

Diocese: Healthy and Struggling

"Come and see!" he said. Now that's an invitation you only extend when you're sure you have something worth showing off.

And yesterday during the annual diocesan convention at the Venice Convention Center, **Bishop John Lipscomb** declared that the Diocese of Southwest Florida had plenty to brag about. A few examples:

- * We have two fully operating Spanish language parishes and a fledgling church for Haitians.

- * Five years ago, the diocese operated in the red, barely able to pay its bills; this year there will be many more programs plus a budget surplus.

- * There are new priests and deacons.

- * In this diocese, average parish attendance on a Sunday is 205, almost 100% higher than the national average for Episcopal churches.

Our delegates from St. Augustine's, **Mary Clowers**, **Shirley Davis** and first-timer **Tom Krug**, were elected at our annual meeting last January. **Deacon Mack Bauknight**, alternate delegate **Greg Duckett**, **Fr. Whitlock** and **Judy Krug** attended as well.

During the business meeting a resolution was passed directing the diocese to work toward significantly improving wages and living conditions of farm workers in the Immokalee area. This means negotiating with McDonald's, Wal-Mart and Burger King, who are primarily responsible for helping create some deplorable conditions. Typical income for an individual worker there is well below the national poverty level of \$10,000.

A second major issue was a proposal *continued, page 2*

**Inquirers' Class
for Everyone
Today at 11:00
Ford Hall**

Walkabout: Seven Want to be Bishop

Walkabout, (wo-k'a-"baut) a noun of British origin meaning organized group meetings with a public stroll taken by an important person among a group of people for greeting and conversation.

Coadjutor (kO-'a-'jü-ter) a noun from Latin meaning a bishop assisting a diocesan bishop and often having the right of succession.

Our diocese held a *Walkabout* this past Friday at the Venice Convention Center to acquaint parish representatives with seven priests who are candidates for the position of Bishop *Coadjutor*. Three of the candidates were selected after eighteen months of work by 28 members of the Nominating Committee. Four candidates were nominated outside the nominating committee's work.

Next Saturday, December 9th, at St. Peter's Cathedral, delegates from all 78 parishes in our diocese will choose from among the seven candidates the man or woman who will succeed Bishop Lipscomb. St. Augustine's will be represented by **Mary Clowers**, **Shirley Davis** and **Tom Krug** who were elected at our parish meeting last January. **Greg Duckett** is our alternate delegate.

Last Friday for over six hours, the candidates individually spent forty minutes in each of seven groups of parish representatives.

There they answered spontaneous questions posed by parish representatives. They spoke about church growth, the viability

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A Grand Old Tradition

Oh, the Waiting: Here's How

Shopping: not even begun. Aromas of Christmas cookies: only vague memories of last year's harried effort. Decorations: still stowed in red and green plastic bins.

So honestly now, how can anyone possibly think about slowing down -- for Advent? Pausing, quieting your mind to prepare for Christ's birth. How can anyone ...?

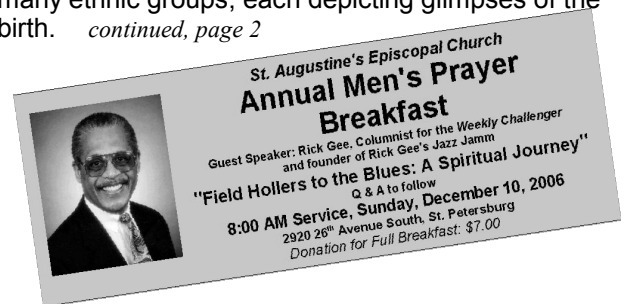
It's never been much different.

For centuries people have attempted to pace themselves during this season of preparation for Jesus' birth. They drew a chalk line on their door to mark off the days, or burned a candle every night diminishing its height a little bit every day until Christmas. Some put up small religious pictures to mark each day of Advent.

And from these traditions, the Advent calendar appeared. The original printed calendar in Germany, back in the 19th century, was produced by a man whose first calendar, when he was a youngster, consisted of miniature colored pictures attached to a piece of cardboard, one for each day in December.

This year you can rediscover anticipation and pace yourself by using an Advent calendar made out of paper or appearing out of thin air on the internet.

One of the best calendars comes from the Episcopal Diocese of Washington. Each year they create an on-line Advent calendar using pictures from the annual crèche exhibit at the Washington National Cathedral (Episcopal). The nativity scenes are collected from every part of the world, from many ethnic groups, each depicting glimpses of the birth. *continued, page 2*



St. Augustine's Episcopal Church
**Annual Men's Prayer
Breakfast**
Guest Speaker: Rick Gee, Columnist for the Weekly Challenger
and founder of Rick Gee's Jazz Jam
"Field Hollers to the Blues: A Spiritual Journey"
Q & A to follow
8:00 AM Service, Sunday, December 10, 2006
2920 26th Avenue South, St. Petersburg
Donation for Full Breakfast: \$7.00

8:00 Sunday: Music Story

Set your alarm for an earlier hour next week. Our Men's Club is expecting a crowded parking lot for its annual Men's Prayer Breakfast. Guest speaker is **Rick Gee**, the *Weekly Challenger* columnist who wrote so glowingly of our church's jazz music several months ago.

"Breakfast will be catered, we'll have a soloist and the guest's topic *continued, back page*



Almost ghostly. Yesterday for several hours our sanctuary took on an eerie glow. It was draped – no, cloaked – in hundreds of yards of filmy plastic sheeting in preparation for a relatively quick spray painting of the ceiling. And 90 minutes later the odors and plastic were gone, leaving a transformed place for our worship. Professionals did it all this time, completing what parishioners had begun – on the walls -- just over a year ago.

Healthy and Struggling *continued*

to reduce diocesan giving to our national church in 2007 by more than \$215,000. In a close vote, this item passed and will bring the amount we send to the national church in line with the Biblical concept of the tithe. Our diocese had been giving the requested 21%.

Bishop Lipscomb, who did not support the item, said he would work to assign the “saved” funds to ministries outside this diocese.

The approved 2007 budget of \$ \$3.1 million includes \$169,900 for 11 months of salary and benefits for the new Bishop Coadjutor; plus \$35,000 allocated for the consecration ceremony.

At the convention, administrative and program committee positions – for those groups that carry out the work of the diocese between annual conventions -- were filled by elections of both lay and clergy members.

“I thought the convention did good work,” reported St. Augustine’s delegate **Mary Clowers**. **Tom Krug**, attending for the first time, said “A fascinating mix of God’s work and human effort.”

Advent Tradition *continued*

Find it by typing <http://www.edow.org> into your browser. Or just google Washington National Cathedral.

This year’s calendar features a Peruvian tapestry woven with strands of raw wool. The fabric depicts a rural South American nativity scene in which shepherds in native clothing pay homage to the Christ child who is sheltered beneath a rough stone arch.

When you click on one of the calendar’s numbered windows, a new page appears with distinctive figures from the crèche exhibit. On that same page is an Advent meditation, a “giving opportunity,” and the daily office. Each day in December, one more window on the calendar can be opened.

This can help us focus on the waiting and anticipating that prepares us for His birth.

Walkabout for the Seven *continued*

of small churches, the role of deacons and women, evangelism and the emergent church, outreach and the value of anti-racism training. Homosexuality, the blessing of homosexual unions, the literal and less literal interpretation of scripture, and the place of the Episcopal Church in the worldwide Anglican Communion were significant topics also addressed during the Q & A.

What follows here is a list of the candidates and selected remarks our delegates heard during the walkabout.

The Rev. John S. Adler, 64, vicar of Iona-Hope Church in Fort Myers, FL: “Stagnation comes with an inward looking parish....The more outreach we do, the more we grow.... Churches need to be constantly changing, constantly recreating themselves in order to be viable today....The bishop serves them as cheerleader.”

The Rev. Dr. Robert S. Dannals, 50, rector of Christ Church in Greenville, S.C.: “We live in an isolated and lonely culture....Churches must become havens of hospitality.... We should be about relationship building; small groups in a church do this well....Anti-racism training is essential in the church; but the training will be effective only if it is followed with relationship building.”

The Rev. Michael P. Durning, 55, canon to the ordinary of the Diocese of Southwest Florida: “Our diocese must change. We know what we love. We know what we desire. But we don’t have the will to do what we need to do.” In regard to scripture and the tension surrounding homosexuality, he said “Sometimes the Gospel truth cannot be subjected to the democratic process.”

The Rev. Edward J. Henley Jr., 57, rector of St. Mark’s Church in Tampa, FL: “The major problem in our diocese is how to deal with great diversity.... We have to stay connected even when we disagree. That always allows for growth to happen....We should stop numbering chapters and verses in the Bible. That system is only about 300 years old anyway. Without them we would read the Bible as a unit and stop quoting from here and there.”

The Rev. Sharon L. Lewis, 62, rector of Church of the Holy Spirit in Osprey, FL: “Large or small church is not the issue....A church has to discover its reason for being, discover the specific ministry it can do and that others need....God gives us basic building blocks. We have to discover them, own them and build with them. Then God gives us more blocks.”

The Rev. Dr. Jacob W. (Jake) Owensby, 48, rector of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Webster Groves, MO.: “The two most important things for church growth are evangelism, and communication both inside and outside the church....We have to foster contacts outside our church facilities, in secular settings being present in the name of Jesus Christ....Proclamation of the love of Jesus Christ has to be the bull’s eye and the millennium goals have to be primary in our planning.”

The Rev. Dr. Dabney T. Smith, 52, rector of Trinity Church in New Orleans, LA.: “What we are actually here for is to love Jesus and then show that love to other people, having Gospel impact.... Isn’t it a wonderful direction to focus our lives and live in such a way that people thank God for the church....Evangelism is always best understood by the way we love people.”

Gee, Music @ 8:00 *continued*

is just great," President **Bobby Allen** is saying. "And we've printed more tickets than ever!"

This is the Men's Club's biggest fund raiser, attracting folks from many other churches every year.

In fact the event's 8:00 starting time is to accommodate those who want to go on to a later service at their own church after our breakfast.

Mr. Gee's presentation, in lieu of the usual sermon, will be followed by a Q & A session.

Cliff Stewart will render an appropriate solo as well.

Tickets, at just \$7.00, are available from most men of the parish.

And God Said . . .

The church's steeple was very high and it was being painted on a very hot day.

About half way down, as the steeple was widening, the painter noticed that the job was taking more paint than planned. He might not even have enough paint to finish.

He was hot and weary, and he did not care to make another trip down; so he decided to stretch the paint by adding some paint thinner to it.

He finished painting, lowered himself to the ground and went about cleaning up.

But when he looked to see the results of his work, he noted that the area with the thinned paint looked decidedly different.

He was wondering what to do when the sky turned dark, there was a lightning flash and a loud thunderclap.

Then from a booming voice in the sky came these words: "Repaint and thin no more!"

Armed With Scripture

A devout, Bible-reading woman returned home after dark from a service of Eventide at her parish. As she entered her house, she was startled by a burglar about to make off with her silver and jewelry.

"Stop!" she yelled. "Acts 2:38!"

The intruder stopped dead in his tracks. Never moved an inch while the woman called 911.

She even had time to describe to the police how she managed to stop the burglary.

Moments later while the cops cuffed the man, one officer asked him, "Why'd you just stand there all that time? All she did was yell a scripture verse at you."

"Scripture? Oh, no. She said she had an axe and two 38's!"

**"A Whole Year?
You Must Be Kidding!"**

No joke. **Fr. Robin Whitlock** first appeared here at St. Augustine's on December 4th, 2005. He came to us as a supply priest after Fr. Crawford's departure.

That was a full year ago, hard as it is to believe.

"It was love at first sight," **Joyce Corn** remembers.

Within less than eight weeks, our vestry had negotiated a twelve month contract with Fr. Whitlock to begin officially as our priest-in-charge. This contract, on February 1st, 2006, was written with the strong encouragement and firm endorsement of the parish at large.

Last month at a vestry meeting Fr. Robin told the assembled vestry: "One of the things I'm most thankful for this year is my discovery of St. Augustine's."

In retrospect, maybe a song title aptly describes our relationship over the past year: Frank Sinatra's "It was a very good year."

And there is a second anniversary to be celebrated this month: **Fr. Whitlock's birthday is Saturday, December 9th**. Greetings and blessings can be sent to him at 750 Sand Pine Drive NE, St. Petersburg, 33703.

In Search of Our Kneeling Places

In each heart lies a Bethlehem,
an inn where we must ultimately answer
whether there is room or not.

When we are Bethlehem-bound
we experience our own advent in his.

When we are Bethlehem-bound
we can no longer look the other way
conveniently not seeing stars
nor hearing angel voices.

We can no longer excuse ourselves by busily
tending our sheep or our kingdoms.

This Advent let's go to Bethlehem
and see this thing that the Lord has made
known to us.

In the midst of shopping sprees
let's ponder in our hearts the Gift of Gifts.

Through the tinsel
let's look for the gold of the Christmas Star.

In the excitement and confusion, in the merry chaos,
let's listen for the brush of angels' wings.

This Advent, let's go to Bethlehem
and find our kneeling places.

Ann Weems in Kneeling in Bethlehem

Your Elected Parish Board, The Vestry

Sr. Warden: Mary Clowers 864-3568
Jr. Warden: Joyce Corn 540-0655
Clerk of the Vestry: Shirley Davis 866-1499
Parish Treasurer: Greg Duckett 866-1508

Inez Ford 327-9693
Rudy Gabbidon 866-1077
Michael Griffin 823-5933
Hazel Hudson-Allen 343-4157

Mary Jones 867-7702
Judy Krug 525-5044
Claude Reynolds 422-2395
Louise Stroude 866-2818