

*More Neckties Than Socks:
St John's Chapel, Harbor Springs, Michigan
Sunday, July 10, 2011*

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the town of Harbor Springs, Michigan, is a community of just 1,567 souls; in summer, however, the population in the surrounding area swells to 20,000 or more. Founded in 1691 by Jesuits who came to work with the indigenous Odawa people, the area was once called L'Arbre Croche, which means "Crooked Tree." French traders renamed the settlement Petit Traverse, or "Little Traverse," when they arrived in 1859, and the village was eventually incorporated as Harbor Springs in 1880.

In the late nineteenth century, the natural harbor with deep water and protecting peninsula proved perfect for steamships that arrived from such origins across Lake Michigan as Chicago, Milwaukee, and Gary, Indiana. The Pennsylvania Railroad arrived in 1882, allowing visitors from Detroit, Kalamazoo, and Grand Rapids to join the escape from heat, pollen, and dust and "summer in Harbor Springs." Summer residents formed "associations," which still operate today as land-owning cooperatives. The two oldest associations—Harbor Point and Wequetonsing—contain numerous "cottages," sprawling multistoried second homes, many from the Victorian era with beachfront views of Little Traverse Bay and Lake Michigan. Harbor Point closes to motor vehicles from June 15 through Labor Day each year, and in season its eighty-eight cottages can be reached only by horse-drawn carriage.

In the 1920s, Harbor Springs was dubbed "the Naples of the north"—for its similarity to the resort in Florida. The area surrounding Harbor Springs today claims ten golf courses, two ski resorts, eleven parks, eight tennis courts, and more than 22,000 acres of nature conservancy. Some have called Harbor Springs today "the Nantucket of the Midwest." Notable residents of Harbor Springs have included many captains of industry and political leaders, including Ephraim Shay (designer of the Shay locomotive), U.S. Sen. John

C. Danforth, as well as families Fisher (as in “body by Fisher”), Gamble (as in Proctor), Otis (as in Elevator), Ford (as in Motor), Reynolds (as in Wrap), and Wrigley (as in Gum and Field).

On July 14, 1882, the Rt. Rev. George Gillespie, bishop of the Diocese of Western Michigan, laid the cornerstone for St. John’s, a seasonal chapel operated mid-June through Labor Day to this day. Under the aegis of the rector of Emmanuel Church in nearby Petoskey, St. John’s briefly operated year round, from 1901 to 1906. It has remained a summer chapel ever since.

One of the church’s most beloved and influential leaders was Daniel Tuttle, who served as missionary bishop of Montana, Idaho, and Utah, as bishop of Missouri, and as the thirteenth Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. The guild hall and chapel are dedicated in his memory. Bishop Tuttle built a cottage in Wequetonsing; he and his wife summered in Harbor Springs for many years. In 1918, he prepared the summer’s confirmands, and the Bishop of Western Michigan noted, “it was indeed an unusual experience when the Presiding Bishop insisted on himself presenting to me a class when he had himself prepared for confirmation.”

Estimated to cost \$2,300 originally, the church building was a gift of Charles Scott, who became the first Warden of the parish. Built in the carpenter Gothic style, the building is white-painted wood outside and a natural honey-toned paneling inside. The church accommodates perhaps 120 worshipers, and is near capacity this particular Sunday. In addition to the chapel building, the congregation owns a vicarage on the grounds of a nearby country club. Clergy are engaged for two- or three-week residencies throughout the summer.

Standing in the narthex, a male usher dressed in jacket and tie tracks attendance on a mechanical counter. Visitors obtain a worship bulletin and a warm smile from a woman

usher on the opposite side of the entry. The congregation reflects the general level of racial diversity in Harbor Springs; happily, there is one person of color. Worshipers are mostly mature and well dressed in summer “resort wear.” Ladies wear sundresses or slacks, and a few have hats. In spite of the heat, most of the gentlemen wear sportcoats and neckties; very few wear socks.

The rectangular church building has pews on each side of a center aisle, with what appear to be handmade needlepoint kneeling cushions fashioned in a rich blue. These are adorned with gold crosses as well as various floral patterns. Stained-glass windows punctuate the side walls, whereas the altar is backed by a carved wooden reredos over which hangs a damask dossal. Atop this, more wood carving—depicting a dove descending and the familiar shield of the Episcopal Church. The paraments are of a sky blue color, and include the dossal, chalice veil, and lectern adornments—all with a Canterbury Cross motif. Flags of the United States and the Episcopal Church stand on either side of the chancel.

Copies of a miniature-sized *Book of Common Prayer* may be found in each pew rack, to either side of *The Hymnal 1982*. Pew cards request both “address in Harbor Springs” and “home address,” indicating perhaps that having one’s principal residence elsewhere is normative. The worship program contains three inserts, which make negotiating the service something of a challenge. This particular Sunday includes a baptism.

The organist begins his three prelude pieces on the church’s Allen electronic organ: *Prelude in a Classic Style* by Gordon Young, *We Beseech Thee* by Dietrich Buxtehude, and *Choral Song* by Samuel Wesley. Clearly, he is an accomplished musician. The service itself begins with the singing of the hymn “Lift high the cross,” during which a crucifer leads a procession into the church. Following the crucifer, a mixed choir of nine dressed in white

academic robes enters. A lay assistant and the priest celebrant follow; he is dressed in cassock-alb with a blue stole matching the altar paraments.

This week's celebrant is a priest who served as assistant dean at a cathedral before his retirement. Since this Sunday includes Holy Baptism, the priest begins by announcing the page number for the opening acclamations. Following the Collect of the Day, all are seated to hear a reading from Genesis. This is preceded by a lengthy and presumably extemporaneous commentary about it and the previous Sunday's periscope. The lessons are read from a lectern on the gospel side, near the organ console. All recite Psalm 119:105-112 in unison, and the second lesson (Roman 8:1-11) is read—with a briefer commentary preceding.

The congregation is asked to remain seated for the sequence hymn, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation." The first four stanzas are sung by the choir in a round-like setting, and the people are invited to join in singing the final stanza, and they do so with gusto. The nine young choir members are conservatory students, enrolled this summer at the nearby Bay View Music Festival. The music is both eclectic in style and presented with a high quality of connoisseurship. On occasion, the musicians include brass and other instrumentalists. The musician reports that his aim is to present a mix of styles ranging from free church to high church, and he succeeds in this endeavor.

The priest proclaims the gospel (Matthew 13:1-9,18-23) from the center at the top of the chancel steps, and then gives his homily from the lectern on the epistle side of the church. He relates the practice of sowing seed in Jesus' time in some detail, and then asks, "What is your response? How are we cultivating the seed for God's work in our hearts?" Relating his remarks to the context, he declares that the process of planting the seed of

Christianity in each of us begins with baptism. He asks us to consider how we will allow God's word to grow and multiply in our hearts as he concludes his brief remarks.

Following the sermon, the candidate for baptism is presented. He appears to be about a year old and somewhat uncomfortable in the unfamiliar situation. After a brief instruction to the parents and godparents, the priest resumes the formal presentation and examination of the candidate. We continue with the Baptismal Covenant, prayers for the candidate, the Thanksgiving over the Water, and the baptism itself at a font next to the organ console—with text all taken *verbatim* from the prayer book. While many of the congregation appear comfortable participating without holding a book, only a few of the choir actively contribute to the said responses. A friendly, warm, and brief exchange of the peace follows, during which no one leaves a pew.

Various announcements follow, including an appeal for funds by a member of the chapel's executive committee. The ten-week worship season operates on a budget of approximately \$100,000 annually, he reports. In addition to these operating funds, the congregation donates \$35,000 to various local causes through its community fund. All of this support comes from current summer worshippers.

The choir members then move to the center aisle to sing *Credo* by Alexander Gretchaninov. A mezzo-soprano soloist sings a plainsong-like setting of selections from a traditional-sounding text of the Nicene Creed in English while the other eight choristers hum. During this anthem, an offering is collected. At the presentation of the gifts, all stand to sing "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow," set to the *Old 100th* psalm tune, and "Our fathers' God, to thee" (the final stanza of "My country, 'tis of thee"), sung to the tune *America*—reminding this visitor of many happy worship experiences of an era thought bygone.

The service continues with Eucharistic Prayer A—said, with a sung *Sanctus* and Lord's Prayer. Although neither is so noted in the bulletin, the *Sanctus* is sung to Schubert's *Deutsche Messe* setting, and the Lord's Prayer to that of Albert Hay Malotte. This has been adapted to the traditional Anglican language of the prayer ("trespasses" instead of "debts"), and the congregation seems familiar with both settings. The fraction anthem is said, and, as the people come forward to receive communion, more musical offerings are presented: *Wind, Wind, Blow on Me*, for which words and music have been provided, a solo of *There Is a Balm in Gilead*, and the hymn "Praise the Spirit in creation," sung to David Hurd's tune *Julion* with choir and congregation alternating stanzas. Here, as throughout the service, the organist embellishes the music with numerous trills, arpeggios, and improvised accompaniments—not without effect.

The first post-communion prayer and a blessing follow, and the worship leaders process from the altar to the singing of "Great is thy faithfulness," which is printed on an insert for the congregation. A brief but boisterous postlude concludes the worship: Allegro in G Major by John Stanley.

The seasonal chapel known as St. John's has provided Anglican worship in downtown Harbor Springs for over 125 years. Enthusiasm for a somewhat relaxed though traditional celebration in modern language is strong, as evidenced by the assembly gathered approaching the capacity of the building. In Northern Michigan (which is properly the northern part of the lower peninsula), visitors will find a generous welcome and sturdy worship when summering in Harbor Springs. Gentlemen: leave your socks at home.

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