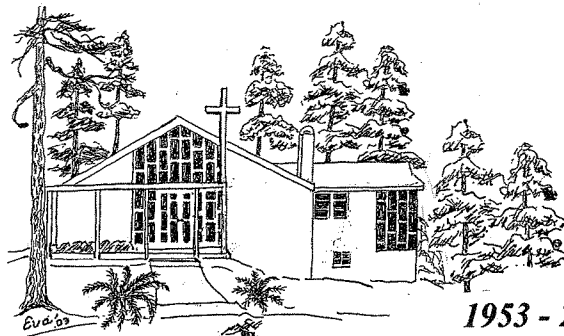
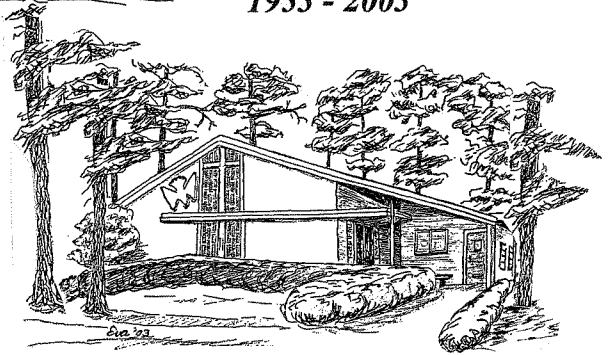


Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter



1953 - 2003





*Holy Comforter Episcopal
Church*

*50th
Anniversary*

1953 - 2003

Acknowledgements

To Gail Banke
who “waded through” hand-written
pages, offered constructive ideas,
and along with Erin Clark,
prepared the document for printing.
She did all of this with patience,
wisdom, and a smile.

To Don Birch
who skillfully reproduced and provided
the photographs.

To interested, loving, former, and
present parishioners and other
friends too numerous to mention
who shared memories and
information which provided
answers to questions.

To Eva Curry
who so graciously allowed us
to use her sketches
of Holy Comforter Church.

Dedication

This historical account is dedicated to those who helped establish this Holy Comforter worshiping body, to those who have helped perpetuate the Church of the Holy Comforter, but especially to the saints who have gone before us.

This is truly a document for the glory of God and in thanksgiving for Holy Comforter Episcopal Church and the lives that have been touched by its existence.

Introduction

Holy Comforter has flourished for five decades. The Holy Spirit has been evidenced as challenges abounded and changes were endured.

As a charter member of Holy Comforter Episcopal Church and a dedicated communicant since its “birth”, I humbly offer this account from the time the “seed” was planted until its fiftieth anniversary. Although I have endeavored to be accurate, all meaningful facts and significant persons may not have been included. My sincere apologies for any errors and omissions. I hope the passion I hold for this church community, the School and all other ministries is evident. God has truly blessed me and enriched my life as I have lived these years and embarked on a spiritual journey. This has taken place in an incredible church with loving, giving people of God who strive to bring others to Him through praying, praising, healing, teaching, and serving.

The walls of our buildings might have revealed wondrous stories of the life, love, laughter and tears which have been shared. As we know, a building does not always give evidence of the life within or without. The Holy Spirit, our church’s namesake, has been present during our planning, dreaming, building and servicing. God’s children at Holy Comforter are compassionate. God has provided well and we, in turn, hope that our stewardship of time, energy, and talents is worthy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Harriette McCarter
November, 2003

SIGNERS OF PETITION REQUESTING THE
PRIVILEGE OF ORGANIZING THE
HOLY COMFORTER MISSION

Betty H. Lewis
Betty L. Harrison
Harriette Martin McCarter
Mrs. J. L. McCarter
Minnie R. Lonnbladh
Sara Burwell
Mrs. Harry A. Connors
Palmer Munroe
Mrs. Palmer Munroe
Elizabeth F. Culley
Joseph A. Culley
Angelina D. Thornton
A. E. Thornton, Jr.
Rose S. D'Anna
Francis R. Bridges, Jr.
Callie Mae Bridges
Mrs. Jack Yaeger, Sr.
Miss Charlotte Yaeger
Albert James Livingston
Mrs. A. J. Livingston
Miss Jean Livingston
Mrs. Lee Thompson
R. G. Higgins
Mrs. R. G. Higgins
Lee Thompson
Clifton Lewis
George Lewis, II.
W. G. Eaton
Frank D. Lewis
John Ward Henderson
Annie Belle Henderson
Mrs. Henry Palmer
Henry E. Palmer, Jr.
Elizabeth Gehan Lovcy
Burwell C. Harrison
Cheever Lewis

April, 1953

50th Anniversary

1953-2003

On April 2, 1953, Burwell Harrison and Cheever Lewis assembled a group of parishioners from St. John's Episcopal Church to assess their interest in beginning a mission. The new congregation desired a church that would be "welcoming" to children offering worship and programming that would meet the spiritual needs of children and young families. Those who attended included a number of young couples with children as well as older individuals. They gathered in Alfriend Hall which is now known as Cobb Library. Thirty-six individuals signed a petition requesting the organization of a mission. The name, The Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter, was suggested by the Rev. Jeffrey "Parson" Alfriend, Rector of St. John's Church.

Mrs. Margaret Hood offered a parcel of land, approximately two acres, adjacent to Goodwood Plantation on Miccosukee Road. She later offered Bishop Juhan additional acreage which he did not accept, not anticipating Tallahassee's growth.



*Sign identifying future site of
Holy Comforter Episcopal Church on Miccosukee Road*

On April 28, 1953, a meeting was held with the bishop. Ground was broken on Whitsunday, May 24, 1953, at the church property on Miccosukee Road. Bishop Juhan, the Rev. Jeffrey Alfriend and the Rev. Vernon Quigley, assistant at St. John's, participated together with Mrs. Margaret Hood.



*Ground breaking for the first church
L to R: Ray Higgins, Bishop Frank Juhan, the Rev. Vernon Quigley, Mrs. Margaret Hood, the Rev. Jeffrey Alfriend, and B. Cheever Lewis*

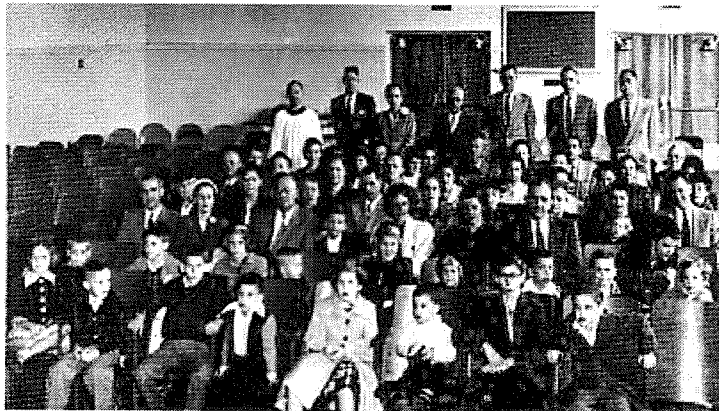


Kate Sullivan School, Miccosukee Road

On October 21, 1953, an organizational meeting was held at Kate Sullivan School. The following month a small group met with Bishop Juhan at which time he announced that the petition for the formation of the mission was in order. Planning meetings with the bishop took place at the Thornton home at St. Teresa. A Mission Board was appointed: Ray Higgins, Senior Warden, Gene Thornton, Junior Warden,

Harriette McCarter, Secretary, Ben Rogers and Lee Thompson.

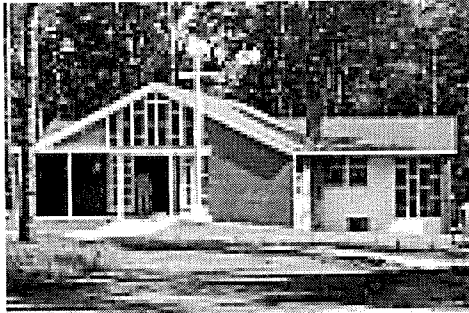
The auditorium at Kate Sullivan School on Miccosukee Road was acquired for Sunday worship services. Ben Rogers and Arthur Platt, a layreader from St. John's, were requested to be responsible for the first service. John Ward Henderson accepted the position of Sunday School Superintendent. Services began with the first worship service at Holy Comforter Mission on November 29, 1953, with approximately seventy-five persons in attendance. Arthur Platt conducted the Morning Prayer Service.



The First Congregation Kate Sullivan School Auditorium

Gene Thornton supplied a door and two sawhorses to be used as an altar. Jamie McCarter made a small folding credence table. The auditorium stage was converted into some semblance of a place of worship. Each Saturday, the Holy Comforter family with children in tow and in strollers, gathered at the school to create a place of worship. Angelina Thornton with other ladies organized the Altar Guild. (As a charter member and parishioner, she has continued sacristy duty for fifty years!) Sunday School was conducted in the back of the auditorium and in the halls of the school. On January 3, 1954, the first service of Holy Communion was held with the Rev. Walter Morley, chaplain at Ruge Hall, celebrating.

Bishop Juhan reappointed the Holy Comforter Mission Board. A building committee consisting of Al Livingston, John Ward Henderson, and Robert P. Owens was designated. Construction began in May, 1954. The Rev. Sandy Anderson was appointed priest-in-charge in July. He served Holy Comforter for six months.



The first building of the Holy Comforter Episcopal Church

The first building consisted of a large area with space for worship and a downstairs kitchen with basement to serve as a parish hall. The building which was completed at a cost of \$23,500.00 was dedicated by Bishop Juhan on October 31, 1954. Bill Watson and Cheever Lewis constructed a portable pulpit used by the bishop at the service of dedication.



Holy Comforter Church was dedicated on October 31, 1954. Left to Right: Gene Thornton; the Rt. Rev. Frank A. Juhan; the Rev. Sandy Anderson; Ray Higgins and Hamilton Oven, Jr.

Church members used their skills and talents to build chancel furnishings and make altar linens. Callie Mae Bridges (Mrs. Francis R.) proudly proclaimed that her work displayed thirty-three tiny stitches in an inch! Several memorials such as a processional cross and altar appointments were presented. Sunday School classes were conducted in every nook and cranny, even under the trees in front with the children sitting on concrete blocks. Pews were constructed by Gene Thornton. The altar, altar rail and

other chancel appointments were built by the men of church. Blankets were brought from homes to serve as kneelers.

With no air conditioning, the soothing sound from sprinklers on the roof made us think we were cool in the Tallahassee heat and humidity. A small portable organ was “borrowed” for an extended period of time from Gridley Music Company. With limited financial resources, Gene Thornton, Francis Bridges and Ben Rogers journeyed to Slocum, Alabama, and returned with a small pump organ. The bill for its acquisition was rendered. It was for three cups of coffee and three slices of pie! The organ’s quality was questionable, but we had music! The first baptisms at the Church of the Holy Comforter took place in December when Peter and Paul Harris were baptized.

In 1955 a new Mission Board was appointed with Hamilton Oven as Senior Warden, Gene Thornton as Junior Warden, Burwell Harrison as Treasurer and Harriette McCarter as Secretary. Ben Rogers, Ray Higgins, Francis R. Bridges, Cheever Lewis and John Ward Henderson completed the group. Mr. Bridges never missed an opportunity at a board meeting to remind the secretary that a woman had no voting rights!

An historic event took place when the Mission Board met with the bishop in a board room at the Lewis State Bank. Holy Comforter purchased a rectory at 1467 Crestview Avenue.



The Rev. Frank Warren Pisani

The Rev. Frank Warren Pisani was appointed minister-in-charge in June, 1955. He arrived from Virginia Theological Seminary with his wife, Harriet Hazard Pisani and young daughter, Sally. Fresh from school he “hit the ground running”. With enthusiasm and a wealth of ideas for a young church, he reported for duty. His ministry officially began June 19, 1955. He soon reported that Holy Comforter had a total of 106 communicants, 85 baptized members and 32 prospective members. Frank Pisani began shepherding his flock even before he left seminary. He requested and obtained names and addresses of those who were ill and had special needs. These persons received written communications from their priest-to-be.

The first kindergarten sponsored by a protestant church in Tallahassee was begun in the fall at Holy Comforter. The timing was an advantage as there were no public kindergartens in the state at this time. Enrollment was limited to twenty-five pupils with one teacher in charge of the school. Mrs. Bea Owens was the teacher selected for this venture.



The first kindergarten class with Mrs. Bea Owens, teacher. (Classroom was located in the basement with kitchen adjoining. Double doors opened to playground)

“The kindergarten is designed to meet a need in Christian and secular education,” the Rev. Mr. Pisani said, “We will open and close each day with brief devotions and children will be familiarized with Biblical stories. Christian teaching will assume its place in the curriculum. All devotionals and religious teaching will be purely on an inter-denominational basis.”

It had been noted that pre-schoolers could benefit from formal education. Em-

phasis on child development encouraged the addition of this ministry. Two years later a nursery class for four- year olds was added with fifteen students and one teacher, Annie Belle Henderson. These endeavors had the approval of the Vestry and enthusiastic support of the parish . Thus, Holy Comforter Day School was well established. In a tiny downstairs room, a chapel complete with altar and crude homemade benches afforded a location for school chapel services.



Kathryn "Kat" Oven and a class of four-year olds

In November, 1955, exactly two years from the date the first service was held by the Church of the Holy Comforter, the minister and people presented to the bishop signed Articles of Association and a formal request for Parish status. On Christmas Sunday, 1955, the *Tallahassee Democrat* announced that the Holy Comforter Mission had become a parish. This was quite an achievement within such a short time since organization! The parish made a formal application for membership in the Council of the Diocese of Florida during the annual meeting at St. John's in Tallahassee on January 24, 1956.

The Rev. Harry Douglas was the celebrant at our midnight Christmas Eve service in 1955. He was to assist the deacon in Perry, Florida, at an earlier evening Eucharist. Not chancing a late arrival for Holy Comforter's service, Francis Bridges arranged for a Highway Patrol escort to ensure Harry Douglas would be on time.

Mr. Hamilton Oven presided over the first annual parish session on January 9, 1956. The first Vestry was elected: Ray Higgins, Ben Rogers, Gene Thornton, Francis R. Bridges, Jr., Burwell Harrison, Cheever Lewis, John Ward Henderson, George Harrison, Richard Marland, and Raney Oven. The following were appointed as the first delegates to the Annual Council Meeting: Francis R. Bridges, Jr., Gene Thornton, John Morgan, Jr. and William Watson. Alternate delegates were R.E. Marland, Ben Rogers, H.S. Oven and George Lewis, II. Mr. Pisani was formally called as Rector-elect pending his ordination to the priesthood on February 13. Mr. Pisani accepted the call and appointed Mr. Bridges as Senior Warden. The Vestry nominated George Harrison and Gene Thornton for the position of Junior Warden. Harriette McCarter was chosen as clerk and T.G. Walker as treasurer.

There was a ground-breaking service for the Holy Comforter educational building, nave and parish hall extension on May 16, 1956. It was a time of real fellowship and a moment of consecration as Holy Comforter took its next step forward. On October 28, 1956, there was a formal opening of the Holy Comforter education building with an open house that afternoon and a dedication service that night conducted by the Rt. Rev. Hamilton West, Bishop of Florida.

Holy Comforter took many steps forward in 1957. The junior and senior choirs were formed, a Bible study group was begun, and the first Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper was held, hosted by the young people of the parish. A Theological Education Trust fund was established for the purpose of assisting and promoting theological education among the people of this church and elsewhere. Then in November, property on Piedmont Drive was given to the church for a new mission by Dr. and Mrs. C.K. Wall, Holy Comforter communicants. This was later established as the Church of the Advent.

The Pisani family added a son to their family. Another rectory was acquired on McDaniel Street.

Acting on the recommendation of the Future Planning Committee of this parish, the Vestry of 1958 approved plans for the future expansion of the church plant at Holy Comforter. Mr. Pisani officiated at the ground-breaking ceremonies in June and a cross was placed at the site of the new church altar. During the building of the new church, Bill Harris served as Senior Warden and William Watson, Junior Warden. The dedication of the new church sanctuary took place on February 14, 1960.



Sanctuary at 1500 Miccosukee Road



Interior view of sanctuary

A touch of history graced the new building as it was constructed of brick from a demolished school in Apalachicola, Florida. Innovative features included a free-standing altar and a hanging cross. The choir was located in a loft at the rear of the church. Frank Pisani instituted an Epiphany Feast of Lights Service which brought sensitive meaning to this church season. After attending a retreat at Camp Weed led by Agnes Sanford, the Rector initiated a midweek service of healing with Eucharist. This is the one service that has been perpetuated through the years. Frank undertook the ambitious task of writing the total Sunday School curriculum. The women were organized as a Women's Auxiliary. A church bazaar was held. Some of the women gathered in the kitchen and porch of Goodwood where Mrs. Hood provided space for busy hands to create products for sale at the bazaar. The 60's were busy!

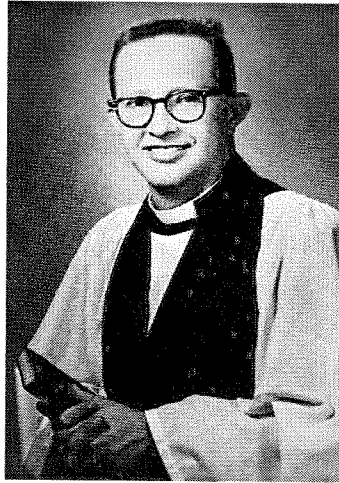
Tallahassee had extended the city limits and streets were being improved. When Miccosukee Road was to be widened in front of the church, Mrs. Bershe Oven literally planted herself by the huge oak tree in front. She defied the men to cut down the tree. Alas! She lost and we lost the tree!

The *Dove* newsletter is distributed monthly to all parishioners as well as the school population. It was first published in the early sixties. The first edition, Volume I, Number 1, revealed the fact that it was to be published irregularly and the first issue was offered with no definite future in mind. Although the format has changed frequently through the years, the articles have been related to topics of ever-present interest. Tidbits from the first issue information revealed that in its seventh year, Holy Comforter was operating on the most ambitious budget ever - \$39,000.00. An intense study of church growth was prepared by Harry Elwell, a member of Holy Comforter. We were thriving and it was anticipated that in 1963, 379 children would over-extend our church school plant and 526 communicants would over-extend the rector. Expectations of pledges and offering might reach \$45,000. Each parishioner was asked to take an active part in planning the pathway of the future growth. Questions were raised related to the addition of class space, the hiring of an Assistant Rector or supporting a new mission.

When Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw the brothers Peter and Andrew casting their nets into the Sea. That day Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." They left their nets and followed him. Jesus still calls. Some listen and respond. Some of the men in the parish were no doubt influenced by their priest. In 1960, Jean H. Chance left to enter Seminary at Sewanee. The following year Raymond H. White entered Virginia Theological Seminary. Three others answered the call in 1962 when Barclay Wilson left for Sewanee and William C. Harris and Robert Stuart enrolled at Virginia Seminary.

In June 1963, the Pisani family, Frank, Hap, Sally and Jack, left Holy Comforter for Virginia Theological Seminary where he had accepted the office of Director of Development. He later became Associate Dean and subsequently moved to Raleigh, N. C., to become President of St. Mary's Junior College.

A call committee was named to seek a new Priest-in-Charge. The Rt. Rev. Hamilton West met with this group on several occasions. Bishop West discussed in great detail the priests' strengths and weaknesses. He also shared information about their families and who might be a likely match with Holy Comforter as a parish.



The Rev. James A. Hardison

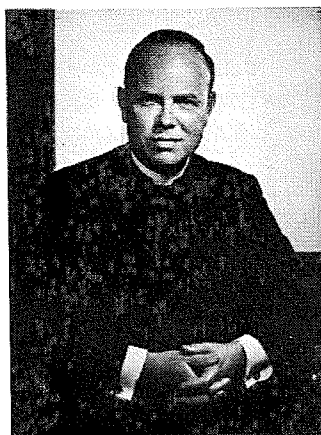
After due consideration and visitation, in August 1963, the Rev. James A. Hardison came with his wife, Mary, together with children, Paul and Carol. Another daughter, Ann, was born while the family resided in Tallahassee. He had served three years as Assistant Rector of All Saints in Jacksonville. The new Rector was a social gospel priest with a passion for social justice and change, stressing civil rights, poverty and capital punishment. He and his wife, Mary, initiated a food and clothes closet housed in a downstairs room in the parish hall that had once served as a children's chapel. Mary Hankins was a devoted worker who maintained and perpetuated this outreach ministry for many years.

In his years at Holy Comforter, Mr. Hardison invited black priests and bishops to deliver sermons making the black community feel welcome in our church family. He helped to lead the church in many outreach programs. Some of these were the Foster Children Program, the building projects at the Community Service Center in the Frenchtown area, the adoption of a fatherless family, and Halfway House. Transportation for the needy, services to Sunland and the continued service to the patients of the state hospital in Chattahoochee. He also helped shape the Housing Foundation, the Tallahassee Urban League and the school system's Teenage Parent Program.

The Rev. Mark Waldon became Curate at Monticello's Christ Episcopal Church and was welcomed as Assistant to the Rector at Holy Comforter. Bill Jones left Tallahassee in 1965 for seminary in Virginia. In 1969 Tom Feamster and Michael Rowell

answered the call to enter seminary at Sewanee. As had been the custom, each seminarian received a monthly stipend from Holy Comforter Church offering some financial support. The Wednesday night healing service was perpetuated. As a family man, Mr. Hardison felt the traditional midnight Christmas Eve Communion should be changed to an earlier hour to make it inclusive for the whole family. An 8:00 pm service would allow time for worship and preparation for Christmas Day. Change often creates a struggle. Needless to say, the midnight service was resumed.

After serving Holy Comforter for seven years, Father Hardison left in 1970 and moved back to Jacksonville to work for the State Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services in the Family Services Division.



The Rev. William Cone Harris

A new Rector arrived at Holy Comforter who already had strong ties to church and community. The Rev. William Harris arrived with his wife, Bette, and children, Priscilla, Peter, Paul and Patrick. They would occupy the newly acquired rectory on Lucy Street. Bill had received his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1965. After serving churches in Monticello and Madison, Florida, he accepted a pastorate in Alexandria, Virginia, before his call to Holy Comforter.

A building committee had been designated and the Rector promoted the fact that additional space was needed if there were to be programs for older children and evening groups. Sullivan Chapel named for Miss Mattie Sullivan, Edge Lounge (also a memorial), and a new education wing with classrooms were dedicated. Renovation of the par-

ish hall was also accomplished. At an evening celebration of Holy Communion on January 22, 1975, these new facilities and chapel appointments were dedicated. It is revealing to note that the altar rail installed in the chapel is the original one which was made for our first church building. Gene Thornton had wisely salvaged it when our sanctuary was converted to the parish hall.

Evening Bible study for adults continued. Mr. Harris added many new traditions to the life of the Holy Comforter family; brightly colored banners were a joyful addition to the celebrations of baptism and confirmation. Black beans and rice supplemented the menu of pancakes at the Shrove Tuesday supper. A new event began the weekend of May 21, 1971, when a group of approximately seventy parishioners from Holy Comforter went camping near Port St. Joe. A vacation church school, *A Time For Children*, was conducted in the summer of 1971. A Folk Mass was a beautiful contribution to the worship and weekend Vestry retreats afforded a concentrated time to evaluate and plan. The Rector discontinued Morning Prayer and instituted the Eucharist at every Sunday service. Tradition was broken when Harriette McCarter became the first female Vestry member and also the first Junior Warden to serve as the people's warden. Electing female Vestry members has since become commonplace. Another lady to make history in the parish was Mrs. Cliff Gwynn. At the 128th Annual convention of the Diocese of Florida held at St. John's Church, our delegate, Noanne Gwynn was the first woman to ever make a motion on the floor of the convention and subsequently a motion was passed commending her! Holy Comforter celebrated its 20th anniversary at the end of 1973. A new calendar year was launched in 1974 with resumption of the Feast of Lights Service. A first grade class was added to the Day School, a special ministry.

Moving into the 70's, a strong youth program had developed. The Rev. Michael Hesse arrived to serve as the first full-time Assistant Rector. He was formally introduced to the congregation and gave his first sermon on June 17, 1973.

The Rev. Michael Hesse



The first service in the new Sullivan Chapel was Holy Communion on Wednesday evening, May 6, 1974. Following ordination to the priesthood, this was also Mike's first service as celebrant for the Holy Eucharist.

Another left our parish to enter seminary in 1974. Bud Williams enrolled in Virginia Theological Seminary. The Church of the Holy Comforter and the Church of the Advent hosted the Diocesan Convention in 1975. The meetings were held at Holy Comforter. Office space was provided for the Rev. Barnum McCarty as he worked with the Camp Weed program. Holy Comforter maintained its outreach effort by providing a furniture warehouse for those in need. A group of men from Holy Comforter provided their muscles and their trucks to help folks move from one home to another.



The Rev. George Demetrios Kontos

In July 1975, the Rev. George Demetrios Kontos arrived to serve as Rector. Accompanying him were his wife Theresa (Terry) and daughter, Elizabeth. Father Kontos had been serving as a Canon at St. John's Cathedral in Jacksonville. George was a guitar playing priest whose music and singing enhanced much worship and many church and school functions.

The school had begun to add grades. At the beginning of the 1975-76 school year, the second grade was added. An impressive Lenten study on *Death and Dying* was offered. Men's Prayer Breakfasts were inaugurated and a chancel drama of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday added to the significance of this holy time. A moving seasonal program of dance was also offered. In 1976, a practice was initiated when Jane

Robinson served as the first female Senior Warden. Mike and Claudia Hesse left to assume duties at Holy Cross Mission in Pensacola. The year 1977 ushered in amazing Buck Breakfasts prepared by the Men's Cooking Crew under the direction of Bill Mayo.

The Rev. Richard Wayne Moore, his wife, Linda, and daughter, Jennifer arrived. Ordained to the diaconate at the cathedral in Jacksonville, our new Assistant Rector preached his first sermon at Holy Comforter on June 26, 1977.

Teaching principals (regular classroom teachers), had served as administrators and liaison between the school and church. The growth of the school demanded a full-time head. Dr. Paul Hamilton Fuller filled this position to serve as the school's first Headmaster. The school had grown by adding a grade a year. By 1978 classes extended through fifth grade.

The Wholly Comfortables were organized for monthly adult socials in the homes of our church family. Those who attended can remember the fun shared on a hayride, at a fish fry, a box supper, eating Brunswick stew cooked in an open pit and even sipping green beer! Other special events and seasonal parties added to the fun and fellowship of these gatherings. A twenty-fifth anniversary was celebrated in 1978. The ceramic dove which adorned the outside front of the church was created by a student of Bill Watson and dedicated as a memorial to him. Rick Moore served the youth of our parish and diocese when a youth renewal movement, Happening, was introduced. Kitchen renovations and an office wing culminated construction from 1978-1981. Mike Ellis chose Seabury Western as his seminary. He built the aumbray in Sullivan Chapel as a parting gift to Holy Comforter. A few years later Mike returned to pastor Holy Spirit, a new church in Tallahassee.

In August, 1979, Father Rick Moore left to become Assistant Rector at Christ Church and Vicar at St. Paul's-in-the-Hills, both in Winchester, Virginia. There were other departures and arrivals in 1981-82 as Jill Mercer ended her services as Administrative Assistant, Sally Lewis resigned as Business Manager and was succeeded by Brim Stone. Catherine Apel assumed the roles of Director of Programs and Director of Religious Education for the day school.

During George Kontos' tenure, programs involving the youth seem to be flourishing with children in choir and as acolytes. EYC joined the youth at the Church of the Advent for programs and activities. Camp Weed accommodated many young folks from our parish. Passover and Seder dinners led by Rabbi Garfein and others from

Temple Israel afforded enriching experiences. Maundy Thursday hand and foot washing, the solemn stripping of the altar followed by the extinguished lights in the sanctuary, and an all night vigil gave special meaning to the conclusion of Lent. The darkened sanctuary on Good Friday Eve made an emotional impact as the hanging cross and its two shadows became visible on the back wall.

Margie Watkins was employed as Administrative Assistant to the Rector and Parish in 1986. Her position continued until January, 1993.

After graduating from Sewanee in 1982, The Rev. Robert Marsh arrived with his wife, Diane, and children, Robert, Richard and Laura. Our new assistant was ordained to the diaconate in Jacksonville and to the priesthood at Holy Comforter in December, 1982.

The day school continued to grow adding afternoon enrichment for those young children normally leaving at noon. An early morning program beginning at 7:30 known as the Alpha Program, a primer class, and grades six, seven, and eight extended the program into middle school. Holy Comforter School was so loved by the children that they lovingly referred to it as the "Holy Blanket".

A vacated doctor's office building adjoining the church property was purchased from Radiology Associates and renovated for the middle school. A Deputy Head of School was hired to assist with administrative duties of this new area. Due to low enrollment, the middle school closed at the end of the 1985-86 school year. Tallahassee Memorial Hospital purchased the building. An extended afternoon enrichment for the students began. This Omega Program accommodated many student's from three to six o'clock in the afternoons.

Ham Fuller, Head of School, remained until 1983 when he left to enter seminary at Sewanee. Several years later, Jim Wright, a communicant, left to enter Colgate-Rochester Seminary. This brought the total to thirteen postulants from Holy Comforter who had answered the call.

Jane Mooney assumed leadership of the day school as its first Headmistress. She had been a classroom teacher in public school and a member of the Tallahassee Community College faculty. As an active communicant, she had served on the Vestry at Holy Comforter as well as being Senior Warden and Chair of the Day School Board.

The School Board was enlarged to include faculty representation, parents (often from other faiths and churches), members of the Vestry, parishioners from Holy Comforter and other Episcopal parishes. This group was responsible to the parish via the Vestry. In some rules and procedures for the parish school dated 1964, these statements are found: "It is recognized that the school is an integral part of the parish and can operate successfully only with the support of the Vestry. It is of the utmost importance that the Vestry understand the inner workings of the school, its academic and religious program, financial operations and future plans." In addition, "It should be expected that the school will be an asset to the parish by creating additional good will within the community."

The school has visibility in our city by virtue of the fact that our students participate in county-wide programs related to the school. Musical performances have been shared with other school and civic groups. Some years ago, active communicants of this parish were instrumental in the formation of the Diocesan Board of Regents and the instigation of accreditation of parochial schools by that body. The spiritual development of children, the nurturing of moral and spiritual values and a strong, comprehensive academic program is the basis of and reason for the school's existence. Children attend chapel three days a week. Not many Holy Comforter communicants subscribe to this much weekly attendance in church. Unchurched families have found a church home at Holy Comforter initiated by their children's attendance at the school.

Leaving Holy Comforter in 1984, Father Bob Marsh became rector of St. Peter's in Jacksonville. Sally Lewis entered Seabury-Western Seminary and Libby Hall assumed her duties as Coordinator of Lay Ministries.

A few years earlier, the ceiling had been "lowered" in the parish hall. It was restored to its original style with exposed beams. Completely redecorated, it was designated as Lewis Hall in honor of Mrs. Sarah Lewis, a benefactor of Holy Comforter. Sally Lewis, granddaughter of "Mama" Sarah, was ordained to the diaconate in June, 1988. Sally's parents, Cheever and Betty Lewis, are charter members of Holy Comforter. The Rev. Sarah Elizabeth Lewis celebrated her first Eucharist in December, 1988. Exquisite memorial stained glass windows and a door enhanced the beauty of Sullivan Chapel. These were designed, created and installed by some skillful, talented parishioners who were commissioned by the donors. Additional windows were installed at one entrance to the sanctuary and in the chancel. The Food and Clothes Closet moved from the parish hall basement to its own trailer providing more space and easier access. An impressive new organ was installed in the sanctuary.

Father Kontos initiated the concept of Pastoral Assistants as well as a Parish Council to assist in the ongoing life and ministry at Holy Comforter. The *Dove*, the monthly newsletter to inform the church family and communicate the life of the parish, had continued. Members of Holy Comforter participated in the life of the church as Liturgical Families who planned special activities during the church year. For many years opportunities for spiritual renewal and refreshment were made available. These have included Faith Alive, Cursillo, Happening, Kairos, Marriage Encounter, The Catechumenate, Faith at Work, Bible Study, Adult Classes, and Mission Group.

Within the parish there was much activity. Parish camping trips, begun in the past, continued for a few years. Those of Scottish heritage celebrated the Kirking of the Tartans conducted by the St. Andrews Society. On the Sunday closest to Epiphany a huge bonfire, fueled by used Christmas trees, created a party atmosphere that concluded with wassail and cookies. An annual Ministries Fair to acquaint parishioners with church activities and programs also provided opportunities to learn where to serve and become involved. Visiting priests came to enlist support for Food for the Poor. A fair took place to secure support for the International Heifer Project.

The numerical growth at Holy Comforter and its ever growing service to the community, based on a welcoming spirit of love, inspired Father Kontos to dream of moving the parish and school. The possibility of a high school and even the development of a retirement community were envisioned. There were thoughts of accomplishing this together with a Roman Catholic partnership. A Holy Comforter 2000 Committee was formed to pursue relocation and an expanding future. Father Kontos was a visionary.

A deacon, The Rev. Jim Weber, a communicant at the Church of the Advent, was assigned by the bishop to serve at Holy Comforter. Under the guidance of the Rector, Jim conducted some services at Holy Comforter, but his primary contribution seemed to be ministering to residents in nursing homes.

Father Kontos announced his resignation effective the end of 1992 conducting his final services on Christmas Eve.

In interim Rector called by Bishop Frank Cerveney. Henry "Hank" Pinkerton served from January, 1993 through December.

During this period, members of the parish became aware that Miccosukee Road

was to be widened extensively, jeopardizing the parking area. Trees were to be removed. Driving and parking patterns were to change dramatically.

During the interim, whenever the need arose, local clergy ministered to our congregation. They planned services to support Holy Comforter when there was no clergy serving the parish on a regular basis. The Revs. Harry Douglas, Lee Graham, Roger K. Steinhauer, Eddie Jones and Bill Finlaw were among those who came to the aid of our parish family.

In the “olden days”, a call committee met with the bishop who suggested possible candidates. Members of the committee would meet with each candidate and attend a worship service in which the candidate participated. Following this, a likely prospect would visit Holy Comforter and preach, giving the congregation an opportunity to observe.

This procedure had changed when the parish was in search of a rector in 1993. The Vestry appointed a committee of fourteen to serve on the search committee. The National Church mandated that a parish profile be written and the position was referred to the deployment office. As applications were received, Canon Arthur Spruill served as advisor to the committee. Members of this group visited several applicants who, in turn, came to visit Holy Comforter.

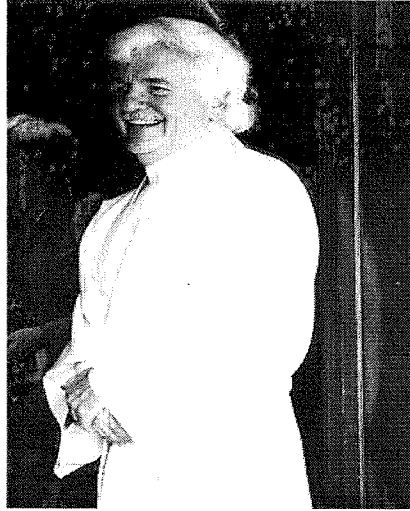


The Rev. F. Thomas Crittenden

The Rev. F. Thomas Crittenden, an Associate Rector, at St. Martin's in Ellisville, Missouri, accepted the call in early November, 1993, after visiting Holy Comforter with his wife Christianna, and young son, Joseph. Their move to Tallahassee was delayed until the birth of their daughter, Conde'. A short time later, on February 2, 1994, Father Tom had his first service at Holy Comforter. He came with a background of work in Christian Education, Program and Youth. During these initial years with Father Tom, some established activities were maintained. Additional program and personnel were introduced in the 90's. Vacation Bible School was reinstated with much parish involvement as leaders, staff and providers of supplies. Eve Haney was hired as Program Director with her emphasis being on Sunday School. A prayer and praise group gathered after the Wednesday service for a covered dish supper. Father Tom's presence provided another singing, guitar playing priest for the enjoyment of others.

In November, 1995, Holy Comforter School recognized its fortieth anniversary by "Celebrating the Spirit." The Rev. Frank Pisani, the school's founder, returned for chapel services with the children, church worship and a celebration dinner held in Alfriend Hall at St. John's. One Sunday each year is designated as National Episcopal School Sunday. This has been recognized for many years. Special presentations by faculty, students and parishioners have shared the influence of Holy Comforter Church and School on their lives. Father Tom conducts a weekly chapel for the students. He also teaches regularly scheduled classes and serves as Spiritual Director for the school.

Outreach ministry continued with the maintenance of the Food and Clothes Closet, food at the Shelter for the homeless and support for the Habitat for Humanity. Huge yard sales raised money for this last community endeavor. There were far-reaching results from our support to a companion church in Cuba. A very small dilapidated church which was barely standing needed to be replaced. In 1998 Julia Sullivan instigated a program for Holy Comforter's involvement. Other parishioners and some outside the parish have made numerous trips to Ceballos with the goal of rebuilding the church. They afforded some of the physical labor. Holy Comforter offered clothing, supplies and money. Jane Robinson provided a small banner for each child in the congregation as well as a larger banner for the church. Our Rector made his second visit to participate at the time of the church dedication in March, 2003. The Bishop of Cuba, four priests, their families and other lay people from the community have visited Holy Comforter as well as the Diocesan Jacksonville area. Outreach was also extended to SAMS (South American Missionary Society) in Honduras where Pam Terry, a Parishioner, had served. Holy Comforter Parish has contributed money, clothing and other necessities. The priest and his family visited Holy Comforter and enjoyed Tallahassee.



The Rev. William Finlaw

Over the years, The Rev. William Finlaw shared many gifts with our church family. He conducted an occasional quiet day, study groups, opportunities to reflect on the relationship of the church and school and weekly Lenten programs. After retiring from his work at Faith Counseling Center in 1995, he joined the church staff as Associate Rector the following year. This offered some relief for our Rector as Father Bill conducted some services and preached with an introductory prayer which will be long remembered. "Lord make our lives clear spaces where children can see light and meaning and through which they can enter into your love. Amen". Reprints of Bill's sermons were frequently requested by members of the congregation.

Father Bill taught fourth graders in the school. One of his class projects resulted in the publication of student written psalms. The creative writing entitled "Who's Created by Whom?... Psalms Created by Children" appeared in *The Living Church* in September, 1997.

Supper clubs composed of church members brought creative gifts before a gala evening crowd when skits were performed. Some shared questionable acting skills but long-to-be remembered was a "Sonny and Cher" song rendered by Christi and Tom Crittenden. Father Bill's performance as a singing nun wearing appropriate attire, produced abundant laughter. Father Tom's conversation with God about the relocation of the church and school was hilarious.

A loving contribution was made to the Tallahassee community and surrounding area when Father Bill and his wife, Kay, shared an all day workshop related to death and dying. The event was entitled *One lasting Gift*. Bill had been diagnosed with cancer. Widespread grief followed his death on July 27, 2000. Holy Comforter parish was dealt a devastating blow. He was so endeared to the school community that a street on the school campus bears his name.

“Without a vision the people perish.” Fr. Tom Crittenden presented a new vision for the future of Holy Comforter Parish encompassing community life, the school and outreach. Based on our strong emphasis as a caring, diverse congregation, it became clearly evident that the parish must relocate. A capital campaign was organized early in 1997 with the hiring of a professional director. “Preparing a Place” was the theme of this effort with Larry and Jo Deeb serving as co-chairmen. A dinner took place in Al-friend Hall on Sunday, February 23. The history of Holy Comforter was presented in decade increments. The capital campaign was underway. During this same month, the Crittendens added a new member to their family when Harrison was born.

Our extremely diverse group of parishioners enjoyed monthly supper clubs in members’ homes. “Women’s Night Out” gatherings shared decorated bags filled with toiletries for Elder Care Services. Fellowship and interesting programs were planned. Softball games between the Vestry and EYC afforded aching bodies and tests of the player’s skills. Stewardship was organized in cottage meetings to discuss our future and to learn more about the obligation and opportunity to be faithful stewards of all that God has provided. Programs entitled *God’s Gifts and God’s Promises* and *What Jesus Really Said About Giving; A Change of Heart* were used in this effort. Serving as loyal stewards of our time, energy and talents bestowed on us by God was emphasized as well as money. Camping week-ends at the Diocesan Camp and Conference Center near Live Oak afforded fun in camp lodging, tents and campers. There was a baptism in the lake. Those attending bonded with fellowship culminating on Sunday morning with Eucharist in the chapel.

Lucene Birch was ordained a deacon on September 13, 1998, at the Cathedral in Jacksonville. She became involved in the parish assisting with services, ministering to the school and serving shut-ins at the nursing facilities as well as other individuals with special needs.



Deacon Lucene Birch



*Labyrinth located
on Fleischmann Road*

With parishioners visiting labyrinths throughout the nation, an idea was planted to have a labyrinth at Holy Comforter as a gift to the community. The Labyrinth 2000 Society was organized. An opportunity was afforded for the public to walk a labyrinth. On New Year's Eve, 1999, a borrowed canvas labyrinth was displayed at East Hill Baptist Church gymnasium. An appropriate atmosphere was created by members of the Society. So many came to participate and meditate that the hours had to be extended. At the same time, a joint worship service was conducted in the sanctuary at East Hill. This was a joint effort of a Baptist, a Korean Presbyterian, Lutheran, and an Episcopal church with clergy representatives participating. Construction of the labyrinth ensued at the newly acquired property with funds and labor coming from a group of parishioners and other devoted persons.

A service of dedication took place on New Year's 2000. Easter sunrise services have been conducted using the Iona Liturgy. The first such service abounded with glorious evidence of God's creation. A lighted moon was visible in the western sky as the sun appeared in the east. A flock of geese flew overhead. It was later learned that on Iona a goose is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. To acknowledge this symbolism, a goose was carved from one of the tree trunks. A large white rock was adapted as an altar in memory of Father Bill Finlaw. Occasional Eucharistic Services are celebrated at this site.

A new effort was made to add to the spiritual life at Holy Comforter when the chancel Christmas tree was salvaged. During the Lenten season, a cross was constructed from the trunk and limbs of this tree. It was displayed in the chancel during Holy Week, adorned with a crown of thorns on Good Friday and flowers at Easter. The symbolism conveyed the fact that a tree which was enjoyed while awaiting the birth of Christ was later related to the cross of His crucifixion.

Barbara Hodges who was currently teaching at Holy Comforter School served as interim director in 1993 and was subsequently invited to be the Head of School. She was installed in 1994 and instituted innovative plans and programs. Barbara's background of business, teaching, and administration were assets to her position. As a mother to two sons and wife of a Methodist minister, she had many outstanding qualities.

Capable, enthusiastic, dynamic parents organized to purchase land on Fleischmann Road. In 1996, acreage in excess of forty acres was purchased for the relocation of the church and school. With the widening of Miccosukee Road, the church received condemnation money for some property in front of the church that was to be sacrificed. Some of this would go toward the purchase of the new property. The sixth grade was reinstated at the school on Miccosukee Road for the 1996-97 school year. Two portables accommodated the students. Middle school construction at the new site began in 1996. At the beginning of classes the following year, the new structure housed sixth and seventh grades. A bell tower connected by a columned walkway and a field house were completed. The following year eighth grade was added to complete the middle school offerings. This culminated in the first graduation in 1999. The next classroom structure housed grades three through five with students making the transition from the old school. Other funding made it possible for additional building. Two more classroom facilities, additional portables, an administration building and media center provided space for three-year olds and pre-k through second grade. Bishop Stephen Jecko dedi-

cated the individual facilities. The entire school had vacated and relocated in the fall of 2002. A plan to establish funds for tuition assistance is a long-term desire.

Gail Banke responded to our advertisement for an Administrative Assistant. She assumed this position in September, 2000. Her personality and skills proved invaluable as Holy Comforter faced the challenges of maintaining its composure while moving and relocating to join the school on Fleischmann Road.

On Whitsunday, June 3, 2001 the congregation gathered at the new property to reflect on the history of Holy Comforter and to launch an additional capital campaign for the building of a basement in the new plant and to view the planned location of our anticipated church structure. A mock altar reminiscent of the one used when Holy Comforter began was set up at the approximate location of the new sanctuary.

In the fall of 2002, the school was incorporated enabling the issuing of bonds. Additional land was purchased bringing the total acreage to an amount in excess of eighty acres. Membership on the School Board included persons from other Episcopal churches as well as other denominations. The board increased in size but always had Vestry and Holy Comforter Parish representation. Annual board retreats have been conducted to stimulate and structure the work of this body.

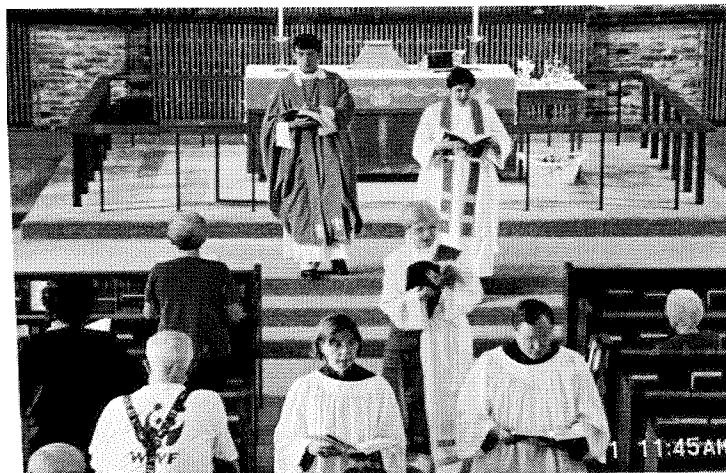
Efforts were made to mutually involve the church and the school in respective activities. Grandpeople's Day at the school recognized parishioners as true or surrogate grandparents. The parent teacher organization welcomed the church family as members in the parent teacher parish organization. An annual Fall Festival with overnight tent camping provided a favorite activity for church and school families. *The Spirit*, a quarterly newsletter, is shared with the Parish.

Mother Shari Hobby who had been training with Father Tom as her mentor came early in 2002 to share duties as an assistant at Holy Comforter. Her training had culminated with ordination to the priesthood. She brought new ideas and programs. Together with her husband, Jim, also a priest, a weekly Lenten program based on Bible Study was offered. Mother Shari's role was primarily to assist the Rector's ministry. Father Tom was involved in study and summer activity as he pursued a doctorate.

A clergy appreciation dinner was enjoyed in the parish hall in the fall of 2002. Clergy and their spouses were recognized and honored for their service and dedication to Holy Comforter.

An inspiring dinner and program entitled “Moving Our Story”, took place in Lewis Hall, the parish hall, on January, 2003. Parishioners presented the history of Holy Comforter and the accomplishments of each of our Rectors who had served through the years. Hearing about the many aspects of our parish life was nostalgic and celebrated the history of the church. Through the years Holy Comforter had become known as a place where we are all part of a family and a place where all are welcome. Diversity has always been great. Our mission was proclaimed “to bring others to Christ through praying, praising, healing, teaching and serving.” “A place where love takes flight” was our identification.

The church property on Miccosukee Road had been put up for sale. God had offered us a vision of the need to relocate and join the school on Fleischmann Road. However, a detailed, suitable sale had not been part of this vision. Patience prevailed accompanied by anxiety and frustration. A sale finally culminated in February, 2003. Bishop Jecko was present on February 2, 2003, for confirmation. He also conducted a ceremony of deconsecration of the sanctuary. The final service of worship in the sanctuary of the Church of the Holy Comforter was conducted on February 9, 2003. At the conclusion, parishioners symbolically carried all of the movable appointments outside. These were later transported for storage or use at the temporary location at the middle school.



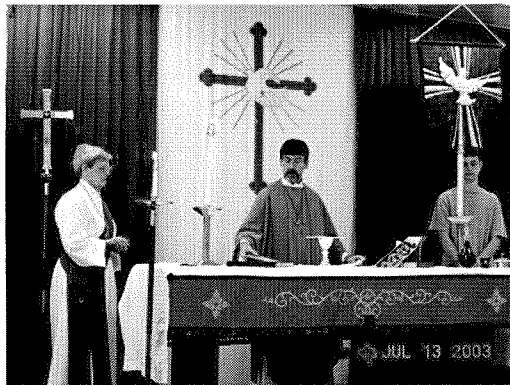
Final Service at 1500 Miccosukee Road

The Lord had provided. The property on Miccosukee Road had been sold. The gigantic task of moving was engineered by the Administrative Assistant. The organ was dismantled and stored along with the stained glass windows and other church appointments. Holy Comforter received a special blessing when suitable storage was found for furnishings as well as office space located at Tech Place. A private school rented some classroom space from the buyer and ultimately a small church congregation began using the sanctuary for worship.



Holy Comforter School is used as a place for midweek and Sunday services

Worship services began in a large classroom area of the middle school on February 16, 2003. On Saturday, under the direction of Eve and Locke Haney, “Set up” and “breakdown” teams convert the classrooms into a worship area and Sunday School rooms. Following the last Sunday service each week, the teams again arrange the classrooms for the resumption of school the next day. Church supplies are stored in a trailer provided on the school campus. The food closet was allowed to continue on the site off Medical Drive. The altar guild has worked to store chancel appointments and supplies. For easy mobility, castors were put on an altar that had been given to the school and the church’s very first credence table was put into use again. Claire Walker made a docile which, along with church banners, enhances the atmosphere of the classroom. Rooms have been designated for Sunday classes and a small area at the end of the hall serves as a place for intercessory prayer. Both the Chancel Choir and Folk Choir provide music for the worship services. The Holy Comforter community was organized in a school. Almost fifty years later, it became necessary to return to a school for a place to worship.



Middle school classroom serves as a sanctuary for worship services

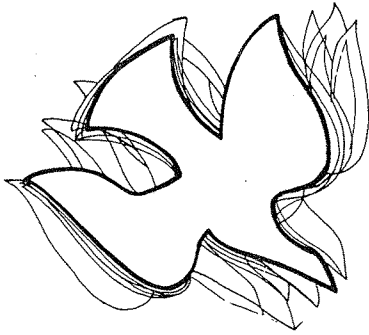
Buck breakfasts are prepared and served by the Men's Cooking Crew as well as occasional cookouts. Summer brunches were held in an effort to provide special fellowship and bonding for our church family. The Lenten offering was designated to allow young people from Grace Mission to attend Camp Weed. In March, 2003, a symbolic groundbreaking for the new church took place with the rector, wardens, and three remaining charter members taking part. Mother Shari left Holy Comforter to be engaged full-time with her husband in Episcopal World Mission work.

As the construction of a new church building and accompanying facilities is underway, the vision broadens as we accommodate a diverse congregation, a school and a broadened community. We look forward to growth from nearby neighborhoods. Parishioners are aware of the Holy Comforter, the Holy Spirit, as being ever-present in our service to our Lord and Savior. We pray that we may be ever-mindful of our stewardship.

For fifty years God has blessed this flock. The Holy Spirit has been with us in our challenges, accomplishments and victories as well as our doubts, sorrows, and joys.

And so we proclaim.....

ONWARD AND UPWARD!!



*MISSION
STATEMENT*

*The mission of Holy Comforter Church
is to bring others to Christ through
Praying, Praising,
Healing, Teaching,
and
Serving.*