

July 31, 2005

Flashbacks? No, Flash Forward!

With all the fixing up around here, it might be a good time for ... a longer view.

You should know that in this congregation today there are people who are having visions – singular, personal visions – for transforming this little church into an even more vital engine of grace.

Those daydreams may be scattered but they are effervescent: many of them seem almost ready to pop. Some people are whispering about another day, a time of thriving, way beyond mere survival.

Now such ideas may not be quite ready to be called a Plan. All the dreams have not yet coalesced that far. It's not yet a proposal for the vestry. But the musings do get examined at breakfast tables and lunch counters. Some folks are getting impatient for St. Augustine's Next Step. Some examples.

Emile DeCosmo presses for a vitality he knew in a similar-sized parish up north. At Trinity Episcopal www.trinityparishbayonne.org in Bayonne N.J., Windmill Alliance is a private, non-profit organization providing services for the handicapped and the disadvantaged – in partnership with local churches and temples. They do residential care for the developmentally disabled and job training and emergency assistance to the poor. And they too started small. “Couldn't we do that?” Emile asks.

Our Junior Warden **Joyce Corn** is championing program partnerships (rather than competitiveness) with nearby churches, like McCabe United Methodist. “Or even completely ceding some kind of activities over to other congregations,” she says. “We should specialize and not try to do so many things.”

With the peculiar tunnel vision of an organizer, **Judy Krug** is talking these days of our church creating permanent ministerial connections on the campuses of Eckerd College or USF-Bayboro – or both.

Hazel Hudson feels there's no reason that the facility at Your Place could not become a satellite arm for St. Augustine's. *Continued on page 2*

Spiritually, It's Come As You Are

“Every time our parish makes a wish-list,” **Shirley Davis** says, “at the top, it's spiritual growth.” Now **Virginia Ryan** is going to get us started this Thursday, August 4th, at 5:30.

Around the big conference table in Ford Hall Thursday evening, Virginia will introduce us to multiple experiences in spirituality. “We will look at six different ways to meet God,” Virginia says. “The idea of this introductory course is to provide just a taste of each one. Then you can pursue the one that especially appeals to you.”

Companions in Christ: Exploring the Way, An Introduction to the Spiritual Journey is the text Virginia has chosen for the seven week course. The bookstore of The Upper Room says “*Exploring the Way* defines and explains the most basic concepts and language of the Christian spiritual life: prayer, the Bible's message for our lives today, spiritual gifts, listening, journaling, and much more.

The book is written by Marjorie J. Thompson.

“Stories, scripture, and exercises in each chapter will help connect your beliefs with daily experiences. Through independent and group study, you'll establish a rhythm of daily time with God, weekly time in Christian community, and a lifelong attentiveness to possibilities for serving the world.”

Rev. Harry R. Ripson Here for Next 4 Weeks

Over the 78+ years of this parish's life, members have seen a good number of priests in both short and longer term assignments. This summer, during our rector's sabbatical, we have had great experiences with two “supply priests,” Fr. Lee Jaster and currently Fr. Jack Hyde.

Beginning next Sunday **Fr. Harry Ripson** will serve us for the month of August.

Raised in southeast Pennsylvania, in the Reading and Lancaster areas, Fr. Ripson spent his first career in the military, both in the U.S. Navy and in the Air Force, with a year spent in Southeast Asia.

As a priest, Fr. Ripson served in the diocese of Dallas, in the northwest Louisiana area, in Arkansas and then in various positions in the Diocese of New Jersey – including as Special Assistant to four successive bishops there.

An Episcopalian since he was a 14 years old, Fr. Ripson, since his retirement, has been assisting at St. Giles Church in Pinellas Park.

Out of the Blue

Last week **Greg Duckett** was routinely opening the day's mail.

Slitting an envelope addressed just to St. Augustine's, to no one in particular, he felt like Ed McMahon had knocked on the front door. Inside, from an Episcopal church he barely knew, was a check and a letter.

Greg is our church treasurer, so this enclosure had even more impact: it was an out-of-the-blue check for \$4500 from a Florida parish who'd received an unexpected gift and decided to share it.

Now that is an unexpected blessing!

From St. Augustine

**“Let us understand that
God is a Physician,
and that suffering is a
medicine for salvation,
not a punishment for
damnation.”**