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# TWO CHURCHES, ONE DIFFICULT HISTORY

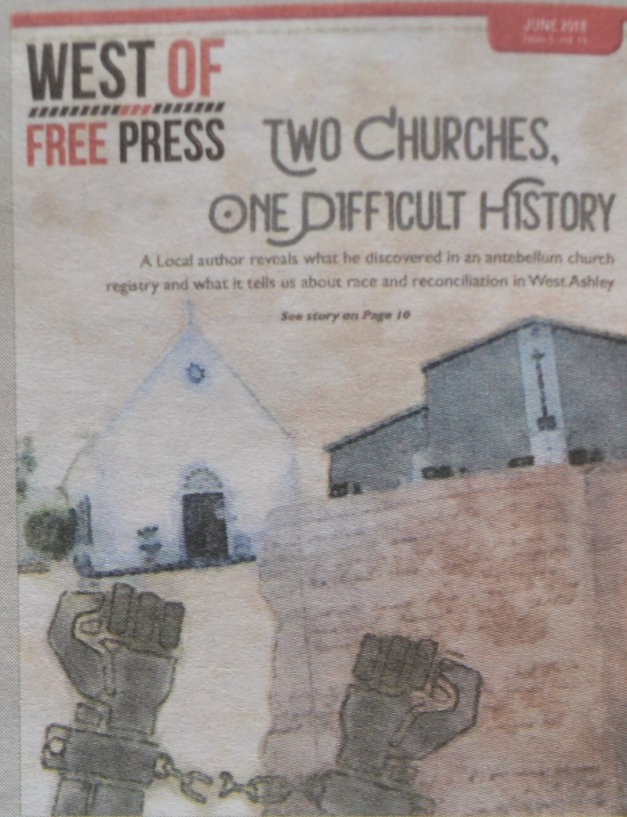
A Local author reveals what he discovered in an antebellum church registry and what it tells us about race and reconciliation in West Ashley

*See story on Page 10*





# ABOUT THE COVER STORY:



When I received the book *In My Trails Lord, Walk with Me* in the mail a couple weeks ago, I set it on the corner of my desk and, honestly, forgot about it. Then days before going to press I started flipping through it. I must have felt like the author, Paul Porwoll, did when he discovered the antebellum registry for St. Andrew's Parish Church. I was fascinated. I was also moved at the thoughtfulness in how Porwoll handled the subject. He did not shy away from the racism or use euphemisms to soften the blow.

This was much more than a book about a church. This was a book about history and society. Specifically our history and our society right here in West Ashley. Porwoll looks at not only the racist history behind the concealing of the original registry but faces where we are today as a society in the wake of the Emmanuel 9 shootings.

I realized that this was an important book and an important story to tell. So I made the last minute editorial decision to make it our cover feature this month.

— Lorne Chambers, editor



# TWO CHURCHES, ONE DIFFICULT HISTORY

A local author reveals what he discovered in an antebellum church registry and what it tells us about race and reconciliation in West Ashley

from Staff Reports

The discovery of a tattered, old book takes us back in time into a world we can scarcely imagine today. A world of cotton and rice, masters and slaves, and a religious movement that brought the word of God to the enslaved who toiled on plantations right here in our own backyard.

West Ashley resident Paul Porwoll's new book *In My Trials, Lord, Walk with Me: What an Antebellum Parish Registry Reveals about Race and Reconciliation* explores this world through the eyes of the actual antebellum register of Saint Andrew's Parish Church, the era's official logbook of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and burials,

which Porwoll found at the archives of the South Carolina Historical Society, housed on the third floor of Addlestone Library at the College of Charleston. Upon seeing the register, he realized what he was looking at was significant. This was different and more thorough than what Porwoll saw several years ago when he published *Against All Odds, a history of Old St. Andrew's*.

"I thought I'd seen everything related to this storied church, so this new find intrigued me. I guess I need to go to the historical society and see for myself," says Porwoll.

What he found was a number of items Porwoll



had never seen before, including a portrait of 'Daddy Billy' Fludd, the African-American church sexton who had faithfully served Old St. Andrew's for most of his adult life through the 19th century and into the 20th, and photos of the 1969 church restoration when the current stone and tile floor was laid. "But I was not prepared for what I saw in the first folder in the box," says Porwoll. "It took my breath away."

Here was the original parish register in which the Episcopal rectors had maintained the official log of baptisms, marriages, confirmations, and burials in the antebellum years 1830–59. This was a significant discover because there was no original registers from this old church existing before 1947. Porwoll was not prepared for what he found inside. The original register was far different from the copies he had seen previously and used while writing *Against All Odds*.

"After viewing a few pages in various sections of the book, I had an uneasy feeling that the register contained many more entries than had been copied," says Porwoll, who then went back into the original register and examined it more closely.

The pages were filled with entries for specific baptisms, marriages, burials, and confirmations for specific slaves on specific plantations. "The more pages I scanned, the more slave entries I found," says Porwoll.

He later calculated that the original register contained six times as many events as the copied versions. He would also learn that the St. Andrew's register contained six times the number of slave events as were recorded in the antebellum register of her sister parish to the south, St. James Episcopal

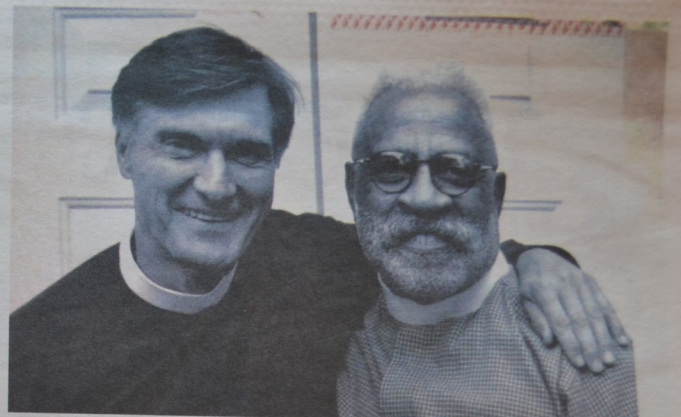
Church on James Island.

"Why this discrepancy? How did these materials make their way to the South Carolina Historical Society? These were questions I had to answer," says Porwoll.

"The discovery of the St. Andrew's antebellum parish register should elicit profound joy among local historians. The lost has been found. But this joy is quickly tempered by the fetid smell of racism lurking beneath the surface," writes Porwoll at the beginning of Chapter 11. "The publication of the original register, with all its entries for enslaved blacks and free whites, cannot lessen the sadness felt that the black entries, representing black lives truly lived, were intentionally hidden from public view, now for more than a century."

Not only does the register reveal historical surprises, it also documents the relationship between two Anglican churches named St. Andrew's located not far from each other on Ashley River Road. One, the parish church built in 1706 and the oldest surviving church still used for regular worship south of Virginia (Old St. Andrew's), and one, which began as a plantation slave chapel to the parish church in 1845 (St. Andrew's Mission). These institutions share a troubled past that could have torn them apart and left them strangers to each other. But just the opposite has occurred, and what a magnificent story it is.

"It's so special that the Lord's chosen one black congregation, a mission church, and one white congregation, a parish church, to make this community look whole, look colorless, look seamless, look like the Holy Spirit, who doesn't have a color to it," says



With the discovery of the St. Andrew's antebellum church register, two churchers and their pastors now have a better understanding of the history of their churches.  
Pictured: Rev. Marshall Huey (left) and Rev. Dr. Jimmy Gallant (right)

the Reverend Doctor Jimmy Gallant, vicar of St. Andrew's Episcopal Mission Church. "I believe that anyone who reads this book or reads about what we're doing will get excited about forgiveness and loving and kindness, how we're walking in the cause of Christ."

"This book contains a story that needs to be told, and a story that needs to be understood by all who seek true racial understanding and reconciliation in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, particularly after the shootings at Mother Emanuel AME Church," says the Reverend Marshall Huey, the 19th rector of Old St. Andrew's.

More than anything, *In My Trials, Lord, Walk with Me* is a long overdue tribute to

these otherwise faceless people whose names now appear in the register — people of a different skin color from the white planters who owned them, people who toiled against their wills, in the rice and cotton fields, in gardens producing food for the table and beauty for the soul, and in managing the never-ending affairs of the household.

For more information and to purchase a copy of *In My Trials, Lord, Walk with Me: What an Antebellum Parish Registry Reveals about Race and Reconciliation* visit [www.oldstandrews.org/copy-of-against-all-odds](http://www.oldstandrews.org/copy-of-against-all-odds). Net proceeds from the book will support the ministry of St. Andrew's Mission.