

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR PHIL ALBRO, MAY 6, 2012



A memorial service was held for Phillip W. Albro on Sunday, May 6 at St. Paul's Church. Phil passed away early on the morning of May 3, 2012.

Memorial donations may be made to the American Lung Association, www.lung.org.

Obituary in News and Observer 5-4-2012

Read "**Interview with Phil Albro**"

Last Updated (Friday, 31 October 2014)

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The following are responses of long-time parishioner Phil Albro to interview questions for the 50th Anniversary Celebration.

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"... that was the assignment being given to Fred. He took it seriously, and did indeed make clear to the parish that the Priest-in-Charge was not just an employee hired by the Vestry, but was in fact In Charge!..."

(When did you come to St. Paul's and who was the priest, or the earliest clergy you remember before St. Paul's became a Parish.)

I came to St. Paul's on April Fools' Day, 1969. There was no priest at that time, but Fred Valentine was the first of St. Paul's priests I knew.

(What activities were you involved in in those early years?)

I was involved in everything. Sunday school teacher, Jr. Warden, Sr. Warden, clerk of the vestry, every committee, choir, everything. I attended every meeting, covered-dish supper, class, work party, activity of every sort that the church had. This is a clear prescription for burnout, as I eventually learned.

(Please share with us events and things that happened at St. Paul's that you think should be included in a written history of the early years of St. Paul's, are there any personal memories or stories you would like to share with us?)

I can easily talk for days without stopping about the happenings at St. Paul's. Like the only time we ever tried to hold a dance there, when Fred Valentine was priest. We had Tommy & Jimmy Dorsey records, everyone dressed up, dim lights, tables set around, fox trots and two step - and some neighbor called the police. That was the last time we ever tried to hold a dance at the church, although we had Autumnfest at off-site locations when Bill Coolidge was priest. A tradition of the Mission Committee in the 60s and early 70s was to hold one meeting every summer at the Kildare Farms pavilion/lake when Bill Dawkins would barbecue steaks. Of course, that tradition couldn't last when Kildare Farms stopped being farms, and Bill Dawkins switched to Christ Church in Raleigh. But most of my stories are in the history of the mission years.

(In hind sight, is there anything you think could have been done differently in the organization, or in running the mission?)

Everything that was done could have been done differently! But should it have? Who can say? Sure, the old-timers (in experience, not years of course!) miss the days of the family oriented church where everyone knew everybody else, everyone worked, everyone pledged, everyone cared, everyone felt needed because they were! But you can't block growth without stunting. Those who missed it enough, went to the Apex mission.

This next segment was in response to a question about what he thought were the differences in style between Charles Hocking and Fred Valentine, two priests that were regarded as being authoritarian.

In April of 1969 when I started at St. Paul's we had no priest-in-charge and a search committee was actively hunting. Since we were a mission, the diocese played a stronger part in the search than if we had been a parish, and they gave us a list of possible candidates. The search committee nominated, the Vestry endorsed, and the parish as a whole elected, to call Fred Valentine. The bishop sent a letter to Father Valentine, which discussed a study of our parish made in response to a request we had made to Bishop Moore. The diocese had concluded that St. Paul's was dominated by three or four families, and that a troubleshooter was needed to break up that clique, restoring the central leadership to the clergy. So that was the assignment being given to Fred. He took it seriously, and did indeed make clear to the parish that the Priest-in-Charge was not just an employee hired by the Vestry, but was in fact In Charge! Two of the four families on the bishop's list apparently needed to be in control, so they left St. Paul's. Fred was very German in personality, very disciplined, but I believe he was more authoritarian than he would have been by choice, because of the Bishop's instructions.

Charles Hocking, in contrast to Fred Valentine, was coming into an established parish rather than a mission. Charles had left the parish priest role for a while (his gardening/greenhouse experience), then been talked by his bishop in Connecticut into returning. But Father Hocking was more "New England" in orientation, so his

Episcopalianism had more of an Anglican slant than our previous priests had projected. The rules and traditions of the Church were very important to him, and although he accepted that St. Paul's was a "Low Episcopal" church, nonetheless he was a stickler for the strong Episcopal values. Because of St. Paul's start, it tended to see the congregation as the final authority for secular decisions. The congregation has no such authority by the constitution and canons of the Episcopal Church, so it was brought out of that habit by Father Hocking.

One could not imagine Father Hocking writing upbeat hymns and playing them on the banjo during church services (backed by the choir) as Father Valentine did. That may sum up the difference in a nutshell!

Phil Albro with Becky and Joe Furno and Trudy Hogarth, Feb 10, 2008



One of Phil's many accomplishments was as historian for St. Paul's. Read [St. Paul's History](#).

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