

Tripp Jones
All Saints Sunday
November 6, 2005

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts, be always acceptable to you, O Lord our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

With my fellow parishioner Reg Jones speaking last week and myself, Tripp Jones, speaking today, I want to dispel any rumors that the Joneses are staging a coup and trying to take over Epiphany's pulpit! We are all called to be participants in the liturgy and I am grateful to Randolph for giving me the opportunity to speak on this All Saints Sunday.

“Refurbished buildings are not unconnected with refurbished lives.” That’s a quotation from the book, *Re-Pitching the Tent* by Richard Giles. Giles is the dean of the Philadelphia Cathedral and a prominent author and lecturer on the subject of church design. His book is one of the resources that Epiphany’s Renovation Task Force is using as we consider the refurbishing of this sacred space.

I was intrigued by Dean Giles’ quote when I first read it and thought I would put it to the test when I examined our own renovations here at Epiphany. What were the reasons for the renovation? How did our church come to more closely model the recipe for Godly living that Jesus gives us in the Beatitudes? Would I perhaps find some Epiphany saints that guided us along the way? You may recall earlier in the year, we made a presentation on the various renovations in this building’s history. I want to focus on the three 19th Century renovations that gave us the physical structure we have today, and see the connection they had with the faith journey of the parish.

Let me start with the renovation of 1857. It was the first since the building was initially opened 13 years earlier. Its main purpose was to provide additional seating. A tower was added to the entrance of the building and these transepts were added on the east and west, thus putting the church in the shape of a cross. The architect of this renovation was Ammi Burnham Young, who was the supervising architect for the Treasury Department, two blocks up the street. The Senior Warden of the day was Charles James, often called “Uncle Charley” by rector Charles Hall. James ran an apothecary shop next door to the home of Elizabeth James, no doubt a relation, the saintly woman who held the many cottage meetings that lead to the creation of this church. When Bishop Whittingham made his first Episcopal visit to this congregation, two months after its founding, Charles James was one of five confirmed on that day. Two of the chalices we currently use were memorial gifts in 1920 of James’ descendants.

Junior Warden David Higgins was a local judge. One year before becoming Warden, at age 68, he was baptized in this church. Seven years later, at age 75, he stood at the baptism of his infant son, Lucius Cornelius. Shortly after President Lincoln’s assassination, Higgins was the sponsor at the baptism of Vinnie Ream, the young girl Lincoln had befriended during his time in the White House and later did the sculpture of him that stands in the U.S. Capitol. Two of the vestrymen of the day were George Davis and William Maynadier. Davis was a prominent local banker and Maynadier, an 1827 West Point graduate was chief of the Army Bureau of Ordnance.

Brigadier General Maynadier was the one appointed by the vestry of Epiphany Parish to take back possession of this church after its use by the Federal Government as a hospital during the Civil War.

Did a refurbished building result in refurbished lives? Within months after the 1857 renovation's completion, the Epiphany Church Home was established. It would become the principal medium for the social outreach of this church for the next 100 years. The main purpose of the new organization was "to extend relief to the sick and the poor, the ignorant and the destitute" living within Epiphany Parish. Specifically, its goals were to care for the sick and needy, to take charge of orphans, to find employment for those who lacked the means to support themselves, to secure the services of a physician to care for the poor, to establish a school for the youth, and to obtain a house at which the beneficiaries of the parish may be provided. These were prominent needs in a day when the government provided very few social services. The people of Epiphany heard Jesus' call and responded.

Seventeen years later, the 1874 renovation came along. Among other things, it replaced a low flat ceiling with this lofty, open-timbered one. This renovation was one of the few whose motivation was not additional seating. The 1874 Vestry was wrestling with the idea of repairing what would have been at the time a 30-year old building or erecting, as the vestry minutes record, "a new church in a more desirable locality." Yes, my friends, we're talking 1874 and there was already talk about leaving this downtown location.

The 1874 Vestry was a formidable group. Senior Warden Lewis Johnson Davis had deep roots here at Epiphany. His parents were founding members. Nine year old Lewis stood on this site and witnessed the laying of the cornerstone of this building in 1843 and basically grew up with the church. His maternal grandfather, Alexander Reinagle, was a significant musical figure in Colonial America, both as a pianist and a composer. Davis would later donate his grandfather's manuscripts to the Library of Congress. Reinagle wrote the first piece of music to honor an American president and was actually hired by George Washington to teach piano to his adopted daughter, Nellie Custis. Musical ability seemed to run in the family. Davis himself sang in Epiphany's choir and even directed it for a time. Davis, like his father was a banker. On his death, a vestry resolution stated, "He carried his accurate business methods into the financial and general affairs of the church and his services were simply invaluable."

Junior Warden William Dickson Baldwin was a cousin of Epiphany's first rector, John French and both men were nephews of Abraham Baldwin, a signer of the U.S. Constitution. In a wedding in this church in 1866, Baldwin married Margaret Maynadier, the daughter of General William Maynadier who we mentioned earlier. Baldwin was a prominent patent attorney, who worked with such inventors as Alexander Graham Bell and Marconi. After serving as warden close to 50 years, the vestry called Baldwin "a man of unusual ability and energy which he devoted unsparingly to the work of the Master."

Three of the 1874 vestrymen were active duty Army Generals stationed in Washington at the time - Joseph Eaton, John Parke, and Joseph K. Barnes, the latter being the Surgeon General of the Army who attended Presidents Lincoln and Garfield after their assassinations here in this city. Vestryman John Coffin was a mathematics genius, who had taught at the Naval Academy

and was a founder of the National Academy of Sciences. He was a long time treasurer at Epiphany and was married to Louisa Harrison, who had given the land upon which this church was built. Vestryman George McCartee was the Superintendent of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing at the Treasury Department and Vestryman Richard Joseph was the chief disbursing officer of the Department of the Interior. Dr. Joseph stood as the sponsor for Epiphany sexton James Saunders when he was baptized here as an adult.

The 1874 Vestry began to wrestle with the question of repairing or rebuilding elsewhere. The vestry went with the less expensive option and decided to renovate the existing building. The services of New York architect Henry Dudley and \$9000 gave us the ceiling we have today.

Did a refurbished building result in refurbished lives? Shortly after the 1874 renovation was completed, the congregation was considering William Paret to be its next rector. Dr. Paret asked the vestry what Epiphany was doing for its poor. The response came back, "We have no poor. Every pew is let." The rental or sale of pews was the main source of income for the church. If all the pews were generating income, then the parish was running efficiently and at peak capacity. Wasn't that the goal of any good vestry? Paret came back with his sobering response. Not only would he not consider coming to Epiphany under these conditions, but added, "A church without any poor is too spiritually poor to be useful." You can almost feel the mouths of the vestry members drop. Unfortunately, the discernment process they went through at that point is not recorded, but we do know that William Paret did in fact become Epiphany's fifth rector.

Our parish records give many examples of how the lives of these men and the life of our parish were changed after that 1874 renovation. The number of services in this church was increased, with more of them free and open to everyone. Epiphany began the practice of keeping the doors open during the week, not just on Sundays. Many of the people who lived in the southern part of the parish "across the tracks" in SW Washington were poor and almost none of them came to church. The parish rented a house on Maryland Ave SW and opened the Epiphany Mission and Chapel. Day care, boys and girls clubs, mens meetings, women's sociables, a free dispensary, sewing classes - all were means of reaching out to the poor of the parish. The Sunday School of the new mission opened in 1880 with Senior Warden Lewis Johnson Davis as its Superintendent, a position he held for the rest of his life.

And lastly, the renovation of 1890. The main feature was an addition to the chancel area, which allowed for the choir to move from the South Gallery to the area where they remain today, which in turn created additional congregational seating in the balcony. The three monumental arches were added to the front and the verse from today's second reading was added above the central arch. Architect Edward J. Neville Stent of New York carried out these improvements. The vestry that authorized them included Lewis Davis and William Baldwin, still serving in the positions of Senior and Junior Warden, respectively. New vestry members included Adjutant General of the Army Edward Townsend, prominent Washington attorneys Calderon Carlisle and Nathaniel Wilson, and banker philanthropist Charles Carroll Glover. Glover was the first president of Riggs National Bank. He was baptized as an adult in this church, confirmed and married here and also stood here at the baptism of his two daughters. It was at a meeting in Glover's home on Lafayette Square that the idea of building the National Cathedral was born.

Did a refurbished building result in refurbished lives? Our parish records record shortly after the 1890 renovation was completed, the cornerstone of a permanent Epiphany Chapel in SW Washington was laid with William Paret, now Bishop of Maryland, presiding. Epiphany Chapel served the people of SW Washington for the next 60 years. The last tangible evidence of the Chapel, its cornerstone, rests outside in our garden here on G Street. The people of this parish played host to the Diocese of Maryland Annual Convention in 1895. It was the decision of this convention to create the new Diocese of Washington with the people of Epiphany Parish subscribing one quarter of the amount pledged to support the new organization. In 1898, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church met for the first time in the nation's capital and that meeting was hosted by this church.

And so as we prepare for another renovation in this church's history, we ask ourselves are we prepared to refurbish our lives as well. Are we prepared to heed the words of Jesus regarding what it takes to be blessed in God's kingdom? A renewed building won't make us love one another. A beautiful space won't force us to be Christ's hands and heart. Being a mission outpost for God in downtown Washington will take our hearts, our minds, our strength and our wallets. But be assured we will not be alone in our journey. We stand on the shoulders of a whole cloud of witnesses who have gone before us in this place. As a community of faith today, we pray that we may always strive for the things that will make us blessed in the Kingdom of God. We pray for all those saints in our midst, especially for Irene and Phil who will be baptized this morning. And one great day, we pray that we will all join that saintly chorus and stand before the throne of God singing the unending hymn, Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto the Lamb forever. Amen.