

The History of St. Luke's, 1767-2007

In pre-Revolutionary South Carolina the colony was divided into parishes by the colonial government. St. Luke's Parish was established by an act of the Colonial Assembly on May 23, 1767. Even though a church was authorized, none was built until 1786. In that year Wm. Hort, Esq. moved to "Maye" River and was "desirous of promoting the building of a church in his neighborhood." Joined by John Bull, James Garvey, George Hipp, Jacob Guerard and Daniel Stevens, he erected a church on what is now Route #170 on land donated by John Bull. "A respectable congregation soon collected," including many planters from Hilton Head Island.

Because it was such a long trip by boat and carriage for the Islanders on Sundays, they built a small wooden chapel in 1788 known as the Zion Chapel of Ease at what is now the intersection of Route 278 and Mathews Drive. The first permanent rector was the Rev. Phillip Mathews. Mathews Drive is named for him. He was rector from 1811-1828 serving St. Helena's, Beaufort and Zion Chapel. In 1834 the Zion Chapel congregation purchased two chalices from England made by the noted silversmith, Edward Barnard.

In 1862, Union Troops occupied the Island forcing the plantation owners to flee to the mainland and abandon Zion Chapel. After the war, no trace of the chapel or its furnishings could be found. St. Luke's on the mainland barely survived the post-war years and finally disbanded in 1872. The building was sold to the Methodists who worship there today.

Years later, a Philadelphia gentleman bought what he thought were antique silver goblets. Removal of the tarnish revealed the inscription, "Zion Chapel, Hilton Head, 1834." Learning the chapel no longer existed, he entrusted them to St. Helena's, Beaufort until the time when they could be returned to the rightful altar.

Approximately 100 years passed before Hilton Head Island became a thriving community once again. As Episcopalians moved to the Island, they formed a discussion group and prayed together. They persuaded mainland clergy from the Church of the Cross in Bluffton and the church in Grahamville to hold services on the Island wherever they could find space such as the Honey Horn Chapel, Chamber of Commerce Office and the Hilton Head Inn among others.

By 1963 a Chapel Fund Committee made up of Reuben Clark, Arthur Gerhard, Caroline "Beany" Newhall, Charles Doughtie and John Postel was appointed to plan for a church with a small wing for Sunday School and an office. Sea Pines' Charles Fraser donated a

five acre lot on Pope Avenue. The young church was started as a mission under the revived name of St. Luke's. The first fund raising project was a Tour of Homes held Oct. 24, 1963 chaired by Mrs. Reuben Clark. Ground-breaking ceremonies were held April 16, 1964. Reuben Clark found the large bell that now hangs in the church yard in a Savannah junk yard and gave it to the church. It had belonged to a church in Key West that was destroyed by a hurricane. Bob Carr of Ashville gave the handsome walnut and cherry wood for the chancel and the altar rail. Specially laminated beams came from the West coast. The huge shell that originally served as the baptismal font came from Africa, a gift from Winnie Morris. The historic chalices were retrieved from St. Helena's and burnished to their original beauty. The first rectory for the future Rector was built on Lagoon Rd. in Forest Beach on land donated by the Hilton Head Company.

The Rev. Henry Sizer became the first Vicar. Christmas Eve 1964 Island Episcopalians and many of their friends received the Blood of Christ from the venerable, now gleaming, 1834 chalices at the first service marking the rebirth of St. Luke's on Hilton Head Island.

In September, 1966 the Rev. Dr. Thorne Sparkman replaced the Rev. Sizer as Vicar. The Rev. Dr. Sparkman was a Rhodes Scholar with a B. A. in Theology from Oxford, an M. A. from the University of South Carolina and a D. D. from the University of Chattanooga.

By 1968 due to the rapid growth and progress of the church, an expansion fund to add a parish hall and more Sunday School rooms was begun. Charles Doughtie was named Fund-Raising Chairman and Charles Bates Building Chairman.

The Women's Guild donated playground equipment to the church in 1968. Throughout that year the Sunday School rooms were used by various Island groups, Boy Scouts, Sunday evening youth groups, Alcoholic Anonymous and an arts and crafts group from the Women's Association of Hilton Head.

The new construction was completed in February, 1970. A cloistered garden between the church and the new addition was started under the supervision of Virginia Howe and Alva Hines and named the Alice Doughtie Memorial Garden.

In its five years of existence St. Luke's had grown considerably and demonstrated its financial stability. February 22, 1970 the Diocese was officially declared a Parish. Dr. Sparkman was unanimously accepted as the first Rector of St. Luke's Parish. By September, 1971, all accounts were paid, all indebtedness on the church property cleared and the church could be consecrated. Bishop Temple held the formal Service of

Consecration on December 5, 1971.

The Asnip Memorial doors to the church with bronze fish hardware were installed in October, 1972. From Sept. until Dec. Sea Pines Academy (now Hilton Head Prep) met in the new Parish Hall while their buildings were being constructed.

In 1973 the first two Lay Readers, Anders Kaufman and Roberts Vaux were licensed, followed by Al Shepherd and George Jennings. They trained the Acolytes and both groups grew to meet the needs of the worship services.

Upon his retirement in 1973, Dr. Sparkman was offered the rectory to live in as long as he wished. It was refurbished for him at the time and sold following his death. A new rectory was built in Sea Pines on Club Course Drive. The Rev. Holland Clark, a Savannah native and son of one of the founders, answered the call to be the next Rector. He had served in the Marine Corps from 1944-1946, has a B. A. from Yale, a B. D. from Virginia Theological Seminary and a S. T. M. from the University of the South. The Rev. Clark was installed January, 1974 and retired in January, 1992. He chose to purchase the rectory from the church upon his retirement.

Due to a rapidly growing population on the Island, by 1975 another building expansion, adding a Sunday School wing and an administration wing, was needed with the project being completed early in 1978. Ben Turnage was called as the first Associate Rector in 1976. He started the first EYC. An Intercessory Prayer Group, which is still active today, was formed in 1978 by Becky Stickle, Joyce Kennedy and Bella Powel. Several ladies in the church made the beautiful needlepoint covers on the bishop's chair and the altar kneelers. Marianne Faiers became Church Secretary and Office Manager in 1978 and retired in 1998. Stuart Dunbar started taping the sermons and making them available on cassettes in 1978.

In 1979 General Fred Dean hand carved plaques depicting the Apostles and Bob Stafford made a kneeling desk for clergy, which was placed in the chancel as a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Al Keske. The Rev. Terry Fullam came from Darien, CT to teach for the first time, returning many times to teach to the delight of the congregation. This same year, the Rev. Saxton Wolfe became a part time Assistant Rector and remained until 1984. The parish hall and grounds held the Hilton Head Hospital's Bazaar for the community for several years.

A lending library was started in 1980 by William Peart. Mr. and Mrs. Jim Littlejohn developed a youth program which was continued by the Rev. David Miller when he came as the new Curate. In 1981 Penny Rose was hired as Organist and Choir Director

and remained until 2003. In 1981 Rev. Wolfe started a ministry known as "Parish Life in Action" which covered parish outings, tutoring, minor home repairs, telephone, child care, financial/legal advice, housekeeping and helping shut-ins for those in need of these services.

Jody and Charlene Osborne were sponsored as missionaries to Honduras 1984-87. General Fred Dean made new doors with crosses for the aumbrey behind the altar. In 1985 St. Luke's started and completely funded a mission church for the North end of the Island. Eighty-three people from St. Luke's were commissioned to start the All Saints Mission (All Saints Episcopal Church now). The Rev. James Cirillo came on board as the first Youth Minister in 1985. "The Messenger," first published as a weekly newsletter in 1985, continues today as a monthly publication.

Jack Ware was hired as the first Parish Administrator in 1986, and the Rev. Miller left that year to serve in California. The Rev. John Michael van Dyke, a Yale graduate, became the new Associate Rector and introduced some new worship procedures, revived the Acolyte program, started "Sing Hosanna," a weekday evening service of prayer and praise followed by dinner, promoted the Cursillo weekends and small groups following. Larry Ashton and the Rev. van Dyke had 16 acolytes invested in the Order of Francis & Clare (a national acolyte order). "Light from St. Luke's" went on the air on radio station WLOW in 1989. It was a 30 minute broadcast on Sunday mornings featuring a homily by the Rev. John Michael van Dyke and financed by Richard Shafto. Rev. van Dyke accepted a call to Montgomery, AL in 1990.

A chapter of The Daughters of the King was organized in 1987 by Betty Pitts and sixteen ladies were installed as charter members. The active chapter has grown to be one of the largest in the Province. Two cookbooks have been published by the ECW as fund-raisers. A "Feed My Sheep" program was started by Rhoda and Larry Scott and Connie and Jack Mann to replenish the closets at Deep Well.

A successful Capital Funds Drive for another much needed building expansion headed by Marc Puntereri led to ground-breaking for the project in May of 1988. Construction was completed by the end of the year. A pipe organ specially designed for St. Luke's by Gabriel Kney of London, Ontario was included in the expansion project and was installed early in 1989.

Kempton Baldrige, who had a summer ministry at St. Luke's while he was in Seminary at Yale, became Youth Minister in 1989. The Columbarium, located in the Alice Doughtie Memorial Garden, was dedicated in 1990. Aileen Lau provided landscaping and maintenance for the Columbarium.

The Rev. Holland Clark announced his desire to retire in December of 1991, and the Rev. Don McPhail was asked by Bishop Salmon to act as Education Consultant for that year. David Rasmussen became Youth Minister. An Interim Rector, the Rt. Rev. Bill Gordon, retired Bishop of Alaska, came to serve in Jan. of 1992. .

October 11, 1992 the Rev. Gregory Kronz was installed by Bishop Salmon as the new Rector. Rev. Kronz, a graduate of Trinity School for the Ministry, had served the previous four years in San Antonio, TX as Associate Rector. He started the Discovery Classes which he teaches for those interested in joining the church, increased the Sunday morning Services to three, started the Missions Program, leading most of the trips himself and has grown the church in every way especially young families. He also serves on the Standing Committee for the Diocese and continues to serve as the Rector today.

The lot adjacent to the church was purchased in 1993 with a portion of the funds from the Pauline Bernard Estate. Outreach of the Month was started as a way to contribute to worthwhile projects in the community.

The Rev. Edwin Ward, former Headmaster at an Episcopal Prep School who had retired on Hilton Head Island, joined the staff of the church in 1993 as a part time Pastoral Associate. The Rev. Ward started the Stephen Ministry at St. Luke's and served as its clergy leader for 13 years. It remains a strong "one-on-one" lay ministry for members, as well as people in the community.

Dea and Fred Pfeiffer formed a Part-Timers Group to offer fellowship to winter visitors who spend several months on the Island and attend St. Luke's. The Part-Timers are still going strong with many who moved here permanently still attending.

In 1994 St. Luke's Bookstore was opened in memory of J. Howard Stone through funds given by his family and friends. Sue Britt organized and managed the store for several years as well as upgrading and organizing the St. Luke's Library. June Hayden manages the store today. The Rev. Robert Caswell came as a full time Pastoral Associate in the summer of 1994. Sally Warren started St. Luke's Children's School for pre-school children and an after school program using the Sunday School facilities. This was the first year a group of 13 from St. Luke's went to Le Ceibo, Honduras to assist some missionaries and restore a church school. It was the beginning of a very active Missions Program, which supports many Missionaries worldwide and has sponsored multiple groups from St. Luke's going on Mission Trips each year to Honduras, Dominican Republic, Belize, Kenya and Tanzania as well as many places in the U.S.

Jimmy Jones started a new Newcomers Ministry that welcomed visitors and followed up with them.

In 1996 the office building adjacent to the church property was purchased to house the three Clergy, Church Secretary, Accountant, Communications and Administration, Vestry meeting room, parlor and the second floor for the Youth Ministry.

The Rev. Dea Pfeiffer, a permanent Deacon, joined St. Luke's to assist the Clergy. Twelve Lay Readers were trained to be special Lay Eucharistic Ministers to bring Communion, consecrated at an earlier service, to shut-ins. Sharon Smith, a Bible based Christian Counselor, started a counseling service at St. Luke's which is still growing and active. Nov. 30, 1996 fire gutted the Children's School. After extensive rebuilding under the direction of Janet Mosely, classes resumed in June, 1997. An Alzheimer's Respite Program sponsored by St. Luke's and open to the community was begun in 1997 and continued there for ten years. Bill Asnip organized men to participate in Kairos weekends at men's prisons. T. J. Edmond became Youth Minister.

The fourth major building expansion was begun in 1999. Retired Rector, the Rev. Holland Clark, returned on a part time basis to assist with pastoral duties. The Rev. Kent Walley, a graduate of Trinity School for the Ministry, began his ministry as Associate Rector at St. Luke's in July, 1999. Rev. Walley was creative and innovative in his writing and teaching. He adapted The Chronicles of Narnia by C. S. Lewis to be performed over the summer, created "Bethlehem Village" in the parish hall to teach about Jesus' home and life, wrote lessons for Wednesday night small groups, taught adult Sunday School in creative ways, started a small group ministry known as Living Acts 2, and used drama and music to teach creatively among other things.

The new enlarged sanctuary was used to celebrate the Day of Pentecost for the first time in 2000. The Annual Fall Parish Picnic and the Spring Low Country Boil or "Pig Pickin'" to honor new members have become traditions which are celebrated each year. Denise Gildner became the Parish Secretary and remains so today. The Rev. Don Brown became the Pastoral Associate for two years, followed by the Rev. Bill Henry in 2002. Walking the Mourner's Path, an eight week program for dealing with grief, was begun at St. Luke's by Rev. Henry in 2003. A Habitat for Humanity house was sponsored and built by St. Luke's. Jonathan Hobbs was hired as the Youth Minister.

St. Luke's started hosting the Good Friday service, "The Seven Last Words from the Cross" in 2003. Tom Gallagher led Work Days for cleaning the church and started the program for taking their entire Vacation Bible School each year to the kids at York Place, an Episcopal Children's Home in upstate SC. Both projects have continued. The

Church Mouse and Medical Loan Closet opened in 2003. It is a thrift store to benefit Missions and Outreach.

In 2004, Nina Rodman came as the Organist and Music Director.

In 2005 Cec Niemenen retired after seven years as Operations Manager and Corporate Secretary. Kathie Phillips joined the Clergy as a Deacon with her primary focus on Missionary Care with the Global Teams organization. Buzz Yount led Faith Alive, an evangelistic program which came for the second time in 2006. Tom Hendrickson, a graduate of Trinity School for Ministry, became the Pastoral Associate. Needlepoint kneelers were handmade by many women of the church for the Communion rail and put into use in 2006. In 2007 Larry Mann and Larry Setola built a brick memorial courtyard between the sanctuary and the parish hall. The bricks can be engraved to honor or memorialize loved ones.

Credit

We would like to express our appreciation to Dotty Black for preserving our history. Her publication, "The History of St. Luke's", was the primary source for this article. Mrs. Black is the official Historian for the church, was the Secretary of the Vestry for six years, and for many years served as Office Volunteer, Lay Reader and member of the Altar Guild. We have her to thank for the records we have. Her full publication of our history is available from the St. Luke's Library. It is beautifully indexed and easy to use.