

## Vestry Question: How Much Priest Does This Parish Need?

After dispensing with its routine agenda items at last week's regular vestry meeting, the group moved eagerly to a discussion of what kind of ordained leadership this parish wants and needs at this time -- and how much of it.

"Priest-in-Charge" is the priestly role that **Canon Durning** suggested St. Augustine's needs to fill at this time. "I hear you say that you want more than a supply priest -- more than someone who comes in on Sunday morning, celebrates the Eucharist, says hello to a few people and leaves."

**Joyce Corn**, junior warden, was talking with Canon Durning by phone last week. Hiring a priest-in-charge would provide us with additional services during the week. These additional hours, of course, would increase the fees the parish would pay for those services.

**Mary Clowers**, in charge of the meeting as senior warden, challenged vestry members to

identify what it is that we truly want a priest to do for us -- right now.

"Visit the sick," volunteered **Mary Jones**. "Maybe attend some meetings," **Claude Reynolds** said, "like The Men's Brotherhood." "We receive documents that a priest must review and sign," said **Greg Duckett**. "It would be nice to have a priest

*continued on back page*

### Christmas Events

**Dec. 18** Eucharist at 9 am  
 Concert by The Young  
 Motivational Singers of Tampa  
 Bay 4 pm  
**Dec. 24** Christmas Eve at  
 St. Bartholomew's 5 and 10 pm  
 St. Vincent's 5 and 11 pm  
 St. Peter's Cathedral 4, 5:30 &  
 10:30 pm  
**Dec. 25** Eucharist at 9 am  
**Jan. 1** Eucharist at 9 am

## Our Faith Tested Again -- And We Passed

When times are tough, many of us faithful folk start to lose our vision. When the money is short, when people disappoint us, when schedules demand way too much, it seems utterly reasonable to say, "This just can't be done." Put on the brakes, okay? Now's not the time. Get realistic.

At St. Augustine's we might add "This church just doesn't have the money to do those things." There's no fat endowment fund here. Blah, blah, blah.

Heck, we're stuck.

Well, yes. And no. Strings of devastating news CAN test our belief, our confidence that we can make it. Betrayal can do that. Death. Suffocating debt. And those uprooted folks in New Orleans must be facing a test of faith beyond our imagination.

That can get pretty close to home. "We just can't," gets said around here so often that it can sound like common sense.

Last month our **Judy Krug** discovered that Northern Trust downtown was disposing of a whole floor of office furnishings, much of it barely used. She knew that our church had been talking about some remodeling, but we'd have to move fast to claim these items before they were lost.

So she and **Joyce Corn** rushed over there, skimmed every room of desks, tables, chairs, and conference supplies. They tagged dozens of pieces, calculating room sizes, color schemes and appropriateness ("No half-acre executive desks, please."). Friday night they called for pickup trucks and "a few good churchmen" (**Lewis Clowers, Bobby Allen** and **Tom Krug**) to lug their choices down the freight elevator, across the loading docks and then across town.

So? In just five hours this church had netted a nice desk and new furnishings for the sacristy, and a new conference table and six attractive matching chairs for small group sessions in Ford Hall.

Budgetary outlay? Zero. Personal funds expended: zero. New belief that objectives can be achieved without writing checks: incalculable. There's a good sermon here somewhere.

### I Will Light Candles This Christmas

Candles of joy, despite all  
 sadness,  
 Candles of hope where despair  
 keeps watch.  
 Candles of courage for fears  
 ever present,  
 Candles of peace for tempest-  
 tossed days,  
 Candles of grace to ease heavy  
 burdens  
 Candles of love to inspire all  
 my living,  
 Candles that will burn all the  
 year long.

by Howard Thurman

#28 December 18, 2005

## How Much Do We Need? *continued*

here to count on for things like that.”

At the January vestry meeting, members will decide the number of hours St. Augustine's will initially contract for with the priest-in-charge. The dollar amount for that work will be built into the parish's 2006 budget to be voted on at the annual meeting later in January.

After experiencing two worship services and a memorial service with **Fr. Robin Whitlock's** leadership, the vestry voted to have **Mary Clowers** arrange a time to meet with him as soon as possible.

That meeting occurred the very next night, Tuesday of last week. Fr. Whitlock told the assembled vestry (100% attended) of his work with two parishes in Louisiana – one wonderful, the other very difficult. He also shared his experiences working the night shift in a minimum security prison for 300 men.

On several college and university campuses, Fr. Whitlock taught applied ethics courses and he anticipates teaching similar courses here at St. Petersburg College two nights a week.

He is a published author and an accomplished photographer. But his love of cooking, especially Cajun style, is what caught the attention of most vestry members. Talk of a parish dinner this spring ensued.

**Judy Krug** concluded that “Fr. Whitlock likes people, and he likes being a priest. It shows.”

Vestry members introduced themselves at length and **Mordecai Walker** had everyone laughing with his descriptions of some previous church experiences before his wife, **Anna**, brought him to St. Augustine's.

**Rudy Gabiddon** credited “my good friend Greg Duckett” with bringing him to St. Augustine's.

Fr. Whitlock learned of **Mary Jones'** early life as a beautician and how her husband, **Nat Jones** encouraged her to go for a degree in education.

“My husband, Charley Ford, decided to design and build a new church on 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue South for this parish,” **Inez Ford** said with considerable pride. “And once he decided that, I knew I had to help him every way I could – including sometimes staying out of his way during the full year it took to raise St. Augustine's.”

Claude Reynolds credited to his mother his decision to join St. Augustine's. She insisted on Claude bringing her to church here even when he would have preferred sleeping in. “You never say ‘No’ to your mother” he explained.

Vestry members and Fr. Whitlock each have some research to do on topics:

“How long does a parish have a priest-in-charge?”

## What do I want for Christmas?

To see in that stable  
the whole world kneeling in thanks  
for a promise kept:  
new life.

For in his nativity  
we find ours.

Ann Weems

## YOU SHOULD KNOW...

“It was a lot more work than I thought it would be,” **Fr. Whitlock** said with a smile. He was talking about his volunteering to sub for our **Inez Ford** in putting together today's bulletin while she's freezing up in NYC. The new priest acknowledges a few typos but says he has even bigger plans for next week's Christmas edition. Why? “Because Christmas is different than Advent!” he said, underscoring his love of topics liturgical.

It takes many hands to keep the church festive. Those wreaths adorning our red front doors and those in our sanctuary windows are the craftwork of **Joyce Corn**. And those poinsettias lining the church walkway were planted by **Judy Krug**. Other flowers in the new white pots outside and in the atrium were also donated.

This **newsletter** will not be published for the next two Sundays while the editors take a holiday. Our “more... from St. Augustine's” will resume Sunday, January 8, 2006.

Longtime member **Minnie Williams** has just had two cataract surgeries and both “went just wonderfully.” She says all the follow-up care was done by **Dr. Debra Flanagan**, daughter of **Mary and Lewis Clowers**.

Sometimes church people are moved to do things that blow you away. **Calvin Knight**, hearing that we were considering hiring professionals to clean the Hall's terrazzo floors, just volunteered to maintain the floors and the church's four rest rooms. Jr. Warden Corn is beaming.

“Will we need an interim priest at some point?”

“Do we pay benefits for a part time priest?”

“How do we explain all of this to our parish?”

“How do we find out what they want?”

Fr. Whitlock and vestry members will be meeting again in early January.

“... **more\* from St. Augustine's**” is for members and friends of one courageous Episcopal Church in south St. Petersburg, Florida. This weekly newsletter is about candor, recognition, spiritual attitude, nixing hearsay and, yes, unashamed cheer leading. Members Judy and Tom Krug are co-editors; Mordecai Walker is co-founder. Some 65 parishioners are essential to the project. Every issue is available at the church and online at [www.staugstpete.org](http://www.staugstpete.org), our web site for church-shoppers.

