

Church History

In the summer of 1949, The Rev. Francis Ball received permission to begin canvassing the community then known as Multnomah for the site of a new Episcopal Church. Though outside the city limits of Portland at that time, many new houses were being built across the southwest hills. After starting services at a private home in 1949, 35 families soon moved to worship at the American Legion Hall in Multnomah Village. A building fund was initiated, and two acres were purchased. In 1951 The Rev. Robert Grafe, then in Deacon's orders, was assigned to the mission. A home for the leader was purchased and the parish was erected on SW Vermont Street.

As the congregation grew, the need for a larger place of worship was realized. By 1954, 200 members pledged \$90,000 for a new sanctuary. A year and a half later St. Barnabas' new church was dedicated and sits next to the original hall, which became the parish hall, known as Grafe Hall. In 1956 the organ was installed. The new church was spacious and contemporary, exemplifying the mid-century style with soaring ceilings, expansive brick walls and many windows. The nave could seat 400. The organ and the altar were elevated to take advantage of the acoustics provided by the tall brick walls.

As the neighborhood evolved, so did the needs of the congregation and use of the church campus. In 2009 the Vestry adopted a strategic plan for Mission and Ministry. This was the guiding force behind the parish food ministry that remains today. A Church Campus Committee was formed in 2010 to evaluate the parish facilities and determine a course of action to better utilize the assets. In 2011 the Vestry approved recommendations that the parish would reorganize activities to live within the footprint of the church and Grafe Hall buildings and seek permission from the Diocese to sell the former Rectory and additional lots. Funds from the sale were to be used for needed renovations to the church and Grafe Hall.

Offices and meeting space were relocated to the lower level of the church building. In addition to church meetings, a variety of community organizations use the space on a regular basis such as AA, OA, Boy Scouts, and the Neighborhood Association. Grafe Hall is used for coffee hour, church dinners, receptions, and gatherings, and is the home base for the parish Food Market ministry. The lower level of Grafe Hall is leased to the Portland Kinderschule, a German language immersion pre-school. There is a playground adjacent that is enjoyed by the preschool, church children, and neighborhood children.

2014 began an era of change and new growth for St Barnabas. In January, the congregation welcomed The Rev. Sean Wall as our new Rector upon his ordination. The Rev. Wall was integral in closing the sale of Barnabas House in 2014. An architectural committee recommended creating a new altar placed closer to and on the level with the congregation. Several pews were removed to make room for these

changes. Some were also removed in the back of the church to enlarge the narthex and the storage cabinet and bench wall were placed on wheels and rolled forward.

An intimate new chapel was built in the back of church in 2016. This is used for healing services and other small gatherings. Several church furnishings, such as the new altar, were crafted by a parishioner utilizing reclaimed wood from Barnabas House and old pews.

In 2019, St. Barnabas celebrated its 70th Anniversary. Events included a Birthday Party celebrated with members of neighboring congregations that sprouted from St. Barnabas over the decades, and a photo and memorabilia exhibit that was displayed for several months in the Narthex. The celebration culminated in a Gala Dinner and Silent Auction held at the Mountain Park Recreation Center in November 2019.

In addition to our clergy growth, our music program has grown under the new leadership of Stephen Galván, hired as our Music and Choir Director in 2020. With in-person services back, our choir has resumed, and our music continues to grow and brighten our worship services. We were also fortunate to bring on a new organist, David Wills-Ehlers, in 2020. Both of their contributions to our music program have been significant and bring much joy to the congregation.

Our connection to our neighbors and community continues to be very important to our members and our faith. For better communication with our neighborhood, The Rev. Wall oversaw the installation of new electronic signage on Vermont Street. We also continue to welcome the use of our facilities by a variety of community groups.

The shutdown caused by Covid in early 2020 necessitated many changes at St. Barnabas. Our parish quickly pivoted from in-person services to online services. The parish embraced this new worship style, parking lot drive-through communion, and even occasional tailgate services, always masked and observing social distancing.

As we look ahead to 2022, we see positive things for St. Barnabas. Under the leadership of our interim priest, The Rev. Stewart and her team, we are experiencing stability through change. Our online Zoom presence continues using a permanent media broadcast booth built in the back of church. Parishioners who are comfortable with attending, have returned to worship in-person, while others continue to worship from home via Zoom. We look forward to growing and increasing the community that is St. Barnabas.

St. Barnabas Leadership Over the years:

Vicars/Rectors:

- The Rev. Francis Ball: 1949 – 1951
- The Rev. Robert Grafe: 1951 - 1987
- The Rev. William Cary, Interim: 1987 - 1988
- The Rev. William Waltz: 1988-1991

- The Rev. Lindsay Warren, Interim: 1991 – 1993
- The Rev. Ted Rodriguez: 1993 – 2006
- The Rev. Dr. Richard Bullock, Interim: 2006 – 2007
- The Rev. L.D. Wood-Hull: 2007 – 2012
- The Very Rev. Anthony Thurston, Interim: 2012 - 2013
- The Rev. Sean Wall: 2014 – 2021
- The Rev. Bonnie Stewart, Interim: 2021 – present.

Deacons/Assistants/Associates:

- The Rev. Deacon Laurel Hart: 2011 – 2014
- The Rev. Deacon Colleen Howard: est. 2012 - 2013
- The Rev. Deacon Barbara Jo Finch: 2014 to present
- Youth Minister, Aubin Spice: 2017 – 2020
- Assistant Rector, The Rev. Bonnie Stewart: 2019 – 2021
- Associate Clergy (Retired), The Rev. Jeff Frost: 2019 - present.