

LOVE, FAITH, SERVICE, AND ENDURANCE

A History of St. Edmund the Martyr

Episcopal Church 1893-2018



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

When I began researching the history of St. Edmund the Martyr Church I did not expect to be able to find much information regarding the early history. To my delight, I was able to slowly discover information about events and people involved with the establishment and development of this ministry. My focus in researching and writing has, from the beginning, been the stories of people who have been and are the Church of St. Edmund the Martyr.

A number of folks should be recognized in assisting me in this endeavor. My wife, Nancy Jo Vaughn, has served as an able research assistant. Additionally, she has tolerated well the “mess” of papers and books in our home. Ann Hilliard devoted a number of years collecting historical information that proved to be of great value to researching this history. Father Bert Daly along with Irene and Michael Pooser shared their recollections and knowledge resulting from decades of St. Edmund Church experience. Arol Mahler of the DeSoto County Historical Society provide her expertise and extensive knowledge of local history. Carolyn McConnell offered her excellent editing skills for the final version. Special thanks to Nancy and Bart Plymale for their support of this project.

Most of all, acknowledgment and gratitude to all those who are part of our history as a congregation that for over 125 years have loved, been faithful, served, and endured as the only ministry in the Episcopal/Anglican tradition in our local community.

Deacon Robert J. Vaughn

The author of the historical novel, A Land Remembered, wrote this dialogue between two characters in the book:

Zech toyed with his food, and finally he turn to Frog and said, "you been around more places than me, Frog, what with all them trips you've take after drives and when we don't have much to do. What is the roughest town there is, with the meanest men you can find anywhere?"

"There ain't no doubt bout that one." Frog mumbled, his mouth full of roast beef. "It's Arcadia. They's about fifty fights a day there, and as many as four killins 'tween sunup and sundown. Last time I was there some fellows whupped the stew outen me just 'cause they didn't like the cut of my britches. You aim to go there and give it a shot?"

"No. That's not what I've got in mind. Can you hire gun slingers there?"

"You can go into Arcadia and get anybody you want."¹

The author, Patrick Smith, may have exaggerated in this fictional book but during the latter two decades of the 19th century Arcadia (and Pine Level) was noted for being a base for rough men working the cattle herds. Frederic Remington visited Arcadia in 1895 researching Florida cowboys. There was also a criminal element present. The New York Times referred to one group operating out of the Pine Level area as a notorious assassination society. By 1897 a Tampa newspaper noted that *"In fact, Arcadia and DeSoto County have about gotten rid of the lawless element, and the criminal branch of the courts now have but little business to attend to. The jail is almost entirely empty, and cattle stealing is a thing of the past."²*

¹ Patrick Smith, A Land Remembered, p. 104

² Tampa Morning Tribune, July 21, 1897

Established in 1866, Pine Level was the original county seat of DeSoto County when it was formed in 1887. The area on the Peace River that is now Arcadia began to be settled in 1856. As the settlement slowly developed it was known by various names until 1883 when a post office was established with the name of Arcadia. With the 1886 completion of the Florida Southern Railroad, the area began to grow, and on December 6, thirty-one qualified voters approved the incorporation of

Arcadia as a town. After DeSoto County was formed in May 1887, several elections were held, the citizens finally chose Arcadia as the county seat in November 1888.

Photo: Seal of the Diocese of Florida



Although the first documentation of Episcopalians in Arcadia is not until the early 1890s, the Episcopal Church was present and active in Florida. Florida was under British

control from 1763 until 1784. An Anglican church existed in St. Augustine during that time. Florida became an American territory in 1821 and the first Episcopal church was established in St. Augustine in 1825. In 1838 the Diocese of Florida was formed but could not afford a bishop until 1851 when the Rt. Rev. Francis Huger Rutledge became bishop. He was succeeded by Bishop John Freeman Young. In 1886, the Rt. Rev. Edwin Gardner Weed became the third Bishop of Florida.

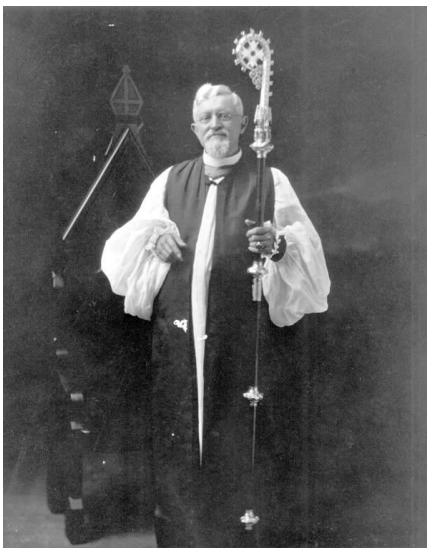
All three of the bishops serving the expansive territory comprising the Diocese of Florida during the 19th century were indefatigable missionaries spreading the Gospel of Christ and building local churches. By the beginning of the 1890s it was clear that dividing the diocese would be necessary to enhance further growth and development of local churches. In 1892

the Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida was created; the Rt. Rev. William Crane Gray became the first bishop.

Reading Bishop Gray's reports and annual journal entries is truly inspirational regarding the hardships, obstacles, and accomplishments in laying the foundation for strong Episcopal Church ministry in even the most remote areas of late 19th and early 20th centuries Florida. Church archivist Beatrice Wilder wrote:

Like his predecessors, Bishop Gray was a man of boundless energy and spiritual vision, which he translated into practical projects. He established a Church hospital and founded a Cathedral Church in Orlando. To follow him as he traversed central and southern Florida on every imaginable form of transportation is a breathtaking experience. He founded missions, nurtured them, purchased land for church buildings, searched for clergy to staff them, named Lay Readers to keep them going, wrote innumerable letters.³

Photo: The Rt. Rev. Edwin Gardner Weed, Third Bishop of Florida



It is clear that the ministry of the Episcopal Church in Arcadia started with Bishop Weed while the original Diocese of Florida was intact. Bishop Weed reported that in 1891 he conducted services in Arcadia on October 13th, stating that it was the first Episcopal service ever held in Arcadia. He reports officiating a Confirmation

³ Beatrice Wilder, [Florida Faith: A Treasury of Tales from the Episcopal Church's Colorful History In The Sunshine State](#), 2012, p. 16

Service in 1892 for three persons on February 8th and confirmed another person on February 9th.

A 1930 letter by Annie (Brewer) Hollingsworth Methvin (of Columbus, Georgia), who was part of the St. Edmund congregation in the 1890s, provides information regarding the early days of the Episcopalian experience in Arcadia. In it she mentions that a Mr. Belcher, an Englishman, would come to Arcadia about every six months to conduct services at the home of Carl and Anna Johanson. The Diocese of Florida was based in Jacksonville; the hardships of transportation and limited number of clergy hindered pastoral visitations. It involved travel by horseback, carriage, and tedious train trips, especially to the remote and sparsely populated areas of the Florida peninsula.

The Rev. Edmund Coles Belcher served in the Diocese of Florida from 1890 until 1896.



He was born in England in 1836. His father was a Baptist minister and the family immigrated to the United States in the 1850s. Graduating from Philadelphia Divinity School, he was ordained a deacon in 1881 and priest in 1884 by the Bishop of Pennsylvania

Photo: The Rev. Edmund Coles Belcher

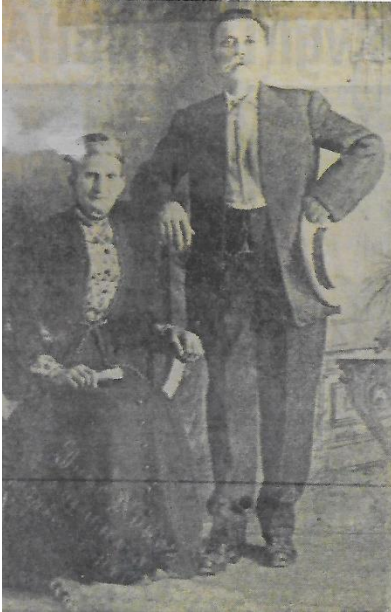
Following ordination he served as curate at Christ Church, Philadelphia. Starting in 1890 he assisted in Florida, at least during the winter months, and also in the Diocese of New York, during the summer months. It appears he made pastoral visits to Arcadia between 1891 and 1893.

There is no evidence he served in the newly formed Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida. In the Diocese of Florida he is listed as serving at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Jacksonville, St. Mary Church in Green Cove (1893), and St. Katherine Church in Pensacola (1895). He is listed as non-parochial from 1896-1902. He died in London, England on November 20 (Feast Day of St. Edmund) 1902.

Annie Methvin in the 1930 letter mentions that an English deacon, Mr. Hodgman, had determined the name of St. Edmund for the Arcadia church. In fact, there was a Deacon Hodgman assigned to minister to the small group of Arcadia Episcopalians but he was not English and was not ordained and ministering until the mid-1890s. Some 30+ years later it is likely Mrs. Methvin became confused with facts and events.

In February 1893 at the first convention of the Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida, the mission station at Arcadia is identified for the first time and the name "St. Edmund, Martyr and King" is designated. Although not documented, it seems reasonable to assume that there is a connection between the name of the mission station and the priest (not deacon) who was English and named Edmund who ministered to the Arcadia community. St Edmund is a major patron saint of the English people. It appears likely that the Rev. Edmund Coles Belcher decided the name "St. Edmund, Martyr and King" for the Arcadia mission station.

As noted above, the 1930 letter states that the Johanson home was used for church services. The Carl G. Johanson family immigrated from Sweden in the early 1870s to Sanford, Florida and came to Arcadia before the railroad was completed in 1886. He operated a sawmill on the Peace River. Anna Johanson is listed as the proprietress of the Arcadia Hotel; reportedly, she worked as a cook in the royal castle in



Stockholm prior to immigrating. When the town of Arcadia was incorporated in December 1886, Johanson was elected as one of the aldermen. By the turn of the century, he had moved his sawmill and family to the Cleveland/Punta Gorda area and later moved his business to Englewood and built a family home on Manasota Key.

Photo: Carl and Anna Johanson
(Courtesy of DeSoto County

Historical Society)

The Johansen home exists today as the Hermitage Artists Retreat. Lemon Bay Historical Society historian Josephine Cortes quotes Carl and Anna Johanson's daughter, Isabelle Johanson Hanlon, about her father:

Shortly after arriving in this country, Papa, who was Carl G. Johansen, moved the family to Arcadia, where he bought a sawmill, but had asthma very bad and thought the salt water would help him, so he moved to Punta Gorda. He heard that the Heacock brothers had a sawmill for sale on Lemon Bay, so Papa came over, bought the mill, and we moved here.... When we first came to Englewood, we lived on the mainland near the mill...Then Papa bought land on the beach. He cleared it and built our house....

Although the Hermitage has since been remodeled, the main part of the house Papa built still stands, with its beautiful old-fashioned four-light windows. Our summer kitchen was built off from the main house, as grandmother kept that big stove

going all day, baking and doing all the cooking which in those days was an all-day project every day.

The only way that Papa could travel from the Hermitage on the beach to his mill in Englewood was by rowboat...he was a strong man and rowed across the bay, a distance of more than three miles every morning and night....⁴

A paranormal website lists the Hermitage house as being “haunted” by Johansen’s mother (“grandmother” mentioned above).

Carl Johanson died in 1916 and his funeral was conducted by Father Frank Shore of St. Edmund Church. His obituary: *“C.G. Johansen, a well known citizen of Boca Grande, died at his home in Boca Grande last night after a long illness. The deceased was a prominent citizen of Boca Grande and well known to many citizens of Arcadia, where he lived for many years in its early settlement. His body will arrive here this afternoon via the C.H.&N. Railway, and will be taken to the Central Hotel immediately. The funeral will be held tomorrow morning, the burial will take place at the Joshua Creek cemetery.”⁵*

The newly formed Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida



met for its first annual convention on February 21-22, 1893. In the Convention Journal, for the first time Arcadia’s “St. Edmund, Martyr and King” is listed as a mission station.

Photo: Seal of the Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida

Bishop Gray and the Church had a major task to accomplish. Shortly

⁴ Josephine O. Cortes, [The History of Early Englewood](#)

⁵ [DeSoto County News](#), August 1916

before the creation of the Missionary Jurisdiction, the Archdeacon of the Southern Convocation of the Diocese of Florida reported:

*I would call attention to the need of fuller provision for establishing and maintaining services in other than the most populous towns and villages. Our people are scattered over a large area that we ought to try to do is to maintain services at such intervals of space as may fall within the reach of all, not only for their sake, but for the sake of all others who may, in time, become members of the household of faith. Such system requires, on the part of the Church, a patient perseverance that will be content to maintain a work that may show no immediate results.*⁶



Photo: The Rt. Rev. William Crane Gray
First Bishop of the Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida

A couple of weeks prior to the First Annual Convention, Bishop Gray was in Arcadia. He wrote that on Wednesday, February 8th *“had service and preached at night in a school-house in Arcadia. On Thursday, 9 am, I gave Holy Communion to eleven persons in same school-*

*house. Mr. Fuller at this place, is anxious to further in every way possible the effort to have a church edifice at no distant delay.”*⁷

⁶ Wilder, Florida Faith, p.35

⁷ Journal of Annual Convention, 1894

Later in the year he noted for Monday, October 16, 1893, *“went on to Arcadia [from Fort Myers]. On Tuesday night and Wednesday morning had services in the school-house. Mr. P.H. Fuller, superintendent of Peace River Phosphate Company, and his excellent wife entered heartily into effort to secure a permanent foothold there for the church. Before I went on my way, a very excellent lot was secured on which there is a building that can be temporarily fitted for services. They will do their part in sustaining the clergyman who may be sent...I have been disappointed, thus far, in every effort made to put a clergyman in charge of these missions mentioned [Arcadia, Punta Gorda, and Fort Myers]. I am still doing my diligence to find the right man to go there.”*⁸

The property (Daughtrey Addition Lot 10) secured by the Fullers and Bishop Gray was purchased for \$150.00 and deeded to the Missionary Jurisdiction on November 8, 1893. The deed is recorded at the DeSoto County Courthouse. In her 1930 letter, Annie Methvin writes that she and Sally Fuller collected donations for purchase of land to build a church. On September 5, 1896, Bishop Gray reported being in Arcadia and *“rose at 5 am and went to see church lot. Found Mr. Weir and gave consent to exchange it for one considered more desirable. Left on the 6:40 am train.”*⁹ For whatever reason, the exchange was never done since the original lot is the location of the church.

Paul Hamilton Fuller was an executive with the Peace River Phosphate Company. Considering 21st century concerns regarding phosphate mining in DeSoto County, this connection with the beginnings of St. Edmund Church and the phosphate industry is notable. Phosphate was discovered in the 1880s and during the 1890s there was phosphate mining occurring in the Peace River around Arcadia. DeSoto County historian

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Journal of Annual Convention, 1897

Howard Melton wrote: *"Phosphate mining between 1886 and 1906 brought the river its heaviest traffic, providing hundreds of jobs and netting thousands of dollars."*¹⁰ But it was soon discovered that better deposits were available north, especially in Polk County. Paul H. Fuller (and the Peace River Phosphate Company) relocated to Polk County, where he and Bishop Gray maintained their relationship and interest in the growth of Episcopal Church ministry in the area.

Following the land purchase at the end of 1893, the small group of Arcadia Episcopalians continued in their quest to develop the ministry in DeSoto County. Bishop Gray visited in December 1894. On December 10th he reported *"I had a very tedious two days' journey via [Fort] Myers and Punta Gorda to Arcadia. I was badly worn out when I arrived there; Mrs. Fuller gave me a quiet room for a refreshing sleep before the night service; the same evening had service and preached in the Methodist Church."*¹¹ On December 12th he officiated at Holy Communion where eight persons received the sacrament.

At the 1895 Annual Convention, Archdeacon J.H. Weddell reported: *"If two more priests could be secured, one for the Manatee River region, and another for points on the Florida Southern Railroad, lying south of Fort Meade, much advantage could be gained."*¹² It is clear that lack of available clergy hampered the development of mission stations like Arcadia. In December 1895, Bishop Gray was again in Arcadia. He held a service in a private residence and another service in the Methodist Church building. Although the record is lost, it appears that there were periodic services whenever a priest was sent around to the mission stations during the early years of the Missionary Jurisdiction. There were ten services held in

¹⁰ George Howard Melton, Foot Prints & Landmarks: Arcadia and DeSoto County, Florida, p.3

¹¹ Journal of Annual Convention, 1895

¹² Ibid

Arcadia in 1896 (as recorded in the 1897 Journal of the Annual Convention).



Photo: 1897 Church. Note the fence around the property. Florida had open range and cattle roamed freely. Homes and buildings would be fenced to prevent cattle eating flowers and other vegetation.

Finally in 1897 the Arcadia mission station of St. Edmund, Martyr and King, acquires a church building. The information available is from the Annie Methvin 1930 letter. In it she writes that the lumber for the ceiling was acquired from Georgia and that the actual construction of the building was done by congregation members Jester E. Brewer (her father), Tom Gaskins, and Jacob Kreider. The architectural style of the 1897 structure, referred to as Carpenter Gothic or Rural Gothic, adapted Gothic elements such as pointed arches and steep gables. It was common in rural area late 19th and early 20th century churches because it tended to be inexpensive and easily done by house carpenters. Many examples still exist in Florida Episcopal churches of that era.

Photo: Annie (Brewer) Hollingsworth Methvin (Courtesy of DeSoto County Historical Society)



Not much is known about Jester Brewer. He was born in 1835 in New York and his wife, Laura, was born in South Carolina. He is listed as a carpenter and contractor. The Brewer family lived in Alabama prior to moving to Arcadia in 1892/1893. In the 1900 federal census Jester

and Laura are living on Polk Avenue with their daughter, Annie (born 1868), who is divorced. Sometime after 1900 she married James Neeld Hollingsworth who died in 1909. In 1916 she is mentioned as president of the Arcadia Civic League. In the late 1920s she married Thomas S. Methvin of Columbus, Georgia, where she lived until her death. She died due to complications resulting from an automobile accident in 1940. Her 1930 letter, although not always accurate, provides the best information regarding the early days of the Episcopal community in Arcadia.

Tom Gaskins is a well-known person in Arcadia history. He arrived in Arcadia in 1886, the same year as the railroad. He owned "Gaskins Cash Store: Dry Goods and Groceries." Arcadia historian Howard Melton commented: *"Gaskin's name is linked with railroads, for he invented the Car Coupling, patented 1895, that revolutionized the railroad industry. Since modified, it is still in worldwide use today, for it hitches and unhitches railroad cars in the simplest, quickest way"*¹³ In addition to his carpentry work on the church building, Gaskin also constructed a lectern. Although not verifiable, based on its noted existence through the years (including in the 1930

¹³ Melton, Foot Prints & Landmarks, p. 260

building), it may be the lectern sitting at the west wall upon the entering the church's main entrance. In 1930, Tom Gaskins' funeral was held in the church he helped build.

The third carpenter mentioned regarding the construction of the 1897 building, Jacob Kreider, has had the longest lasting family involvement with St. Edmund Church. He, his wife Amanda, and daughters Minnie, Effie and Imogene came to Arcadia from Ohio. Amanda died in 1904; Jacob died in Ohio in 1909. Amanda Miller Kreider was a cousin of Mina Miller Edison, wife of Thomas Edison. The Kreider and Edison families would visit each other in Arcadia and Fort Myers. Thomas Edison built a home, Seminole Lodge, in Fort Myers and the Edison family periodically spent time there escaping the New Jersey winters.

Effie Kreider married Fred Peters. The Peters family was wealthy and involved in numerous businesses in DeSoto County, including the first DeSoto County bank, a sawmill, brick foundry, streetcar business (one car that ran on railroad tracks that was pulled by a mule), and citrus grove. After Fred Peter's death, she married Frank B. Smith who planted one of the earliest orange groves in the area and started the Bunker Packing Company and was involved in a number of other packing houses.

Fred and Effie's daughter, Christine, married George T. Stonebraker. George Stonebraker was a successful businessman, mayor of Arcadia, and active leader at St. Edmund Church. He also served as a Lay Reader conducting services when no priest was available during the Great Depression.

Effie Kreider Smith served as church organist until her death in 1951. The candle-lighted sanctuary lamp that hangs in the church to indicate the presence of the Reserved Sacrament was given by Christine Stonebraker in memory of her mother.

Imogene Kreider married Leon Conklin. She has the distinction of being the first resident of the Bishop Gray Inn in Davenport, Florida. The Episcopal Diocese of South Florida opened the retirement center in 1952 and it continued as an Episcopal ministry for the elderly until 2004. Due to changes in the needs and costs of elderly care the facility was sold. Revenue generated from the sale and the continuing support of the three dioceses that formed from the division of the former Diocese of South Florida (Central Florida, Southeast Florida, and Southwest Florida) are used by the resulting Bishop Gray Foundation for grants to elderly Episcopalians for residential care. Currently, the Rt. Rev. Dabney Smith, Bishop of Southwest Florida, is the president of the foundation.

In the original plan for Arcadia, the north-south avenues were named for Florida counties and the east-west streets were named for trees. There were two exceptions as the area expanded. Effie Street and Imogene Street are named for the two sisters, Effie and Imogene Kreider.

Minnie Kreider married one of the first physicians in Arcadia, Luby S. Smith, in 1889. Dr. Smith died in 1904. One of the children of Luby and Minnie Smith, daughter Pauline, married John J. King. John's father, Ziba King, was a prominent rancher. The trail he used to drive his cattle to Charlotte Harbor for shipping to markets became "Kings Highway," the primary route to Port Charlotte. John and Pauline King had two daughters, Janet and Flomine. Janet King married the Rev. John Massie (St. Edmund vicar 1947-1977). Flomine King married Travis Petrey; their daughter, Adrienne Petrey Daly, who died in 2016, was the final member of the family at St. Edmund Church. The baptismal font in use at the church is a memorial to Minnie Kreider Smith. On December 31, 2017, the font was used by Father Bert Daly, Jr., to baptize his great-niece and Jacob and Amanda Kreider's fifth generation direct descendent, Daly Ann Shoop (daughter of J.C. & Stacy Shoop).

Currently there are three Episcopal priests descended from the Kreiders: Bert Daly, Jr., Daniel Smith, and Mitchell Smith.

In addition to the above mentioned names, the other 1890s original members of the congregation identified by Annie Methvin is "Mrs. William Seward and daughter." Lotta Greene Seward was the daughter of Dr. Edwin Greene, an early physician in Arcadia. She was married to William H. Seward. W.H. Seward was a cattleman and businessman in Arcadia. The Seward building was one of only three that survived the fire that destroyed downtown Arcadia on Thanksgiving Day 1905; it is still used today. The Seward family eventually became members of the Presbyterian Church.

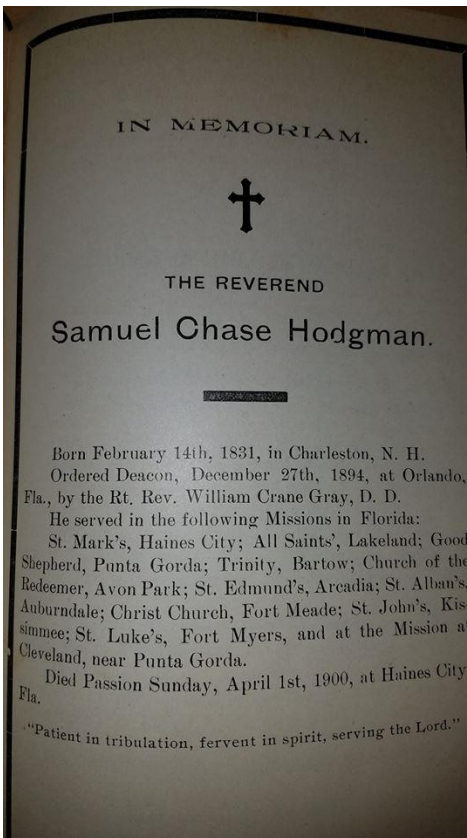
On May 12, 1897, Bishop Gray was in Arcadia and wrote *"Delighted to hold service in our own place of worship, at last, in this capital of DeSoto County. That we do so is largely due to the zeal, energy, and perseverance of our good deacon, Rev. S.C. Hodgeman, who also built the church at Haines City, with his own hands. Rev. Hodgeman assisted me in the service and I confirmed five persons."*¹⁴



Photo: The Rev. Samuel C. Hodgeman

¹⁴ Journal of Annual Convention, 1898

Samuel Chase Hodgman was born in 1831 in New Hampshire. He grew up in Michigan where he enlisted in the U.S. Army at the beginning of the Civil War. He attained the rank of Captain. He was wounded at the battle of Antietam and was medically discharged due to leg wounds and continuing effects of typhoid fever. He and his wife Ella moved to Haines City, Florida in 1885. He worked as a surveyor. Deacon Hodgman was ordained in 1894 by Bishop Gray. Based at St. Mark Episcopal Church, Haines City, it is clear that Bishop Gray utilized the deacon at the mission stations from Haines City south to Punta Gorda. Deacon Samuel Hodgman is the initial clergyman listed for St. Edmund Church. He is mentioned a



Southern Florida

number of times in Bishop Gray's notations in the Annual Journals as assisting the bishop at various locations and services. It is interesting to speculate about conversations between the Confederate Army chaplain and the Union Army officer. Deacon Hodgman died in 1900 in Haines City. Bishop Gray personally arranged for an appropriate gravestone.

Photo: Memorial Page-
Deacon Samuel Hodgman
1901 Journal of Annual
Convention
Missionary Jurisdiction of

After Deacon Hodgman, there are no clergy listed for St. Edmund Church until the beginning of the 20th century.

Apparently a priest would occasionally visit the mission station. In 1897 there are 13 congregation members and in 1898 there are 15 congregation members with a total of 24 services during the year including three Holy Communion services. The annual assessment to be paid to the Missionary Jurisdiction during these years was \$2.40; the assessment was usually delinquent!

In 1899 there are 26 adults connected to the congregation. There were a total of nine services held in the church during the year including six Holy Communion services.

Bishop Gray reported on Sunday, July 9, 1899: *"11:00 am had full services at St. Edmund's Church, baptized one person and confirmed two. No clergyman there to present them. Holy Communion at the same service. 3:17 pm had a second service and sermon."* On Tuesday, December 5, 1899: *"Full service and sermon. I confirmed two young men and celebrated Holy Communion."*¹⁵

Following Deacon Hodgman through the first decade of the 20th century the priests assigned to Good Shepherd Church in Punta Gorda ministered to the small congregation in Arcadia: The Rev. James Warren, E.M. Braden, Thomas Purdue, William Browne, Robert Campbell, and Clement Blanchett are the ones documented.

The 1901 annual convention reported the following data (for 1900) regarding St. Edmund Church: annual assessment of \$2.40 was paid (unlike previous couple of years when the assessment payment was delinquent), 28 adults and 4 children "connected" with 16 communicants, and 21 services held including 9 Holy Communion services.

Bishop Gray wrote that on Saturday, February 23, 1901, *"Rev. Braden and I came to Arcadia [from Punta Gorda] on the*

¹⁵ Journal of Annual Convention, 1900

*freight train. Held night service at the church; I preached. Mr. Braden returned on the night train” and on Sunday the 24th, “Very, very cold; no way to heat the church. Had, however, a larger congregation than could have been expected. Took the evening train for Orlando.”*¹⁶ There were 32 adults “connected”, 16 communicants, and 9 services including 6 Holy Communion services reported for 1901.

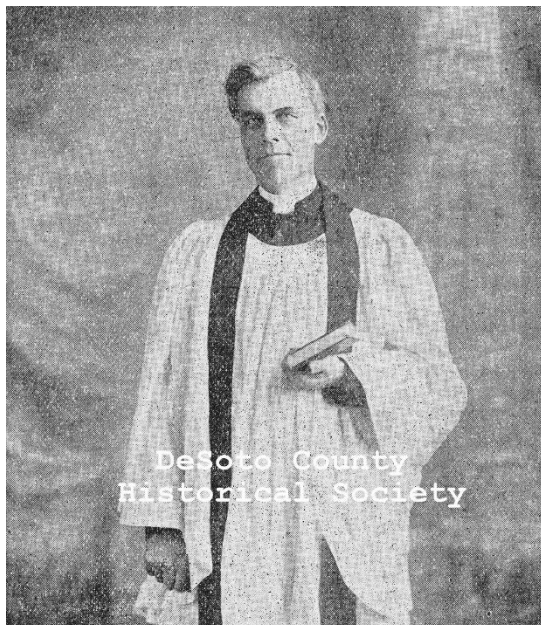
St. Edmund Church moved from “mission station” to “organized mission” status in 1902; 61 adults “connected” were reported for 1903. The number of communicants remained around 16 during the early 1900s. Even without the benefit of regular clergy availability the ministry of St. Edmund Church seemed to be taking hold. Bishop Gray reported that on his February 2, 1904 visit *“Rev. Purdue joined me here, and at 10 am in St. Edmund Church I celebrated Holy Communion and preached. At 7 pm he said evening prayer and I preached. The church was absolutely full, men predominating. Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists—with some preachers—were present, all attentive and evidently impressed. Many men accompanied us to the depot. One man seemed determined to draw me out as we waited for the train, and another sermon was the result, as more men gathered around; the Negroes in their waiting room also eagerly listening.”*¹⁷ In 1903 there were 12 services held including 6 Holy Communion and 24 services including 12 Holy Communion reported for 1904. By 1905 the number of communicants were reported to be 35 adults with 53 services held including 11 Holy Communion. The reported numbers remain stable through the years leading to 1912 with continued clergy visitation from Punta Gorda and the Rev. Rudolph Stahley from Wulfert in Lee County.

¹⁶ Journal of Annual Convention, 1902

¹⁷ Journal of Annual Convention, 1905

Bishop Gray made two visits in 1911. He wrote that on May 18, *“Up early at the Arcadia House and did some writing before breakfast. As there is no priest in charge here, just now, I obtained the needed information about candidates for confirmation from one of the faithful ladies. I set out to visit and talk to each one before the service tonight. I also called on a family indeed afflicted over the recent loss of a daughter. By this time I had to go to the church for 11 am service. Said litany and then Communion Service. Preached, confirmed five and addressed them. It was indeed a precious service, and all felt that Christ had indeed been present with us...”* and on September 9, *“Took 4 pm train for Arcadia [from Punta Gorda]. Then had a busy round to see candidates for baptism and confirmation before the night service, no time to even eat supper. During the baptism the electric lights went out for awhile, and we had to proceed with two dim lights...a decided impression seemed to be made on the congregation by the occasion.”*¹⁸

Photo: The Rev. Frank A. Shore (Courtesy of DeSoto County Historical Society)



For twenty years the small group of Episcopalians in Arcadia had lacked the ministry of a priest among them on a regular basis. Finally, in 1912, this was to change. Bishop Gray noted on February 22, 1912 that *“Rev. Frank Shore, of Lisbon, North*

¹⁸ Journal of Annual Convention, 1912

Dakota, is with us as a guest and I hope to have him take charge of some work in Southern Florida” and he reported for July 27 “...took the 6 am train via Lakeland for Arcadia, for another potential move for the church’s interests. Saw and talked with friends and find good progress made for securing a suitable clergyman for this vacancy. The weather very hot and sultry.”¹⁹

In October 1912, Bishop Gray sent the Rev. Frank Arthur Shore to Arcadia to be the first full time resident priest at St. Edmund Church.

Father Frank A. Shore was born in Canada. He was ordained deacon in 1906 and priest in 1908 by Bishop Cameron Mann of North Dakota. Upon Bishop Gray’s retirement in 1913, Bishop Mann would become the second Bishop of the Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida. Father Shore served for four years in North Dakota at small churches as well as ministry to lumberjacks. When he arrived in Arcadia, he and his wife, Caroline, had a small daughter, Clel.

His eleven year tenure is the second longest for priests serving at St. Edmund Church. It is clear his ministry in Arcadia developed the congregation into stronger growth status. The report on his first year shows a total of 97 “connected” with 57 communicants, 88 services with 30 Holy Communion, and a Sunday School started that had 33 participating. In 1915 the congregation built a home for the priest on the church property and it was also in 1915 that a Ladies Guild is first reported. The same year the ladies started raising funds for a new church building.

For fifteen years the women of St. Edmund Church did various money raising events to add to their new church fund. At their April 4, 1916 meeting, twenty-six women were present. It was announced that the building fund had \$966.00 and the

¹⁹ Journal of Annual Convention, 1913

next fund raising event would be the Easter Tea with various items to sell. The meeting ended with the ladies being *“served refreshments consisting of tomato and banana salad with mayonnaise dressing, sandwiches, crullers and coffee.”*²⁰

In reviewing members of the Ladies Guild, one name stands out among the list of women. An active member is Elsie Rosin. She and her husband Simon Rosin moved to Arcadia in 1905. They eventually had a 4000 acre cattle ranch but Simon Rosin is best remembered locally for building his arcade building in downtown Arcadia in 1927. Today it is known as the “pink building” that houses various businesses, including antique shops, tea room, restaurant and bar. The Rosin family was Jewish. There was no local Jewish community, the closest being in Sarasota, and apparently Elsie Rosin felt welcomed among the Episcopal women. Part of the success of Father Shore, in addition to his ministry with the congregation, was his engagement with the local community. Various involvements are documented. For example in 1916 as the United States was watching Europe at war as well as threatened hostilities with Mexico, the local paper published in an article: *“Following out an idea suggested by an editorial appearing to this paper of a recent date, several well known citizens of this city assembled at the local armory, last night at 8 o’clock to organize the Arcadia Military Training Camp. The primary object of this organization is to make leaders of these members, to train them in such a manner that in case of war they would be able to become officers, in the service of the United States.”*²¹ Father Shore was listed among the list of participants. Later the same year he was mentioned speaking at a meeting in the Owens community advocating for their support to join with the city of Arcadia in a bonds campaign for road improvements.

²⁰ The DeSoto News, April 6, 1916, p. 12

²¹ The DeSoto News, June 29, 1916, p. 1

Photo: Jacob F. Stonebraker, Jr.



The United States entered World War I in 1917. Father Shore remained in Arcadia; sixteen men from St. Edmund Church served in the military. For many years a plaque hung in the church with names. One died during service, Jacob F. Stonebraker, Jr. He contacted cerebrospinal meningitis and died in April 1919 at Camp Wheeler, Georgia. A

Washingtonian palm tree was planted in 1921 with a bronze plaque as a memorial to the young soldier. The plaque remains although the palm tree has been replaced by an oak tree.

In 1918 Father Shore officiated at the wedding of Charles Edison, son of Thomas and Mina Edison in Fort Myers. It has been noted earlier about the relationship between the Kreider and Edison families. A biographer of Thomas Edison obviously missed that connection as well as incomplete research. Tom Smoot, in *The Edisons of Fort Myers*, wrote regarding the wedding: *“...Charles said they wanted a minister from Arcadia. Charles did not reveal the name of the minister, but the Fort Myers Press reported that the Reverend F.A. Shore, the rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Fort Myers, conducted the service. Records at St. Luke’s confirm that F.A. Shore, the rector at the time, performed the wedding. There is no explanation for the reference to an Arcadia minister; Father*

*Shore was the rector in Fort Myers, not Arcadia.”*²² In 1923 Father Shore did become the priest at St. Luke Church, but in 1918 he was the priest at St. Edmund Church. Charles Edison later became Secretary of the Navy and Governor of New Jersey.



Photo:
Church
and
Vicarage

Two oak chairs in the church sanctuary, still used today by clergy officiating services, were donated in 1920. One was given by the Ladies Guild as a memorial honoring long time guild president Ida Holcomb and the other, a “Bishop’s Chair”, was given by Father Frank and Caroline Shore. To the distress of the congregation, in 1923 Father Shore accepted the call to be the priest of St. Luke Episcopal Church in Fort Myers. He remained there for the rest of his active ministry. When he died in 1945 he was the senior priest in years of service in the Diocese of South Florida.

During his time as priest, St. Edmund Church developed into a stable congregation. As noted earlier, during Father Shore’s first year 57 communicants were reported; when he left in 1923 the reported statistics indicated 73 communicants, 40

²² Tom Smoot, The Edisons of Fort Myers: Discoveries of the Heart, p. 140

families, and a total of 110 baptized members. The vicarage (residence for the priest) was built and a strong active women's group was established.

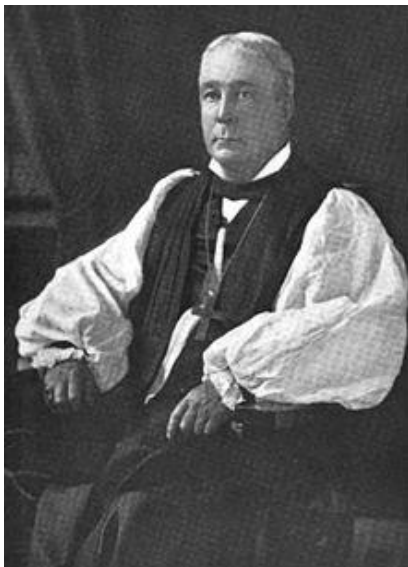


Photo: The Rt. Rev. Cameron Mann
Second Bishop of the Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida
First Bishop of South Florida

In 1922 the Missionary Jurisdiction of Southern Florida became the Diocese of South Florida, based in Orlando, with the Rt. Rev. Cameron Mann as bishop.

The early 1920s was a period of economic expansion throughout Florida. The

“land boom” as well as growth of the citrus industry impacted DeSoto County. It was during this time that a number of the large downtown buildings were constructed. Upon Father



Frank Shore's departure, the Rev. R. Paul Ernst became the priest at St. Edmund Church. The congregation continued to grow and in 1926 St. Edmund Church moved from “organized mission” status to designation as a parish under the pastoral ministry of Father Ernst. Father Ernst served as St. Edmund's priest until

Photo: The Rev. Henry E. Payne

1927; that year there were 84 communicants reported. In 1928 R. Paul Ernst resigned from the ordained ministry of the Episcopal Church. There is no indication that decision had anything to do with his service at St. Edmund Church.

In 1927 the Rev. Henry E. Payne, a native of England, was assigned to serve as priest at St. Edmund Church, Good Shepherd Church (Punta Gorda) and St. Andrew Church (Boca Grande). As noted in an historical narrative written in 1963: *“During his period of service, the country, South Florida and Arcadia passed through calamitous experiences. Late in 1925 and early 1926 the Florida land boom came to an abrupt end, and with it a financial depression. In 1926 and 1928 occurred destructive hurricanes which affected the citrus industry in DeSoto County. 1929 brought two disastrous events; the fruit fly epidemic directly affecting citrus production and then the New York Stock Market collapse, which led to the depression years intensified in 1932.”*²³

Although the country was heading into the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Service League (formerly the Ladies Guild) had accumulated adequate funds for the construction of a new church building. A generous donation by Mary Andrew completed the fifteen years of fund raising by the women of the congregation. Luckily they expended their funds from the First National Bank of Arcadia before it fell victim to the depression on January 26, 1932. The balance in the account on January 2, 1932 was \$93.68. A 1930 contract was entered into with architect Nat Walker (Fort Myers) and general contractor J.A. Christ (Arcadia) for the total sum of \$8790.00 for the church construction; it was later amended to \$8839.75. Repeated narratives since 1930 have quoted the cost being \$8500.00. No explanation is found for the discrepancy.

²³ Read B. Harding, Historical Data: The Church of Saint Edmund the Martyr, p. 3

Construction commenced in the summer of 1930. The 1897 building had to be moved further back on the property to be used as a parish hall and to make room for the new structure.

Photo: Duncan McKee Memorial Window



The architectural style of the new building was described as typical of an English country village chapel from the Norman period. Much of the furnishings from the 1897 building were utilized in the new building, including the pews and altar. The tall stained glass window at the center of the west wall was donated by Colonel and Mrs. Henry T. Ferguson as a

memorial for her son, Duncan McKee, who died at age 17 on September 20, 1929. Duncan McKee was among eight youngsters confirmed the previous March by Coadjutor Bishop John W. Wing. On December 21, 1930, Bishop Wing consecrated the new church building, using the liturgy from the “new” 1928 Book of Common Prayer, assisted by Father Henry Payne and Father Frank Shore.



Photo: The Rt. Rev. John D. Wing
Second Bishop of South Florida

The First Bishop of South Florida, the Rt. Rev. Cameron Mann, retired in 1932. He was succeeded by the coadjutor bishop since 1925, the Rt. Rev. John D. Wing, as the Second Bishop of South Florida.

Father Henry Payne served at St. Edmund Church until 1935.

During that time the number of communicants moved from the low 80s to the low 70s. In 1933 the Committee on New Parishes reported to the annual convention of the Diocese of South Florida that “...*considering the condition of St. Edmund’s Church, Arcadia, do recommend that the provision of Canon VIII, Section 5 be applied and that the parish of St. Edmund’s be returned to the status of an organized mission.*”²⁴ It was pointed out that the Arcadia congregation had continued to receive financial assistance from the diocese for a number of years; the vote was unanimous for returning to organized mission status. The period between 1926 and 1933 is the only time in its history that St. Edmund the Martyr Church has been canonically designated a parish.

During this period of the Great Depression many local congregations struggled and some actually closed. It appears that Father Payne relinquished his responsibilities in Arcadia due to health. He continued serving in Punta Gorda until

²⁴ Journal of Annual Convention, 1933

1937. He died in 1938. Good Shepherd Church in Punta Gorda was closed from 1937 until the 1940s.

The congregation at St. Edmund Church struggled but persevered. Between 1935 and 1938 the congregation endured difficulties.

There was no regular priest and the church was operational only during the winter seasonal period. At times a deacon, the Rev. R.T. Bell, assisted with services; the Rev. Charles C. Edmunds was more regularly available during the winter months of 1936-1938. A Diocesan Mission Survey Committee was appointed in 1936 to evaluate the condition of the mission congregations. In the committee's report, "*Certain*



static missions, after careful study, were branded as 'Retrogressive Missions,' that is, they were churches 'which either are closed or should be as they seem to meet no need.' These included ... St. Edmund's, Arcadia ... Not all of the recommendations of the committee were carried out, but publication of its findings caused some of the stronger

missions to become self-supporting and some of the retrogressive missions to become more lively."²⁵

The congregation benefited from the strong lay leadership of George T. Stonebraker, who also served as a licensed Lay Reader. He was a younger brother of the previously identified soldier, Jacob F. Stonebraker, Jr., who died in 1919. His maternal grandparents were Tom and Sarah Gaskins, original members of St. Edmund Church and his wife, Christine Peters,



Photo: Graduation Class (Year Unknown) (Courtesy of DeSoto County Historical Society)

was the granddaughter of original members, Jacob and Amanda Kreider. George Stonebraker was a local businessman and also served as mayor of Arcadia.

Howard Melton noted in his history of Arcadia, *“George Stonebraker was the first president of Arcadia’s Kiwanis Club.*

²⁵ Joseph D. Cushman, *The Sound of Bells: The Episcopal Church in South Florida 1892-1969*, p.240

*He worked hard to get Carlstrom and Dorr Fields activated during World War II. He was instrumental, with others, in securing the G. Pierce Wood Memorial Hospital [state psychiatric facility] after Carlstrom Field was deactivated. George served as mayor and as tax collector of Arcadia. He was affectionately called 'Foghorn' because of his strong voice, which served him well as a rodeo announcer."*²⁶

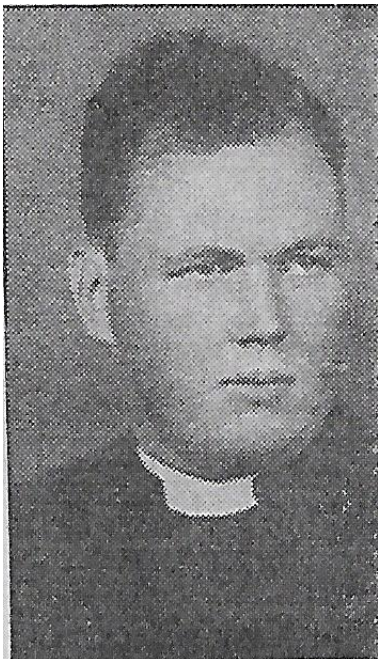
Bishop Wing did not follow the recommendation of the above mentioned 1936 committee regarding the Arcadia church. In 1938 he sent a transitional deacon, Leonard Campbell Bailey, to St. Edmund Church upon his graduation in June from the seminary at the University of the South, Sewanee. He was an accomplished young man with obvious great promise, which seems to indicate the bishop's interest in developing the ministry at St. Edmund Church by the decision to send him to Arcadia. The local paper published an article announcing the appointment with a background summary stating that he "was educated at the University of Florida, taking his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1932 and his Master of Arts in 1934. For two years following his graduation, he was instructor of English at the University of Florida, and served for one year in the correspondence division of the Florida Emergency Relief Administration at Jacksonville. In 1936 he resigned this position to enter the Theological department at Sewanee. Rev. Bailey is a member of Chi Fraternity.... While in the University of Florida, he founded and was the first editor of the 'Florida Review,' the student literary quarterly."²⁷ Bishop Weed ordained Leonard Campbell Bailey a priest on

²⁶ Howard Melton,

²⁷ The Arcadian, June 9, 1938

June 24, 1938 at St. Edmund Church. It is the only ordination that has been done at the church.

Photo: The Rev. Leonard Campbell Bailey



Father Bailey apparently devoted himself to ministry development at St. Edmund Church. His 1940 report to the annual convention indicated 70 communicants, a 14 member boys choir, and a boy scout troop with 30 members and cub scout pack with 20 members. He also served at St. Andrew Church, Boca Grande, although open only during the winter seasonal months.

On October 21, 1940 the congregation commemorated the tenth anniversary of the construction of the "new" church building with a service of Holy Communion officiated by Father Bailey and assisted by a number of clergy from nearby Episcopal churches. Bishop Wing was represented by the Rev. William Moses, who later became suffragan bishop; Father Moses delivered Bishop Wing's message to the gathered congregation.

In April 1941 Father Bailey abruptly left Arcadia. His departure was announced to the community in a newspaper notice:

"The Rt. Rev. John D. Wing, Bishop of South Florida, has given the Rev. Leonard C. Bailey, vicar of the local Episcopal Church, a leave of absence, The Arcadian was advised this morning.

Mr. Bailey's plans are not known and no arrangement have been made as yet to take over his various duties here. If Mr. Bailey's leave should be made permanent, the community

would lose a valuable citizen, Mr. Bailey now being president of the Kiwanis Club, Scout Master, and the recently elected head of the local Defense Council.”²⁸

During WWII, Leonard Bailey served in the U.S. Army, not as a chaplain, attaining the rank of Sergeant First Class. Following the war he was in Australia. In 1945 he requested that the vestments he left in Arcadia be sent to his mother’s residence. After a brief period serving in Florida parishes 1949-1951, he returned to Australia and became a citizen. He died in 1977, his gravestone is inscribed with “Priest and Scholar” in New South Wales.

From 1941 until 1943 the Rev. Frank G. Ireland was the St. Edmund Church vicar. During this time the Arcadia church ministered to British Royal Air Force cadets training at the Arcadia and Clewiston air fields. A number of funerals were held at St. Edmund Church and the cadets are buried in the designated British military section of Arcadia’s Oak Ridge Cemetery. Father Ireland left in 1943 to become the rector of St. Luke Church in Fort Myers. He eventually returned to his native Michigan and attained a doctorate at the University of Michigan. He taught at Kent State University, Akron University, and Ferris State University as a professor of psychology while serving as priest at various Ohio and Michigan parishes. He died in 2002 at the age of 95 in Michigan.

²⁸ The Arcadian, April 17, 1941



Photo: The Rev. A. Bruce Lauenborg

In 1944 Bishop Wing ordained Navy veteran and recent seminary graduate, A. Bruce Lauenborg, a priest and sent him to Arcadia. During his three-year ministry the number of reported communicants increased from 62 to 90. In 1947 he accepted the

call to the Church of the Redeemer, Avon Park, Florida. During his thirty years of priestly ministry he served in parishes throughout Florida.

The 1944 Dumbarton Oaks Conference was held in Washington D.C. with representatives of China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States to formulate a proposal for the creation of the United Nations. The Council of Churches strongly supported the effort and asked local congregations to endorse the plan. The following letter to the U.S. Secretary of State, dated April 17, 1945, was sent:

"We have been informed that the State Department requests an expression of our congregation concerning The Dumbarton Oaks Proposals, and for that reason a special meeting of the Vestry Committee of St. Edmund's Episcopal Church was held yesterday to discuss this momentous problem. As a result of the meeting the following resolution was unanimously adopted: 'We endorse the principals as outlined in the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals and having read over and discussed the suggestions as outlined by the Federal Council of Churches meeting at Cleveland, Ohio in January 1945, and we having confidence in their ability and sincerity, respectfully ask

*your consideration of their suggestions when final agreements are made governing World peace’.*²⁹

During the post-war period of the late 1940s and early 1950s there was an active youth group at St. Edmund Church. The area to the west of downtown had the major churches within a couple of blocks of each other: First Baptist, St. Edmund Episcopal, Trinity Methodist, and First Presbyterian. The teens tended to float among the youth organizations of the four churches. A Presbyterian lady who was a teen at the time has commented that the Episcopal youth group had the best looking boys!

The longest serving priest at St. Edmund Church became vicar in 1948. The Rev. John E.M. Massie was a Canadian who received his theological training at the monastery of the



Society of John the Evangelist (Crowley Fathers) in Ontario.

Photo:
Massie
Wedding
(l-r) Flo King
Petrey,
Pauline
Peters King,
Janet King
Massie,
Father John
Massie,
Travis Petrey

As reported in the local newspaper toward the end of his ministry, *“After he was ordained, he joined the group of young*

²⁹ St. Edmund Church Vestry Minutes Book 1944-1947

priests who served 42 churches, which were scattered over some 1,000 square miles. Later they were sent into the mining districts to do missionary work among the miners of Northern Ontario. The young priest would ski in the winter time, and in summer, walk. The mode of travel certainly influenced the young priest to come south. One day he was skiing down the mountain and one ski broke, and he went sliding down, firmly convinced that ten years of his life was long enough to give to this crude and rugged existence.”³⁰

Father Massie quickly settled into his new ministry in Arcadia including meeting and marrying Janet King (great-granddaughter of Jacob and Amanda Krieder). The wedding, held at St. Edmund Church, had Father Lauenborg as the celebrant of the Holy Communion service and Coadjutor Bishop Henry Louttit officiating the marriage rite.

In addition to his responsibilities in Arcadia, Father Massie also assumed responsibility for Good Shepherd Church in Punta Gorda and St. Andrew at Boca Grande (during seasonal winter months. In 1947 the state psychiatric facility, G. Pierce Wood Memorial Hospital, was established at Carlstrom and Dorr air fields. Father Massie took on ministry to the patients being treated there.

³⁰ The Arcadian, July 12, 1973



Photo: The Rt. Rev. Henry I. Louttit
Third Bishop of South Florida

In 1951 Bishop John D. Wing retired and Coadjutor Bishop Henry Louttit became the Third Bishop of South Florida.

In the initial years of Father Massie's ministry at St. Edmund Church through the 1950s a number of improvements occurred. The Sunday School was revived and started again in 1955

with seven students. Rooms to the south side of the fellowship hall (1897 church building) were added for classroom and office space. In 1953, a solid oak altar was acquired from Bethesda-By-the-Sea Episcopal Church in Palm Beach. It replaced the smaller altar that had been moved from the original church building to the 1930 church building. The original altar was given to St. Ann Episcopal Church in Wauchula, Florida. The current oak communion rail was donated in 1954 as a memorial for Jacob F. Stonebraker, Sr. by his daughter, Mrs. Read B. Harding. In 1956 a small belfrey was constructed on the church building with a bell donated by Richard Davis and J. Harley & Consuela (Pooser) Garner.

The Garners' son, Jay, was active at St. Edmund Church as a youngster. He was an acolyte and served on the vestry. He initially enlisted in the Marine Corps and then graduated from Florida State University and was commissioned as an Army second lieutenant in 1962. He served two tours in Vietnam. He helped develop the Patriot missile system, served as commander of U.S. Army Space and Strategic Defense

Command, and ended his military career as Assistant Vice Chief of Staff with the rank of Lieutenant General. After retiring he worked in the defense contractor industry. In 2003 following the invasion of Iraq, President George W. Bush appointed Jay Garner to lead the Coalition Provisional Authority to form a civilian Iraqi government.



Photo: Christ the King window above the altar

The east wall (behind the altar) of the church was constructed as a “plug” that could be removed for any future expansion of the sanctuary.

Overtime it started to have leaks and in 1958

the decision was made to replace it with a permanent wall. Mrs. Reba Dunwody donated a circular stained glass window, six feet in diameter, depicting Christ the King as a memorial for her husband, William E. Dunwoody. Three red elongated windows were removed with the “plug;” two were installed in the sacristy and the third longer one was donated to a church in Lake Worth FL.

William E. Dunwody, for decades prior to his death in 1956, actively participated in the life of St. Edmund Church with skilled leadership and dedicated service. He was a successful businessman in ranching, citrus, and real estate endeavors. His obituary noted his civic importance to the community:

“He was one of the citizens mainly responsible for the city acquiring the Youth Center property [now McSwain Park], and he completely financed the south half of the block, permitting the city to repay him over a period of years. Although he was

in the real estate business, Mr. Dunwody refused to receive any commissions or pay for his services in this transaction. He also assisted the city in the transfer of properties that resulted in acquiring the property adjacent to Lake Katherine. This he also did without cost to the city.

Oldtimers around Arcadia also recall that Mr. Dunwody loaned the city money with which to purchase its first fire engine and on several occasions assisted with financing equipment for the department.

Many of the county's fighting men will remember him as the chairman of the Local Selective Service Board from 1941 until 1954 when he resigned.

*In 1941 he was awarded a Citizenship plaque for outstanding service to the community. He leaves hundreds of friends throughout this area.*³¹

During Father Massie's first decade of ministry a number of improvements were made to church property. A number of years of neglect were due to the combination of the Great Depression, WWII, and often changing pastoral leadership. Although there was a gradual decrease in the number of communicants throughout the 1950s, a Sunday School program grew during this time. Effective ministry was based at St. Edmund Church to the community, the state psychiatric hospital and the congregations located in Punta Gorda and Boca Grande. In 1958 Good Shepherd Church in Punta Gorda acquired their first resident priest since the 1930s. Father Massie continued serving the winter seasonal congregation at St. Andrew Church, Boca Grande, until the 1960s. Until 1958, the vestry consisted of all adult male communicants; at the annual meeting that year vestry membership changed to ten

³¹ The Arcadian, May 24, 1956

elected men. Women were excluded from vestry membership in the Episcopal Church until 1968.

The 70th anniversary of St. Edmund Church was observed in November 1963. An historical narrative was researched and written by Read B. Harding (Colonel, USAF, Retired). On November 9th the Episcopal Churchwomen (ECW) prepared a dinner in the fellowship hall, with Suffragan Bishop and Mrs. William Hargrave as special guests. The dinner was attended by 62 adults and 18 youth and children. Bishop Hargrave officiated at the 9:00 am Sunday Eucharist on November 10th and afterwards addressed the Sunday School. According to the vestry minutes, a *“STAG luncheon at the Palm House Restaurant will be given Sunday noon for the Vestry of St. Edmund’s with Bishop Hargrave and Father Massie the honor guests.”*³²



Photo: The Rt. Rev. William L. Hargrave
First Bishop of Southwest Florida

In 1968 the Diocese of South Florida divided into three dioceses: Central Florida, Southeast Florida, and Southwest Florida. St. Edmund Church became part of the Diocese of Southwest Florida. Suffragan Bishop William Hargrave became the First Bishop of Southwest Florida.

Father Massie continued his ministry at St. Edmund Church until he retired in 1976; he was vicar for a total of twenty-eight years. Even in 2018 older Arcadia residents still acknowledge his contribution and importance to the community. He and Janet King Massie

³² Vestry Minutes, October 22, 1963

remained in Arcadia until their deaths and are buried in Arcadia's Oak Ridge Cemetery. The Rev. Raymond Dage, St. Edmund priest when Father Massie died in 1988 was quoted in the obituary: *"He was the finest priest I've ever known...Massie provided a Christian nurture, in one way or another, for many people in the county over this period of time...He was the longest tenured vicar St. Edmund's (or any other church in DeSoto) ever had."*³³



Photo: The Rt. Rev. E. Paul Haynes
Second Bishop of Southwest Florida

In 1975, Bishop Hargrave retired and the Rt. Rev. Emerson Paul Haynes became the Second Bishop of Southwest Florida.

Not only did the St. Edmund congregation have to adjust to the change of long-term stable pastoral leadership and

ministry with Father Massie's retirement, but during the late 1970s and early 1980s the Episcopal Church experienced changing to a new Book of Common Prayer and the increasing role of women in the church, including the ordination of female priests. The struggle is evident in vestry minutes of the era that refer to "priestesses" and accepts women as lectors but not to administer the chalice. The vestry approved using only Rite One (similar language to the 1928 BCP) in the new 1979 Book of Common Prayer. The minutes documents written communication from parishioners asking why is it necessary to change prayer books and questioning why the new vicar's wife is serving as lector and other roles in the church rather than just attending services.

³³ DeSoto County Times, January 14, 1988

Following Father Massie's retirement, St. Edmund Church again entered into the experience of mainly having short-term priests. The Rev. Edward Manning served from 1976 until 1979 and the Rev. Mervin Allshouse from 1979 until 1982.

Prior to ordination, Father Allshouse had a career in metallurgical engineering and in the Naval Reserves, serving in WWII naval battles and the Korean War. He retired with the rank of Commander. He was scholarly, earning doctorate degrees in theology and divinity. He was ordained a deacon in 1968. Five years later, after a year in seminary, he was ordained priest. He was a life-long leader in scouting and participated in the Boy Scout program in Arcadia. He left St. Edmund Church in 1982 due to health issues and died from chronic lymphocytic leukemia in 1983.

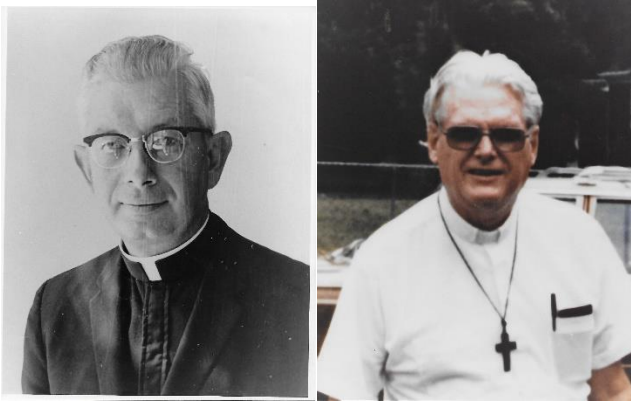


Photo: (l) Father Manning (r) Father Allshouse



Photo: The Rev. Raymond Dage

In 1983, the Rev. Raymond Dage became vicar and served for six years. Father Dage arrived with his wife, Jaci, and three children to live in a newly acquired vicarage at 805 E. Oak Street. He had a doctorate in theatre from the University of Florida and spent several years teaching theatre at universities in Nebraska,

Florida, and Wisconsin. While in Arcadia he taught at the community college and coached the high school golf team.

In 1983 there were 118 listed communicants with average attendance at “four key services” of 77. At the end of Father Dage’s time as vicar, there were 135 listed communicants with average attendance at “four key services” of 101.

In 1988, Bishop Hargrave retired and in 1989 the Rt. Rev. Rogers S. Harris became Bishop of Southwest Florida.

Photo: The Rt. Rev. Rogers S. Harris
Third Bishop Southwest Florida

The Rev. John Owens was appointed interim vicar by Bishop Harris when Father Dage left St. Edmund Church in 1989.





Photo: The Rev. James Bingham

The Rev. James Bingham became vicar in 1990. Prior to coming to St. Edmund Church, Father Bingham had served as Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Maryland, Director of Communications at Appalachian Peoples' Organization, and Director of Development at St. Francis Boys Home (Kansas).

During his time at St. Edmund Church, Father Bingham moved

the altar from against the east wall so that services would be conducted with the officiant facing the congregation; this conformed better to normative liturgical practice in the Episcopal Church at the end of the 20th century. The large stained glass window on the east wall of the fellowship hall (1897 church building) was donated by Ruth Gordon and Father Bingham commenced planning for the 100th anniversary of St. Edmund Church, however he resigned as vicar prior to the anniversary observance.

A two day observance of the 100th anniversary was held on May 15-16, 1993. The May 15th plans as described in the local newspaper: *"An old fashioned celebration will begin at noon on Saturday on the lovely oak shaded church grounds. Country western music will be provided by the Tater Hill Band. More exciting entertainment will be provided by a local group of cloggers. There will be hot dogs, hamburgers, barbecue, and soft drinks to satisfy your hunger. There will be old fashioned ice cream cones and hot popcorn. There will also be baked goods for sale and activities for the kids."*³⁴ A "special

³⁴ The Arcadian, May 1993

centennial worship service” was scheduled for Sunday, May 16th at 10:30 am.



Photo: 100th Anniversary Festival May 15, 1993

In observance of the centennial, a ceramic chalice was attained from the Church of England’s Diocese of Bury St. Edmunds. This was arranged by Nancy and Brooke Diamond through Mrs. Diamond’s nephew, a priest of that diocese. The Diamonds became part of the St. Edmund congregation in the mid-1950s and were members for over 50 years. Nancy met and married U.S. soldier Brooke in England during WWII. Anyone who sat close to her in church when the hymn “My County ‘Tis Of Thee” was sung could hear her quietly singing the words to “God Save The Queen.” Brooke served over the years as vestryman and delegate to diocesan conventions. An accomplished woodworker, he made the fourteen wooden

crosses that served as the Stations of the Cross in the church until they had to be replaced following hurricane damage in 2004.

In 2002 the Diamonds coordinated St. Edmund Church to be one of the sites during the national concert tour of the 40-member Middle England Cavendish Choir. The congregation sponsored the Arcadia concert as a community event and arranged for overnight hosting.



Photo: Nancy & Brooke Diamond



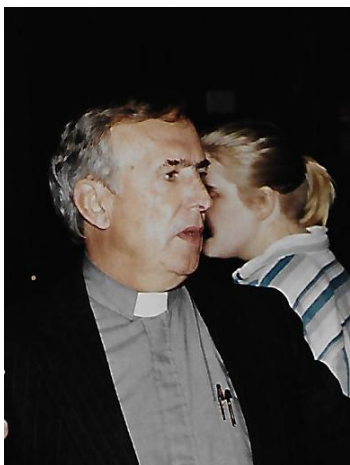
Photo: The Rev. Ernest Johns

The Rev. William Magill became interim vicar following Father Bingham and served until the Rev. Ernest Johns started as vicar in November 1993.

The decade following the 100th anniversary became a troublesome period for the congregation. While Father

Johns served as vicar it became clear that serious financial problems existed. St. Edmund Church had become dependent on outside financial sources such as the Diocese of Southwest Florida, the local Morgan Trust Foundation, and annual contributions from St. Andrew Episcopal Church, Boca Grande. Congregation pledges and contributions did not meet budget requirements. A level of discontentment with assigned priests

and within the congregation also developed.



Father Johns remained as vicar less than two years; and in 1995 the Rev. Ron Nevins became priest-in-charge. Father Nevins was British; he had been ordained in the Church of England.

Photo: The Rev. Ronald Nevins

With Father Nevins, St. Edmund Church began having part-time priests, a situation that exists to the present time.

Although difficulties existed during these years, there also were effective ministries in the life of the church. During the 1990s into the beginning years of the 21st century an active youth ministry was conducted by able lay leadership. A

number of congregation members were involved in Cursio with regular Ultrea gatherings held. Bert Daly, Sr. was a leader in the Kairos prison ministry.



Photo: Bert Daly, Sr., his mother-in-law Flomina King Petry; Adrienne Petry Daly

Bert and Adrienne Daly provided important leadership in the congregation for many decades.

He was a grandson of H.T. and Elizabeth Davis, early members of the congregation and she was the final descendant of the founding Kreider family at the church.



Photo: The Rt. Rev. John B. Lipscomb
Fourth Bishop of Southwest Florida

Bishop Harris retired in 1997 and the Rt. Rev. John Lipscomb became Bishop of Southwest Florida.

Bishop Lipscomb issued an appeal to all the churches of the diocese to consider entering into a Habitat for Humanity ministry. Bob

Baumann, Senior Warden at the time, coordinated a community meeting at St. Edmund Church to explore local support. DeSoto/Arcadia Habitat for Humanity was established out of this endeavor. Bob Baumann was the initial Executive Director and St. Edmund Church has been a continuous supporter of the organization through ECW and

Community Outreach ministry efforts. When the thrift store (“Re-Sale Store”) was initially established, it was located in the vicarage building.

Although it took many years (centuries!) for full incorporation of women into the ministry of the Episcopal Church, the women of the church have been a crucial part of the church’s ministry. As noted, the building of the 1930 church building was possible only by the dedicated work of the Ladies Guild. Later the women’s organization was known as the Service League; and more recently as Episcopal Church Women (ECW). In the early 1950s there were two chapters of the women’s group at St. Edmund Church. One met during the day and the other in the evening. This continued until the 1970s when membership numbers indicated returning to a single group. During the 1980s into the 1990s the ECW operated a thrift store in the 1915 vicarage building. Revenue generated helped support the local church as well as outreach ministries in DeSoto County and diocesan outreach ministries. ECW remains a vital ministry at



Photo:
ECW
Christmas
Toy
Ministry
(2014)

St. Edmund Church in their support of congregation needs and local outreach involvement. The annual United Thank

Offering program supports Episcopal Church national ministries.

Father Nevins left as priest-in-charge in 1998. Due to financial and leadership challenges, Bishop Lipscomb made a unique decision regarding leadership for the Arcadia church. He made a part-time appointment of the Rev. Raymond Kress, not as priest-in-charge, to provide pastoral ministry. Since 1994, the Rev. Jimmie Hunsinger had been assigned as deacon at St. Edmund Church. Bishop Lipscomb assigned Deacon Hunsinger to be "church administrator." Professionally she was a registered nurse with administrative experience. Father Kress had spent most of his priestly ministry as a chaplain in Episcopal schools. This arrangement did not last very long due to family decisions that resulted in Deacon Hunsinger relocating and leaving St. Edmund Church. The experiment did not have time to fully develop and left role confusion in the church's leadership.



Photo: The Rev. Raymond Kress

The Rev. Jimmie Hunsinger, Deacon, with acolytes and choir

The following years were often contentious and in 2000, after deliberation with vestry and diocesan leadership, Father Kress was appointed vicar. During his time in Arcadia, Father Kress was active with the Ministerial Association, including serving as chairman. On some evenings he would be seen with his pet bulldog at a DeSoto County High School “Bulldogs” football game. Many issues and difficulties continued between the vicar and congregation as well as among congregation members. Father Kress resigned as vicar at the end of 2002. The months prior to and after the departure of the vicar was tumultuous and resulted in loss of membership, decreased contributions, and disrupted ministry.

Toward the end of 2003, St. Edmund Church benefited from a new ministry endeavor initiated by St. Boniface Episcopal Church, Siesta Key, to support ministry in the Manasota Deanery of the diocese. Under the leadership of Father Ted Copland, rector of St. Boniface, funding was provided for a priest to serve as curate at St. Margaret of Scotland, Sarasota, and priest-in-charge at St. Edmund Church. Since all three churches are in communities on State Road 72, the ministry was named the "State Road 72 Coalition". In addition to the funding, the coalition of the three churches included mutual supportive ministry of the congregations and clergy.

As result of the "State Road 72 Coalition," the Rev. Greg Fry became priest-in-charge at St Edmund Church in October 2003 with the task to help the congregation move forward.

Photo: The Rev. Robert J. Vaughn, Deacon



In 2001, St. Edmund Church again had a deacon assigned. Having moved to Arcadia from Miami, the Rev. Robert Vaughn was licensed to serve as deacon. Professionally a clinical social worker with experience in psychiatric and medical settings, Deacon Vaughn continues to serve liturgically and in other congregation based ministries, but his focus is the

development and enabling of community outreach ministry.

As a resident of the community he maintains ongoing civic involvements that have included serving as Exalted Ruler of the Arcadia Elks Lodge, chairman of the DeSoto County Democratic Party, president of the Peace River Chapter of the Democratic Progressive Caucus, president of the DeSoto Cares



Homeless Services Board of Directors, and member of the Shelby House/Mental Health Community Centers advisory board. Within the diocese he taught at the School for Ministry and was appointed in 2017 to the Commission on Ministry.

Photo: Hurricane Charley damage

On August 13, 2004, Arcadia and southwest Florida experienced Hurricane Charley. St.

Edmund Church had endured previous hurricanes without major impact. Destructive damage was done to the 1930 church building. Fortunately the 1897 structure was relatively unharmed. Damage to the 1915 vicarage resulted in the building being demolished.

The hurricane impact to the church and to the community was extensive. As often the case, crisis evolves into opportunity. The national and diocesan Episcopal Church responded to the need at St. Edmund Church and the church quickly became a center for responding to community need. Donations and volunteers assisted in the community's recovery.

The physical damage done to the church was repaired and the church building beautifully restored. More importantly, the difficulties of the previous decade faded as the congregation found renewal in community outreach and mutual support of each other. When all recovery efforts were concluded, about \$20,000 remained in the hurricane donation account. After deliberation, the vestry/Bishop's Committee decided to use the money for community outreach rather than internal use. It was decided to donate the funds to Tidewell Hospice for a planned hospice house to serve the Arcadia community.

Photo: The Rev. Fry and vestry/Bishop's Committee members with hospice donation



In 2007 the Rev. Fry left as priest-in-charge to take a new position and over the next decade made gender identity transition. The Rev. Gwen Fry is a leader in the transsexual community nationally and in the Episcopal Church. She currently serves as president of the Episcopal Rainbow, a LGBT organization in the Episcopal Church.



Photo:
Charter
Members
St.
Edmund
DOK

In 2006, the St. Edmund chapter of the Daughters of the King (DOK) was established. The Order of the Daughters of the King is organized as a lay religious order. Each Daughter takes a lifetime vow to live by the rule of the Order. The Rule of Life requires a spiritual discipline of daily prayer, service and evangelism. Because of the vow, Daughters refer to themselves as an order, not an organization.



Photo:
The Rt.
Rev.
Dabney
Smith
Fifth
Bishop of
Southwest
Florida

Bishop Lipscomb resigned in 2007 and the Rt. Rev. Dabney Smith became the Bishop of Southwest Florida.

Bishop Smith appointed the Rev. James Williamson to be vicar in 2007. Father Williamson, with a doctorate in Religious Studies, was chaplain at the University of South Florida, taught at State College of Florida, and served on the bishop's staff as Canon for Ministry Development.

The local National Guard unit based in Arcadia was deployed twice to the war areas resulting from the World Trade Center attack. One deployment was to Iraq and the other to Afghanistan. Each time the St. Edmund congregation "adopted" a Guardsman and his family by providing support and encouragement during the deployment.

A food pantry ministry started at St. Edmund Church in 2007 under the leadership of Clifford Pierce, Mike Carter, and Jim Moore. This ministry was supported by the financial contributions of congregation members as well as their volunteer efforts. Operating for ten years, it regularly served 150-200 individuals and family units monthly. It ended in 2017 due to lack of available leadership and inability of the increasing aging congregation to sustain the physical work necessary.

On the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12, 2011) the St. Edmund Latino Ministry started with a Eucharist celebrated by Assisting Bishop Michael Garrison. The Rev. Mario Castro was appointed as Missioner as part of the diocese's Latino Ministries. Father Mario is in Arcadia on Wednesdays and Sunday evenings; his ministry has been fruitful with many baptisms and confirmations each year.

Photo: The Rev. Mario Castro
Start of St. Edmund Latino Ministries, December 12, 2011



In 2013 concern about the homeless population in DeSoto County became an issue on local social media sites. Deacon Vaughn facilitated community meetings at St. Edmund Church to discuss response to increasing homelessness in the local community. The result of the meetings was to organize a



Photo:
DeSoto
Cares
Service
Center. St.
Edmund
folks:
Deacon
Vaughn far
left,
Clifford
Pierce &
Mike Care
in the
center.

community intervention to start addressing the needs of homeless people under the name of “DeSoto Cares Homeless Services.” Congregation members Mike Carter and Clifford Pierce initially formed a team to go into the various homeless camps to assess need and provide basic comfort items. Community members organized a board that eventually became incorporated. In 2015 DeSoto Cares Homeless Service opened a service site to provide basic services to homeless people. Episcopal Charities provided a grant toward the operating costs and St. Edmund Church continues to provide volunteers and outreach funding support.

Photo: 2017 “St. Edmund Has Heart” Dinner

In 2014 the “St. Edmund Has Heart” dinner was initiated as a means of increasing available funding for benevolence and outreach ministries. This has been a



successful fund raising event every February that not only enhances outreach and benevolence ministries but also serves as a community building experience within the congregation.

As part of the St. Edmund Church outreach ministry, each year \$1000 scholarships are granted to selected high school graduates. The scholarship committee collaborates with the DeSoto County School District in the selection process. The scholarship fund is the result of generous donation independent of the general operating fund.

Since 2011, three individuals who had been part of the St. Edmund congregation have been ordained. They now serve in various places in the Episcopal Church: the Rev. Lisa Fry is a priest in the Diocese of Maine, the Rev. Bert Daly, Jr. is a priest in the Diocese of Florida, and the Rev. Elizabeth Jordan is a deacon in the Diocese of Massachusetts.



Photo: Lisa Fry, Bert Daly Jr., Elizabeth Jordan



Photo: The Rev. James Williamson

In 2015, Father Williamson retired. He had served for eight years as vicar; only two other priests served for a longer period (Father Frank Shore and Father John Massie).

During his years (2007-2015) the St. Edmund congregation experienced a period of stability, gradual increase in membership, and greatly enhanced outreach ministry endeavors. During his tenure, mutual ministry with lay and diaconal leadership thrived.

In the 21st century, retirees (seasonal and permanent residents) from northern states and Canada are strong contributors of congregational growth and stability. They add much to congregational life.



The Rev. Lisa Hamilton was appointed as priest-in-charge in 2015. Prior to ordination she had a professional career as a producer with the “Mister Roger’s Neighborhood” television show and later worked as a writer, producer and director for CBS News Religion Unit, the national Episcopal Church, Trinity Wall Street productions, and Church World Services. She focused on the grief experience as an author, chaplain in hospitals and hospice

organizations, and as a retreat leader. While at St. Edmund Church she experienced the tragic death of her only child, Edward (Ted) Lane Hamilton and resigned as priest-in-charge in 2017. A magnolia tree is dedicated as a memorial to Ted Hamilton at St. Edmund Church.

Photo: The Rev. Lisa Belcher Hamilton



Photo: The Rev. James B. McConnell

The Rev. James McConnell followed as priest-in-charge in 2017. He had served for the previous ten years at St. Ann Episcopal Church in the neighboring community of Wauchula, Florida. Prior to

ordination he had served in the U.S. Navy and had careers in law enforcement and the insurance industry. After attending seminary at Sewanee and ordination, he has served in parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Wyoming, Florida, and as a hospital chaplain in Alabama. He and his wife, Carolyn, reside in Punta Gorda, Florida.

The first Episcopal Church service was officiated by the Rt. Rev. Edwin Weed, Third Bishop of Florida, on October 13, 1891. On November 17, 2018, the Rt. Rev. Dabney Smith, Fifth Bishop of Southwest Florida will officiate at the anniversary liturgy for the 125th anniversary of the establishment of the mission station in Arcadia that was given the name of St. Edmund, King and Martyr. The theme of the anniversary observance is “Honor Our Past, Celebrate Our Present, Anticipate Our Future.”

In the Book of Revelation there is a verse that reflects well the experience of this ministry over the decades: *“I know your works—your love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first.”* (Revelation 2:19)

That small group in 1890s Arcadia had a vision for the establishment of ministry in the Episcopal tradition. The ensuing decades witnessed those who gathered at St. Edmund the Martyr Episcopal Church endeavoring through good times and difficult times to live and proclaim the Good News of

Jesus. This historical narrative tells some of that story. There are countless other aspects and personal experiences over the past 125 years, some of which are known to God alone.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice;
Oh, come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory; great things He hath done.*
(Hymn: "To God Be The Glory")

ST. EDMUND THE MARTYR CHURCH 2018

Clergy

The Rt. Rev. Dabney Smith, Bishop of Southwest Florida

The Rev. James B. McConnell, Priest-In-Charge

The Rev. Robert J. Vaughn, Deacon

The Rev. Mario Castro, Missioner

Bishop's Committee (Vestry) and Officers

Joseph Mancuso, Senior Warden

Roy Michaud, Junior Warden

Irene Pooser, Clerk

Pat Moore, Treasurer

Connie DeWitt

Charlene Michaud

Michael Pooser

Vivian Stewart

Episcopal Church Women (ECW)

Charlene Michaud, President

Linda Gromen, Secretary

Shelly Baumann, Treasurer

Nancy Jo Vaughn, United Thank Offering (UTO)

Altar Guild

Irene Pooser, President

Daughters of the King

Ruth Adams, President

Music Ministry

Yvette Dumaine, Organist

Pearl Kiellman, Choir Coordinator

Parochial Report (2017)

Baptized Members: 139

Communicants: 88

Average Sunday Attendance: 78



Fourth of July Parade 2018

Fourth of July Parade award presentation

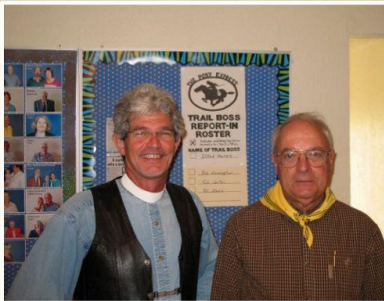




Diocesan Convention 2018



Progressive Dinner 2011



"Pony Express" Stewardship Campaign 2011









\$500 for safety equipment
Fire Cadets Program

ST. EDMUND OUTREACH GRANTS
July 2017

\$1000 for C. Simon house
Habitat For Humanity



\$1000 for
DeSoto
Cares
Homeless
Services

