

St. John's Centennial

1970-1979

By Anna Aubry

Looking back on our first half century, members of St. John's have a rich heritage to draw from. During those fifty years, a strong lay leadership had developed with the creation of new committees to carry out needed parish services and ministries. Among those ministries were St. Margaret's Guild, the Rector's Committee, the Outreach Committee, the Prayer Group, Saints Alive Thrift Shop, the Education Committee, and, of course, the Vestry. True, the 1970's saw the US and the World in the grips of political and social turmoil. But, in spite of that turmoil, St. John's proceeded to enjoy continued growth, and the congregation focused on what we share in common: parish life, worshiping together, and even enjoying new grounds for commitment.

The year 1970 marked the ordination of the Reverend W. Hamilton Enslow as a non-stipendiary clergyman. Mr. Enslow and his family had long been active members of the parish, and his ordination allowed him to extend his services in a new capacity. He assisted the rector until 1974, when he was assigned to St. Margaret's, Bellevue by Bishop Cochrane, and the Rev. Geoffrey Ethelson was transferred to St. John's.

During this time, the Episcopal Church entered into a trial period on Prayer Book revision; the final version is the Prayer Book we use now. Another change was a trend toward the use of a Folk Mass with contemporary music.

In 1971, the Mitchell House, a small house at 180 3rd Street South, was purchased, completing the church's property acquisition that had begun in the 1950's. The house was rented for a while, then became extra church school space, and was later used almost exclusively by Alcoholics Anonymous and AL-ANON for meetings.

A Vestry task force led by George Oaks began the preliminary steps for a low-cost housing facility for the elderly on church property. However, by the time the groundwork was completed, federal funds were no longer available, and unfortunately the project ended. To cover the expenses of this project and the purchase of the Mitchell House, a new mortgage was negotiated on the church property and the process to vacate Third Street was also back in the works.

In the early 1970's, St. John's began providing child care once a week during daytime Bible Study. With Father Hayman's encouragement, Mary Baldwin, Shirley Allert, Diane Smith, Doreen Duggan, and Jan Spangenberg began working on what would become Moss Bay Preschool. With a \$100 grant for equipment from the Outreach Committee, countless gallons of paint, numerous visits to garage sales and thrift stores, and many hours of scrubbing and painting, these women were able to open the doors to the first two classes in September 1974. Jan Spangenberg became the first Board Chair, and Rainy Husband later became the first Director.

In November 1974, the missions of St. Gregory's and St. Timothy's separated themselves from St. John's, and each became a Diocesan Mission. Father Alan E. Mack became vicar for both. Soon the congregations combined and became Holy Cross. This left St. John's with 464 communicants and 299 families.

A major capital funds drive, Project Reaffirmation, began in 1973. The goals (all achieved!) were to raise pledges for completion of our share (\$11,500) of Huston Conference Center construction at Gold Bar, the remodeling of the Guild Hall (in the basement or "undercroft") including a new floor, improvements in the narthex, and a better organ.

With the assistance of Julia Kissell, Organ Historical Society member and friend of the Hayman family, our organ was located through the Organ Clearing House. The organ had been built in 1892 and had served the Highland Congregational Church in Lowell, Massachusetts until the church was demolished to make way for a

freeway in 1970. It was originally pumped by choir boys, but later Swiss electric bellows were installed. The organ had 19 ranks of pipes and tracker action. The total cost of the organ (purchase price \$2500, shipping costs \$3200, and installation) was about \$8,500.

All 10,000 pounds of organ pieces arrived on Maundy Thursday, 1974. Jim Neal, Chairman of the Organ Committee, his committee and other volunteers began the task of cleaning, carrying, and installing the many, many parts which included over 1,000 pipes with the help of Glen White of the Olympic Organ Builders. In just five months the huge task was completed, and the organ was happily ensconced in its new home, a space 18 feet wide and 20 feet high in what had been the choir practice room. On September 29, 1974, the organ was dedicated in a concert featuring Guy Bouvet, outstanding organist from Geneva, Switzerland, and Margaret Brandon-Irwin, co-director of the Early Music Calliope in Portland. (Sometime, check out the list of St. John's volunteers involved in the putting our organ in place – it's on a plaque in the choir loft.)

Other exciting things were going on at St. John's! In the mid-1970's, many people in our parish made a Cursillo Weekend, a special three-day course or retreat to help serious Christians better understand God's grace and love and their relationship to Jesus, Savior and Friend. These weekend experiences had a real impact on the life of the parish by strengthening the faith and commitments of many people.

In January, 1976, St. John's began an important outreach when it was actively involved in sponsoring a Vietnamese refugee family, Mr. and Mrs. Nguyen Anh and their young sons, Phi and Hiep. Kathy and Ray Tremain served as host family until housing was arranged, and St. Thomas and the Church of the Resurrection assisted financially. Mr. Anh had been a professional photographer with the Saigon Bureau of United Press International.

The Reverend Robert F. Hayman, who had been at St. John's for 19 years, became Archdeacon of the Diocese of Olympia in 1977. While the parish searched for a new rector, Father Irwin McKinney was interim priest and served the parish lovingly and even helped the congregation grow during the year he served St. John's.

In June 1978, Father Robert E. Dunn was called to be St. John's new rector. The parish had waited a long time for this selection to be made, and he was greeted with enthusiasm.

Another all-parish undertaking was the successful "Raise the Roof" drive in 1979. This completed the task of providing a new roof on the church buildings as well as some other needed improvements.

The 1970's saw many, many changes in our country, the world, and definitely in St. John's. During this decade, the conflict in Vietnam ended and our country celebrated its Bicentennial. The country experienced a renewed sense of patriotism and national pride. Many of the causes of the 70's continued to have an effect, but the faith of the nation had been reaffirmed, as had the vision of St. John's Parish.