



**The Dedication of
SWOPE HALL
at
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Cypress Mill, TX
January 9, 2011**

**Tommy Bye, Vicar
Sandy Hodges, Senior Warden**

To God be the Glory!

-Written by Don Gray

Sunday, January 9, 2011 was a very special day at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Cypress Mill, Texas. This booklet is written for those who were fortunate enough to participate in this wonderful day and for those members of the St. Luke's community who were not able to participate. But most of all, it is written to honor those who came before those of us, and for those who in the St. Luke's community who will follow us in the years ahead.

St. Luke's is now 54 years old and is as alive today as much as it has always been. The excitement of the events like the dedication of the original Swope Hall in 1988 and the recent dedication of the "new" Swope Hall suggest that the foundation has been laid for St. Luke's to be a vibrant example of Christ's love for generations to come.

Sunday, January 9, was a cool and cloudy morning that followed a much-needed rain from the night before. But our hearts were filled with sunshine and with His blessings as we gathered together on this first Sunday of Epiphany at 10:15 AM for a very special Holy Eucharist to celebrate baptisms, confirmations, re-affirmations, the dedication of our "new" Swope Hall and the consecration of our new columbarium.



The Dedication Service

Our service was held in Swope Hall and was officiated by Bishop Gary Lillibridge (Diocese of West Texas) and St. Luke's vicar Tommy Bye. More than 100 parishioners, friends and family were present to worship, share in the dedication and in the consecration. The service was followed by a luncheon feast and fellowship.

Special guests included Rev. Les Spear (former vicar at St. Luke's) and Bishop Lillibridge's wife, Catherine.

Lonnie Ragsdale served as the lay reader and his wife Monique served as the acolyte. Corrie Craig Furber accompanied our singing with piano music. The service opened with the congregation singing "I Bind Unto Myself Today".



Vicar Tommy Bye and Bishop Gary Lillibridge



Lonnie & Monique Ragsdale



Rev. Les Spear & Dottie Moon



Catherine & Gary Lillibridge



Gathering for the Service

Bishop Lillibridge delivered the sermon. He reminded us that the purpose of the Epiphany season is to celebrate Christ's baptism. He asked us to give thought to what was going on in Christ's life on the day that he was baptized in the river by John the Baptist. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, Galilee, helping in his father's carpentry shop. Eventually Jesus took over his father's shop. Jesus and John were cousins and had grown up together. It is recorded that at the baptism John protested baptizing Jesus because he felt that Jesus was the one who should be baptizing him. However, Jesus told John that they needed to do this to fulfill all righteousness. In other words, it was the "right thing to do". So John baptized Jesus in the river.

Next, Bishop Lillibridge asked us to think what might have been going through Jesus' mind as he stumbled and fell three times under the weight of the cross he carried to Calgary. As he laid on the ground following the first fall and looked at his mother, Mary, did he recall visions of his childhood and how he had worked with various woods alongside his father Joseph? Did he look closely at the cross and study its wood and think, "I can make something beautiful from this"? The Bishop noted that Jesus did in fact make something beautiful out of the horrible occasion, by sacrificing his life for us, and that it all started with Jesus' baptism. Bishop Lillibridge reminded us that, like the tools that Jesus used in his shop, Swope Hall is a tool for us to use. He pointed out that Swope Hall has its basic purpose

(i.e., a place to gather) and its ultimate purposes (i.e., a place to share the blessings of Jesus with others).

The Bishop's sermon was followed by the baptisms of Lacey Perez and Daniel Perez, children of Connie Steiler. Connie stems from generations of Cypress Mill residents. Ladd Smith and Amy McLaurin accepted their responsibilities as the Godparents to the newly baptized. Bishop Lillibridge administered the baptisms as well as the confirmations and re-affirmations that followed.



Daniel and Lacey Perez,
newly Baptized.

Those confirmed included Nathaniel Zivin, son of Amy Zivin and grandson of St. Luke's Reverend Tommy Bye and Connie Bye; and Eric Fruin, son of Shelly Fruin and grandson of Pat and Sandi Burleson.

The re-affirmations followed next. Those re-affirming their lives to Christ included Beth Preston, Linda Appleton, Charlie and Jeannine Brown, Waldo and Lois Gonzalez, and Sandi Burleson.

Bishop Lillibridge mentioned that he had heard that eight or so St. Luke's parishioners remain who actually knew our former vicar Gordon Swope, for whom the hall was named when it was originally constructed in 1987-1988. He added that the churches within the Diocese of West Texas, which covers 60 counties and close to 69,000 square miles, are far apart in "miles" but remain close at "heart". He explained that he visits a different church within the Diocese almost every Sunday and that he intends to share the exciting story of all the activity going on at the little mission church, St. Luke's in Cypress Mill.

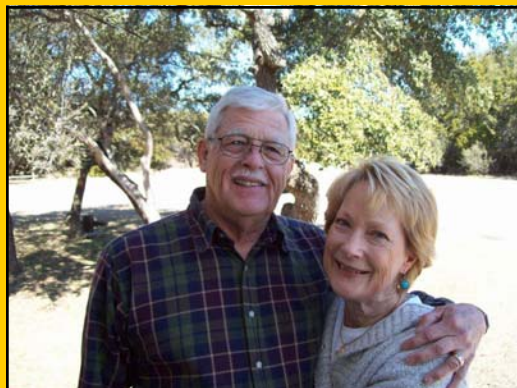
The next part of the service was to bless those with recent birthdays, including Connie Bye, whose birthday actually fell on the date of the service, as well as Betsy Stephenson, Lois Gonzalez, Paula Sumners and Father Bye's daughter Amy Zivin.

David Greene and Rick Schroeter assisted with the offering.

Next, we joyfully celebrated the Eucharist. As we approached to receive Him in front of the altar, Betsy Stephenson shared her voice by singing "There is a Road" as a beautiful solo, accompanied by her husband John Stephenson, on guitar. The Eucharist experience continued with some very special music, as we sang "Just as I Am" and "I Am the Bread of Life." As we reached the last verse of "I Am the Bread of Life," Amy Keith Jameson rose from her seat and stood in praise of our Lord, and she was quickly joined by all in standing in response to the grateful emotion felt in singing this glorious song. As the service closed, we joined together in singing "Amazing Grace" - a reminder of the grace and many wonderful blessings that Christ brings to us.



David Greene



Rick & Christie Schroeter





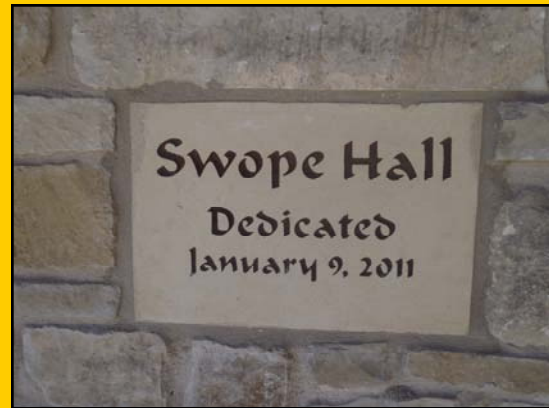
The Dedication and Consecration

At this point in the celebration, we undertook the dedication of the new Swope Hall and the consecration of the new columbarium. Bishop Lillibridge, assisted by Lonnie Ragsdale, conducted the blessing of the new hall just inside its east door then led us outside to the columbarium, where he was assisted by Lonnie and Monique Ragsdale in the consecration. The columbarium is located along St. Luke's "Stations of the Cross" path, which winds its way through the grounds. The construction of the path was initially undertaken by young parishioner Matthew Gray in 2008 to fulfill his Eagle Scout project with help from many of his friends and fellow parishioners. As originally built, the path featured a crushed granite surface lined by sandstone rocks collected from the nearby Sandy, Texas community. However, due to the recent construction of the columbarium, the granite path was replaced with a stained concrete walkway to better accommodate the needs of all who travel the path in remembrance of Christ's suffering for us and to facilitate access to the columbarium.

The dedication of Swope Hall



Above: The consecration of the columbarium



The Lunch Feast

As we re-entered Swope Hall following the columbarium's consecration, we found that the hall's seating arrangements had been transformed for a luncheon feast and that a large buffet bar had "magically" appeared with help from Marie McShane and her gracious helpers.

On the hall's flat-screen TV, we enjoyed watching a photo presentation prepared by Connie Bye, which included photos of our parishioners and recent events in the life of St. Luke's. The buffet included wonderful ham provided by St. Luke's and a large variety of side dishes and breads shared by parishioners. Senior Warden Sandy Hodge's daughter, Marti Spruiel, prepared and served a lovely cake and cupcakes for dessert. The lunch feast also included a feast of fellowship as people happily enjoyed mingling and visiting with each other.



Marie McShane enjoying the hall's new kitchen and buffet table



Flat-screen television



Marti Spruiel prepared the dessert

Following the feast, Father Bye recognized Jorn Budde (photo on page 9) for his huge role in serving as St. Luke's representative in overseeing the contractor in the construction of the hall. He noted that Jorn was present at the jobsite almost every day and that it was a blessing (to put it lightly) that Jorn and Doreen Budde came into the St. Luke's community at a time when their gifts and talents were very much needed.

Following Father Bye's remarks, Bishop Lillibridge spoke once more with us, mentioning that one of the favorite tasks of all priests is the serving of the sacraments. He explained the reverence he feels when open hands are laid before him asking for the "body and blood" of Christ. This reminded him of all the hands that came before ours today as St. Luke's was first established and then began to grow. Bishop Lillibridge pointed out that we start as beneficiaries of those who came before us and evolve into benefactors to those who follow us. As Father Bye would've typically added with a smile, "Can I have an Amen on that?". You bet, Father Bye, as the foundation of the past is still so evident at St. Luke's, along with a heart open to those ahead of us.

Also during the lunch feast we enjoyed our Children's Sunday School "choir" in singing "Jesus Loves Me" and "This Little Light of Mine". The singers included Alyssa McLaurin, Ava Craig, Anna Craig, and Preston Craig. The audience was moved to sing along with the kids during "This Little Light of Mine".

The Hall's True Purpose

Swope Hall was very much alive on this day with the same vibrancy and excitement that has always been a part of the original parish hall. In his sermon, Bishop Lillibridge reminded us that Jesus might have looked at his fallen cross and asked, "What can I make of this?". However, within that comment and other comments that Bishop Lillibridge shared with us, it was clear that he was reminding us to continually ask ourselves how we might best utilize Swope Hall as a tool for sharing the hall's ultimate purpose, sharing Christ's love and sacrifice with all. As Jesus in essence told John at Jesus' baptism, "It was the right thing to do." It seems that the same can be said for the construction of the new Swope Hall and St. Luke's columbarium. No doubt, Rev. Gordon Swope would agree.



Some of our children singing during lunch.



Photos of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 2010



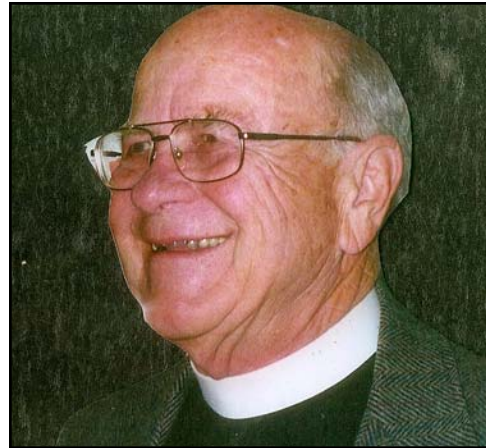
The Original Swope Hall

The idea of a larger parish hall has been a dream at St. Luke's for many years. St. Luke's was formed in 1956 and the church was built on land donated by Herman and Esther Reiner, parents of present-day parishioner Fielding Reiner. In the fashion of Fielding's parents, Fielding and his wife Rita recently donated additional land to St. Luke's with frontage on Spur 962.

The original parish hall, named for St. Luke's first permanent vicar, the Rev. John Gordon Swope, Jr., was built in 1987-1988. When Gordon came to St. Luke's, we had no water well (i.e., no bathroom!). We used the bathroom facilities of the Cypress Mill General Store and post office across the road. And we did the same during the recent construction of the new Swope Hall!



Fielding & Rita Reiner



Rev. John Gordon Swope

When the Bishop visited back then, we had dinner on the picnic tables under our "great" live oak— and we still gather under this great tree today. Gordon said we had to have an activity building if we wanted to grow. So, St. Luke's started to raise money for that purpose. We held an auction with members donating various articles, including: handcrafts, knitted items, hand woven shawls, preserves and jellies, carpentry, cypress carvings from Thomas Young (now deceased), an order for a tailored shirt, and many other unique items. We raised several thousand dollars from this auction. Residents of Austin who ranched on weekends in Cypress Mill made generous donations. We finally could start building the original parish hall! As St. Luke's is a focal point in the Cypress Mill community, the parish hall became an important part of Cypress Mill and remains so to this day.



First in the construction process was a need for a water well. After drilling a number of days and not finding water, the driller was discouraged. But his father suggested that he drill one more day. On that next day, water was found! The well came in at 1,111 feet. Perhaps the extra drilling day served as a reminder of "our Father's" wisdom and guidance.

After water had been located, the construction of the parish hall began with Gordon serving as contractor assisted by Lee Paul. First, they laid the plumbing, including plumbing for a second bathroom to be added later. The slab was poured and the carpentry began. These two men worked every Tuesday and Thursday. On Wednesdays and Fridays, several women came to sweep sawdust, shavings, bent nails and all the clutter that carpenters leave behind (leaving one to wonder if Mary could identify with this effort!).

Bob and Frana Keith donated limestone rocks from their nearby ranch for use in constructing the exterior walls. A neighbor, Bobby Wilson, built the kitchen cabinets and other carpentry. Mike Kelley and Charlie Lechow taped, floated and textured the interior walls and ceilings. Many hands worked to finish the hall's interior, sanding, staining and sealing the cabinets, painting the walls, and staining the concrete floor- all the while working under Gordon's supervision. Furnishings were ordered and the kitchen supplied. When all was completed, we named it "Swope Parish Hall," despite Rev. Swope's protest. When the hall was complete, the Bishop came to visit, and the original Swope Hall was dedicated and celebrated on October 2, 1988.

It is said that Gordon was seldom without a smile on his face. He was our spiritual advisor and confidant. He is described by many as a man of love. We at St. Luke's benefited by his wisdom and understanding.....and by his teaching. Gordon and his wife Jeannie led by example. Through them, we also learned more of the traditions of the Episcopal Church and the riches of its heritage.

Our beloved Rev. Swope died January 18, 2000. His memorial service was held at St. Luke's, attended by bishops and clergy of the diocese, overflowing the church and Swope Parish Hall, attesting to the life and ministry of one called by God. Reverend Swope's daughter, Dottie Moon, and her husband Chuck Moon, remain parishioners at St. Luke's to this day and travel from their home in Hye, Texas to worship at St. Luke's. Both were present for the dedication on January 9. The love of Christ that was so evident in Dottie's father still thrives at St. Luke's today.



Dottie & Chuck Moon



The “New” Swope Hall

The original Swope Hall consisted of close to 1,300 square feet and served us well over the years. However, a small “one-room” multi-purpose facility has inherent limitations over time, especially with the growth and activity that has marked St. Luke’s in recent years.

Construction of the “new” larger Swope Hall began on August 15, 2010, and concluded on December 15. The slab from the original parish hall lies underneath a portion of the new slab. The project was completed under budget and was entirely paid for in cash with funds that have been accumulating for construction use over many years now. The new hall includes 4,000 square feet of heated space and another 1,000 square feet of covered porches.

The new parish hall includes an enlarged kitchen complete with modern appliances and built-in cabinets, an enlarged sacristy, a new vestry room, a nursery room, an enlarged Sunday School room, offices for the vicar and his assistant, enlarged separate bathrooms, and storerooms. Of course, most of the square footage is found in the large multi-purpose room, as St. Luker’s are a friendly bunch who enjoy fellowship time together! The multi-purpose room is complete with the latest in audio/video equipment and a large flat-screen TV. With this equipment, the hall can be used to view live videos of events occurring in the church. The covered porches will be used for small group discussions and other purposes.

Parishioner Jorn Budde volunteered to oversee the construction efforts. Jorn was at the jobsite most every day, donated countless hours, and did a wonderful job .

Since the construction of the much-needed “new” Swope Hall drained funds from St. Luke’s building fund that accumulated over time, we initiated a new Capital Campaign in 2010 to help replenish funds for possible future construction purposes. To date close to \$180,000 has been donated to replenish the building fund. “To God be the Glory” for his impact in the lives of our parishioners!



Jorn Budde

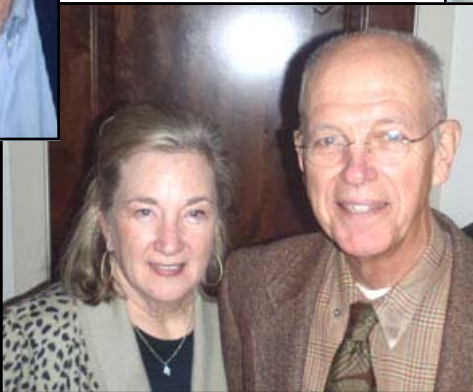


A Photo Collage of Some of Those Present...



Photos left to right, top to bottom: 1. Mae Hernlund, 2. Amy McLaurin, Gail Moreman, Amy Keith Jameson, 3. Thomas and Paula Sumners, 4. Rev. Les Spear and Don Gray, 5. Sandy & Pat Burseson, 6. Jim & Corrie Furber, 7. Candy & Keith Falatko, 8. Connie and Rev. Tommy Bye, 9. Tatum & Garrett Craig, 10. Gail Moreman, Linda Appleton, Sally Smith, 11. Frances Imlay, 12. Ladd Smith & Elizabeth Clark

More Photos...



Photos left to right, top to bottom: 1. Betsy Stephenson, 2. Rev. John Dunham, 3. Rev. John & Susan Dunham, 4. Monica & Bob Bailey, 5. Liz and David Manning, 6. Shirley & Ralph Bishop, 7. Marie & Joe McShane, 8. Ava & Anna Craig.