

**Caring for the Temple**

***Brilliant Saturday, Rustling Leaves & Fresh Mullet, Oh Yes!***

Driving by, you might have thought it was a block party. Yesterday, from 8:45 onward, there were people swarming around this church.

Their numbers grew until lunch, then tapered off slightly until 3:00, when the police arrived. But, wait, that's another story.

In response to an ordinary Men's Club Work Day announcement, these things were accomplished:

- \* the property was thoroughly raked and four large trailer-loads of oak leaves were hauled to the dump.
- \* that recent church sign erected for Homecoming Sunday, was totally repackaged while a new set of masonry posts are being fabricated on the original sign's site
- \* our parking lot's bumper-blocks were relocated and given a fresh coat of brilliant yellow paint
- \* the entire contingent was feted with a fresh fish-fry lunch from the Parish Hall's kitchen.

Seven boys from Britt House joined Saturday's raking and painting party. **Bobby Allen** steered the entire operation, with **Nat Caines, George Fleming, Michael Griffin, Judy and Tom Krug, and Lawrence Pope** all heaping piles of leaves in all directions from the 26th Street curb all the way to the chain link fences.

St. A's now looks cleaner and much brighter.

Meanwhile our resident craftsmen, **Rudy Gabbidon** and **Claude Reynolds**, calculated, measured, sawed, fit and finished a very substantial-but-temporary new enclosure for the St. Augustine's sign out-front. In the weeks ahead the two will create a new design with stucco'd pillars, a shingled roof and nighttime illumination.

Every church work party must ultimately end with sustenance and this one feasted on a lunch of fried mullet, baked beans and cole slaw, with corn muffins and dessert. **Nate Jones** and **Inez Ford** prepared the plates.

Eleven rakes and a gorgeous day, eager youth and a seasoned boss, paint and muscle and excellent food. Your church thanks you, oh Lord.

*Six Simple Suppers*

every Wednesday in Lent  
5:30 – 7:00 \*

*You're All Invited!*

Study session after each meal  
And childcare Is Free

\* Yes, still time for choir practice!

**40 Days**

***Already We Are Draped in Purple***

Our Episcopal Church practices for this entire season alert us to a more somber time, a period of discipline and simplicity, even austerity. Even our sanctuary looks somber.

The emphasis, our rector, **Fr. Robin Whitlock**, says, is on the essential symbols: an altar unadorned with flowers or even greens. We drape the crucifixes and ponder the simple cross, seen without a body (the *corpus*).

We will spend this Lenten season in a serious study of reconciliation.

On Sundays and on Wednesday nights after our Simple Suppers, we will reflect together on our need -- personal and as a society -- to create a kingdom of fairness, of justice. Each week we will explore our call to be implemeters of God's reconciling work.

Our starting place in reconciliation, James Allison has said, " is... of people who are undergoing the process of being forgiven."

*As the Work Day wound down, the last three folks checked the Hall doors, turned off the lights and walked out the red front entrance. They admired the flowers, then heard two squad cars barreling toward them. No, the guns were not blazing, yet there were no screaming burglar alarms either.*

*A few flashed IDs and the mystery mounted: whatever brought the City's Finest? "A security alarm at our sliding doors!" But St. A's has none; never has. Walkaround, open doors, check locks. Aha, a window screen is on the ground! Fingerprints are on the glass! Could it be...? Naaaah, false alarm says **Greg Duckett**. "Our back door acts funny sometimes."*

*Still, why do alarm systems seem to "imagine things?"*

## Some Answers about Lent

### What Does the Word "Lent" Mean?

"Lent" is apparently derived from the Old English *lencten*, which means "lengthen." It refers to the lengthening of the daylight hours that occurs in the northern hemisphere as spring approaches. Sometimes Lent is described as the "church's springtime -- out of the darkness of sin's winter emerges a people reborn through baptism into their Lord's death and resurrection from the grave."

### Why Does Lent Last 40 Days?

Actually it doesn't. There are 47 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday. But the church does not count Sundays because they are considered feast days -- weekly, joyful celebrations of Christ's resurrection.

While no one knows for sure why 40 days became the norm, in the story of Noah and the Ark, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. Moses and the Israelites walked the desert for 40 days. And after Jesus was

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baptized by John the Baptist, He fasted in the desert for 40 days and resisted the devil's temptations.

Does that answer the question? Well not exactly

It was customary in many ancient Christian communities to require a 40-day period of fasting, discipline, and study for candidates who were to be baptized on the evening before Easter.

We do know that the tradition of Lent's 40 days is very old. The period was first mentioned in the Canons of Nicea in 325 CE. And the 40 day fast was said by Athanasius in 339 CE to be celebrated the world over.

### Why Do We Use Eucharistic Rite One in Lent?

Lent is a time for increased reflection and the tone of Rite One is more somber, more formal and meditative. For instance, in Rite One the Confession comes earlier in the mass and sets a more penitential tone.

Fr. Whitlock described its effect as "... ringing guilty the heartstrings of our soul."

He said that he uses the less familiar Rite One because it alerts us to Lent as a different time.

"It jolts people a little," he said, "and reminds all of us that Lent is the time for more intimate self-reflection."

## **"So What Are You Doing for ...**

...Lent: here's something to help you translate your convictions into, well, behavior.

Go to [www.beliefnet.com](http://www.beliefnet.com) and click on "New This Week," then click on "Our Interactive Lent Calendar."

It offers a "to do" for every day of Lent. That fits in perfectly with the challenge to change our lives during Lent. Some examples:

\* Make pretzels. In the middle Ages people folded dough into the shapes of folded arms, to remind themselves to pray.

\* For just one day, don't interrupt. And don't prepare your reply while you "listen."

## Ten Percent of What?

Our Stewardship Chair, **Louise Stroude**, is concerned about that issue all year round -- not simply at pledge time. And that generosity principle, so central to Jesus' message, is a concern that truly is about much more than ten percent of our W-2 figure.

Our faith's stewardship must be focused on the talent we share as well. That too can be "tithed." In good faith we must assess whether we give enough of our abilities and interest to the Kingdom, as well as how many checks we write. And in this season of self-examination, that assessment is quite appropriate.

Christian stewardship does take a positive view on money, even though it may seem otherwise. It sees money as one symbol of the person who has it: in other words, the way we acquire money, use it, and share it reveals much about who we are.

We certainly need not give up the pleasures and luxuries of this life. God does not insist that we be ascetics, but He does call us to a moral sense of proportion in administering our assets.

The question is: "If I have this for myself, then what should I do for God?" This might well be the question into which the whole matter of stewardship resolves itself.

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## **Foul-up Report**

An important letter, meant for everyone in the parish, was mailed too late for weekend delivery. That letter will be distributed after service today. Please read it before leaving.

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

