

**August 7, 2005**

## Could This Be Testimony Time?

We Episcopalians are not known particularly for the power of our personal testimony. We are a more cerebral lot perhaps. But occasionally an incident is so impressive that it simply insists that we share it, out-loud. And lately in this congregation such events are occurring more often. They seem to demand retelling.

“Pray, then make your plans carefully, and more doors will open for you.” That’s a major expression of Christian belief, shared by many here. So take your pick of these recent “doors opening.”

“...Holiness is absolutely practical and concrete... (It’s where people) get into the dirt and sweat of real life.... This is where God is at work.”  
Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast*

1. In July an Episcopal church that most of us had never heard of sent St. Augustine’s a check for \$4500.00, out of the blue.
2. Several months ago we sought just a few used hymnals and some chairs from another church that was closing. Our interest and persistence led to an absolute windfall of items, some small, others very large and significant.
3. Our bishop’s recent visit, dreaded by many, turned out to be full of encouragement and alternative avenues for managing our future.

4. Your Place, our people’s most ambitious outreach project, languished for years and has suddenly turned a corner. It has thrown open its doors and is getting new support from unforeseen sources.

In just the past 90 days this parish has tasted a new sweetness of spirit, one that is a treasure and a blessing and a grace. Say amen.

## They're Practicing Spirituality

One of the areas in which a small church like ours can excel is Religious Formation for Adults. In past years St. Augustine’s has had some good successes here. Now a new effort has begun with the first of seven 90-minute class meetings on personal spirituality.

Using a book called *Exploring the Way*, a group of 13 of us took seats in Ford Hall at 5:30 on Thursday and began examining these disciplines: biblical meditation, daily examen, holy listening, journaling, breath prayer, and sharing the journey.

From **Michelle John** to **Minnie Williams** group members related a yearning to move closer to God. Course leader **Virginia Ryan** said the sessions would be semi-structured: there will be practicing and “taste-testing” of disciplines that have worked for thousands. As a member of St. Peter’s Cathedral, Virginia plans to offer this course there as well.

Seventeen centuries ago the patron saint of this church wrote: “You have created us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” Over the next weeks, this group will explore ways to achieve greater intimacy with God and rest for their hearts.



## Genuine Pride: Permitted, Once a Year

**'Bet you too** have a “proud list” – those accomplishments that took some real hard work. And maybe a few that didn’t (like becoming a grandmother!), but you’re “busting buttons” when you mention that little tyke.

Haven’t you had challenges that you conquered through sheer persistence? 5 pounds lost. Yard barn got cleaned. Relationship was mended. Or maybe you finally figured out how to program your VCR, just as they’re becoming passe’.

On August 27th, at St. Augustine’s Big Celebration Party, you provide the achievements and everybody else will supply the applause and whistles, the high-fives and hugs.

“This will be so much fun,” promises **Margaret Smith** who is organizing this event. “Some people will probably have big things to tell about, and some of us will self-consciously mumble that we only kept the garden weeded. What’s important, what we’re going to celebrate, is what made you feel good about your self.”

This is also a time when we’ll recognize all that St. Augustine’s has accomplished over the last 12 months.

We’ll sit at 12 tables, one for each month. All the folks with birth dates of that month sit together. “We’ll spend some time playing some table games,” **Mary Clowers** says, “and have a delicious, light summer meal.”

So, start writing out that list of “boasts and brags.” Indulge yourself, just this once, with friends. Invite guests to join the fun on Saturday, August 27th at 4:00 pm. But warn them all: *No Modesty Allowed.*

