skills in prioritizing projects, fiduciary
responsibility, and leadership (particularly in terms of dividing and clearly identifying expectations for the staff
members and volunteers who tend to the physical needs of the Church). We hope our new rector can
effectively communicate possible ways that our aesthetic experience may be enhanced, and help us align the
use of space to the social and physical needs of our community.

**Congregation meets the community:**
The Walla Walla Valley shines on us, and we shine our light into the Valley.

St. Paul’s sits on historic Catherine Street amidst trees that were planted decades ago, within walking distance
to downtown Walla Walla. Our town offers residents and visitors an informal small town experience with
the occasional cowboy, historic reenactment character, or fourth-generation wheat farmer sighting
you’d expect to find in the former capital of the Washington Territory in the inland Pacific Northwest. We also have a booming tourism and wine industry, award-winning restaurants, numerous outdoor activities, groups dedicated to cultural enrichment, a lively music and visual arts community, three colleges, workforce opportunities in health and other fields, high participation in civic groups, and great schools with dedicated teachers. Walla Walla is an attractive destination for many.

Less visible, though perhaps more important for any who are interested
in doing the work that Jesus asks us to do, are social problems experienced
by far too many in our community. We see high poverty rates and
challenges for people to find affordable housing (including a growing
number of homeless individuals), racial inequalities, and mental health and
addiction troubles. *St. Paul’s makes connections within the varied contexts of the Walla Walla community,* from the economically vibrant wine-food-arts experiences to working with the downtrodden. Sometimes this happens
under the auspices of the church’s visible outreach work (such as
providing free hot lunches to the community twice a week through our
Loaves and Fishes program, preparing and serving dinner once a month
at the Christian Aid Center, creating healthy take-home food packets for
local school children during youth group, collecting donations for our
local food pantry, or offering meeting space for groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Cub Scouts).
Sometimes we offer our gifts in less visible ways, such as our individual volunteering with local schools and
non-profit organizations, or sending monetary donations to ERD or Doctors Without Borders. We have
talented members at St. Paul’s who are actively involved with the local art, music, food, and wine communities,
too. Whether formally or informally, collectively or individually, our outreach efforts in Walla Walla and
beyond are an integral part of our ministry at St. Paul’s.
And yet, we wonder...
While wine, culture, and colleges are visible and attractive for visitors who may wish to join us at St. Paul's for worship or more, there's a lot in our community that is hidden and requires our outreach efforts. We wonder where we ought to place our energy and whether this energy can be sustained. While we are happy that so many St. Paul's members are active in the Walla Walla Valley individually, sometimes the representation of St. Paul’s as a collective community of givers and servants is less visible. While our individual lights may be shining, we want God’s bigger light to shine more brightly within our community.

We seek a rector...
who finds a way to connect to the Walla Walla Valley personally, and who helps us discern how best to use our gifts to enhance our connections, too. Stained glass windows are beautiful when the sun shines in, but light from the inside can show beauty to the outside, even when it seems dark. We seek someone who sees this kind of light in us, and who helps us discern where may be the best places for it to shine.

**DO YOU SEE YOUR LIGHT SHINING WITH OURS?**

It is through transition, challenge, and change that we have come to know ourselves better. Through recent transitions at St. Paul's, we’ve done a lot of hard and uplifting work, and we’ve done a lot of reflecting. We’ve learned that we want to keep shining our light inwardly and outwardly. We are in a ready place, and we could use some guidance for which paths to take. We seek a rector who knows how to see us – to identify issues and name them as they’re happening, along with honest and compassionate ways to communicate this “knowing” to move us forward. We want a joyful, mature, and confident person who can help us continue to see what our path ought to be in the Walla Walla Valley for years to come.

We have received the gift of light: the new bright bulbs in our sanctuary, and the new ways we know ourselves through intentional reflection and conversation. Quiet and contemplative candlelight helps us, too. It is in some of the quiet (and sometimes dark) moments when we realize “for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” Now we “live as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). We welcome you to come and shine your light with us along the path.

**A Prayer for St. Paul’s**

God of love and glory; you are a companion on our journeys, and you dwell in our praises;

free us from every shackle,

speak your healing and creating word among us,

and give us the joy of your Spirit.

Raise up a rector who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries.

and use us to be about the work of the Jesus movement,

to proclaim your kingdom and share your love in the Walla Walla Valley. Amen.