

Dear members and friends of St Paul's, Jo Krug was kind enough to take notes and write up a summary of Bishop Harmon's visit. These are attached below. I wanted to make sure that everyone had all of the information he gave us on the Vestry, and to the congregation this past Sunday. Please continue your prayers for St. Paul's, the Vestry, the diocese, and our rector candidate.

In Christ, -Sarah Harmon, Sr Warden

Bishop Harmon paid a visit to St. Paul's July 27th to preach at both services and to answer our concerns about how the process of getting a priest is going.

The delay in freeing up our candidate to come to Arkansas is a matter of getting her R1 Visa (R is religious). Although she has the R1 for the state where she is employed now, it is non-transferable between states and her application has to go through the process again.

One reason for the delay was the decision to use a lawyer working for the Diocese of West Texas to process the application. Our case was still being held up after several months due to that lawyer's workload.

Finally, our Diocesan office decided to hire an immigration lawyer who practices in Arkansas to handle St. Paul's visa case as well as several other similar cases. This new application is for all parishes in the state not just St. Paul's. That will enable her to work anywhere in the state (such as Camp Mitchell). That change was made in June 2025.

We've done the paperwork and even paid for expedited handling but we still have to wait our turn for processing. The department in charge of approving visas is currently working full-time on other matters. The next step in the process will be a site visit by a federal agency to ascertain that Arkansas is a real diocese and St. Paul's is a real church.

After all steps are completed and the visa is obtained, our candidate has to submit her resignation to her current parish with a decent amount of time given to that church (negotiable).

The Bishop also addressed to the prospect of hiring a second supply priest to come in two or three Sundays a month. He has spoken with a retired priest here in the state about taking this on but details have to be negotiated by our Senior Warden and Vestry. We would also still have Rev. Natalie.

Long range, the Bishop has hopes of making St. Paul's a Teaching Church which means our rector will be able to work with a newly ordained seminarian as a mentor, which would give that person some on-the-job experience at leading a parish. That would be a program we would need to apply for some time in the future. The meeting was informative. Lots of good questions were asked and answered. For now, we need to keep a positive attitude, not blame anyone for the delay and above all...PRAY.

When asked to give the final comment, Sally Fittsizer said this "We can't tread water forever but together we can hold each other up."