

**A Commemorative
History of
ST. MARY'S CHURCH,
Stone Harbor, N.J.
1910-2010**

by Janet Taillie Kowalski

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Foreword

I volunteered to be a part of the Centennial Committee when it formed in early 2009 in anticipation of St. Mary's Centennial in 2010. A number of events and activities were proposed to commemorate this milestone, including a written history of the church. Fr. John asked if I would consider writing it; my experiences working in the newspaper business as well as a degree in literature and language -- generally not put to much use, I confess -- seemed to make me uniquely suited to the task. I agreed to give it a try. Initially, I imagined that 20 pages would be plenty long enough to tell our story, and that length in itself seemed pretty daunting. Little did I know what an odyssey this would become, and one that turned out to be more fun than work, as I combed through old Trustee Reports and Vestry Minutes, with the help of a few others. When I asked parish members for their pictures and recollections, so many of you had stories to share, and I've worked hard to be sure they're all included, because each and every person, past and present, has helped make St. Mary's Church the vibrant and beautiful place of worship that it is. Thank you all for entrusting me with this work and for helping me accomplish it. I hope you enjoy reading our history as much as I enjoyed researching and writing it.

Introduction

What's in a Name?

Over the months I researched the history of St. Mary's Church, I realized that some questions remained shrouded in mystery. Answers fitting into the old detective formula of "Who, what, where, when, why" simply could not be satisfied, because few documents or records remain from the early 1900's. Details are sketchy or, in some cases, nonexistent, leaving us with "Just the facts, Ma'am," in the words of Sgt. Friday.

I really wanted to start by finding out how did our church come to be named St. Mary's? No records remain to answer that question. Instead, we can perhaps choose to look on the name as a reflection of the passages in Luke that describe Mary's words and thoughts at the time she learned she was to bear the son of God: "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:18-20) Certainly, our church personifies the very words Mary uttered: "My soul glorifies the Lord ..." (Luke 1:46)

Interestingly, if you do an internet search using the parameters "St. Mary's Episcopal Church," you get 3,750,000 listings! There are St. Mary's Episcopal Churches from Arlington, Virginia to Anchorage, Alaska. Each listing has a brief descriptive sentence, and what you read is the embodiment of what OUR St. Mary's is as a church:

" ... a unique parish ... with warmth and cohesiveness ..." (St. Mary's Church, Haddon Heights, NJ) " ... a Christ-centered community, open and affirming ..." (St. Mary's, St. Paul, MN), " ... restoring all people to God and with each other in Christ ..." (St. Mary's, Ely & Tower, MN), ... "to share our spiritual journey in Christ by celebrating the sacraments [and] proclaiming the Gospel ..." (St. Mary's, Eugene, OR)

Most listings make mention of activities including a schedule for worship, newsletters, youth activities, calendars, and sermons available for reading. At least one-third of the listings I browsed included the word, "Welcome!" in their headliner ... including St. Mary's Church, Stone Harbor.

In the end, it doesn't really matter what we're called; what counts is that in 1910 David Risley chose to donate a plot of land at 95th Street in Stone Harbor in order that a church could be built. In the 100 years that have passed, St. Mary's has sought to glorify God, and has been, in the words of our mission statement: a "Christ-centered parish, united in worship, revealing the love of God by sharing our gifts among ourselves and with others." We are happy to be St. Mary's, to treasure her beauty in our hearts, and to be sure, always, that our souls glorify the Lord.

Chapter One

THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH

May God almighty bless you and make you fruitful
and increase your numbers
until you become a community of peoples.
-- *Genesis 28:3*

The building of a house of worship involves far more than mortar and foundation; rather, it is the strength of faith melded with determination to create a place to honor that faith. St. Mary's history is rich with individuals who became living examples of such strength and determination; whether their contributions were small or large, each and every one created the space where -- 100 years later -- we gather to celebrate the communion of faith, family and friends.

Planting the Roots

In Jeffrey M. Dorwart's book, Cape May County, NJ - The Making of an American Resort Community, he notes on page 174:

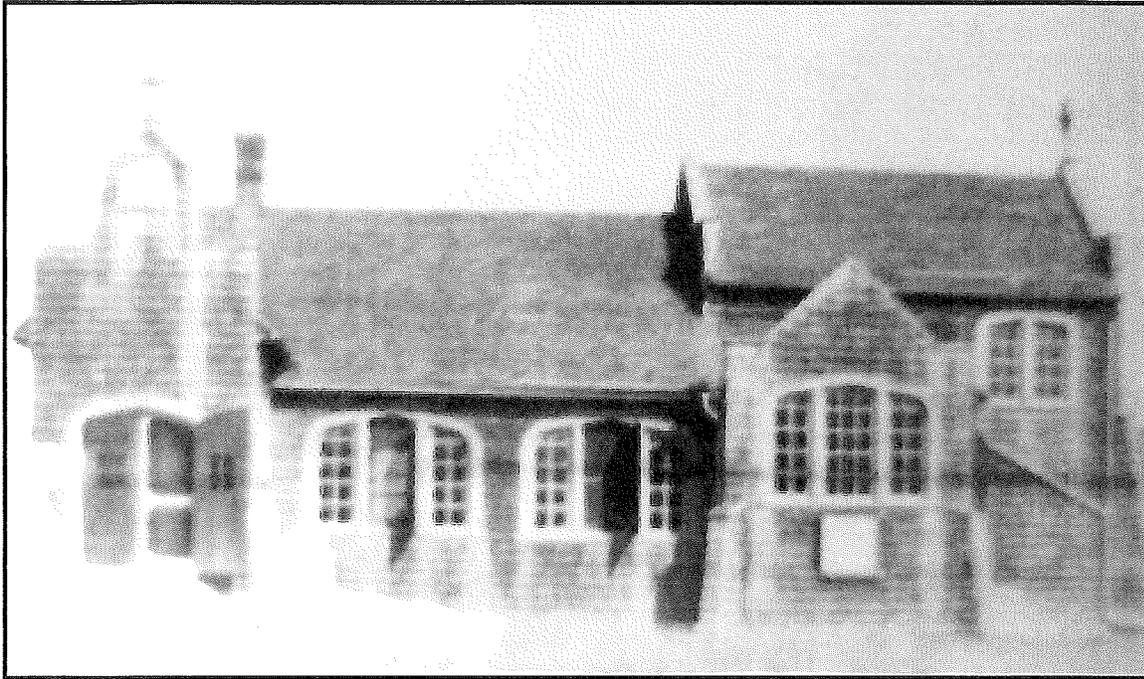
" ... the Avalon Development Company sold the southern portion of Seven Mile Beach, known as Stone's Harbor, to the South Jersey Realty Company for \$90,000 in September 1907. ... The SJRC immediately distributed property to Howard S. Risley and David Risley, the company's president and secretary. The Risley brothers created the resort community of Stone Harbor and secured its incorporation as a borough in 1914."

Both Howard and David Risley were at various times Trustees of St. Mary's Church, but it was David Risley who, around 1910, donated the piece of property on which our church is situated. Designed by architect H.J. Reinbold, the cedar shingled frame structure was at that time known as St. Mary's By-the-Sea. The original structure, seen in the following photograph, was dedicated on July 2, 1911 by Suffragan Bishop Garland. The original structure cost \$6,000 to build.

Scattered through the Trustee Reports from this early period of church history are many of the minutiae that bring our church to life, put flesh on its bones, so to speak. In a Trustee Report prepared in 1918, Nellie May Rennyson, Secretary, noted:

"The matter of surplus red cushions was discussed, and a decision was made that if St. Simeon's, Wildwood, would buy them for \$1.00 each, they could have fifteen, which money could be used toward a notice board."

A subsequent report entry notes purchase of a notice board for \$30 on November 4, 1918. Always thrifty, we Episcopalians!



St. Mary's By-the-Sea, circa 1910

Though very little information can be found regarding these early parish members, Nellie May Rennyson is one individual about whom some facts are known. A maiden lady, Miss Rennyson graduated from the Philadelphia General Hospital Training School for Nurses, and went on to become the Superintendent for two years of Good Samaritan Hospital in Lebanon, PA. She eventually resigned due to "pressure of domestic duties in her home." She was a major contributor to St. Mary's, and upon her death on July 6, 1929, she left a bequest of \$1,000 to the church. A note of condolence to her sister and brother stated:

"Miss Rennyson had been deeply interested in St. Mary's, Stone Harbor, since the very beginning of Church work in that Community ... whenever she was in Stone Harbor and the Church was open for service, she was always in her place, and thus showed by her example her vital interest in the Church of God."

In July, 1933, new pews were installed at a cost of \$348.86, and a motion was made by Mrs. Jessie Andreas that a "plate of uniform size be placed on such pews as were to be donated by members of the Church." By further resolution, the Trustees donated one of

the new pews as a memorial to Miss Nellie Mae Rennyson. In a tradition that continues to the present day, the funds for the new pews were donated in part by the Women's Guild (now known as the E.C.W.).



Other donations made to the church in its infancy included an organ, donated in 1912 by Grace Church of Philadelphia. In 1918, the Trustee Reports note that Rev. Ven. Archdeacon Shepherd thought he could arrange for a cassock for the church, and Rev. Cox said there was a litany desk at St. John's Church, as well as a surplice, that could be used by St. Mary's. Obviously, there was no lack of support for this budding parish. In fact, an article published in the May 1, 1936 Gazette newspaper noted that "St. Mary's By-the-Sea, the new [sic] Stone Harbor Episcopal Church, has a very bright future because of the fact that many cottagers are interested in its welfare."

Trustee Reports tell us that at the annual meeting on July 24, 1927, "there being a consensus of opinion that the church should build a rectory," a Committee was formed to raise funds for the construction of a rectory and garage. "It was ordered that the lot adjoining the Church on 95th be purchased," and said purchase price was not to exceed \$1,000. Reports from 1928 indicate the funds had been raised, and in July of 1928, construction of the rectory was presumably complete, as a resolution was passed, " ... thanking the Women's Guild for their fine work in furnishing the rectory."

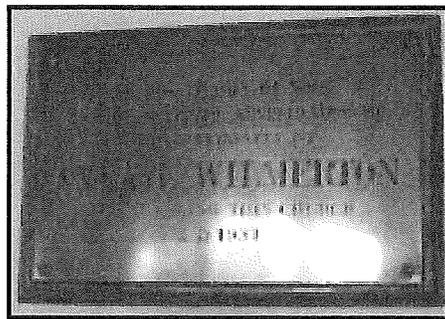
Another individual who featured prominently in the building of St. Mary's was Miss Anna Wilmerton. In addition to donating a credence table and new kneelers to the church in 1921, it was Miss Wilmerton who donated funds to enlarge the church in 1932. At the annual meeting of July 19, 1932, the Trustees of St. Mary's Church voted to send the following letter, through Mr. O.F. Ferree, presumably the church sexton at that time, noting the following:

"At a meeting of the Trustees of St. Mary's Church, Stone Harbor, held in the church July 18, 1932, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

"Resolved that the Trustees of St. Mary's Church desire to Express to the donor of the addition to the Church recently completed, their sincere thanks for and appreciation of this generous gift.

Very truly yours, H.B. Stavers, Secretary"

Though Miss Wilmerton is not specifically named in that Resolution, a hand-written notation in the front of the book containing Trustee Reports from that period of church history states, "Church enlarged in 1932 by Miss Anne Wilmerton ... a Trustee." A subsequent report notes "purchase of a brass tablet to be placed in an appropriate place in the church for Miss Wilmerton in consideration of the addition to the church recently completed. The cost of tablet costing approximately \$25.00."



For a number of years thereafter (1937 through 1945), no Trustee reports exist; presumably this period of turmoil and war interrupted regular meetings. In 1946, when a bi-annual meeting was held in August, however, it would seem that life was getting back on track: reports note that the roof of the church needed repair, as well as windows needing to be varnished.

MISSION CHURCH TO PARISH CHURCH

In 1947, the topic of turning St. Mary's into a year-around parish was briefly discussed. Trustee notes from August, 1947 note that nine parish members along with the Rt. Rev. Alfred L. Banyard, Suffragan Bishop of New Jersey, suggested keeping St. Mary's open all winter. It was eventually decided the church was not yet big enough, and the decision would be deferred until such time as there were "125 adult members."

Other improvements, however, went on apace: in 1948, "new beds, a card table and lamp, and also a **mechanical refrigerator**" were purchased for the Rectory. In 1949, the property committee decided to have "living room furniture painted and reupholstered, and to replace the porch glider, which is badly needed. \$500 to be allotted." Some of these repairs were accomplished with proceeds from a lot located on Sunset Drive, donated to the church, which was sold for a profit of \$670. How property values have changed...! The first official church stationery was printed in 1950; and Trustee Reports

from 1951 state, "We are to purchase a Wurlitzer electric organ," at a cost of \$1,895. 1952 saw the installation of a telephone in the rectory.



A view of the altar in St. Mary's, circa 1950. Note the windows above the altar, lack of organ pipes, as well as lecterns to either side. Also, note window on the left side of altar, this being prior to building of parish hall and sacristy. Absent is our beautiful altar rail.

In 1951 at the annual meeting, the idea of turning St. Mary's into a year-around parish was revisited. At that time, it was decided again that "this was impractical at present, so Bishop Banyard suggested the formation of a committee." Oh, how we Episcopalians love our committees!



In 1953, a petition containing 30 names was signed, and it was decided that a delegation would go to Trenton to discuss with the Bishop the creation of a year-round church. Diane (Markle) Hanley recalls her grandmother, Elizabeth LoBue, **(shown at left)** whose family was one of the first to settle in Stone Harbor, was among those who made the trip to see the Bishop. Diane recalls her grandmother saying that when the Bishop expressed concerns that creating a year-round parish would be too expensive, Mrs. LoBue assured the Bishop she would do everything within her power to keep expenses down, including making choir robes herself and feeding the new rector. In fact, Diane recalls that Fr. Thomas Higgons, first as a seminarian and later as St. Mary's vicar, enjoyed many meals at their dinner table.

The Bishop decided the best solution, given budget restrictions, would be to have a lay-reader or seminarian conduct morning prayer, with a visiting priest once a month to celebrate the eucharist. Accordingly, a motion was passed to winterize the church by taking \$2,000 from savings and installing a heater, chimney, and storm windows. Fr.

Thomas Higgons, then a seminarian, began conducting weekly services during "the quiet season".

Meanwhile, improvements continued: a new 25' x 27' "sacristy" was installed in 1954, (as it was called in our records), for the purpose of "small entertainment and conducting Church School."

Discussion of the building of a new Parish Hall ensued in 1956, according to Minutes of the December 3rd Annual Meeting, conducted by newly-installed Rev. E. Thomas Higgons. Officers were "empowered to investigate and estimate operating expenses of a Parish Hall, and necessary repairs and improvements to church and rectory." By 1957, a report was given on the new Parish Hall, "now in the planning stage." In 1958, the improvements were completed, and included a sacristy, choir room, parish hall and kitchen. Subsequent Minutes of Vestry meetings begin to make consistent mention that such meetings "followed a covered dish supper" in the parish hall!

Even as physical improvements were being made, St. Mary's was growing in stature as a church. Now a full-time, year-round mission parish, Fr. Higgons, at the request of various parish members, explained the requirements that St. Mary's would have to meet in order to move from being a mission-level church to a regular parish. At this juncture, Fr. Higgons received a call from another church in Bridgeton, and feeling that he had done as much for St. Mary's as he could, he accepted that offer. Accordingly, in 1959, The Rev. George Freifeld became rector of St. Mary's.

The process to become a regular parish, under the guidance of Fr. Freifeld, was not concluded for a number of years. Although in 1964, a vote was passed at the annual meeting to apply to Trenton for a change of status from a mission to a parish, there apparently was some miscommunication between St. Mary's and Bishop Banyard's office. The application for regular parish standing was turned down, and the original application was withdrawn on April 12, 1964.

During the tenure of the Rev. Edward Sykes, the process of becoming a regular parish was completed; ultimately, a Certificate of Incorporation designating St. Mary's as a regular parish was recorded in Cape May County Court House on January 24, 1967.

The advent of the 1970's saw a whirlwind of activity at St. Mary's Church. Further improvements to the church were made, in spite of the fact that times were difficult, and money was tight. In the words of Treasurer Robert Somes to Senior Warden Emil Bissig, "We are again getting close to the bottom of the barrel." Still, the little church on the corner persevered. Though struggling to pay fuel and light bills, the Music Committee formed in 1968 began a search for a new organist/choir master, and plans were being made to raise funds for a new Moller pipe organ.

In November, 1973, Minutes of the Vestry report a letter of resignation tendered by Fr. William St. John Frederick. Fr. William Guerrazzi was made interim rector. Fr. Guerrazzi already had a history with St. Mary's, having been one of the young counselors at Calvary House, the summer choir cottage located at 83rd Street and Third Avenue.

It can be guessed from notations contained in the 1974 Vestry minutes that the church, during the tenure of Fr. Ronald Norton, who was appointed rector that year, showed that members of the parish were inclined at that time to want less formal worship practices. The Minutes state: "A \$50 check received for purchase of Stations of the Cross would be returned to the donor since 'agreement with Fr. Norton was for middle level church ... and St. Mary's at this time was not ready for Stations of the Cross.'" Reading this type of comment in parish records allows us to trace the ebb and flow of changing perceptions of accepted worship practice. In recent years, Stations of the Cross have been placed around the church, and during Lent a solemn service traces their path.

Financial struggles continued through the 1970's, as mention is made of a decision against "soliciting funds from local businesses to defray our \$3,000 deficit." Late in 1975, Treasurer Don Brown reported, "As far as I can determine, no budget exists for the church. I recommend that a Finance Committee be appointed." And thus began another mainstay committee which continues to support the church. The Finance Committee's first edict was "We need an increase of 19.4% in church pledges and contributions to meet our 1976 budget." Sound familiar?

Meanwhile, the world beyond the boundaries of our own little parish was changing and evolving. Echoes of issues which continue to trouble the Church as a whole were being discussed even then. Incorporated into the Vestry Minutes of May, 1976, is a portion of anonymous correspondence addressed to the Rt. Rev. Albert W. Van Duzer, which read in part:

"We hear about ordaining women to the Priesthood; changing the meaning of the prayer book, and making (in the Newark diocese) a bishop of a man who denies the entire story, life and teachings of Christ."

Change always represents a challenge, but never more so than to those who, like Episcopalians, hold strongly to tradition.

In November, 1978, the Vestry accepted the resignation of Rev. Ronald A. Norton, and December Vestry Minutes note that "Rev. Paul Lengle will cover services until Rev. Perry Cox takes over as interim rector in the middle of January." A parish survey was completed to assess what qualities were needed in a new rector, the first reference to the complex process that today is the hallmark of a parish seeking a new rector. The survey results indicated that the people of St. Mary's "would like to see improved conditions both spiritually and in good fellowship."

It is interesting to make mention that prior to this point in time, new rectors were located and installed in a fairly quick process, generally based on a list of eligible candidates provided by the Diocese. In October, 1979, Vestry Minutes note a report from the Search Committee of a second visit to interview and rate Rev. Wesley Martin of Belmar. "Mr. Martin is 48, his wife 49, and they have a six-year-old son." On January 11, 1980, a letter from Bishop Albert W. Van Duzer approved the call of Fr. Wesley Martin to St. Mary's Church. One of the changes that Fr. Martin instituted was to combine Morning Prayer and Eucharist at the 10 AM worship service, in spite of protest from various parish members. The Vestry agreed that a trial period of one year be given ... and so a new worship tradition was begun.

Moving forward into the 1980's, many changes in both worship tradition and church organization were being instituted. A Building Improvement Program was created, with donated monies used to finance a number of projects, including improvement to the parish kitchen. Included among those suggestions was one that can't help but elicit a chuckle:

"It was suggested that [the] ECW make 10 white butcher aprons (one size fits all) and appliqué on each 'SMKP' ... the apron is the uniform for the 8 on duty, plus 2 spare aprons. SMKP - St. Mary's Kitchen Police ... but no one other than SMKP is permitted in the main part of the kitchen."

Kitchen police, no less! Thankfully, how times have changed!! In spite of attempted restrictions placed on access to the kitchen, a new kitchen facility was dedicated to the memory of a parish member in 1986. At this point in our history, we're happy to welcome anyone and everyone who wants to help out with coffee hour, dinner preparation, or other kitchen-related activities.

Also in the mid-1980's, thanks to a donation from the Buckingham and Casper families, the rear narthex was constructed. Marlene Casper explained:

"In the spring of 1985, both our daughter and Audrey Buckingham's were to be married at St. Mary's. There was no rear narthex at that time, and we were concerned about rainy wedding days, so we decided to have one built. The sidewalk was very broken so we also decided to replace it, just the Monday before our daughter's wedding. We removed the walkway Monday, and it rained Monday night, Tuesday, Wednesday and into Thursday. We finally were able to pour the cement Friday morning, and Stan and Warren spent the rest of Friday smoothing it out. Thankfully, the sun shone on both brides!"

Also during the 1980's, St. Mary's celebrated her 75th anniversary with a gala dinner at the Whitebrier Inn in Avalon. Guest of honor was Rev. E. Thomas Higgons, St. Mary's first vicar.

During this period, growth of the church was also reflected in the institution of greeters to welcome newcomers to St. Mary's, a new and invigorated Men's Club under the leadership of Mr. John Basford, and plans were proposed to air condition the church. Other items considered by the Long Range Planning Committee included a columbarium -- although it took until 2002 before one was designed and installed -- proposed development of a theatrical/music group, Bible Study sessions to be held during Lent, and purchase of an office computer. Indeed, the times were a'changin' ...

As many changes as were made to worship practice, formation of new groups to support the church, and various additions to the physical structure of St. Mary's, nothing impacted the appearance of the church interior so greatly as the installation of our incomparable stained glass windows. The windows were dedicated on August 26, 1990 by the Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Robert A.K. Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, during the tenure of Fr. Martin. [Ed. Note - see separate chapter for more details about the windows.]

By the 1990's, St. Mary's had grown and thrived. Committees that continue to exist even today were up and running. The E.C.W. and Men's Clubs were actively involved in a variety of activities and fund-raisers to support parish programs; an active youth group under the auspices of Mr. Charles Collett and Ms. Carla Robinson was firmly entrenched. Yet even as the church's roots were firmly planted, the surrounding towns were beginning to see a downturn: Sr. Warden Frank Adkins, in his Senior Warden's Report of January, 1992 noted, "These are sobering and changing times for us as well as the rest of the world." Concern over the Seven Mile Island population decrease was evident, with towns suffering losses of full-time residents ranging from 4.6 to 6.6 percent from the 1890's to the 1990's. In what would become the established pattern, there was a corresponding growth seen in residency "off-shore" in Cape May Court House and Middle Township.

Still, the members of St. Mary's parish continued to support their church, no matter where they lived. In September, 1992, at a cost of \$85,000, construction was begun on redesigning and rehabilitating the church rectory, including a new landscaping design. Fr. Martin commented, in support of the improvements, that the rectory "had not been touched by human hands since 1929," and donations from both memorial funds and interested individuals made this undertaking possible. The refurbished rectory was blessed by Fr. Martin on November 29, 1992. A plaque installed on the rectory memorializes the donations made by Florence Atwood and other parish members who supported this project.

Other improvements during this period included the installation of air conditioning in the church offices and part of the kitchen in 1993. In 1994, a beautiful memorial garden between the church and the rectory was dedicated in loving memory of Penny Adkins, wife of long-time parish member Frank Adkins.

BRANCHING OUT 1997 to Present Day

In 1997, the Rev. John Sosnowski became rector of St. Mary's Church. In the intervening years, many improvements have been made to the church building and grounds, thanks to the contribution of time, money and effort by many members of the parish. According to Fr. John:

"A former member, Bob Emberger, used to joke about the fact that prior to my coming, duct tape was good for just about any repair around the church. However, after my arrival, the church began to take seriously doing the work necessary to be good stewards of our property and preserving the precious assets for the future."

Work began in earnest in 1997. Spearheaded by two dynamic Junior Wardens, Dave Kowalski and Franklin Lee, no job was too big for these skilled and dedicated craftsmen to accomplish or to supervise to completion. The time and talent they have given over the years can't be measured, and is certainly a gift beyond compare, and could not have been afforded without Dave and Franklin's involvement. It began with a total renovation of the parish hall. Dividers that marked out rooms in the back of the hall were removed by "taking out the couple of screws that were holding them up," according to Dave and Franklin. New classrooms were installed; a beautiful loft was built and is now used for our parish youth. New lighting, new carpeting, and an entirely new heating and air conditioning system were put in place.

Improvements were also made to the church itself, including new carpeting, painting of the interior, and rebuilding the old narthex because the weight of the bell on the roof was causing support beams of the roof to crack. New heating and air conditioning were also added to the church offices and chapel, along with new carpeting, paint and closet space.

In 2002, a columbarium, long a dream of Dr. Rosabel Koss, was designed and installed by Dave and Franklin.

Work on the outside of the church included stripping and repairing rotten wood and painting the frames of all the windows, as well as installation of new plexiglass over the stained glass, new cedar siding for the church, new church doors and new siding for the rectory and a new deck.

Our church organ was totally rebuilt by Russell Meyer and Associates of Bridgeton, converting it from an analog to a digital system, with the addition of new ranks of pipe and totally new frontal pipes, installed in 2005.

Fr. John says, "What was most amazing is that every project was paid for upon completion by the ever-faithful generosity of parishioners! All that's left is the roof, a project anticipated in the next three to five years."

Countless other donations and projects also add to the overall experience of our worship at St. Mary's. Taking a few minutes to walk through the church and around the grounds can't help but reveal the love people have for St. Mary's. Some of these donations are honored with plaques or markers, but others have simply become an accustomed part of our worship. Take a walk around ... experience the beauty of St. Mary's in a new and thankful way. Here are some, but certainly not all, of the expressions of love and generosity of our parish members:

- A tidy garden, complete with a small angel statue, given in loving memory of Marjorie Otton, located just outside the parish hall exit near Sturdy Bank.
- The "Mary Garden" between the church and rectory, in memory of Penny Adkins by her husband, Frank.
- The cross above the altar was given in memory of Howard Pleasants by his wife Nancy (who later remarried and is remembered by many as Nancy Ritchie). The plaque notes his contributions to the church as "Church School teacher, council member, choir member, acolyte supervisor, lay leader, and warden."
- During Lent, a walnut cross replaces the brass cross. This was handmade by Dave Kowalski, using wood he had stored since his high school days, just waiting for the right project to come along.
- The beautiful pulpit was commissioned in memory of Marjorie Otton by the Rich family, and designed and handcrafted by Franklin Lee.
- Many of the items gracing the altar -- candle sticks, vases, and all the vestments worn by clergy -- were given lovingly by parish members.
- A hand-crafted dollhouse-sized version of St. Mary's is a favorite of the children in the nursery.
- The large, beautiful hanging in the parish hall, depicting Mary and Jesus, was stunningly restored by Jason Crafts, married to Cynthia Sosnowski's daughter, Abigail. Prior to its restoration, it languished unnoticed on the rear wall of a classroom; now it's a striking focal point of the hall.
- A state-of-the-art sacristy, donated by a long-time Altar Guild member. A plaque states simply, "To the Glory of God, in appreciation for those who quietly do the Lord's work."
- A skillfully worked cross-stitch sampler hangs in the Church School area, completed by the loving hands of Fran Lewis. Fran was an extraordinary

needlewoman, and having this piece on which she spent so many hours is a blessing.

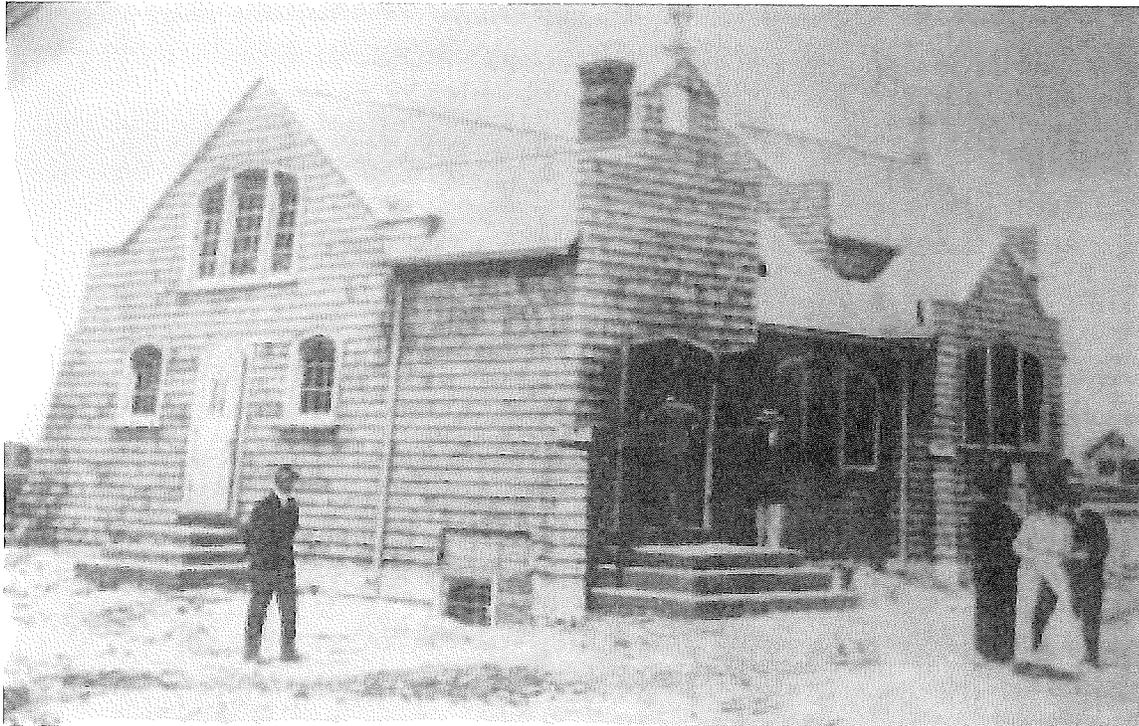
- Gorgeous needlepoint kneelers in the altar area and at the altar rail were donated in memory of Gladys Molyneux by Pat Huber. They were stitched by parish members Elizabeth Merrill and Marlene Casper, with additional stitching and upholstery by Ruth Necker, in memory of Virginia Jean Dormuth and Carol Lynn Dormuth.
- The carved decorations on the altar rail were beautifully painted and restored by Sally Arning and Jason Crafts.
- In the side narthex, the display case housing items of memorabilia was donated in memory of Bob Ritterhoff by his wife, Pam. The matching side table was a gift from Janet and Dave Kowalski
- The St. Mary's Church banner, hanging above the altar, was designed and donated by Zeke and Dianne Boldt, as were Stations of the Cross, in memory of Harry G. Pearce, hanging around the perimeter of the church.
- New choir pews, created to exactly match those installed in the rest of the church, were donated in memory of deceased family members by Stan and Marlene Casper.
- Furniture for the new youth loft area was given by Margaret Luedecke.
- Pauline Murphy, in loving memory of her husband, James Murphy, donated the Gospel book and pillow that adorn the altar each week.
- In the chapel, the Marian statute was donated by Ralph and Jan Dantuono in loving memory of long-time parish member Amelia Guerrazzi, married to former interim rector Rev. William Guerrazzi.
- Organ chimes were donated in memory of Patience Evans by her family.
- The bell located just inside the sacristy door, rung as worship begins, was donated in memory of Janet Kowalski's mother, Ruth Taillie, who for many years served on the altar guild of All Saints' Episcopal Church where Janet grew up near Cleveland, Ohio.
- Plaques on the wall of the Church School nursery pay loving homage to Ruth Fisher and Anna Allen, both of whom for years taught and mentored the youth of St. Mary's Church.
- In the rear narthex, six plaques bear the names of those who have donated funds to St. Mary's Endowment Fund.

A PICTORIAL WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

A surprising number of photographs documenting the evolving appearance of both the interior and exterior of St. Mary's Church have been saved over the years. Shown below are some groupings featuring various aspects of the church, including

- The exterior of the building
- Views of the altar and sanctuary over the years
- The pine trees on our lawn. Their growth, in a way, reflects our growth as a parish.

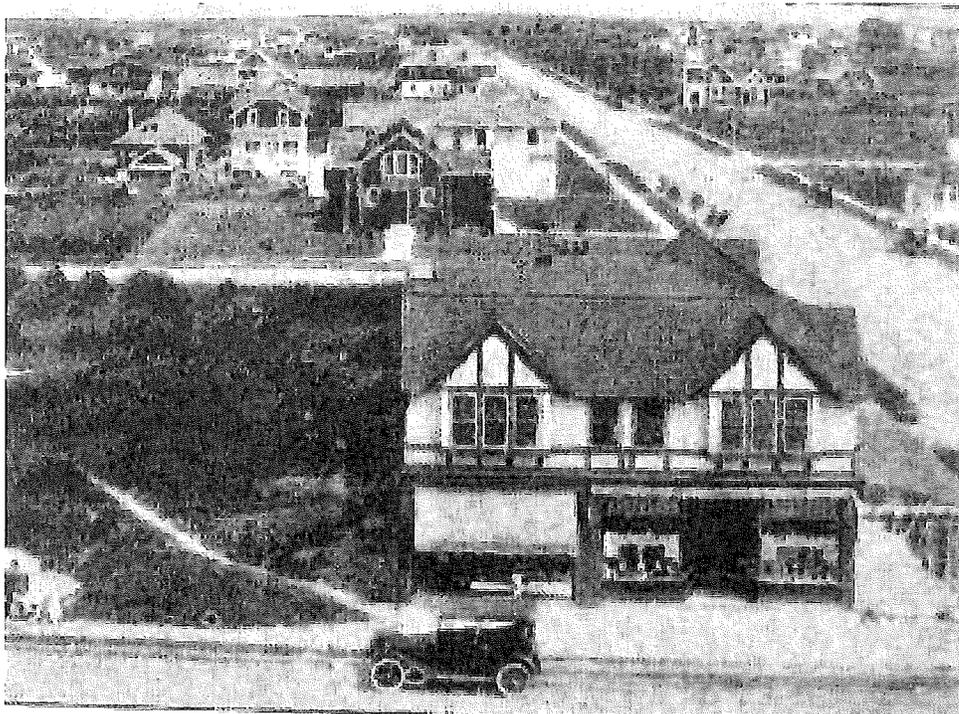
EXERIOR VIEWS OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH



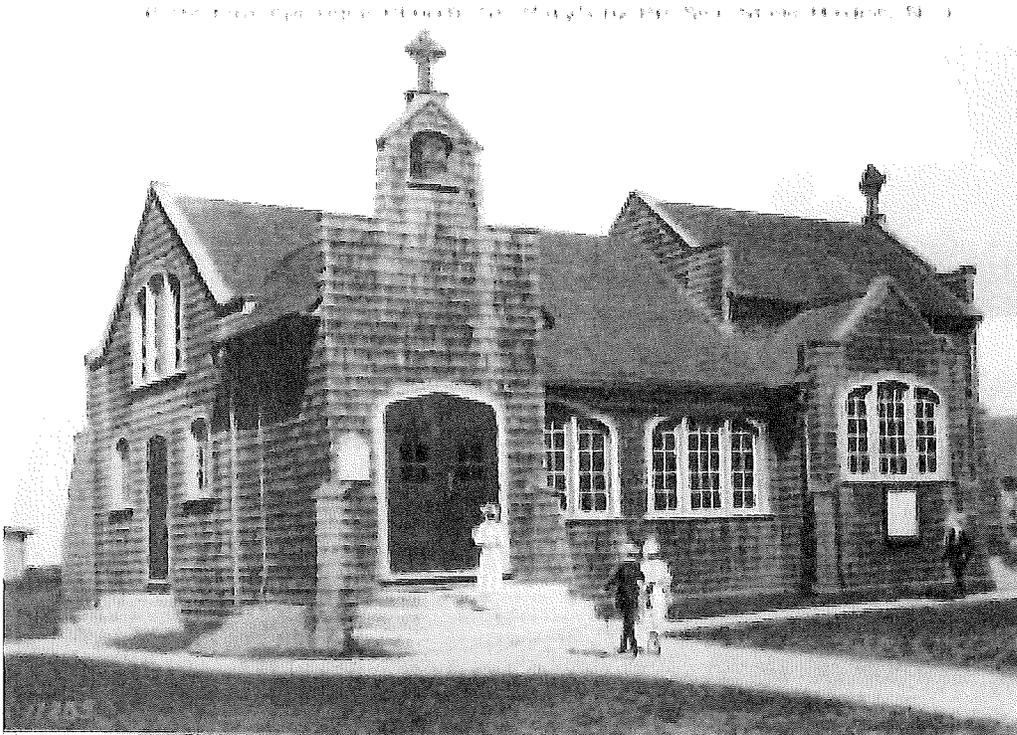
St. Mary's By-the-Sea, circa 1910. Note that construction appears to be incomplete: the cellar door is not framed out, trim above the windows on the right has not been added, and there is no sidewalk leading away from the front steps. Compare this to the next photo, also taken circa 1910.



Another View of St. Mary's By-the-Sea, also circa 1910



An aerial photograph showing shops on 96th Street, with St. Mary's Church one block back (without any rectory), circa 1920



An early postcard depicting St. Mary's - possibly circa 1940



Exterior - pre-1980's (note there is no rear narthex, added in 1985)

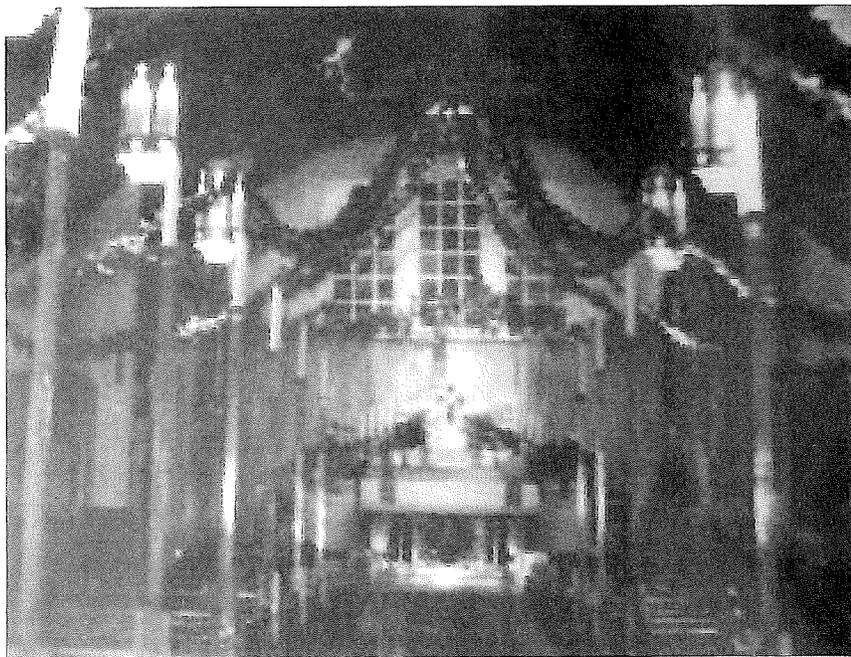
Note white doors on chapel and side narthex.

Also, windows contain amber glass.

THE ALTAR AND SANCTUARY



Altar, circa 1950. The parish hall was not yet built, so door on left led to the sacristy. Note hymn board is on right, and there appear to be 2 pulpits.



The Altar at Christmas, 1983. Hanging lights have been added.



A view down the aisle to the altar, 1962. This photograph was taken at the marriage of Pamela Lane (now Ritterhoff) to David Bond. The photographer was lying on the floor at the rear of the church in order to capture this image.

This was prior to the building of the rear narthex.

Note the cross hanging from the ceiling - this is now located in the chapel.



Altar, Easter 2003 (before organ restoration)



Altar, Christmas 2007 - after organ restoration

PARISH HALL - BEFORE AND AFTER



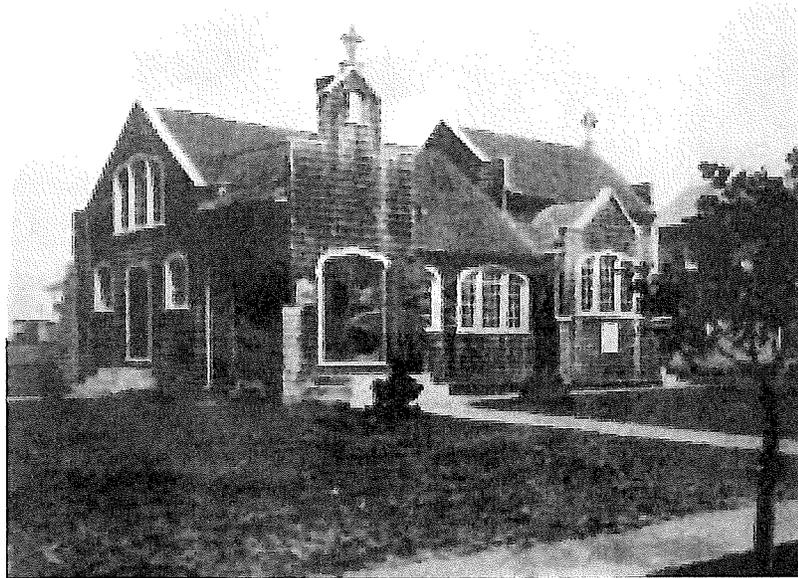
The parish hall and classrooms, prior to 1998 renovation.
Note hanging of Mary and Jesus on wall of classroom.
This has been beautifully restored and relocated on
the other side of the parish hall.



Renovated Parish Hall

THE PINE TREES OF ST. MARY'S

The two large pine trees that dominate the church lawn on Third Avenue have been a part of St. Mary's since approximately 1920. At a Trustees Meeting held on February 1, 1932, it was voted to remove the trees from in front of the church. However, action was never taken, and in 1956, it was moved by Trustee Mrs. Evans, that the 1932 motion be vacated. Either you love them or you hate them, depending on whether or not you have to rake up the pine cones and needles they drop on the lawn, but the trees have become symbolic of St. Mary's ability to grow, thrive, and survive the changes the years have brought.



Pine trees, circa 1920's - The trees appear to be about 3' tall in this view.



Trees, circa 1940. This was the postcard sent to Fr. John from Bisbee, Arizona (see Chapter Six)



The trees, present day, are used to hold our "Welcome!" banner during summer months. Compare this picture to that of the postcard pre-1980: note the red doors and stained glass windows; the trees appear to be approximately 10' taller.

Chapter Two

THE RECTORS OF ST. MARY'S

" ... You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

-- 1 Peter 2:5

In our 100-year tenure as a church, St. Mary's has had ten rectors, several of whom served on an interim basis while a full-time rector was being sought. From 1909 through 1952, our church was served during the summer by vacationing clergy. Each rector made unique and lasting contributions to St. Mary's. Let's take this opportunity to meet each and learn a bit more about them.

The Rev. E. Thomas Higgons Seminarian and Vicar

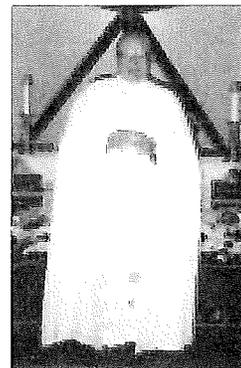


Fr. Higgons began his service to St. Mary's while still a seminarian; in 1954, Trustee Minutes make note of "Mr. Higgons [at this point, still a seminarian] gave his annual report." However, it was further noted that, "Now that St. Mary's is a year-around congregation, Seminarian E. Thomas Higgons will be made permanent rector upon his ordination in October 1955. He will be ordained as deacon in April '55, then priest." And thus, in 1955, St. Mary's was blessed with her first time "vicar," as Fr. Higgons stresses was his proper title, since St. Mary's was yet to be a full-fledged parish church, but was rather a mission-status church.

Diane Markle Hanley recalls that when Fr. Higgons became vicar, he ate many a meal at the table of her grandmother, Elizabeth LoBue. Fr. Higgons himself, in a recent phone conversation, chuckled and fondly recalled, "I had dinner every weekend with a different family."

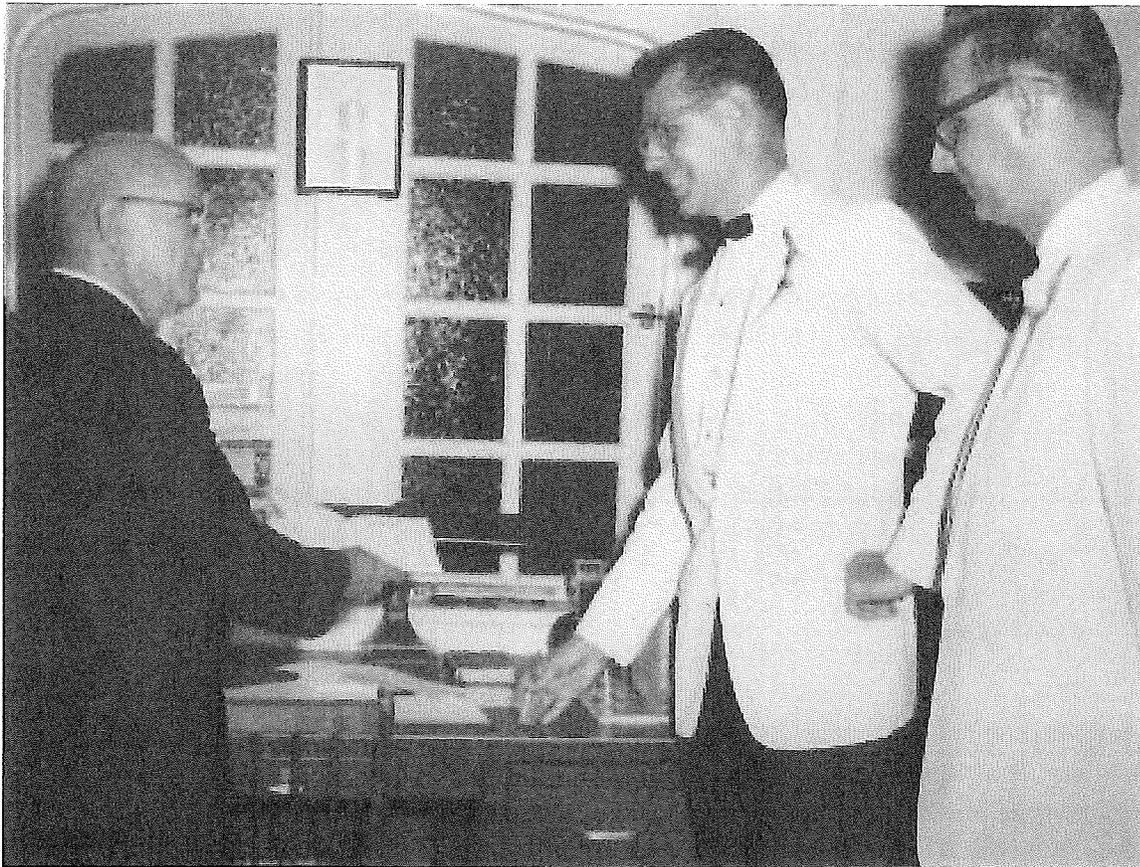
Pam Ritterhoff recalls those early days as well. "Fr. Higgons was very charismatic ... everyone was astonished to see how many people were flocking to St. Mary's!"

Fr. Higgons left St. Mary's in 1958. He explains, "It was time for someone to take my place, someone who could do more to grow the church. I accepted a call to another church in Bridgeton."



Rev. George Freifeld
1959 - 1964

Fr. George Freifeld became St. Mary's second rector when Fr. Higgons accepted a call to another church. Vestry Minutes from 1964 note, "Our first order of business is the matter of deciding whether or not we wish to seek parish status in the year ahead, or remain as a mission." He called for a general discussion, and the matter was put to written ballot. Ultimately, at the annual meeting on January 19, 1964, St. Mary's congregation voted unanimously to seek a change of status from mission to parish. However, prior to finalization of the process, Fr. Freifeld retired in June, 1964.



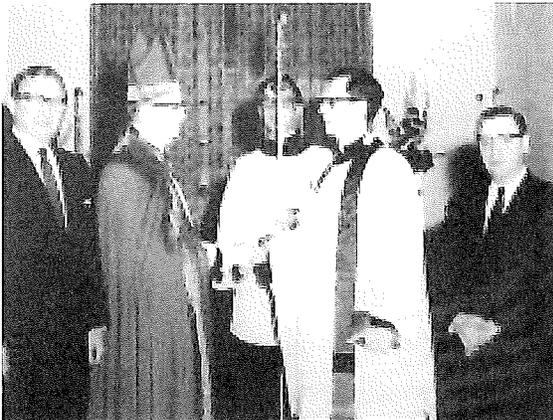
The Rev. George Freifeld, rector from 1959 to 1964, shown in the church office with David Bond on the day of his wedding to Pamela Lang (now Pamela Ritterhoff). Note the amber windows, which have since been replaced with beautiful stained glass.

The Rev. Edward S. Sykes
1964 - 1968

Rev. Edward Sykes came to St. Mary's from Collingswood, and became rector on June 1, 1964. During his tenure, St. Mary's completed the application process to become a full parish church, and a certificate of incorporation was filed with the Clerk of Cape May County on January 24, 1967.

Memories and vignettes about Fr. Sykes are in short supply, but a feel for his warmth and caring for the people of St. Mary's comes through clearly in his letter dated January 21, 1968, incorporated into the Annual Report. Keeping in mind that during 1967, St. Mary's finally achieved full parish status, after a lengthy process of application, he wrote:

"This truly has been one of the greatest years in our history, and the greatest thing about it is that the success is due to so many people working together for the glory of God."



Shown at the institution of the Rev. Edward Sykes as Rector of St. Mary's, left to right: Joe Betz, warden, The Rt. Rev. Alfred L. Banyard (Bishop of New Jersey), unknown acolyte, The Rev. Edward Sykes and Emil Bissig, Warden.

Parish member Marlene Casper, who received accolades in several Vestry reports for her work assisting in the parish office during the tenure of Fr. Sykes, remembers that he would drop off the information for the Sunday bulletin, so that she could prepare the mimeograph to run off copies. "He had a very big dog that always accompanied him," she recalls.

It was an unexpected surprise when Fr. Sykes advised the Wardens and Vestry, on May 21, 1968, that he had accepted a call to St. Matthew's Church in Pennington, NJ. He expressed his sadness to leave St. Mary's: "It has not been an easy decision to make, because considering St. Mary's as a church, there is no reason to want to leave. It is developing into a wonderful parish." His resignation became effective July 31, 1968.

The Rev. William St. John Frederick
1968 - 1973

With regard to Rev. William St. John Frederick, the fourth of St. Mary's rector's, no pictures remain from the time of his tenure. Unfortunately, Vestry Minutes and other records from Fr. Frederick's years as rector do not include much other information.

It is known that eight candidates were interviewed prior to the selection of "Fr. Frederick," as he was called. While rector at St. Mary's, he began the process to purchase a new pipe organ, including organization of a parish-wide fund raising drive. In 1971, when St. Mary's celebrated a patronal mass, an LP recording of music was commissioned, under the direction of Fr. Frederick. A copy of the LP is on display in the side narthex of the church.

Fr. Frederick tendered his resignation rather suddenly, according to Vestry Minutes, and left St. Mary's in 1973.

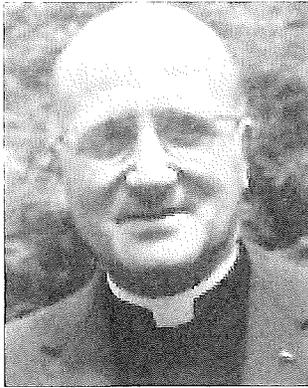
The Rev. William Guerrazzi
1973 - 1974

Though an interim rector, The Rev. William Guerrazzi was no stranger to St. Mary's. A former counselor at the Calvary House, a summer choir cottage described in another chapter of this history, he went on later in life to become an Episcopal priest. Along with his wife, Amelia, who is a cousin to parish member Ralph Dantuono, he served during a period of discernment as the search was underway for a new, full-time rector.

As is the practice for interim rectors, Fr. Guerrazzi was already retired when he came to St. Mary's. He became a priest later in life, after a career as a civil engineer in Pennsylvania. While a member of Christ Church, Germantown, he first became a reader, then a deacon, then entered seminary and became a priest.

In a letter to the Vestry in 1973, Fr. Guerrazzi outlined his plans for his time at St. Mary's: "... to restore morning prayer ..." How such changes were received by the parish is unknown, but it is accepted practice in the Episcopal faith that, during an interim rector's tenure, many such changes may be made. It is a period of waiting, a period of preparation for the installation of a new, full-time rector.

Certainly, the return to St. Mary's by both Fr. Guerrazzi and his wife, Amelia, must have been a joyful one. Amelia became a beloved and involved member of the parish, including serving as Altar Guild Mistress for many years.



Rev. William Guerrazzi



William Guerrazzi and Amelia Gentile
at their 1931 wedding.

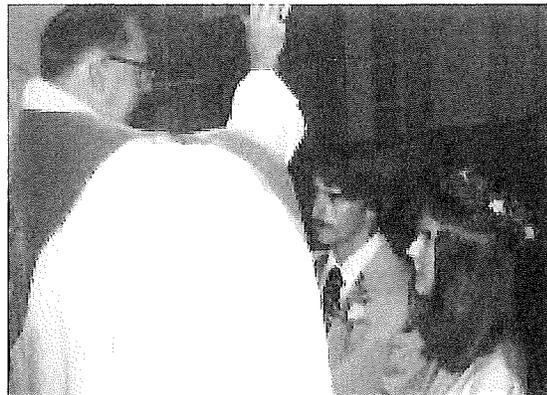
The Rev. Ronald A. Norton
1974 - 1978

Following the resignation of Rev. William St. John Frederick, the Rev. Ronald A. Norton was unanimously accepted by vote of the Vestry on January 6, 1974. It was noted that "Fr. Norton will conduct 'low to middle' services." During his tenure as rector, Fr. Norton attended a 12-day conference at an ecumenical institute in Spain. In an article published in the Atlantic City Press around that time, headlined "Brown-Shingled Church Oldest in S. Harbor," Fr. Norton said:

"The theme was Christian Faith in a Time of Change. It actually did change my views on some things, and I made quite a few friends."

Parish member Janet Kowalski recalls her marriage to Thomas Ciccarone on October 25, 1975, at which Fr. Norton officiated.

"I recall that there weren't any stained glass windows yet in the church, and only one door leading in from the rear narthex. Fr. Norton, in keeping with old traditions, would not allow us to take pictures during the wedding ceremony, and we couldn't play the traditional 'Here Comes the Bride' processional. Still, it was a lovely wedding, in spite of the fact that all the pictures were posed afterwards."



In a December, 1974, newspaper clipping, it was announced by Fr. Norton that during the Yuletide season, the parish would usher in the season by "singing carols to the sick

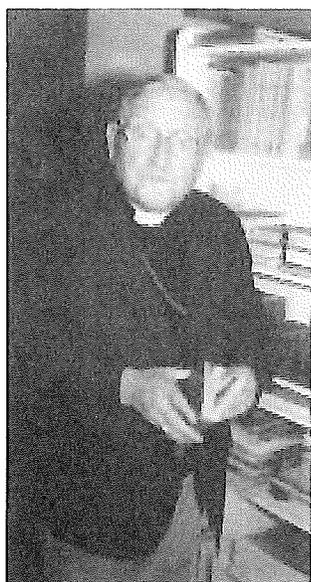
and shut-in." Among those participating were Suzette Collett, Robert Ritterhoff, Leonard Collett, Derek Bond, Scott Bond, and Lisa Bond, under the direction of church school superintendents Mrs. John Battendieri and Charles Collette.

In spite of increased attendance and rising pledge units, Fr. Norton resigned as St. Mary's rector effective December 15, 1978.

The Rev. Canon J. Perry Cox 1979 - 1980

The Rev. Canon J. Perry Cox served as interim rector for approximately one year. Though his time at St. Mary's was short, he is fondly remembered by many, including Bev Waldron, whose family welcomed Canon Cox to dinner in their home on numerous occasions. "It was a pleasure to have him," she recalls, "as he always made himself at home and was such an amusing guest."

It was during this period of time, it may be recalled, that a number of people were taken hostage in Iran, and the President issued a proclamation asking that churches ring their bells each day at noon. An article printed in the Gazette Leader noted:



"If you are ever in the vicinity of St. Mary's Episcopal Church at noon, you will hear the bell in the steeple peal 50 times. ... St. Mary's is honoring a request from the President of the United States for churches across the nation to toll their bells in remembrance of the hostages in Iran."

It was a close call on one such occasion, as the cable holding the bell broke and the bell crashed to the ground. There was quite a scramble by men of the parish to repair it in time for the noon tolling.

The article also included a piece of little-known history about the bell at St. Mary's: The 300-pound bell was made at Meneely's in West Troy, New York, in 1856. It then was used by the Lehigh Valley Railroad in Wilkes Barre, Pa., prior to taking up residence in St. Mary's bell tower.

Rev. Canon Cox's patriotism is also noted in Vestry minutes, which, early in 1979, stated, "Canon Cox made several suggestions to improve worship services, including the singing of a patriotic song following the processional." Whether this suggestion was acted upon is not known.

The Rev. Wesley H. Martin
1980 - 1996

To date, Fr. Wesley Martin remained at St. Mary's longer than any previous rector. It appears from a review of the Vestry Minutes during the time interim rector Rev. Canon Cox served that there was a search process underway, which represents the first time such a formal search was conducted. Prior to Fr. Martin, the Diocese submitted a list to the parish of prospective candidates, and a rector was chosen from among those names.

Ultimately, in October, 1979, the Search Committee reported to the Vestry that they had paid a second visit to interview and rate Rev. Wesley Martin of Belmar. A letter dated January 11, 1980 from Bishop Albert W. Van Duzer to St. Mary's Vestry confirms the appointment of Fr. Martin as the new rector of St. Mary's.



Rev. Wesley F. Martin and wife, Ginny

Many improvements were made to the church during the 16 years when Fr. Martin was rector, not the least of which are the beautiful stained glass windows. Fr. Martin brought the Archbishop of Canterbury to St. Mary's to dedicate the windows.

Other improvements included the installation of air conditioning in the church and kitchen, and a number of other repairs to both the church and the rectory.

Parish member Stan Casper recounts the first Sunday that Fr. Martin held worship services at St. Mary's:

"After Fr. Martin's first 8 am Sunday service, he was worried as his cat was at the top of one of the tall pine trees in front of the church, and the cat wouldn't come down for him. I volunteered to go home, change, and return with my tallest ladder. I climbed to the top of the ladder, then through the tree branches to the top to reach kitty. I grabbed him and he wrapped all four paws around my arm. I worked my way down one-handed with the cat clawing me all the way.

"When I reached the ground, I handed kitty to Fr. Martin. Kitty immediately jumped from him and ran back up to the tree top. Fr. Martin said, 'What can we do, Stanley?' to which I replied, 'Don't worry, he'll come down when he's hungry.' I took my ladder and went home."

Janet Kowalski, a member of the parish since the early 1970's, recalls that it was Fr. Martin's kindness that prompted her to become a member of St. Mary's.

"I was going through an extremely difficult time. One day on my lunch break, I came to the church just to sit quietly for a few minutes. Fr. Martin came in and saw me sitting there, and sat down and talked to me a bit. He was so caring and encouraging. I've since come to learn that this was unusual, as generally he tended to keep more to himself. A few weeks later, he even called me at home to see how I was doing. That meant a lot to me."

In the early 1980's, while Fr. Martin was rector, he instituted a Long Range Planning Committee. Many of these proposals were instituted, though it took until 2002 before St. Mary's had a columbarium. Fr. Martin also began the practice of having greeters welcome newcomers to St. Mary's.

Many people recall that, during Lent, it was Fr. Martin's practice to place a "Question Box" in the rear of the church; his Lenten sermons were then based on the questions that people posed. He also frequently drew on his familiarity with church history for his sermon topics.

Fr. Martin retired in 1996. He died suddenly on January 27, 1999.

Rev. A. D. Weisner

1996 - 1997



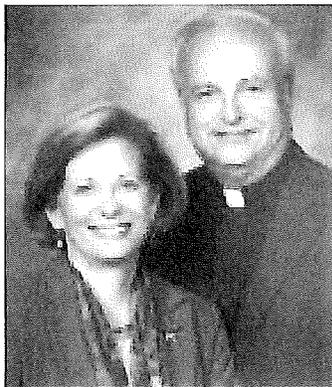
"Fr. Don," as he preferred to be called, served as interim rector during the period between the retirement of Fr. Martin and the search process which culminated in the call of Fr. John Sosnowski in 1997. Along with his wife, Judy, Fr. Don enthusiastically embraced his time at St. Mary's, frequently entertaining groups of parishioners with dinners at the rectory.

While serving as interim rector, Fr. Don started the church newsletter, which consisted of a one page document, front and back. When he left St. Mary's, Janet Kowalski became editor of *The Messenger*, which eventually grew into a 10-12 page publication. After 8 years, she turned the reins over to parish Administrative Assistant Julie Taylor, and *The Messenger* is still going strong. The December 2009 edition launched a new era: e-mail distribution!

With a full understanding of the needs of a parish during an interim period, he kept things on an even keel during the 18 months it took for the Search Committee to conduct a parish-wide survey, assess the needs of St. Mary's going into the future, and carefully interviewing and meeting with rector candidates. When a new rector was ultimately chosen, it was with regret that Fr. Don and Judy said goodbye to St. Mary's.

Rev. John W. Sosnowski

1997 - Present



Prior to retiring, Fr. Martin appointed a Search Committee to begin the process of finding a new rector for St. Mary's Church. Based on church records, it appears that this was one of the first times that such a comprehensive search was conducted over a significant period of time, with close adherence to guidelines set forth by the Diocese. Under the chairmanship of Janet Kowalski, the committee consisted of Janet and Dave Kowalski, John and Joan Langston, Bob and Ruth Emberger, Frank Adkins, Gerry Montaigne, and Mark and Debbie Perka. The work included an in-depth survey of the parish to determine what members were seeking as the church moved forward with a new rector. Once completed, the results were correlated with recommended candidates from the Diocese, and members of the Search Committee traveled to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Wallingford, Connecticut, and other locations to

hear selected candidates preach. Ultimately, the search was narrowed to four candidates, and of those four, Rev. John W. Sosnowski was recommended to the Vestry as the best match for St. Mary's.

"Fr. John," as he is referred to with great affection, was born and raised in Torrington, Connecticut. He attended St. Mary's Seminary and University, Baltimore, Maryland, and received a Masters in Divinity degree in 1979. He was ordained as a Roman priest in 1980 and served in the Roman ministry for eight years, primarily in New Britain, Connecticut.

He continued his education and received a Masters in family therapy from Southern Connecticut State University, 1987. In 1989, he married Cynthia Barrall. After working for a number of years in the field of family therapy, Fr. John's Holy Orders were accepted in the Episcopal Church, Diocese of Connecticut on June 10, 1995, and he did supply work in that diocese for several years, primarily at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Wallingford, Connecticut. Members of the Search Committee visited Fr. John and his wife, Cynthia, in their Wallingford home, and attended services at St. Paul's to hear Fr. John preside over a worship service.

When reflecting on his call to become rector at St. Mary's, Fr. John says:

"When I responded to the call to come to St. Mary's in 1997, I was very excited about the direction of the church based on information in the parish profile. It was clear to me this was a church that wanted to grow, wanted to be known in the community, and was ready for a change. There were some things in place when I came that were indicative of the direction in which St. Mary's desired to go. There were also some real strengths here upon which to build, including a commitment to church school, good solid worship and a core group of people who were deeply committed to St. Mary's and its future."

He is quick to stress that credit for the numerous programs and improvements to the parish have been accomplished only through the joint efforts of many, including his wife, Cynthia, and countless members of the parish. However, he cites most particularly that it is worship that underlies all we do at St. Mary's:

"Worship is essential to our life as church. We gather faithfully every week to celebrate God's goodness, to hear God's Word, to sing God's praise. A variety of ministries support that worship -- readers, Eucharistic ministers, acolytes, a dedicated choir blessed over the years by talented leadership, ushers, greeters, altar guild ... Our worship gives meaning to everything else we do."

Of the future of St. Mary's, Fr. John is excited and optimistic.

"I guess I see us as a church that has emerged from a foundation that was laid from its beginnings. Things just seemed to come together and we have been able to build on the foundation to become more than anyone could have imagined back in our days as a summer chapel. But it was the people, those who loved our church and their God, who contributed so much of themselves, who have brought us to where we are today."

Assistant to the Rector
Rev. Debra K. Bullock
2007 to Present

Around 2007, a number of changes began to take place at St. Mary's. As the parish grew, it became a long-sought-after dream to hire an Assistant to the rector; given budgetary restrictions, a full-time assistant was not feasible. With a bit of creative thinking, we sought out another church that was looking for a part-time Vicar, St. Barnabas in Villas, and began to explore the possibility of hiring a priest together, thus creating a full-time position. We entered into a partnership and after an extensive search process, welcomed the Rev. Debra Bullock as Assistant to the Rector at St. Mary's and Vicar of St. Barnabas Church.

"Pastor Debra" came to Cape May County from Chicago. She brought with her a background in congregational development and church growth. Under her direction, we saw the founding of *The Branches*, our outreach center for our partnership with St. Barnabas located in Rio Grande adjacent to *St. Mary's This N' That Thrift Shop*, "where all are welcome!" There we hold shared activities for both churches, and *The Branches* has turned into so much more. People gather for noonday prayer every Wednesday, a Wednesday hot lunch served in winter months, or just for coffee and conversation on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10AM to 12noon. *Second Sundays*, our contemporary worship Service, is for many their "church." The third Sunday features a movie night. And on the fourth Sunday "Open Mike / Talent" night provides an opportunity for community members to share their talents. *The Branches* has provided a venue for other community groups to meet and where holiday food baskets are prepared for distribution. Pastor Debra's vision has accomplished what we set out to do, namely to make the Episcopal Church in Cape May County more visible and involved in the lives of its people. Two congregations, one from the bay and one from the ocean, meet in the middle to work together for the growth of God's Kingdom!

As of the writing of this history, the vestries of both churches continue to evaluate and assess the partnership and the goals for the churches' involvement. To date, so much has been gained from the partnership, especially in awakening within both congregations an awareness of the needs in our County and how we, as church, can bring Christ's love and presence in real and effective ways. Under Pastor Debra's

leadership, we continue to strive to create connections between our outreach ministry at *The Branches* and the Episcopal Church, specifically the congregations of St. Mary's and St. Barnabas, to foster the growth of both of these churches into the future.

Deacon Susan Cushinotto

St. Mary's added to its ranks of clergy in 2009 by selecting The Rev. Susan Cushinotto to serve as Deacon at our church. Susan was ordained Deacon May 16, 2009 at Trinity Cathedral in Trenton. She was a parishioner at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Ocean City prior to her ordination, where she was active in various aspects of that church's life. In keeping with our Bishop's policy, she was not able to return there to exercise her ministry as Deacon and, after her own personal discernment, was appointed to St. Mary's by Bishop Cancell. Sue is employed full time at Cape May County Social Services and she has a passion for issues facing the poor and homeless in our County. Deacons are called to exercise their servant ministry in the community and to remind us, as church, of our responsibility to be servants of one another. Her arrival and her goals for her ministry meshed well with our increased outreach and involvement in the county through The Mustard Seed and our Thrift Shop and *The Branches*. Deacon Sue serves as our liaison to *South Jersey Hope*, a collaboration of churches that addresses justice concerns in our community. She is working on organizing a coalition to address homelessness in our county, functions in her role as deacon every Sunday and preaches about every six weeks. Her diaconal ministry is another first for St. Mary's and a welcome addition as we grow our ministry in the county.

Assisting Clergy Rev. Ronald Lockhart

It would be remiss if the chronology of clergy who serve at St. Mary's did not include the Rev. Ronald Lockhart, who while not an "official" rector, has served in a significant way since he became a member of St. Mary's parish. Upon his retirement, Fr. Ron moved from Pennsylvania with his wife, Sandra, and has been an incredible support to Fr. John, who notes:

"Fr. Ron has served as Assisting Clergy and has been available to cover when I am away. But beyond that, his presence here, his support of me in my ministry and his loving care for our church cannot be summarized in words adequate to describe it. He and Sandra are a part of the fabric of our church community, have contributed much and have been a blessing to many."

It goes without saying that St. Mary's has been abundantly blessed throughout the years with dedicated clergy who have helped our church not only survive, but grow and thrive, enriching the hearts and souls of all who have worshipped here.

Chapter Three

The Stained Glass Windows Of St. Mary's Church

"He says, 'I will build myself a great palace
with spacious upper rooms.'
So he makes large windows in it,
panels it with cedar and decorates it in red."
-- *Jeremiah 22:14*

The beauty and charm of St. Mary's Church derives, in no small part, from the stained glass windows lining either side of the nave, and also found in the side and rear narthexes, the Chapel, and office areas.

Prior to the creation and installation of the stained glass, the windows contained a dark amber glass. Conjecture was made that the reason amber glass was chosen, as opposed to plain or stained glass, was that possibly amber glass was less costly and a good alternative to stained glass, especially in a parish that only was open during the summer. This may be true, as evidenced by a notation in the breakdown of Church expenses dated December 31, 1935: "Amber Cathedral Glass - \$6.17." For a number of years after the stained glass windows were installed, the panes of amber glass were stored in the attic of the church. Regrettably, when the attic was cleaned several years ago, the glass was thrown away. That \$6.17 was well spent, though!

According to one version of how and when stained glass windows came to St. Mary's, during the tenure of Rev. Wesley Martin, it was customary to place a "Lenten Question Box" in the church, and Fr. Martin would base his Lenten sermons on the questions posed. Someone asked, "Why don't we have any stained glass windows at St. Mary's?" Perhaps that question was the impetus to open the dialogue; however, Bob Emberger, a Vestry member around this time, recalls that at a vestry meeting, the problem of rotting windows was discussed. One thing led to another, and after much discussion -- says Bob, "You know Episcopalians are hesitant about change ..." -- the first window was purchased by the E.C.W., with Jane Ford as president.

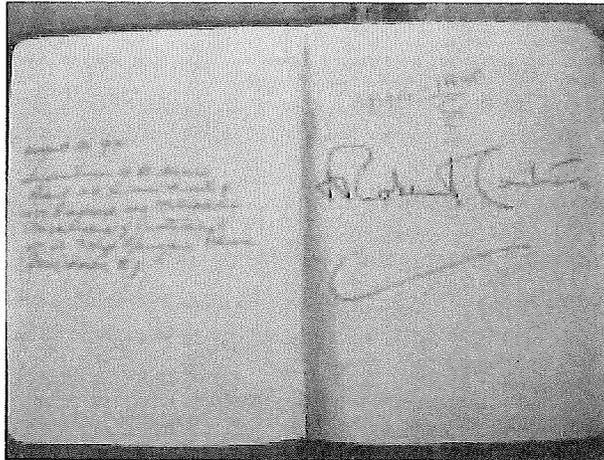
The windows were designed and executed by Albert F. Felberg of Manahawkin, New Jersey. As far as possible, Mr. Felberg used themes of sea and water in the creation of the windows, a reflection of the earlier name of our church, St. Mary's By-the-Sea. When the day came to dedicate the windows, Mr. Felberg was invited. He stated to a parishioner, "This is the only time I've ever been invited to attend the dedication of any of my windows," reinforcing our reputation as a truly welcoming parish.

The formal dedication of the windows took place on August 26, 1990. The Most Rev. Robert A.K. Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, officiated, and was so moved by the beauty of the other windows that he donated two round panels in the rear narthex doors, which represent the Canterbury Pilgrims of Chaucer's tale.

A number of parish members have amusing recollections of the day the windows were dedicated. After the dedication and worship service, Archbishop Runcie, along with his wife, Lady Runcie, were invited to join in a festive coffee hour. Bob Emberger tells the following story: "John Basford, the president of our Men's Club, asked the Archbishop if he would like to become a member of our Association. He said he would be delighted. John gave him one of our baseball hats, which the Archbishop immediately put on. John then told him he was now an official member of St. Mary's Men's Club, and as a member, we would call him when we next painted the church! The Archbishop was very amused and said if he was available, he would help."

Bev Waldron, another parish member, recalls that Lady Runcie, "with a very loud whistle, which sent the Archbishop's eyes heavenward, announced to all present that she was selling souvenirs of Lambeth Castle to help finance a restoration of the Castle gardens." Bob and Ruth Emberger still retain and display a beautiful Wedgwood plate on which Lambeth Castle is depicted.

One of Agnes Moore's treasured possessions is a prayer book signed by the Archbishop on the occasion of the dedication of the windows. She inscribed the opposing page, "August 16, 1990. Signature of Rt. Honorable Robert A.K. Runcie, Primate of All England and Metropolitan (Archbishop of Canterbury) at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Stone Harbor, NJ."



A comprehensive description of each of the windows found in the Church proper can be found in a brochure prepared in 1991, shortly after the formal dedication of the windows. However, there are two windows found in the rector's office that are not included, but which each have an interesting story behind them.



On the wall facing 95th Street, a lovely window depicts St. Barbara holding twin infants. At her feet is a dachshund, as well as a number of seashells. On either side of the triptych are scenes including a lighthouse, a heron and other sea birds, and more shells. This theme for the window was chosen by its donor in loving memory of E. Barbara Veitch, who was the proud grandparent of twins, and who had a fondness for dachshunds, as well the seashore.

On the side office window is a triptych depicting St. Francis, accompanied by a variety of animals and birds. Donated by the Casper family in loving memory of their grandchildren, it makes the rector's office a spot most conducive to penning memorable sermons and handling other day-to-day business of the parish.



Whether attending services or passing by on an evening stroll, the stained glass windows are a stunning feature of St. Mary's. They are an intrinsic part of our worship tradition, adding a sense of serenity and peace to "St. Mary's By-the-Sea."

Chapter Four

BEYOND WORSHIP

"For ... they voluntarily gave according to their means,
and even beyond their means ..."
-- 2 Corinthians 8:3

Even as the physical structure of St. Mary's Church has grown and endured these past 100 years, without the support of the faithful, little would have been accomplished save the erection of a building; the spirit that imbues our parish with its soul sprang from the heart of those who worship here. Time and time again, when a need arose, it was filled by generous individuals and groups like the Women's Guild -- now known as the E.C.W. -- the Altar Guild, Men's Club, choir, and various finance-related committees. Outreach -- giving even beyond the boundaries of our parish -- is a long-established practice.

It has to be stressed that each and every contribution, whether large or small, is irrevocably intertwined to create the St. Mary's we know as our spiritual home. No part can or should be separated; rather, we are grateful for this family of faith who has, over time, given according to their means ... even beyond their means.

The primary reason behind the success and longevity of our parish has been the generosity and financial support of our members. As life became more complex, though, it would take more than donations to assure the successful financial future of St. Mary's.

SECURING THE FUTURE

During the mid-1990's, the Vestry, under the leadership of Senior Warden Lee Arning, had begun to "think bigger" about St. Mary's. Lee saw that this church had tremendous potential and he brought his expertise from Wall Street along with his big heart to set St. Mary's on a new course. Lee wanted St. Mary's self-sufficient, not dependent on the E.C.W. to "keep the lights on" and so his focus was stewardship and his relentless efforts transformed St. Mary's into a church that became secure financially. Under his leadership, we developed an investment policy for the church and began to build our endowment that he believed would be crucial for St. Mary's long term stability. He would be proud to know that prior to the current recession, our net assets approached \$1 million and that we were working carefully, even in the midst of a rocky economy, to preserve our assets for the future.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

In addition to creating a sound financial plan, in 2008 a group of parishioners under the direction of the Vestry did an extensive study and proposed a long range plan for the future of St. Mary's. The work of this committee was invaluable in providing us with demographic information, examining the state of our church, reflecting on our strengths and looking to the future. Their work will guide our Vestry for at least the next five years of our lives together. An adjunct to this Long Range Plan includes the formation of our Morning Star Legacy Society, a way for our parishioners to provide a planned gift to St. Mary's. Our Senior Warden Bill Haines has been a strong proponent for this planned giving program as his commitment to stewardship has been exemplary. Like Lee Arning, whose leadership a decade earlier secured our financial position, we believe that Bill Haines' leadership in this aspect of our stewardship will secure our future into the next century of our spiritual journey as the Church of St. Mary's in Stone Harbor, NJ.

OUTREACH

Due to amazing stewardship, the support of generous and faithful parishioners, our church budget has grown tremendously. As it grew, our Vestry saw a need to begin to take our money and use it for outreach. Our outreach budget began to grow - \$1,000 to \$5,000 to \$10,000, eventually to \$25,000. Our Outreach Committee dispensed that money to local, national and international needs. It was wonderful to be able to share our resources with those in need and be a presence in the community through our giving. Projects throughout the year -- our holiday food baskets, our Church School's "Souper Bowl" Sunday collection, and a variety of other activities -- all are concrete ways to help feed the poor and provide relief to those in distress. Parishioners became involved in volunteering at places like Volunteers in Medicine, a free clinic for the uninsured in the county, whose founding board included our Rector, Fr. John. We have become a church that is looking out and sharing God's love in real and wonderful ways.

WOMEN'S GUILD -- Episcopal Church Women (E.C.W.)

As early as July, 1929, Trustee Reports note that of an annual budget requirement of \$570, "\$500 from the Guild was donated toward rector debt."

Consistently over the history of St. Mary's, the Guild/E.C.W. spent considerable time and effort to assure that the needs of the church were met; whether in terms of paying down debt, keeping the heat and lights on, or furnishing the rectory, the Guild was always ready to lend a hand. Like our current-day E.C.W., funds were raised in a variety of ways, including sale of crafts, social galas, and other annual events. In combing through early reports, a budget breakdown from the Women's Guild in 1930 makes for

interesting reading, giving detailed information about fund-raising events, and where this hard-earned money was spent.

Once the finances of the church stabilized, it was no longer necessary for the E.C.W. to help by paying utility and other bills. At that point, they developed a new mission and committed themselves to increased outreach, raising money to meet several local and international needs.

Report of St. Mary's Guild from
Jan 1st 1930 to Jan 1st 1931

Balance Jan 1 st 1930 -		8.14
Admitted		1.66
Dues		23.00
Card parties		92.00
Reveries		100.82
Musicals		88.30
Prayer Day Supper		92.77
Prize Festival & Sale		120.30
Contributions		8.25
		<u>\$ 531.26</u>
<hr/>		
Expenses		
Christmas Party & Luncheon	12.13	
Yacht Club	5.00	
Prize for Party Supper	2.50	
Club dues & wood for heating	8.25	
	<u>27.88</u>	
Transferred to Building Fund -		
Change Rev. A. Hudson	475.00	
	<u>502.88</u>	
		<u>\$ 28.38</u>
Balance Jan 1 st 1931		28.38

Women's Guild Budget for 1930

Men's Club

Though not mentioned per se in the early annals of the parish records, clearly men of the church were always active in their support. Mr. O.H. Ferree is mentioned many times in a capacity that may have been as Sexton. He oversaw the coordination of many of the early building projects, painting, varnishing, replacement of windows frames, installation of the early amber glass, and a variety of other projects in and around the church.

Male trustees were frequently called upon to find imaginative ways to meet the needs of the church without putting more strain on the already stretched-thin budget: Note is made of enlisting boys from local summer choir cottages to assist with the mowing of the lawn.

Though little actual mention of a "Men's Club", per se, exists in early records, a comment made circa 1963 by Fr. Freifeld bemoans the fact that "There are no reports from the E.C.W. or the Episcopal Young Churchmen, as these organizations ceased to function during the year -- primarily for lack of leadership." Fr. Freifeld went on to express his fervent hope that there would be volunteers who would willingly assume responsibility and revitalize these groups in the year to come.

Without doubt, men of the parish continued to assist and contribute in various ways to support the church, but it was not until the mid-1980's, under the strong hand of Mr. John Basford, that the Men's Club began to re-emerge. Those who remember John recall him with great affection; his accomplishments included resurrection of Parish-wide suppers ... and everyone knows how we Episcopalians love to eat! To this day, the Men's Club is renowned for their bi-annual dinners, and in recent years, the annual Seafood Fest has become a fabulous addition, under the guidance of Men's Club President Dave Kowalski.

Here are a few pictorial glimpses of St. Mary's Men's Club in action:



In a lighthearted moment, shown from left to right are either Ed Yeager or Gene Fisher, Fred Haarde, Ken Werner, Jim Owings and Wiley Christie. Seen peering through the kitchen window opening is Men's Club President John Basford.

Men's Club President Dave Kowalski displays a small, pig-shaped cutting board, of unknown origin, that has faithfully been a staple in St. Mary's kitchen for countless sessions of slicing, dicing and chopping for various Coffee Hours, Men's Club suppers, and Luncheons on the Lawn. Behind Dave in the kitchen is Nancy Runzer, former E.C.W. president.



Altar Guild

Over the years, untold changes and improvements have been made to St. Mary's, but from the beginning, an active Altar Guild was behind the scenes, assuring that worship practices were observed reverently. An early Trustee motion in 1922 notes the expense of "\$1.36 for wafer bread." Early years saw some creative ways to furnish the altar with needed equipment, including donations from other churches, including St. John's in Avalon, who in 1918 donated a "litany desk, also a surplice."

In 1963, it was noted in Vestry Minutes that "Mrs. Howard Pleasants [known later as Nancy Ritchie, following her remarriage after the death of her first husband] thanked a group of dedicated seamstresses who manufactured the new altar frontal, and made donations of a credence table, altar book and sanctus bell."

Mrs. Irene McCullough, who has served faithfully for decades as St. Mary's Altar Guild mistress, recalls that when she joined the parish, she was welcomed by Amelia Guerrazzi, wife of one of St. Mary's interim rectors, William Guerrazzi. Friendly and outgoing, Amelia, in her straightforward manner, offered Irene a choice: you can join the choir or the altar guild ... "Since I can't carry a tune in a bucket," chuckles Irene, "I joined the Altar Guild!"

Mrs. Alma Squassoni, a parishioner who has moved away in recent years, shared a memory of the era when altar hangings were stored in the church office, in a large box built by Bob Whitelaw. Affectionately referred to as "the coffin," should one of the hangings slip off the rod into the bottom of the box, the Altar Guild member would be forced to fish it out with a coat hanger. Those days passed away with renovation of the church offices and a simpler hanging system designed by Dave Kowalski.

Maintaining and preparing the altar can present its challenges. Josee Rich can attest how grateful she was when, in March, 1979, parish member Nancie Ritchie responded to the

need for a new ladder to be used in draping the cross and lighting of the vigil light. Josee explained:

"I remember Easter seasons ... I sewed the drapes for the crosses, and was the one who had to climb up on the altar to change the hangings from purple to white to black ... I did that for years ... always praying and thinking of the day I might be married in my church ... wondering was standing on the altar okay with HIM??? Well, it must have been, because in 1969 I was married standing in front of that altar and Bob and I are still blessed and will celebrate 40 years of marriage in December [2009] ... "

Thanks to the effort of countless women, worship at St. Mary's has been and will continue to be a reverent, beautiful experience.

Music and Choir

For you make me glad by your deeds, O Lord;
I sing for joy at the works of your hands.

-- *Psalm 92:4*

St. Mary's organ is one of the most distinguishing features of the church. The current organ, fully and lovingly restored in recent years, is the third to be a part of our worship. Our first organ was donated in 1912 by Grace Church of Philadelphia. In 1951, at the cost of \$1,895, a Wurlitzer electric organ was purchased. This was followed in 1971 with a Moller pipe organ, and it is this glorious instrument that currently provides music for worship on Sundays.

From its inception as a parish, there has been a choir in some form or another at St. Mary's. As early as August, 1945, discussions ensued between the Music Committee of the church and "Rev. Hauser," possibly a Trustee, to meet with Mr. Charles R. Wilson "concerning a summer choir and organist." It was decided to incorporate the choirs from Calvary Seaside House as well as the St. Mary's (Ardmore) Choir House to supplement our own St. Mary's Choir.

In 1955, while Fr. Higgons was our first vicar, Miss Lucy Swanson was director of the choir. In 1961, Mrs. Lucy Kramer (presumably the former Miss Swanson) remained director of the choir. Accordingly to Vestry Minutes from that period, she "bemoaned that the Senior Choir lacked voices and needed help in this area."

Josee Rich recalls Mrs. Kramer from days when Josee sang in the Junior Choir during the 1950's. She says:

"A great Junior Choir was created in our church in the late 50's and continued for many years ... I was in it and we practiced one night a week

and sang and sat with the adult choir every Sunday. The organist was a woman named Lucy Kramer. She was a large woman who wore silver bracelets on her right hand. She used that hand to direct us in song and they chimed to the music."

Josee also recalls that, in a pre-air-conditioning era, "I remember all of us girls in the junior choir fainting in the heat in the summer time ... we thought it was funny ..."!

Bev Waldron, a long-time member of the choir, remembers the days when Carol Leighton directed the choir. During the holiday season, it became traditional for the choir to visit local nursing homes, the hospital, and shut-ins of the parish. "Very often, we were invited into parishioners' homes for cookies, cheese and crackers and other treats. It was an enjoyable time."

In more recent years, she remembers a choir holiday get-together at the home of Betty Papastavros in Avalon:

"The choir had a New Year's Eve party. At midnight, we all played 'Auld Lang Syne' on penny whistles, each of us playing a different note. It was so successful that we went on the road and serenaded Fr. Ron with 'Happy Birthday.' That wasn't quite as successful, so we decided to stick to singing in future."

Given the fond memories of fellowship and fun, it's no wonder the choir continues to thrive and grow. We've been blessed with many excellent choir leaders, including Carol Leighton, Nancy Roberts, Chris Rio, and our current directress, JoAnne Blackwelder. In addition to worship, a number of performances and chorales have been held, with more planned during our Centennial year.

PRAYER GROUP

In approximately 1996, just prior to the arrival of Fr. John as our Rector, a Prayer Group was formed at the urging of parish member Agnes Moore. This dedicated group of women (though men, of course, are always welcome!) meets weekly and prays faithfully for needs within our church and for people who have requested our prayers. They remind us that we need to be a community that prays always and their prayerful support has enriched our life together in ways that we cannot measure.

NEW MEMBER MINISTRIES

The New Member Ministries Team, under the early direction of Joe and Helen Spence, was seeking to make St. Mary's a more welcoming church. This ministry of greeters was

instituted to welcome newcomers. Strategies were put in place to get the word out about St. Mary's through increased advertising in an effort to "get people to come over the bridge" into Stone Harbor. The theory was that the bridge needed to be viewed as a two-way street -- a way not only to come into town, but a way for us to reach to those on the other side. As we began to invite people to come on over and to see us, we began to look more and more in the other direction, to the mainland. We saw it as rich and fertile territory, filled with potential -- and it still is. A process was started to identify new people, welcome them to our church and gradually introduce them to our parish life by mentoring them and inviting them to participate. Foyer groups gave folks the opportunity to meet each other in informal settings, to share a meal and develop community. As we opened ourselves up, we became more aware of needs and places where we were being called to make God's love real.

HEAVENLY SCAVENGERS

In 1999, our rector's wife, Cynthia Sosnowski, and a fellow parishioner, Josee Rich, became aware of something happening on the island, namely, homes were being torn down with the contents inside! Furniture, household goods, towels, sheets, bedding -- all of it was going to the landfill with the crashing of the wrecking ball. Noting the injustice of it all and inspired by a Bible found at the first home to which they were called "to see if there was anything they wanted," they gathered at the kitchen table in the rectory and began a ministry called "Heavenly Scavengers." Its mission was to secure items from homes being torn down on the island and to work with local agencies to distribute them to the poor in the county. Countless parishioners became involved in this "hands on" outreach, taking inventories, sorting items, moving things in their trucks to a storage facility we secured at the Cape May County Airport for \$1 per year, delivering furniture and bedding free of charge to those in need. Literally, this program has put hundreds of children in our county into beds, who previously had been sleeping on floors, and has made beautiful things available to people in need, restoring their dignity and allowing them to obtain basic items for their homes. This program single-handedly made the needs of the county so very present to us as a church, and helped us to see in a very concrete way how we could impact the lives of others and -- even more -- touch their lives with God's love. St. Mary's owes a debt of gratitude to the founders of Heavenly Scavengers, Cynthia and Josee, and the blessing they are to our church.

THIS 'N' THAT THRIFT SHOP

In 2007, in response to a sermon about the need for affordable housing in Cape May County, two parishioners of St. Mary's, Tim and Gail Noble, began St. Mary's This 'n' That Thrift Shop in Rio Grande. The goal of the thrift shop was to raise money for affordable housing in the county. We quickly outgrew our first site in an old bank building, and currently occupy several storefronts in the Village Shops in Rio Grande. This has turned into a fantastic ministry, meeting a variety of needs on several fronts.

The shop has clothing, household items and a furniture annex, and we have consolidated our Heavenly Scavengers program at the same location.

THE BRANCHES

Also in 2007, shortly after Pastor Debra Bullock joined St. Mary's as Assistant to the Rector, it was decided to open The Branches, our outreach center/partnership center in Rio Grande. There, we share combined activities with St. Barnabas. These include a contemporary worship service called "Second Sundays," a movie night and an open mike night on the third and fourth Sundays of the month, respectively. We are open for coffee and conversation hosted by parishioners on Wednesday and Saturday from 10 to 12 noon and have noon day prayer on Wednesdays. Our ministry there continues to grow and flourish with the support of a variety of parishioners from both churches, especially Bev Larson from St. Mary's, and as of this writing continues to evolve as we listen to God's call in that place.

THE MUSTARD SEED OF CAPE MAY COUNTY

In 2008, our Vestry commissioned a group of parishioners to explore and set up a separate non-profit corporation (501c-3) to oversee the workings of the thrift shop and Heavenly Scavengers. That corporation is presently up and running and is known as The Mustard Seed of Cape May County. It is an outreach arm of St. Mary's consisting of a board of directors with majority representation from our church. This corporation opens endless possibilities for outreach for us as a church making it possible to obtain grants and funding that would not otherwise be available to us. So, the work of this group continues to evolve as we listen to God's call in our midst.

FAMILY PROMISE OF CAPE MAY COUNTY

Our church, in 2009, became involved in Family Promise of Cape May County, part of the Inter-faith Hospitality Network. After several years of planning, with Nancy Runzer as our parish representative, this new program launched. It is a program aimed at addressing homelessness in Cape May County. It serves people who find themselves homeless because of loss of job or other reasons and are able, with case management, to transition to new housing within a three month period. Local churches, including St. Mary's, host families for a week at a time, providing them a place to sleep, an evening meal and a light breakfast. This is still yet another way for our parishioners to come face to face, literally, with the needs of the poor. What a pleasure to open our doors and offer our facilities to provide hospitality to those without a home in our county.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith,
so that you will have a full understanding of
every good thing we have in Christ.

-- *Philemon 1:6*

St. Mary's is a social church. We like being together, doing things together, sharing food together. That is one thing we do well -- we like to eat! The social dimension of this church is supported in a variety of ways: church dinners, covered dish suppers, sidewalk and rummage sales, annual parish picnics, Christmas parties and more recently a Seafood Festival and summer pancake breakfasts. These are all times to connect with each other and to also open our doors so that others may come and join us.

A number of people fondly recall an informal group of parishioners who frequently traveled together. Alma Squassoni recalls a trip to Portugal, along with Ed and Thelma Yeager, Sydney and Dr. George Jones, Bob and Vivian Ritterhoff, Jean and Wiley Christie, and Pauline Murphy. Sydney Jones recalls a trip to Austria:

"After we visited Austria, we had a show, a spoof of 'The Sound of Music.' Pauline Murphy and Ed Yeager were the stars. The rest of us were the children; much hilarity with our outfits, as most of us were at least 65 years old! Peg Johnson provided wigs for the boys with thinning hair or bald heads. Knute [as her husband, George, was known to family and friends] and I waltzed to a Vienna melody."

Frank Adkins recalls hearing stories about a trip that included a visit to Hong Kong, during which one parish member inadvertently fell out of a rickshaw in which she was riding. Thankfully, no one was hurt.

Certainly, one of our more enduring traditions at St. Mary's is our coffee hour after worship services. Though at times volunteers seem to ebb more than flow, this is an important part of our fellowship and offers welcome to all who visit our church.

The earliest mention of coffee hour in Vestry reports is from the Annual Meeting of November 7, 1976, in which it is noted, "Dorothy Hay recalled good reports of Sunday morning coffee hour and suggested additional be sponsored to keep all members of St. Mary's Church in closer fellowship."

At one point, Mrs. Hilda Mixsell primarily oversaw coffee hours, and apparently it was considered an honor to be invited by her to participate. However, others recall that, during the era of Fr. Martin, Bob and Louisa Whitelaw gradually took the reins. Mrs. Sally Arning fondly recalls, "Bob and Louisa Whitelaw were an 8 AM couple. Louisa

took care of coffee hour all by herself for years. When Lee and I offered to help, she said, 'No.' It seemed to be her territory. ..." It was Bob who created a small basket that used to sit on the countertop with a sign that said, "Feed the kitty!" Funds placed in the basket were used to purchase coffee and other goodies.

More recent members of the parish, Janice and Bill Haines, explained how they reached a decision to join St. Mary's:

"We started coming to St. Mary's Church in the year 2000 after Easter. The first few Sundays we were greeted by the regulars who attended coffee hour. They all sat at a long table set up like you were having a meal. We were not used to this type of setting for a coffee hour, but we found a seat at the table and met a few more parishioners. ... This sort of broke the ice for us. Of course, we joined the church and the rest is history."

She adds with a smile, "I am really happy that the coffee hour format has changed, and it seems more welcoming to us now."

As a parish, we participate in a variety of outreach projects each year. We prepare food baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas, donate regularly to the local Food Pantry, and support Volunteers in Medicine, a neighborhood clinic for the under- and uninsured of Cape May County. Even cats at the local Shelter benefited recently when a group of dedicated knitters made dozens of small, soft mats to line their cages.



Serena Smith, Nancy Runzer, Janet Kowalski, Ann Albright and Bev Waldron pose next to a stack of "cat mats" knitted by women of St. Mary's Church and donated to the Cape May County Animal Shelter. Other women who participated, not shown, included Marlene Casper and Holly Best. Janet is a regular volunteer at the Shelter.

THURSDAYS ON THE LAWN

In 2000, a vestryperson, Stan Lane, suggested that we do something on our front lawn to be a part of the summer scene. So began "Thursdays on the Lawn, a series of six free summer concerts with a host of popular local entertainers, in July and August. Parishioners provide refreshments at the break, and tours of our church are available. What an amazing success they have been, as summer visitors now look for our concerts

when they are visiting. Average attendance in 2009 was about 200 people per concert! Not bad for something that many doubted would take off in its first year. 2010, our centennial year, will be our tenth year for this concert series.

Parish member Marion Myers, who organizes the concert series, has fond memories of the first year of Thursdays on the Lawn. She recalls, "I still remember how excited we were, carefully placing chairs and homemade cookies which we passed around. We had so few guests that summer, but look at how it has grown!"

SUMMER WORSHIP ON THE BEACH

Another summer program that has gained in popularity is Worship on the Beach, complete with electric keyboard and song books, at the 101st Street Pavilion in July and August. Visitors can worship in an informal setting on the beach in the midst of God's beautiful creation.

Chapter Five

YOUTH MINISTRY

" ... he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about ... what he has promised him."

-- Genesis 18:18-20

In order for a church to achieve a centennial, it must continue to grow and evolve. Part of what contributes to that longevity is a youth program that enriches and supports parish youth who grow into adults who practice their faith, either with their original church family, or in another location. St. Mary's has a long history of supporting parish youth. Though no mention of a church school program is made in early Trustee Reports, we do know that children worshipped at St. Mary's -- groups of children from Calvary House and St. Mary's (Ardmore) Choir Cottage attended regularly, and it's safe to assume that members of the parish brought their children to worship just as our parish members do now.

In Vestry Minutes dated November, 1954, it was reported that the church school had 51 pupils and church school was held from 9:30 to 10:30 every Sunday. The Minutes noted, "A Christmas Eve service is to be held at 4 o'clock. It is of particular value to those children not old enough to attend midnight service." This is a tradition that endures even to present day. The faces of the children change as they grow up and leave for college or other endeavors, but photographs abound of these shining little faces at various pageants.



A group of parish youth from the mid-1990's includes Alison and Megan Tice, Lindsay, Lauren and Ashley Mayfair, Jane Ann, Ally and Michele Chervenak, Sarah Langston, Brian and Jessica Lee, Charlie McNulty, Beth Hendee and David Kowalski. Some of these young parish members have married and now have children of their own!

In the mid-1970's, Charles Collette took over Youth Fellowship at St. Mary's. With the assistance of Carla Robinson, they put much time and effort into coordinating and reorganizing a youth fellowship program. In 1977, the Vestry Minutes include a report from Bev Waldron: "As part of the new (youth) learning series, the children are encouraged to do some service projects. At present, they are clearing the pew after the 10:30 AM service, helping to serve during the coffee hour, and, for Halloween, made puzzles for the Pediatric Department at Burdette Tomlin Memorial Hospital."

In addition to other types of service projects, parish youth participate in worship by serving as acolytes at the 10 AM service. Shown below is a group of acolytes from 1992:



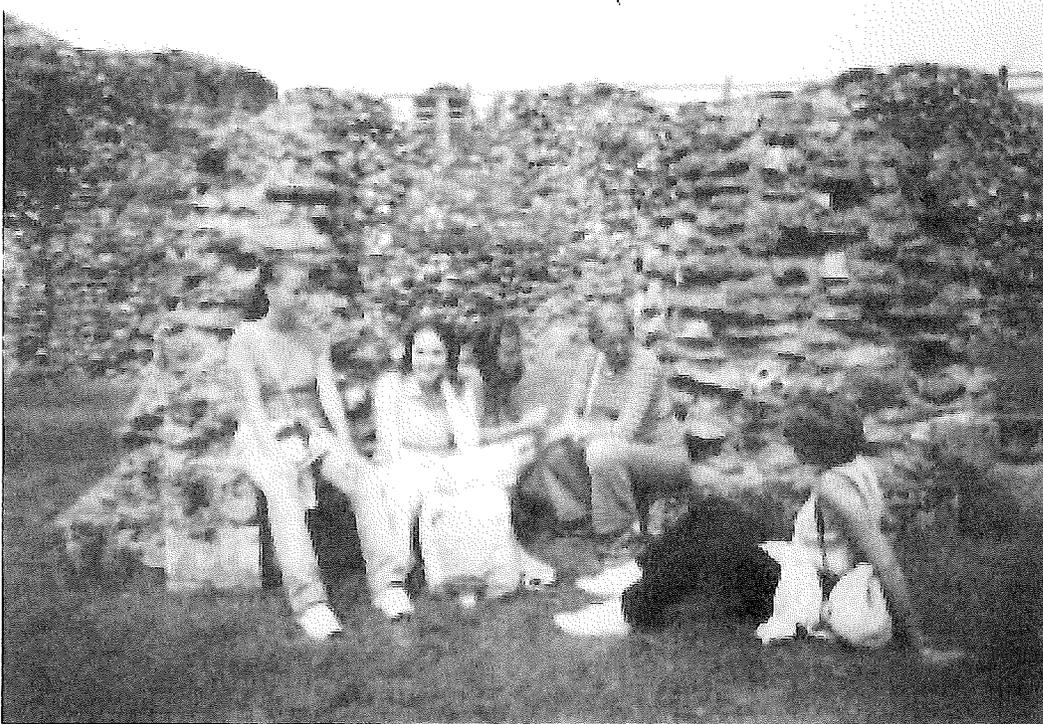
Left to right, front row: Michael Hendee, Vicki Villano, Stefanie Villano and Michael Covington. Back row: Ryan McGraw, Joshua Langston, and Tina Fell.

In more recent years, as they are preparing for confirmation, members of our church youth have gone on pilgrimages to help them prepare for the spiritual commitment they are making.

The first youth pilgrimage included Ashley and Lindsay Mayfair, Beth Hendee, Michelle Chervenak, Doug Adolfsen, Shaun Blake and Charlie McNulty, accompanied by Charles Collett (still serving parish youth since the 1970's!), Cynthia Sosnowski, Susan Mayfair, Fr. John. Other pilgrims included Pat Huber, Bill Griffiths, Linda Hendee, Lee and Alice Thorn, and Cynthia's parents, Bob and Barbara Barrall. In an article published in the church newsletter, "St. Mary's Messenger," the purpose of a pilgrimage was explained:

"A pilgrimage is an opportunity to seek our own spiritual roots by experiencing the holiness of spiritual places. It is a chance to retrace the steps where thousands of others have walked in search of a deeper relationship with God."

This first pilgrimage group traveled in 2001 to England, and included visits to a number of spiritual sites: Canterbury Cathedral, walking a portion of the Pilgrim's Way, Stonehenge, Winchester Cathedral, and Westminster Abbey, among other places.



Some of the parish youth who attended the pilgrimage to England included, left to right, Lauren Mayfair, Ally Chervenak, Beth Hendee, and Ashley Mayfair, with leader, Cynthia Sosnowski.

In 2004, a second group of youth traveled to Sedona, Arizona, where they visited The Good Shepherd Mission, an Episcopal Church in Navajoland. This pilgrimage included

adults Fr. John, Elaine Lee, and Sharie Milio and parish youth Brian Lee, Allie Nielsen, Stephanie Caferio, David Kowalski and Jayson Weider. Sharie Milio recalls the trip:

"The mission welcomed our youth with a service in both English and Navajo. The children of Good Shepherd loved our gifts of handmade picture frames, shell encrusted, with pictures of our Atlantic Ocean. They, in turn, shared their lunch of mutton stew with us. ... Other highlights of this amazing trip included a sunrise air balloon ride over the Sedona desert, viewing the ruins of Canyon de Chelle, and a day trip to the Grand Canyon."

David Kowalski, one of the 'pilgrims,' recalls of the trip:

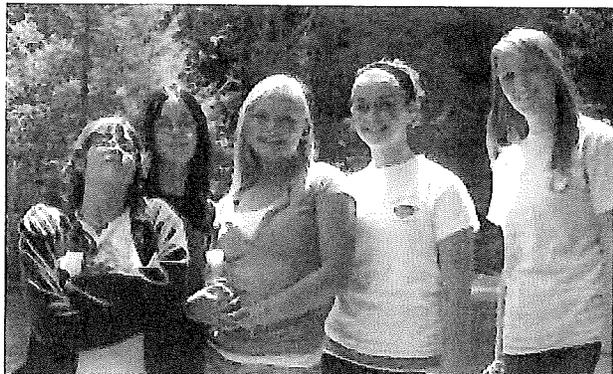
"There are a lot of memories from the pilgrimage of '04. People were so friendly to us ... I'll never forget it. This trip is where I really got close to a lot of the church kids."



Pilgrims from 2004 trip to Sedona, Arizona, left to right: David Kowalski, Sharie Hiller, Jayson Weider, Brian Lee, Allie Nielsen, Stephanie Cafiero and Elaine Lee.

The third parish pilgrimage took place in the summer of 2007, with a trip to Kanuga, North Carolina. Accompanied by adult leaders Cynthia Sosnowski and Candice Turner, the pilgrims included Lauren Mayfair, Alison Tice, Robyn Taylor, Ravyn Conner and Rachel Connor. The week included attending a special youth program at Kanuga, as

well as a visit to the Cathedral of the Diocese of North Carolina and a side trip to the Biltmore Mansion, near Ashville. A day was also spent hiking in the Dupont State Forest, including wading in a lovely river beneath several magnificent waterfalls.



Pilgrims from the summer, 2007, trip to Kanuga included, left to right, Ravyn Connor, Rachel Connor, Robyn Taylor, Lauren Mayfair and Alison Tice.

A new project in 2009 to highlight St. Mary's upcoming Centennial was the creation of a float for the Stone Harbor Christmas parade. With Clyde Pettit coordinating the project, as well as assistance from others including Dave Kowalski, David Cleffi, Cynthia and Lou Schweickhardt, Paul Larson and Fr. John, a magnificent float was constructed. On the evening of the parade, St. Mary's youth turned out in full force, riding the float from 111th Street through Stone Harbor to 96th Street. The theme of the float was "Fishing for Jesus Followers for 100 Years."



Many parish members were wonderful mentors and advocates of St. Mary's church school program, including Charles Collett, Anna Allen, Tracey Melchiorre, current coordinator Dina Ziemba, and countless others. It would be remiss, however, to fail to remember Ruth Fisher. Bev Waldron recalls:

"Ruth and her husband, Gene, were much beloved by the parishioners and children. Ruth was in charge of the nursery for many years. She could be seen on Sunday mornings surrounded by a group of children,

passing out green Tic Tacs. When she died, the children wrote a poem about green Tic Tacs in her memory and it is hanging in the nursery."

The roots planted in the early years at St. Mary's to support and nourish parish youth have flourished: presently, there are 25 children enrolled in the youth church school program. Dina Ziemba is our current Church School Coordinator.

Chapter Six

St. Mary's By-The-Sea, Calvary House, Russell Club House and The Mysterious Postcard

While combing through the Trustee Reports dating from 1910 through the early 1950's, as well as eliciting the memories of members of St. Mary's parish, a small pattern began to emerge: in its early days, St. Mary's By-the-Sea, as it was first known, was the church where dozens of young men and women worshipped during those halcyon summer days, trudging in their Sunday best from both Calvary House, located at 83rd Street and the Bay, as well as the lesser-known Russell Club House, another summer choir home located at 9329 Sunset Drive.

Parish member Mr. Ralph Dantuono recalls, "I first came to Stone Harbor in 1926 with my family. My father rented a big house at 83rd Street and Second Avenue. Later, in about 1929, Calvary Episcopal Church, in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, bought the same house we had rented and used it for a summer retreat. Miss Isabel Krauth, who was in charge of the house, brought many young children, mostly Italian American, to this home in the summer."



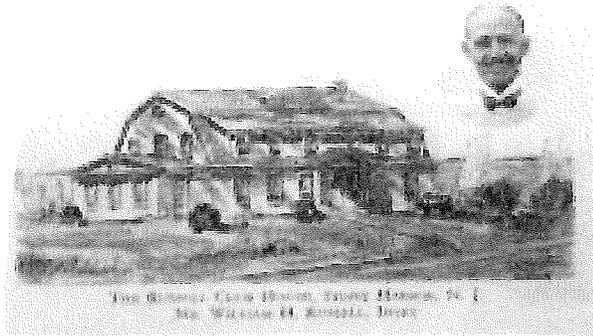
Calvary House

Another former parishioner, Ray Galante, also has fond memories of Calvary House and its link with worshipping at St. Mary's. "My dad, Albert Galante, was one of two boys that Miss Krauth took for a vacation in 1912. The joy and pleasure she brought to these

boys inspired her to begin the work of Calvary Seaside House in 1913. It was my pleasure to join Calvary Seaside House in 1939. I continued going there both as a child and as a counselor until 1950."

Another young man who spent summers as a counselor, William Guerrazzi, eventually went on to become an Episcopal priest and served as one of St. Mary's interim rectors.

Ed Galante, who also spent time at Calvary House, fondly recalled playing basketball during these summer visits, with the "boys from St. Mary's Choir Cottage." Some investigation revealed this to be the Russell Club House, a summer choir cottage run under the auspices of St. Mary's Church, Ardmore.



Russell Club House

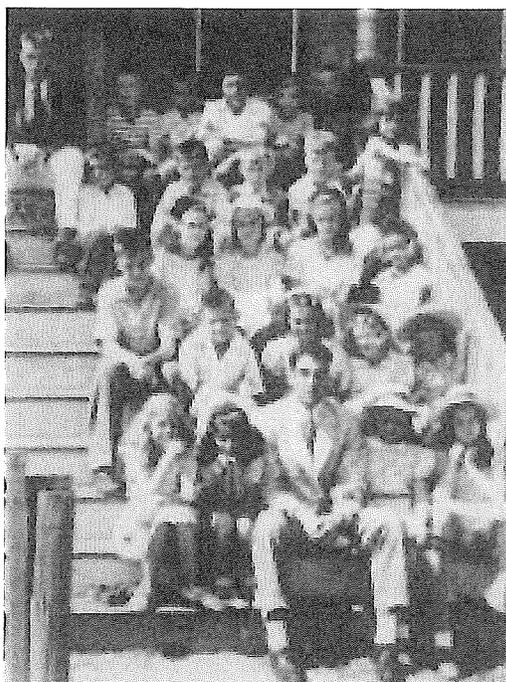
In a vignette written by Miss Isabel Krauth in 1941, she recalls the early days when Calvary House first started welcoming boys who would later go on to become members and trustees of St. Mary's Church: "About twenty-five children ... were taken in groups of four or five for two weeks each with all expenses paid. ... In 1923, through the interest of the Rev. Alan Van Meter [of Calvary Episcopal Church, Germantown] the present home on 83rd Street in Stone Harbor was purchased for \$3,500 with a very small cash payment.

"Mrs. Pasquale Albertelli [whose husband became a Trustee of St. Mary's Church] has assisted with the children for many years ... Mrs. Anthony Galante [whose sons, Ray and Ed, are mentioned above] has also given wonderful assistance. ... **The whole household attends the parish church [St. Mary's] on Sunday.**"

In an odd turn of coincidence, in 2002, Fr. John received correspondence from Tucson, Arizona, in which was enclosed a postcard depicting a 1940's-era St. Mary's Church. The letter stated, "Time has come 'round ... and indeed it has in respect to this old circa 1942 picture of your church. I found it in an antique store in Bisbee, Arizona ..." Addressed to Dr. and Mrs. Louis W. Pitt of Montoloking, New Jersey, the body of the message says, "Dear Folks ... Well, Chris and I brought the choir down to day we have 23 boys and 8 adults with us. Of course, there will be more over the weekend. It will keep Chris and I stepping. ..."

Curious to see if the identity of the writer and the addressee could be discovered, a search of the internet revealed that Dr. and Mrs. Louis Pitt were, in fact, the rector and

wife of St. Mary's Church in Ardmore, who frequently vacationed in Mantoloking, according to their son, himself also a retired Episcopal priest. The writer of the postcard apparently was the wife of the choir director of St. Mary's, Ardmore, and the boys to whom she refers were vacationing at the Russell Club House ... and attending worship, along with Calvary House vacationers, at our little St. Mary's By-the-Sea.



Calvary House Children Ready for Church

A close friend of Ralph and Jan Dantuono, Jean Albertelli Mesropian [daughter of the aforementioned Mrs. Pasquale Albertelli], says, "I remember all those Sunday mornings when we walked from 82nd Street and Second Avenue to 94th Street and Third Avenue, arriving all hot and sweaty; and the boys picking up and stuffing their pockets with pine needles so they could poke the girls with them during the service; and if we dared to make a sound we'd get 'the look' from Godmother [Isabel Krauth]! And every July and August we'd have the same priests, both of whom played the violin along with the organ ... squeaky organ and screechy violin. 'Jerusalem the Golden' was the favorite hymn of the July priest, and we sang it every Sunday -- all verses! -- in July!"

It's easy to lose sight of the ways in which our own familiar environments -- for example, our church -- impact beyond their physical presence. In the case of St. Mary's, a number of those who made significant contributions to the parish, and who continue even to the present as congregants, actually found their way along the dusty road from a summer choir cottage to our little brown church on the corner. By the active sharing of faith, these three diverse groups combined to form lasting bonds and continued service to St. Mary's.

Chapter Seven

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you
a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Jesus Christ."

-- *Romans 15:5-6*

It would be difficult, indeed, to find a parish that enjoys a greater spirit of unity than St. Mary's. If you spend even a short period of time chatting after coffee hour, joining in one of the many activities that abound, or even if you are a visitor, it is quickly apparent that we love our church and genuinely care about each other here at St. Mary's. We have greetings to share, stories to tell, memories we cherish. A history of our church would be incomplete without sharing some of those memories that have been gathered in the process of writing this history.

So here, in their own words, are some of the memories that others have recalled:

Sallie Arning wrote with great fondness about a number of parish members who were integral at St. Mary's:

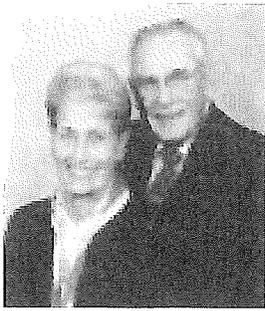
"Lee and I used to attend St. John's-by-the-Sea during the summer. When we moved to Avalon permanently, we still went there, but since they tend to close up the end of September, we started attending the 8 AM service at St. Mary's. There were quite a few Avalon members. They included **John and Mary Basford** of 23rd Street. John and Mary started "Help on Wheels," a cadre of drivers who volunteered to take those who needed rides to their appointments, doctors, dentists, hospital appointments, hair dressers, etc. I drove for them many years and met some wonderful people.



Sallie & Lee Arning

"**Don and Jane Ford**, a wonderful couple, had a standard chocolate poodle. Don made items of wood, and made at least three types of crèches. I must have one of each. Jane was also very creative: the plush Teddy Bears she made were beautifully created and painstakingly done!"

Of **Louisa Whitelaw**, who along with her husband **Bob** took care of coffee hour, she noted "She was tiny, cute and spunky. She wore red 2" heels and brown and white spectators. They all were very welcoming to me and Lee and invited us to periodic home gatherings, where we began to know more of St. Mary's parishioners: **Nancy Ritchie, Ray and Peg Caton** -- a super couple. Peg was computer literate long before many of us.



Peg and Ray Caton

She enjoyed reading as did I; we'd discuss books. Ray was eucharistic minister; we jokingly dubbed him 'Pope.' They gave small wonderful dinner parties. Peg was fastidious and a great cook.

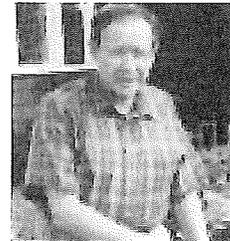
"**Bev Tyler** and her husband moved here from New England, and were another great couple. Bev was E.C.W. president. Our treasurer of E.C.W. for many years was **Peg Johnson**. Peg owned the P&J Gift Shop just south of the Ris Gallery on Second Avenue. The large crèche used at St. Mary's during Advent and Christmas was a gift from Peg Johnson.



Roz Koss

"Lee and I knew **Dr. Rosabel Koss** and her husband, **Franklyn**, as they were members of St. James Episcopal Church in Upper Montclair. Roz was head of the 'Red Hats,' a children's choir at St. James. **Mary Conwell** lived in Stone Harbor and was a huge part of the E.C.W., guiding us in making a bevy of crafts, ornaments, etc. She provided the materials and oversaw the work each Monday afternoon for weeks prior to the Sidewalk Sale. **Ethel Henry**, a dear person, was in charge of the United Thank Offering for many years.

"**Anna Allen** lived in the condominiums next to the 96th Street bridge. Her son, **Bill**, lived and taught in Philadelphia but came down most weekends. Bill was always a great help to all at the Sidewalk Sale events. **Jean and Wiley Christy** were also Stone Harbor folks and did some entertaining with small groups of church people. She made a great potato salad!



Bill Allen

"I can't forget our dear friends, **Bob and Ruth Emberger**. Bob was a great crabber who had two or three commercial traps in Avalon. Their great delight was having parishioners over for their special crab cakes baked in small metal shells with all the fixings of different salads. I guess Bob did the crab 'picking' and Ruth the dinner menu.

"All these people were special in their own individual way," Sallie concludes.

While growing up, **Charles Collett** was a member of the Episcopal parish in Havertown, Pa. Charles and his parents spent their summers in Cape May Court House, and while they were here, they attended St. Mary's.

During the Viet Nam war, though he did not have to leave the country, Charles was called into service and spent three years in the Army. During that time, the people at St.

Mary's stayed in constant touch with him. Charles was so moved and grateful for the attention from St. Mary's during that time that he has been an active member of the parish for the past 50 years!

Ione Pope, who celebrated her 96th birthday in 2009, says, "Since Fr. John's arrival, I have thoroughly enjoyed the services and I deliver church flowers when assigned and have also donated to the Thrift Shop. I was baptized in the Episcopal church in Manchester, New Hampshire, and finally joined St. Mary's about three years ago. I do enjoy St. Mary's and their monthly get-togethers and the men certainly do serve marvelous dinners!"

Shirley Beck says: "I am 89 years old. My dad and mom bought in Stone Harbor in 1920. We were six children, and all attended St. Mary's every summer until 1976. My husband, Ray, and I bought a house in Avalon in 1976 and joined St. Mary's as regulars. We loved the church and all it offers. 'Reds' passed away in 2007. We have 10 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. St. Mary's and Fr. John have been a gift through all our joys and sorrows."

"I came to St. Mary's ten years ago," writes **Dot Haig**. "I called Fr. John and told him I was from Philadelphia. I said I would like to come to church but had no transportation and he sent Bill Waldron after me. I am sorry I cannot do much, but I like Fr. John very much and the people are all so nice."

"During the 29 years I've been a member at St. Mary's, I admire the time and devotion so many people have given to St. Mary's to make it such a haven for our parishioners and visitors alike," write **Sydney Jones**. "St. Mary's has been a very special part of my life, spiritually and socially, since my husband retired from his dental practice in 1980."

Janice and Bill Haines, who came to St. Mary's in 2000, say, "When we first started coming to church, we sat on the pulpit side and have been sitting there ever since, just like good Episcopalians do. **Lee and Sallie Arning** always sat behind us, and it was such a pleasure getting to know them. Lee's voice is one you will never forget. ... You never know what attracts people to a church. We found that we made the right decision!"

Marion Myers recalls that when she first joined St. Mary's in May of 2000, a luncheon was held at the Golden Inn and the Rt. Rev. Vincent Pettit was there for the occasion. "He signed a prayer book that was presented to me. People joining that Sunday were brought to the front of the church during the service, along with their sponsors. My sponsors were **Bill and Doris Griffiths**. I was panic stricken one Sunday when someone accidentally took my copy as their own when I had placed it on a table in our parish hall. It was luckily returned and has not been out of my sight ever since ... it's so important to me."

Many fond memories were shared by **Bob and Ruth Emberger**, who moved in the past few years to Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. They are frequent and welcome visitors, however. Some of Bob's recollections include the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury, which is recounted in a chapter about the stained glass windows. He also recalled, "Did you know that at one time there was only one exit to the parking lot [from the parish hall] and that was through the kitchen. Naturally, after coffee hour, everyone congregated there. **Bob Ritterhoff** took on the task of putting in a new door to the parking lot. He also was the leader for the Men's Club to install all the windows in the Parish Hall." He continues, "Does anyone else remember the rectory when we had plastic sheets on the outside of the windows to keep out the cold? At one time, the upstairs bathroom there was painted orange. To this day, it still comes through in spots!"

He also recalls that one year, while attending a church in Florida during the winter months, he was gazing out the window at a beautiful memorial garden. "Yes," he quickly adds, with his dry humor, "I was paying attention to the sermon! When I returned to Stone Harbor, I was approached by **Frank Adkins**, who asked if there was anything he could do for the church. I told him I thought a memorial garden would be a wonderful addition." Frank generously donated the funds to create the beautiful "Mary Garden" in memory of his wife, Penny.

Of **Nancy Ritchie**, who has a garden memorializing her located outside the "new" (i.e. rear) narthex, he fondly says, "That woman was a hoot, and one of the Grand Dames of Stone Harbor! To know Nancy was to love her."

Pam Ritterhoff remembers that as a child she came periodically to Stone Harbor, but had to go to church school at the Lutheran Church, as St. Mary's at that time did not have its own church school. She also recalls that when she was married in 1962 to her first husband, **David Lang**, there was no rear narthex. The photographer was forced to lie on the floor to get a picture down the aisle of the church, as photography was not allowed in the church during worship. Years later, she and her mother-in-law, **Patience Lang**, along with **Marlene and Stan Casper**, would do all the gardening. Everyone would bring clippings from their own gardens and plant them in St. Mary's flower beds.

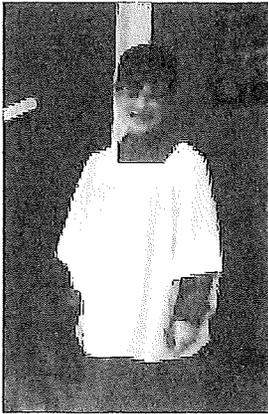


**Pam and Bob
Ritterhoff**

When asked about his memories of St. Mary's over the long period he has been a member of the parish, **Frank Adkins** responds, "I have many fond memories of St. Mary's, but sadness, too, because so many faces I fondly remember are no longer with us. **Chuck Taillie**, Janet Kowalski's father, is one of them. We always had a short but meaningful talk when he came to church dinners." Frank was generous in his praise of

Dave and Janet Kowalski for their contributions to St. Mary's, including service on the Search Committee (of which Frank was also a member) which extended the call to Fr. John, as well as Dave's contribution of time, talent and labor (along with Franklin Lee) in repairing and making additions to the church. Of Fr. Martin, Frank says, "I liked Fr. Martin a lot. He seemed to be happy with retirement. So, we had a happy priest who left, and a happy priest who joined us. This makes me happy, too."

Bill and Roberta Handley joined the parish around 2005. Bill explains, "We were active at St. Andrew's, Bridgeton, for over 30 years. Our daughter Barbara Cleffi was a member of St. Mary's and invited us to attend. We have enjoyed St. Mary's since that first visit. We found the church to be very friendly and quickly were able to meet other members. We also love the church involvement with young people, as our grandchildren are part of the church school."



There are no better words to conclude with than those of **Charles McNulty**, son of **Julie and Martin McNulty**, who grew up in St. Mary's Church:

"It takes a whole village to raise a child. My mom bringing me to St. Mary's provided a positive environment that was fundamental to my growth. I have found that the notion of God is in a warm smile on a sleepy Sunday morning, it's in a rusty oven the Heavenly Scavengers pry out of a swank vacation home, it's in the ocean's exhale a few lazy blocks east, it's in us, people doing their best."