

Old St. Paul's Church in Baltimore

Celebrates 325th anniversary with 17th-century service

By Colin Campbell

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When Old St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Baltimore was founded in 1692, it was a mission church of the Diocese of London. The United States didn't yet exist.

Over the years, the "Mother Church of Baltimore" has served as the spiritual home to thousands, including Revolutionary War figures John Eager Howard and Samuel Chase, and the late mayor and governor William Donald Schaefer.

The church bells at Old St. Paul's tolled to warn Baltimoreans of the invading British navy during the War of 1812, and the parish spawned the St. Paul's School for Boys, the St. Paul's School for Girls, and one of the world's first societies for the abolition of slavery.

Members celebrated its 325th anniversary at Sunday morning's service in 17th-century garb, a 1662 Book of Common Prayer and baroque music. The Rev. Mark Stanley reflected on the church's past — and its future.

"It's got this long history, and yet it feels like it's in a great place as a congregation," the pastor said. "It's not like we're caught in the past. I look out and see engaging, smart people who are trying to live out this Christian life, and I'm excited to do that with them."

Parish leaders say the venerable church at Charles and Saratoga streets is the oldest institution in Baltimore. Members strive to honor its history in the city today by pushing for social justice, said the Rev. Mary Luck Stanley, Stanley's wife and associate pastor.

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