

Homecoming! Enjoy Our Revitalized, Rennovated & Recommitted Church

Are we ever **happy** to have you here again!

Today we are celebrating so many things that we simply wanted more people to share it with – more folks to see what we've done, to sense the new spirit here, to feel the concerns we have for the continuation of this extraordinary church, this community of believers.

We *are* small. We are small even as small churches go. We are threatened – no, challenged – by our bishop to increase our size significantly in three years. In the past eight months we have had a remarkable revitalization, a new congregational confidence, an almost obsessive drive to rebuild ourselves. We feel it and we wanted you to feel it as well.

So we are celebrating our own good news today -- and we are commemorating other blessings as well. We ask you to share with us as we remember – and celebrate – the life and witness of Mrs. Coretta Scott King. And the courageous life of Absalom Jones. And, yes, the heroism of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Like peoples everywhere, when we celebrate, we want more people around us. So we invited you.

When we are happy, we want to share it. So we invited you, our friends.

And when we remember, we wish to do it with as many people as possible. So we invited the ones we have shared so many things with: you, our friends. Welcome home!

Turning Heads?

Finally a Better Sign Out Front

Yes, the sign at the curb is new, so new that its paint may not be totally dry this morning. It was hung yesterday and the afternoon rains began just as the temporary frame was getting a coat of black paint.

"Sure, it's just a temporary improvement," Junior Warden **Joyce Corn** says. "But we were way overdue for a better sign. The old one was badly deteriorated, leaning in all directions and was so dry-rotted that it was nasty-looking."

Replacing a carved wooden plank sign that was silver and black, the new burgundy and cream sign is vinyl lettering on an aluminum corrugate sheet material. For now it hangs from a remnant of the original frame, but it will soon get a pair of stucco columns with a shingled roof and night lighting.

The design, on the same footprint as the original, was first proposed by **Tom Krug**, then went thru numerous iterations as recently as last Thursday and Friday. "Fr. Robin Whitlock" became "Rev. Robin Whitlock." The Church of St. Augustine" became "St. Augustine's Anglican / Episcopal." Font styles were challenged. Its color scheme was altered. Even the Episcopal logo shrank and then Sunday Service time was added. "There were a lot of hands in this soup," Tom said, "but it's a better sign for everyone's anguish over details." He insists that a church sign should be an attractor to the unchurched, not simply a monument to ourselves. "It should draw people in to take a look, to give church another try."

Michael Griffin and **Calvin Knight** worked Saturday to disassemble the old sign and erect the new one. It sits lower now, but it's larger, more colorful and displays much more information. In fact the center section will accept overlays to announce various special church events.

"This installation will get better," Joyce insists. "And someday we may decide to devise something much more substantial." But for now, this is a big improvement!"

Our New Priest

Once attached to St. Luke's Episcopal Church in New Orleans as Interim Rector, **Fr. Robin Whitlock** has been with us since Sunday, December 4.

St. Luke's was the parish of the late **Rev. Curtis Winfield Sisco, Jr.**, to whom our African American hymnal, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, was dedicated.

"That was some of the best liturgy I've ever known," Fr. Whitlock was saying last week, as he recalled the rich experience he enjoyed in the "Big Easy." When he arrived at Tulane Medical Center there, he was surprised by this frequent question: "Where are you from?" (He understood that later to mean: "Who are your people?"). It was as if that was an essential component for defining himself.

In fact his wife **Ann** was born in New Orleans, and the two most recently served in Baton Rouge, LA.

He studied liturgy, history and ethics at seminaries in both Berkeley, CA (under famed liturgist **Massey Shepherd**) and then spent two terms at Kings College in London. That might explain his affection for so many things English.

While serving parishes from Chicago to LaCrosse, WI, to East Tenn. State U., to Baltimore, Fr. Whitlock has also taught ethics at several institutions and has nearly completed a graduate degree in Instructional Media.

**We've come
this far by
faith, leaning
on the Lord**

Taster's Luncheon

We've Been Doing This for Ten Years

Spring and the Tasters' Luncheon are natural cousins at St. Augustine's. This annual culinary tradition, and fund-raiser, sponsored by our Episcopal Church Women (ECW), is slated for April 22nd from noon to 2:00 in our renovated parish hall.

"We chose a date well before hurricane season," **Mary Clowers**, ECW president, said. Two years ago approaching hurricanes "blew our date off the calendar not once, but twice," Mary remembers only too well. So this year the women will go back to a springtime date.

At this time when St. A's is working to promote itself in our community, the Tasters' Luncheon is an event that sells itself, appropriately enough, by "word of mouth. Even so, **Pat Stewart**, chair of the 2006 event, is already asking women to remind their friends to put the date on their calendars. "It's right after Easter, a very busy time."

But **Ivy Fleming** isn't worried, she has said. "We've been doing this for ten years and we've got a good reputation."

"We all serve our best food," said **Barb Watkins**, a previous chair of the event. "You won't find any little tea sandwiches here."

Pat is currently putting together lists of tasks and she will soon begin asking women -- and men -- to accept responsibility for specific jobs. She's very aware that it's only two months away.

"Time to get started!" Pat says.

Tutoring, Homework Help, Praise Music, Health Screenings All in YP's Efforts

"There are doors opening," the Your Place president, Dr. Deborah Flanagan, asserted this week. "Now with our Certificate of Occupancy from the city in place, we can focus on what we set out to do many years ago: work with youth."

Today Your Place is primarily involved with a tutoring program supervised by ACES, a pass-through agency for money from the federal government's *No Child Left Behind* initiative.

Fourteen students are being tutored after school Monday through Friday at the Your Place facility at 750 22nd Avenue South. Although these students come primarily from the Bartlett Park area, any student is eligible for this after school tutoring.

"Any student, may sign up at their school, with a parent. It's as easy as that to get started," Deborah explained.

A long-time YP board member from 20th Street Church of Christ, **Lydia Brown**, said, "We expect to see student numbers grow. We've been tutoring since December 1st, 2005. But some other centers haven't been able to get their program started and so ACES is talking with us about taking on more students."

Maybe specific Your Place envelopes...

With that possible student increase, more tutors will be needed. So far the four tutors all have education backgrounds, "but that's not required," Lydia says. Training and a background check are necessary though before working with youth. "That's one of the federal government stipulations,"

explained Your Place treasurer **Greg Duckett**.

"But tutoring isn't the only activity," Deborah said. "On the last Friday in March we anticipate offering a Praise Service on our property. Pastor **Maceo McGriff** and the praise and worship team from **Abundant Harvest** are planning this with us."

Two programs in particular were identified by another board member, **Hazel Hudson**. Recently Your Place offered homework assistance for kids living nearby. And for two years "we've provided health screenings for the neighborhood," she said "We've worked very successfully with the county on this."

St. Augustine's Church, which holds the deed to the original Your Place property, has been involved with the effort since its inception. But with the arrival of **Fr. Robin Whitlock**, the connection between the church and Y P could become stronger. At his request, YP appointed Greg Duckett as a liaison to communicate with St. A's vestry.

"I would like to see the parish take an offering once a month to help this wonderful outreach effort financially." Fr. Whitlock has said. "Maybe we could use special Your Place envelopes so people were specifically aware of where their money was going."

President Flanagan is thankful for St. Augustine's increased commitment. "But I want the faith community to know," Deborah said, "that we hope for participation from lots of churches. I'm meeting with many pastors and church boards this winter and spring. We'd like to be more interdenominational, with board members from other faith groups, as well as from our Episcopalian friends."

Calendar

Absalom Jones Day, speaker is our own Rev. Lucian Watkins
The Opposite Sax jazz concert with Emile & Laura DeCosmo
Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
Women's History Month recognition
Ash Wednesday service
Simple Suppers, one dish meal, Lenten study & prayer
American Cancer Gala sponsored by Minority Dev. Comm.
Palm Sunday Worship
Maunday Thursday worship
Good Friday worship
Easter Sunday
Tasters' Luncheon

Today at 3 pm	St. James, Port Charlotte
2/18 at 1:30	South Branch Library
2/28 at 5 pm	St. Augustine's
Month of March	St. Augustine's
March 1 at 7:30	St. Augustine's
Lenten Wednesdays	St. Augustine's
April 1 at 6 pm	St. Pete Hilton
April 9 at 9 am	St. Augustine's
April 13 at 7:30	St. Augustine's
April 14	St. Augustine's
April 16 at 9 am	St. Augustine's
April 22, noon to 2	St. Augustine's

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Seventy Years of Stamina, Courage, Coping and Hoping

1927. Seventy-two years ago, when the world was a different place, and at a time when St. Petersburg was two separate zones, when even the churches did not allow the races to worship together, a priest began driving across the Bay to celebrate Eucharist in the homes of a few black people.

Thus a new church was begun, then called a "preaching station," with just a few Negro Episcopalians and the Vicar of Tampa's St. James Church, Rev. John E. Colner. As the congregation grew, services were moved to Davis Elementary School at 3rd Avenue and 9th Street South, then to Jordan Park Community Center at 24th Street and 9th Avenue South. Soon the first priest was replaced by Vicar Rev. Eugene Avery, our first black pastor.

"In those days we were so small that if my family didn't make it, the service was canceled," said Joseph Albury Jr. My father was treasurer, my mother was organist, and my sons were acolytes." Albury is one of the few parishioners still around from that original cadre of what is now St. Augustine's Episcopal parish in St. Petersburg.

1946. Meanwhile in downtown St. Petersburg a committee at St. Peter's Episcopal (now The Cathedral Church of St. Peter) approached our longtime parishesman Joseph Albury Sr. to establish a new mission church and to help secure an appropriate building. "Black people were attending St. Peter's," Mary Clowers was told and, "the members there didn't want that. So they were willing to sponsor a mission church on the south side." Mr. Albury called his son, Joseph Jr., to come home from Tampa, to help with this drive for a church building of their own.

Ten signatures were obtained and a petition was submitted to Bishop Wing. \$12,000 would be raised in four equal shares: from the diocese, from the national church, from St. Peter's, the sponsoring congregation, and from St. Augustine's.

Three lots were then purchased at Prescott Street and 5th Avenue South. Together Fr. Avery and the ten charter members drew plans for the mission church's small first building. Fr. Avery left but the building continued and the first service was held there February 27th, 1949. This church remained St. Augustine's home until August, 1968. At this same time, Ruth Albury and Charles Ford formed the first children's Sunday School.

"It was like a one-room schoolhouse back then," Joseph Albury, Jr. said recently. "The men of the church even laid the hardwood floor tile themselves." For seating in the building, we would drive over to Tampa for a truckload of chairs.

There were handmade benches constructed by Charles Ford and Mary Clowers. "They were so good that some still exist today." Windows were painted to give them color and to keep the sun out. Stained glass was simply not affordable.

All through those early years, the church owned just one set of vestments. "The Beale Four they were called. St. Peter's gave them to us when they got new ones, and we used them for many years," Mary explains. And all the sacred vessels and linen cloths were gifts as well, from a deaconess, Helga Troy. "Every time she visited St. Augustine's, she was on the lookout for things that were needed."

During the summer, in order to beat the heat, services began at 7:30 A.M. "Members were long gone before it got really hot," Mary remembers folks telling her. That first church did have indoor plumbing, one commode and a very small sink, all connected to the city's sewer system.

1949. Fr. Butler was succeeded by our second black pastor, Fr. Francis Johnson. Recognized as a fine speaker, in his four years the church became more widely known and membership grew to 30 communicants. This growth meant any social activity was impossible in the tiny church building, so member Effie Teal opened her home for many church events.

1953. Again St. James in Tampa provided St. Augustine's next Vicar. This time he was a Florida native, Fr. Elisha Clarke, Jr.

1957. New members brought new connections in the city with them. Lewis Clowers was working at the Elks' Club downtown and when the club replaced its chairs, St. Augustine's got the old ones.

1968. During 1968, with the help of the national church and local parishes, funds were raised to build a new facility on 26th Avenue South, St. Augustine's current location. Again, members designed and constructed the church themselves. On Sunday, August 25th, 1968, the first service was celebrated and six months later, the building was set aside for "the working of Almighty God."

2002. St. Augustine's at 75: some things borrowed, others built, many things purchased. Everything blessed.

Update, 2006. In 2002, we rededicated ourselves to be the Church of Jesus Christ Now... In this place... By God's grace. Today that is happening. With a renewed church and invigorating partnership with Fr. Robin Whitlock, St. Augustine's "feels the Spirit," stronger than ever.

Averaging

Seventy-five People at Our Worship Service?

Ring in the ears of every vestry member is Bishop Lipscomb's requirement: by March of 2008 - just 36 months away -- St Augustine's will average a minimum of seventy-five people worshipping here every Sunday — that includes members, friends and guests.

In church jargon, that is referred to as AWA, for Average Worship Attendance. Seventy-five people worshipping at St. Augustine's sounds wonderful, doesn't it?

"Well, of course," our members say. "Why not? This is a special place."

But we haven't been coming close to 75 for a long time.

Others might be prone to conclude, "Okay, but March, 2008 is a long time off. Not to worry. We can deal with that requirement later, maybe next year." But *average* attendance grows very, very slowly. One Sunday with low attendance can cause a month's average to plummet. And one high Sunday can't fix it.

For instance, last July we had a hurricane Sunday with only 17 people present. That *one Sunday* reduced our average significantly. Even with four other Sundays with attendance in the 40's and 50's, our attendance averaged only 37 for that entire month.

We've had baptisms, special services and Christmas during the last eight months, and even with those highlights our AWA has been only 46 worshipers.

That's a very long way from 75.

Okay, let's do the math. If 46 is our average now, what will it take to reach an average of 50? Four more individuals in our pews each week — or 16 more each month. Very doable. Doesn't sound like too many more, does it?

So once we reach that average of 50, how many more are necessary for a monthly average of 55? Twenty more warm bodies each month. That's in addition to the previous sixteen people. Yet all this effort only adds nine points to our average. So we're still 20 short of our goal. Now that job of reaching an AWA of 75 begins to look somewhat more challenging.

Mary Jones knows this, so she has been concentrating on contacting our visitors, letting them know that we welcome them, that we have a place for them at St. Augustine's. She and her Hospitality Committee tell them that we have a great church to share.

Another tactic is getting back in touch with former members who have slipped away. This is the priority for **Shirley Davis, Joyce Corn** and **Cheryl Johnson-**

Here Are Parish Officers for '06

Mary Clowers

Reappointed as Senior Warden by Fr. Whitlock.

Joyce Corn

Elected by vestry for a second year as Junior Warden.

Greg Duckett

Parish Treasurer. Returned again to office by vestry vote.

Shirley Davis

After several years of vestry vacation, elected again as Clerk of vestry.

"This is a very good leadership team," Fr. Whitlock said. "A real asset for St. Augustine's."

Tindall. Shirley asks "Who knows why they left? Maybe they just need to be invited back." This Sunday's Homecoming Day was one way of extending that invitation to come back.

"Right now we need to focus on making sure that our worship experience serves us," Fr. Whitlock says. "When we get consistent in that, when people know that they can count on us, then we will surely grow."

Mordecai Walker, Judy Kru g and **Joyce Corn** participated in a seminar called *The Magnetic Church*. They learned how to welcome visitors and keep them coming back. "Sometimes," Judy said, "you have to get into the mind of a visitor. You might discover that what you thought was warm and welcoming was actually perceived as threatening."

Mordecai concluded that we know how to love here. We just need to polish its expression a little.

We are on our way to becoming a larger worshipping body, well past step one. But there's still a lot of work to do. More than enough to share with everyone already here.

"Over There" -- Our Outreach to Britt House

It seems appropriate that the person who is the "Britt House Coordinator for the Faith-Based Initiative" is a parishioner at St. Augustine's. That's because this church has ministered to the boys across the street for so many years.

Our **Hazel Hudson** wears that nametag. **Nat Caines** and several other men have been visiting on Wednesdays, holding Bible studies, befriending the 14-21 year olds there who are all convicted felons.

That's right, although Britt House is a halfway house, one of only about 30 in this state, it is a lock-up, a "community-based residential treatment facility." The boys that St. Augustine's has chosen as a principal outreach effort, have rap sheets with crimes like stealing cars, aggravated assault, sexual offenses and drug dealing.

Average stay there is 7 months. Unlike in past years there is no more "crossing the street" to St. Aug's for Sunday service and breakfast, so the church men (only men allowed these days) who visit have sometimes formed life-changing friendships. **Nat Caines** says he's never sure how much God works through him at Britt House, but he has enjoyed hearing from young men whom he befriended many years ago. "I know this is the Lord's work," **Nat** says.

"... 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, our web site for church-shoppers.