



St Paul's Raleigh



A View from the Top – Checking in with Alba

St. Paul's Christian Church – April 23, 2022 (Earth Sunday)

Well hello, my friends. It was so good to see you last week and to celebrate Easter with you. I had been missing you. It had been quite a while since you joined me on Sunday mornings for worship. I loved having you with me last Spring and early Summer. It was so nice to hear music and prayers and some goooooood preaching. God is so good..... and its good to remember how good God is!

For the longest time, I really only got to see you all once or twice a year for a picnic and every now and then I'd watch the kids play tag. But last year — that was something! Almost every Sunday, you gathered under my limbs and it was so nice to be with you.

Now, I'm getting ahead of myself. Forgive me. Let me introduce myself properly. My name is *Quercus Alba*. Its a funny name, I know, but it means "White Oak." You can just call me "*Alba*" or "*Aunt Alba*." Well, I'm glad to have you back and I want to catch you up on all the goings on over the last year.

About this time last year, that nice young man, James Brady, told you all a little bit of my history. I've been here a long time – more than 230 years – and I've seen a lot of changes in my time. This little patch of land I call home was way out in the country and life was pretty quiet. That city, they call Raleigh, that was miles away. More than 60 years ago, you good folks of St. Pauls came out to join me in this lovely spot. It's been so good share this sweet corner of God's creation with you.

This last year the City of Raleigh – they let it be known that things were getting so busy out here that they wanted to widen this road they call Blue Ridge. The City said that they wanted to make the road wide enough for three cars and that they were going to build a 10' wide path right here along the property so people and bicycles could come right here in front of the church. That all sounded pretty good, but then.... They said to handle all the storm water from the extra road, and the extra path, they were going to have to put in a great big stormwater water pond, right underneath my branches.

I got nervous I heard folks talking and they said they were going to have to cut some of my roots to dig that hole. I didn't like that at all. And neither did you good folks at St. Pauls. My dear friends, Mr. Jim and Ms. Cheryl Well they called some folks called "arborists" — I think their names are "Leaf and Limb". (I like that name, don't you? I have "Leaf's and Limb's too and they are my kind of people!!!)

- Leaf and Llmb came out to see me. They said I was one fine looking tree, particularly for my age. They sure didn't want to see my roots get cut for a pond – no matter how important that was. They also told Mr. Jim and Ms. Cheryl that I could use a little TLC – like a little mulch, a little hair (I mean limb) cut, maybe a little nice bug gspray.

Well... I'm not sure exactly how it all happened, but you know what.... ? The City of Raleigh changed their mind. It might have had something to do with Ms. Sabrina's gravestone. One day, a bunch of workers with little sound or picture machines came out and they were taking pictures of my roots somehow. It all kind of tickled. One man hollered, "I got something!" Then someone said , "Nah, that's nothing!" Then someone else hollered, "over here... I see something!" Someone else said, "Not sure about that!" It made me chuckle a little to watch them scratch their

heads. I was relieved to hear someone say, “well, I’m not sure what it is, but we are probably better off not digging anywhere near here!”

Before I knew it, they decided that they weren’t going to cut my roots after all. They were going to move that pond over to the corner by the sign. I’m a little afraid for my old friends, the “Pine Tree” and the Pecan Brothers. They might not be so lucky when the road construction starts. It will hurt to see them go. They’ve been my companions on this land for a long time.

Well, I’ve had that little hair cut, and I’ve gotten a good shower of bug spray, and those nice Leaf and Limb guys, they come to see me and take my picture just about every month. I sure do like this nice skirt of mulch you gave me. It keeps my roots warm in the winter and cool in the summer – and it will help keep that lawn mower or other equipment from getting too close.

I sure appreciate all of the attention. Now I’ve been told, that once the construction starts, ya’ll are going put a nice fence around me to be sure that that big machinery stays as far away from my toes as possible. Ya’ll are taking good care of me and I appreciate it!. I appreciate the way ya’ll are working to take care of trees like me and all of creation. I’ve always loved looking over the pretty flower gardens, and watching the good folks work the vegetable garden.

- I love those pretty solar panels, too. I hear that since you put them in last July, they have generated 18 megawatts of clean energy – that just about as good as planting 213 trees!
- I love seeing church members and neighbors bring their food scraps and other compostables to the church. You kept 10,000 lbs of food waste out of the landfill and got that pretty compost in return. You know how I love compost!

- Now, I hear talk of the Raingarden Project with 2 raingardens to filter the water and create homes for pollinators, and with a big rain barrel to boot to help water the garden. That's all good.

Thank ya'll for all you do. Thank you for all the seeds you plant in your actions and your conversations. All those seeds will make the earth a healthier place for all of us.

And thank you for coming back to worship with me this Sunday. You know you are always welcome here. I love praising our loving Creator together, and I love being with you. Your Aunt Alba loves you and loves seeing you! Come back now, ya hear!