

History is often written by the winners and rarely from the vantage point of the vanquished. Due to the efforts of Paul Porwoll, the church historian of Old St. Andrew's Parish Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and author of the just released book, *In My Trials, Lord, Walk with Me*, we now have a much more balanced view of religious life in antebellum and post-Civil War Charleston, and not just from a white person's view. But as importantly, his is also a story of hope and reconciliation.

I first became interested in this easy-to-overlook-church while photographing our state's collection of historic landmarks. Set among the popular plantations on Ashley River Road, St. Andrew's seemed different, seemed like its story would be unlike those of Charleston's far more iconic and visited downtown churches. It was. In hindsight, how could a small church, tucked between the a few of the once richest plantations in America, not have the more compelling history? The sweat of the working African would be smelled in this rural church, far more so than the citified sanctuaries of downtown Charleston!

Porwoll's first book as the church's historian, *Against All Odds: History of Saint Andrew's Parish Church, Charleston, 1706-2013*, provides an unblinking summary of its history and seminal figures, including the story of one of its ministers, Reverend John Grimke' Drayton. Most remember Drayton as the genius behind Magnolia Plantation, but his best work might have been five decades of ministry to his "black roses" at St. Andrew's, a time that stretched from before the Civil War until the end of the nineteenth century. In his most recent book, Porwoll deviates from the more linear, St. Andrew's-centric history of to examine the crosscurrents of our country's most turbulent periods.

It is the "discovery" of St. Andrew's original antebellum parish records (as noted in the January 2016 issue of the South Carolina Historical Magazine) that piques Porwoll's interest in a second, very different book. Upon inspection of the entries for baptism, confirmation, marriage—the basics of church record keeping—Porwoll notes material inconsistencies between the source material and long-available copies. It starts him on a journey to discover who changed them, and why.

The journey, in this case, is more important. We meet plantation owners who care enough to allow ministry to the slaves, and some who simply don't give a damn. We learn of ministers who left the South in protest, and some who stayed despite their personal reservations. We know that nearly all freed blacks left the white man's church after the Civil War, but we learn of one place where that did not happen.

That place is St. Andrew's Parish Church, and later when the black congregation formally established its own place of worship, St. Andrew's Mission Church, just down the road. By embracing the past, warts and all as my British friends say, these churches and their shared histories and legacies, are properly positioned to take a few new steps together.

"In My Trials, Lord, Walk with Me" is ultimately a story of reconciliation and hope. Detective Porwoll may never quite solve the gaps in those parish records, but what he has written is laudable, important and timely, a work that I am proud to recommend.

Bill Fitzpatrick
Author of *South Carolina's Sacred Spaces*