



A SHORT HISTORY OF

St. John's Church

TAMPA, FLORIDA

NOVEMBER, 1961

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH 1911-1961

On Whitsunday, May 26, 1912, the Rt. Rev. William Crane Gray, bishop of the Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida, wrote in his diary, "I am most thankful for this church and pray God's blessing on this forward movement."

This church to which he referred was the new Episcopal mission in Tampa, St. John's, which he consecrated on that day and where he also confirmed a class of four. Bishop Gray added that the Rev. William Wilson DeHart, rector of St. Andrew's, assisted him in the service and the Rev. John Friedenreich Porter, first priest in charge of St. John's, preached the sermon.

Church records show that on Dec. 5, 1910, the Bayshore Realty Company deeded to the Missionary Jurisdiction a lot on the southeast corner of Orleans and Morrison Avenues with the provision that on it should be erected a church to face west and cost not less than \$3000. This first lot was acquired at Bishop Gray's suggestion as was the adjoining south lot, which was purchased from Bayshore Realty Company on May 2, 1911, for \$1400.

On Nov. 21, 1911, Bishop Gray entered in his diary: "Took morning boat for Tampa and went direct to St. Andrew's rectory. After dinner went in auto with the Rev. and Mrs. DeHart to where the first move towards the new church, St. John's by the Sea, is being made, and again I thank God that we have so good and promising a location for the future welfare of the church."

It was on Nov. 27, 1911, that building permits were issued for erection of the new church building at a cost of \$2408. During January of 1912 Tampa newspapers carried accounts of benefit matinee and night performances at the Poinciana Theater Jan. 26 to raise funds for the organ of the "new mission to be built in Suburb Beautiful."

Father Porter agreed to serve as first priest in charge, although he explained that because of his advanced age he would consent to serve only until another priest could be obtained. It was largely through his activity and zealous work that \$1800 was raised for the mission construction fund.

On Friday, March 29, 1912, a story in the Tampa Morning Tribune said: "The guild of St. John's by the Sea will meet this afternoon at 3 o'clock at the church instead of at Dr. Richardson's as heretofore. This will be the first meeting of the Guild in the new church . . . The organ for the new church has arrived."

And a story in the same newspaper on Sunday, April 28, 1912, said that Sunday School opened for the first time at St. John's at "8:30 o'clock this morning." "Judging from the interest that has already been manifested in this enthusiastic little mission," the story continued, "there will probably be a large attendance."

Church records also show that on April 30, 1912, the following became the first communicants of the parish: Mrs. Irene R. Martin, Stephan Hale Rogers, Albert C. Ives, Katherine Bitzer, Mary V. Ives, Clara Ellen Woods, Hilton S. Hampton, Susanne T. Hampton, Sumter L. Lowry, William M. Lowry, Willie Louise Lowry, John D. MacRae, Mary Hill MacRae, William C. Richardson, Marie D. Richardson, Elizabeth Caldwell McIntosh, Sarah Treadwell McIntosh, Ruth Van Buskirk, Frank A. Farwell and Mrs. F. A. Farwell.

The new church building was completed and in celebration of its consecration a special notice, invitation and program was printed and distributed by the first vestrymen of the church: Mr. Sumter L. Lowry, senior warden, Mr. L. R. Woods, Mr. Hampton, Dr. Richardson, Dr. MacRae and Dr. Ives.

It was in the 1913 journal of the convocation of the

Missionary District of South Florida that St. John's was first listed as an organized mission with the Rev. A. E. Cornish as priest in charge. The journal listed the following as assessments against the new mission by the district committee on finance and assessments: \$40, diocesan assessment; \$20, apportionment; \$5, University of the South; \$5, convocation expense.

Speaking of Florida's growth and its challenge to the Episcopal Church, Bishop Gray said in his convocation address that year: "When I first visited Tampa no one considered the population of the entire environment to be more than 5000; now it is beyond 60,000."

The mission became a parish in 1917 with 108 communicants and with the Rev. L. Irving Insley as priest in charge.

On Aug. 1, 1922, the year in which the Missionary District of South Florida became the Diocese of South Florida, the parish bought a third lot from Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Barritt for \$2500 and on Nov. 16, 1924, ground was broken for the present church building, designed by F. J. Kennard and Son. The present structure was completed in 1928 at a cost of \$60,000. The construction, financed by voluntary subscription of parishioners and communicants, represented largely the untiring work of the Rev. William B. Curtis, St. John's rector at that time.

The church building and the new pipe organ, given to the church by Mrs. Lucy G. Root, was dedicated on April 1, 1928, by the Rt. Rev. Cameron Mann, bishop of the Diocese of South Florida, assisted by the Rev. A. J. G. Banks, the Rev. George Cavanaugh and the rector. More than 500 members of the parish and visitors attended the dedication service. In a brief review of events leading to the completion of the new church structure, the rector spoke of the work of Sumter L. Lowry, Jr., chair-

man of the finance committee, and D. M. Partrick, chairman of the building committee.

In July, 1928, the old rectory was moved away and the original wooden church building moved to its site to serve as a parish hall.

The financial situation in the early part of the 1930's made such hardships for St. John's that in April, 1933, according to a suggestion made by the Rt. Rev. John Durham Wing, bishop of the Diocese of South Florida, the subject of merging St. John's and St. Andrew's was raised for discussion. St. John's was without a rector at this time. St. John's vestry and congregation voted almost unanimously in favor of the merger. As had happened during a similar situation in 1926, St. Andrew's congregation voted against the merger.

By January 9, 1944, however, the mortgage on the new church building was completely satisfied and the new church building was consecrated.

It was while the Rev. Clarence W. Brickman was rector of St. John's that the original wooden building was removed from the church site to make way for the new parish hall and school building, which was dedicated by the Rt. Rev. Henry I. Louttit, present bishop of the Diocese of South Florida, on Oct. 30, 1949.

Father Brickman also was the rector when St. John's Parish Day School was established. It began as a kindergarten class in 1951 and opened the 1961-62 school year with an enrollment of 195 in grades one through six.

The Rev. George S. Burchill, Canadian-born, has served the day school, ~~considered a pioneer among modern parish day schools of the Episcopal Church, since September, 1954, becoming its headmaster in 1957.~~

The Rev. William S. Brace has served as rector of St. John's since May, 1957.

The church's real property now includes a rectory at 1307 Morrison Ave., which the parish contracted to buy in 1947; a residence at 916 S. Orleans Ave., which it contracted to buy in 1953, and Marney House, 914 S. Orleans Ave., which the church acquired through provisions of the will of Mrs. Elsie Marney, who died October 15, 1959.

St. John's parish now has 768 communicants.

THE CLERGY WHO HAVE SERVED ST. JOHN'S

Rectors

The Rev. John F. Porter	1912-1913
The Rev. A. E. Cornish	1913-1916
The Rev. L. Irving Insley	1917-1921
The Rev. William B. Curtis	1922-1929
The Rev. Mortimer Glover	1930-1931
The Rev. Harcourt Johnson	1932-1933
The Rev. Richard I. Brown	1933-1937
The Rev. Sidney M. Hopson	1937-1943
The Rev. George H. Bennett	1943-1947
The Rev. Clarence W. Brickman	1947-1956
The Rev. William S. Brace	1957-

Assistants

The Rev. John F. Hamblin, Jr.	1949-1951
The Rev. Ira A. England	1951-1953
The Rev. Bruce T. Powell	1953-1956
The Rev. George S. Burchill	1954-

The following also deserve special mention as having served St. John's at critical times in its history, although they were not acting in an official capacity:

The Rev. Northey Jones, the Rev. Barnby Leach, the Rev. C. B. Wilmer and the Rt. Rev. Harwood Sturtevant, retired bishop of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED AS SENIOR WARDENS

Sumter L. Lowry, Sr.—1912-1919, 1927, 1932-1934
D. M. Partrick—1920, 1926, 1931
G. W. Thames—1921
F. W. Queripel—1922
L. H. Lothridge—1923
C. A. McKay—1924
J. D. Kinser—1925
Hilton S. Hampton—1928
A. D. West—1929, 1930
W. L. Waring, Jr.—1935, 1948, 1954
A. Pickens Coles—1937, 1938
Dr. Blackburn W. Lowry—1939-1942
Phil A. Ammons—1943-1945
Sumter L. Lowry, Jr.—1946, 1947
John A. Boyle—1949, 1953, 1958
Dr. C. A. Rudisill—1950
John F. Beard—1951
A. Donald Fielding—1952, 1956, 1957
James F. Taylor, Jr.—1955
James H. McNeill—1959
Lemuel P. Woods—1960
Howard T. Hersom—1961

Present vestrymen are: William B. Barber, Stockton H. Smith, Lemuel P. Woods, William L. Waring, Jr., J. Bennett DeLoach, D. R. Hall, Jr., Howard T. Hersom, William J. Armistead, Jr., Ernst H. Buck, William J. Bullard, Malcolm J. Hall and James H. White.

Mrs. D. R. Hall, Jr. is the president of the Episcopal Churchwomen of St. John's, which now has a membership of 178, for the 1961-62 year.

THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED AS SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS INCLUDE

D. M. Partrick—1912-1916

Peyton T. Jordan—1924-1926, 1929-1931

M. H. Walker—1928

Thomas H. Delany—1932-1935

C. Murray Brown—1936-1938, 1944-1947

Robert P. Harris—1949

Howard T. Hersom—1950, 1959-1961

James H. McNeill—1951-1958

James E. Lehan is present Sunday school superintendent.

The first persons baptized in the church were Elizabeth Caldwell McIntosh and Sarah Treadwell McIntosh.

The first confirmation class included Stephan Hale Rogers, Elizabeth Caldwell McIntosh, Sarah Treadwell McIntosh and Katherine Lee Bitzer, who were confirmed May 26, 1912, the day the original wooden church building was consecrated.

The first burial service was held in the church by Father Porter on June 20, 1912, for Sagundo Menendez.

The first ordination was on St. Luke's Day, Friday, Oct. 18, 1912, when Bishop Gray, assisted by Father DeHart and Father Porter, ordained Dr. William Conklin Richardson and William Jeffereys Godden deacons.

The first marriage held in the church was that of Oscar Mills Goodrich and Eugenia L. Tucker on December 21, 1912.

The Collect
for the Feast Day of Saint John,
Apostle and Evangelist

Merciful Lord, we beseech thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon thy Church, that it, being illumined by the doctrine of thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist Saint John, may so walk in the light of thy truth, that it may at length attain to life everlasting: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SHARE THE LIGHT

Our Legacy



*"While you have
the light, believe in
the light, so that
you may become
children of light."*

John 12:36

St. John's Episcopal Parish has played a vital role in the spiritual life of Tampa Bay since May 26, 1912, when it was officially recognized as a mission congregation of the Diocese by the Rt. Rev. William Crane Gray. Planning for the parish had begun several years earlier and coincided with the development of Hyde Park, one of Tampa's oldest and most gracious residential communities.

The mission grew quickly and became a self-supporting parish in 1917. A small wooden building served the congregation for the first sixteen years of its life. On November 16, 1924, ground was broken at the corner of South Orleans and Morrison Avenues for construction of the impressive brick and oak-beamed sanctuary that serves the parish today. The building was completed in 1928 at a cost of \$60,000.

The parish struggled through the depression years with the rest of the country but, by the Grace of God, it survived and prospered. On January 9, 1944, with the world's attention focused on war, the parish took a moment to celebrate the retirement of its mortgage by consecrating the building to the glory and service of God.

Following the war, the parish reached out to the community by establishing the St. John's Parish Day School in 1951. The school, which teaches children from kindergarten to the eighth grade, has a well deserved reputation for academic excellence and religious education. The school's main campus adjoins the parish, and the "Little School" is located on the corner of Watrous and Rome Avenues.

Over the years the parish family has lovingly maintained and enhanced the property to the glory of God. During the 1950's and 60's, the beautiful stained glass windows which adorn the sanctuary were installed. In 1989, a chapel was added as part of a major renovation project designed to prepare the parish for its second century of service to God and man.