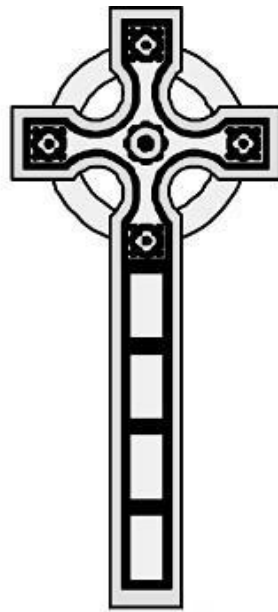


St. Jude's Episcopal Church

50th Anniversary



June 1958 – June 2008

St. Jude's Episcopal Church
200 N. Partin Drive
Niceville, FL 32578

St. Jude's Episcopal Church History

It has taken 50 years for us to make the journey from humble beginnings as a Mission in Valparaiso with 27 members, to arrive at our present location on Partin Drive in Niceville. Early in 1958 several people from Valparaiso who were communicants of St. Simon's On-The-Sound Episcopal Church in Fort Walton Beach, consulted with Bishop Hamilton West, Diocese of Florida, about the possibility of starting a mission in Valparaiso. Bishop West gave his encouragement, outlined the requirements, and assured the help and guidance of Archdeacon Robert F. Cowling from Milton, Florida. A series of meetings were held in the homes of various people, presided over by Father Cowling. Approval for a mission was requested from Bishop West and received. Various names were suggested, voted upon and the name of St. Jude's Episcopal Church was chosen. Pledges and contributions toward a building fund were started. Approval was obtained from the Valparaiso City Council to use the city hall on a temporary basis for Sunday services. The first service was held June 8, 1958 at the Valparaiso City Hall with Air Force Chaplain Ken Treat officiating. Regular services continued primarily with lay readers. Father

Cowling also came from Milton periodically for services of Holy Communion.

In July 1958, Bishop West assigned Bertram (Bert) Herlong, then a seminary student, to work with us and hold services during the summer. Following his graduation from the School of Theology at the University of the South at Sewanee in June 1959, he was ordained a Deacon, becoming our first Vicar. He was ordained as a priest in 1960. Negotiations



St. Jude's, Valparaiso, FL November 1960

were started for a suitable building site and the site on Aurora St. and Hwy 190 in Valparaiso was

approved by Bishop West and the land purchased. Then, in November of 1960, we dedicated the original church building in Valparaiso.



Consecration of St. Jude's Valparaiso, FL, Nov. 1960

Services were moved from the Valparaiso City Hall to the new church. A house on Lincoln Avenue in Valparaiso was also purchased to be used as the church rectory. Father Herlong continued to serve until September 1963. The original church building was a rectangle with the front shaped or curved like a boat. On one side it had two rooms that were used for classrooms and a nursery and a third room that was used for an office and sacristy. There were no pews in the original Nave. Folding chairs with kneelers attached to the back were used. This allowed for quite a versatile arrangement which was necessary as the Nave was used for church "pot luck" suppers and other such parish gatherings. The

first building addition was an office for the priest with a breezeway separating it from the main church building. The second addition continued the building from the priest office to add classrooms and the first bona fide parish hall. One of the early Senior Wardens was Josh Billingsley, father of the late Robert Billingsley. One of the early Junior Wardens was Harold “Butch” Sewart. Robert and Charles Billingsley and the Treacy brothers, Patrick, Brian, and Mark (sons of Mary Ruth Treacy Babbitt) were some of the early acolytes. Louise Harper played the piano. Mary Ruth Treacy Babbitt and Vicki Herlong (wife of the Vicar) took turns tending the small nursery as Andrea Treacy Libby and Michelle and Angela Herlong were usually the only infants in regular attendance. In the early days all women and girls wore hats or the little lace head coverings.

In December 1963, The Rev. Homer Vanture became our second Vicar and served until August 1966. The Rev. Sidney Hopson became our third Vicar in October 1966 and served until June 1968. The Rev. John Wave became our fourth Vicar in July 1968. In 1970, the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast was founded with Bishop George M. Murray as the first Bishop. Bishop Murray had been the Bishop of Alabama. St. Jude’s became part of the new diocese which encompassed South Alabama and Northwest Florida. St. Jude’s, with the required 100 communicants, became a parish in January

1977 and The Rev. John Wave became the first Rector of St. Jude's. Father Wave served until August 1980. The rectory was sold in 1979 and the proceeds were set aside for the construction of a new Parish Hall.

Our second Rector, The Rev. Robert (Bob) Mathison, served our parish from January 1981



St. Jude's Valparaiso, FL 1990's

until May 1985. During Father Mathison's tenure, construction on the new Parish Hall started in 1981 with completion in 1982. Also during Father Mathison's tenure, the organ was donated by Jane Sepmeier, one of the founding members of St. Jude's. The organ is now in our church in

Niceville. The Rev. Dave Dabria became our third Rector in August 1985 and served until July 1994. During Father Dabria's tenure, the vestibule was built and the breezeway between the church and the office area was enclosed. The stained glass windows from the vestibule in the Valparaiso church were moved to the current location and are behind the altar area today. The stained glass from the enclosed breezeway was moved and now hangs in the back of the current Nave. During the interim period after Father Dabria's retirement, The Rev. Robert (Bob) McGill, a retired priest from Indianapolis IN, served as our Interim Rector on Sundays from July 1994 through March 1995.



The Rev. John Wave, The Rev. Arnold Bush, and The Rev. Dave Dabria

The fourth Rector of St. Jude's was The Rev. Arnold Bush who joined us in April 1995. He soon initiated a strategy of evangelism

that enabled our congregation to begin to grow. The strategy was built on the stated goals in the profile for calling a new rector. These goals involved (a) growing both numerically and

spiritually, (b) expanding the music and worship by hiring professional musicians with choral and organ experience, (c) initiating small group bible study groups in the homes or within the facilities, (d) exploring the relocation of St. Jude's with St. Jude's as the primary Episcopal presence in the Twin Cities Area. It was also in 1995 that a long range planning team was formed that made on-site interviews with growing congregations in Northwest Florida. The team recommended we hire Church Growth Consultant, the Rev. Paul Nixon of Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church. One of his strong recommendations was for the congregation to vote "in principle" to relocate to the west of Valparaiso. In September 1996, under the leadership of Father Bush, the congregation voted to relocate to Niceville. In looking at the subsequent relocation months, we can see the Holy Spirit working to provide four things: (1) Valparaiso Realty was willing to sell land at Cedar St. and Partin Drive (Niceville current site) to the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, (2) the Diocese had the capital funds available thanks to a previous diocesan capital funds drive and agreed to purchase the land, (3) we had a successful Phase I capital fund drive which enabled us to sign a construction contract with Contractor Bob Self, and (4) within a few months after the vote to relocate, we signed a contract to sell the Valparaiso facility to New Hope Baptist Church. We shared the Nave and Parish Hall with New Hope Baptist Church until the new



Groundbreaking St. Jude's Niceville, FL

Niceville facility was complete. The relocation to the heart of neighboring Niceville was vital to our continued growth.

The groundbreaking on the current property at Partin Drive in Niceville took place on March 15, 1998 and construction of our sanctuary and administration building was

completed in December 1998, giving us a facility totaling 10,000 square feet. On Sunday December 13, 1998, we marched in procession with cross, flags, acolytes, and part of the congregation from the Valparaiso facilities to the new Niceville spacious facilities. This was a very celebrative moment worshipping in our new Nave. Bishop Charles F. Duvall, the second Bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, consecrated the new buildings on January 30, 1999. We rejoiced once again on January 30, 2000 when we burned the mortgage of the first two buildings. We are exceedingly thankful for God's hand relocating us to the heart of Niceville, located on the academic triangle with Ruckel Middle School and Niceville High School.



Procession from Valparaiso facilities to new St. Jude's, Niceville, FL

In the two years of 1999 and 2000 we expanded our attendance and programs. In January 2000, the Rev. Paul Nixon, lead us in a constructive planning session recommending we continue to grow our children's and youth programs and enhance our hospitality ministries.



St. Jude's, Niceville, FL January 2000

With our growth, the Vestry in May 2000 called The Rev. Martha (Marty) Conner, one of four deacons in the Diocese graduating from the seminary, to serve as curate and assistant rector. The Rev. Connor served with us for two years before she became the Rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Troy, Alabama.



The Rev. Arnold Bush and The Rev. Martha Conner



**Groundbreaking for Chapel and two Additional Buildings
Summer 2001**

A second even more successful capital funds drive was kicked off in September 2000 and construction began in the summer of 2001 for two additional 5,000 square foot buildings that form a quadrangle within which sits a beautiful new chapel and columbarium. The ground breaking was presided over by Bishop Philip M. Duncan, the third Bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. The new buildings were for classrooms, youth rooms, a nursery, a fully equipped kitchen, and a parish hall that can accommodate 200 people. Bishop Bert Herlong of the Diocese of Tennessee (first Vicar of St. Jude's) came in late June of 2002 to confirm a large class and preside over the consecration of the new facilities. Construction was completed in

August 2002. The first major event in the new Parish Hall was the retirement dinner for Father Bush who retired in September 2002. During the interim period after Father Bush's retirement, The Rev. Dennis Baum and The Rev. Charles (Chuck) McMahon served as Interim Co-Rectors on a joint full-time basis from October 2002 through October 2003.



St. Jude's Episcopal Church, Niceville, FL, August 2002

The Rev. Edward (Ed) Robertson became the fifth Rector of St. Jude's in November 2003 and served until September 2005. During his tenure as Rector, St. Jude's hosted the 2004 Annual Convention of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. Over 400 delegates and guests met in Niceville during the

three day convention. Nearly every parishioner contributed time and talents to what has been called one of the most successful conventions in the history of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. The Rev. Timothy (Tim) Watts served as our Interim Rector on a full time basis from October 2005 through November 2006.

The Rev. Charles Gregory (Greg) Hein answered the call to be the sixth Rector of St. Jude's, arriving in December 2006 and is our current Rector for this 50th Anniversary celebration. He has initiated the congregational development planning process for continued growth to fulfill our mission and vision in this community. We have a new beginning with Father Hein as we begin the next 50 years of St. Jude's. The Chapel was dedicated and named the



The Rev. C. Greg Hein

Arnold A. Bush Chapel on April 20, 2008 honoring the fourth Rector of St. Jude's.

In the 50 years since the inception of that mission in Valparaiso, St. Jude's Episcopal Church has continued to evolve numerous

opportunities for ministry. St. Jude's Episcopal Church has grown into a vital parish of approximately 400 baptized members and 300 communicants. These members are from all area communities, but principally from Niceville, Valparaiso and Bluewater Bay.

Disclaimer

This history was joint effort of numerous people using the records, articles, photographs and memories that were available. Every attempt was made to ensure accuracy. As with any human product, however, there may be errors and/or omissions in this document. If any are discovered, please inform the church office so that corrections can be made in future editions.

Timetable

June 8, 1958	St. Jude's first service was held at Valparaiso City Hall.
July 1958	Bishop West assigned Bert Herlong, a seminary student, to work with St. Jude's during the summer.
June 1959	The Rev. Bert Herlong is ordained a Deacon and became the first Vicar of St. Jude's. Father Herlong served until September 1963.
November 1960	The new St. Jude's church building at Aurora and Hwy. 190 in Valparaiso is consecrated.
December 1963	The Rev. Homer Vanture became the second Vicar of St. Jude's. He served until August 1966.
October 1966	The Rev. Sidney Hopson became the third Vicar of St. Jude's. He served until June 1968.

- July 1968 The Rev. John Wave became the fourth Vicar of St. Jude's. He became the first Rector in January 1977 when St. Jude's became a parish. He served until August 1980.
- December 3-5, 1970 First Convention of the newly formed Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. Bishop George M. Murray (Bishop of Alabama) became our first Bishop.
- January 1977 St. Jude's moved from a mission to a parish at the Diocesan Convention.
- January 1981 The Rev. Bob Mathison became the second Rector of St. Jude's. He served until May 1985.
- April 11, 1981 The Rt. Rev. Charles F. Duvall became the second Bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast.
- 1982 The new Parish Hall at the Valparaiso church was completed.

August 1985	The Rev. Dave Dabria became the third Rector of St. Jude's. He served until his retirement in July 1994.
July 1994	The Rev. Bob McGill became the Interim Rector on Sundays and served through March 1995.
April 1995	The Rev. Arnold Bush became the fourth Rector of St. Jude's. He served until his retirement in September 2002.
September 1996	The congregation voted to relocate St. Jude's to Niceville.
March 1997	Bishop Bert Herlong, Bishop of Tennessee, held a teaching mission/seminar and confirmation in preparation for celebrating the 40th Anniversary.
March 15, 1998	Groundbreaking for the new St. Jude's facilities at Cedar St. and Partin Drive in Niceville.

- June 7, 1998 Celebration of 40th
Anniversary of St. Jude's
with Father Bush, Father
Wave, Father Dabria, and Dr.
Ed McCracken, first
president of Okaloosa-
Walton Community College
participating.
- December 1998 Construction completed for
the new sanctuary and
administration buildings
(10,000 square feet).
- December 13, 1998 Procession from the
Valparaiso facilities to the
new St. Jude's facilities in
Niceville. This was the first
worship service in our new
Nave.
- January 30, 1999 Bishop Duvall consecrated
the new St. Jude's buildings
in Niceville.
- May 2000 The Rev. Marty Connor
called as our curate and
Assistant Rector. She served
for two years.

May 12, 2001	The Rt. Rev. Philip M. Duncan II became the third Bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast.
Summer 2001	Construction began on two additional 5,000 square foot buildings. The ground breaking was presided over by Bishop Duncan.
June 2002	The two new buildings (10,000 square foot) were consecrated by Bishop Bert Herlong, Bishop of Tennessee (first Vicar of St. Jude's).
August 2002	Construction was completed on the two new buildings for class rooms, youth rooms, nursery, kitchen, and parish hall.
September 2002	First major event in new Parish Hall was Father Bush's retirement dinner.
October 2002	The Rev. Denis Baum and The Rev. Chuck McMahon became Co-Interim Rectors

on a joint full-time basis.
They served through October
2003.

November 2003 The Rev. Ed Robertson
became the fifth Rector of St.
Jude's. He served until
September 2005.

February 2004 St. Jude's hosted the Annual
Convention of the Diocese of
the Central Gulf Coast.

October 2005 The Rev. Tim Watts became
the Interim Rector on a full-
time basis. He served
through November 2006.

December 2006 The Rev. Greg Hein became
the sixth Rector of St. Jude's
and is our current Rector for
this 50th Anniversary
Celebration.

April 20, 2008 The Chapel was named the
Arnold A. Bush Chapel
honoring the fourth Rector of
St. Jude's.

50th Anniversary Committee

Marty Lester – Chairperson for the 50th Anniversary
Celebration

Mike Baugh

Peter Banning

Deanna Banning

Zoe Bush

Paula DeGraw

Dottie Doherty

Jerry Fowler

Robin May

Frank McCarty

Mary Lee Morris

Jean Van Bergen

And many other volunteers assisting these team
leads.

Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

The Right Reverend Philip M. Duncan II, Bishop

St. Jude's Episcopal Church

The Rev. Gregory Hein, Rector

Church Staff

Anna Wells, Office Manager

Cassandra Crosby, Youth Director

Alicia Smith, Children's Minister

Kara Parker, Music Director

The Vestry of St. Jude's Episcopal Church

Cap Herrington – Senior Warden

Jake Gross – Junior Warden

Dottie Doherty – Treasurer

Peter Banning

Mike Baugh

Gerry Bishop

Marty Lester

Bran McAllister

Frank McCarty

Cathy Self

Dick Schoditsch

Gloria Witkos

St. Jude's Episcopal Church

200 N. Partin Drive

Niceville, FL 32578