

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Changes coming to Faith Chapel

To the Editor:

They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. And for centuries beholders have been enchanted by the beauty of our little golden isle, whether it is the brilliance of a sunrise on an Easter morn or a blazing sunset on the last day of a too short vacation. Maybe it was the glorious clean-swept vastness of the beach, or the ageless, moss-draped live oak trees, or the newborn fawn on its spindly, wobbly legs, or the tiny hatchlings scurrying clumsily to the bewildering expanse of the ocean, or perhaps the historic elegance of homes of a bygone era. The list is long.

But, for many beholders over the past 112 years, the most beautiful place on Jekyll has been rustic little Faith Chapel. Tucked away on its own little plot of soil, the Chapel has been open to everyone. First, of course, were the million-

aires who erected the small house of worship for their 1904 season. In the ensuing 11 decades, it has beckoned not only the rich, but everyone. Especially the average Georgian. In those early days, diminutive Tallu Fish was one of the Chapel's valorous guardians. She became quite indignant at finding vandals had sawed off the ram grotesque, but she was instrumental in getting Russ Fiore to carve the replacement.

Visitors from every state in the Union and dozens of foreign countries have crossed the threshold. It has been a place of solitude and solace. It has known the sorrow of a last farewell. It has rejoiced at the baptism of a new grandchild. It has felt the pain of a nation and death that came too soon.

By the late 50's and early 60's, the little house of worship was being shared by the local congre-

gations before their permanent structures were erected. For many years it was the site of the community Thanksgiving service and World Day of Prayer. Recitals and music programs were presented to the public at no charge. Who can forget Tom Tom Williams, our former singing mailman, imploring all to "Make Us One." I, myself, performed two separate piano/organ programs with Helen Simonsen. And others – Kate Hamer, Doris Bromhoff, Pat Overholt, the Jekyll Singers, the Glynn Academy choral group – and endless list of musicians have performed, entertained and blessed us.

I played for dozens of Saturday weddings, rushing out of Parker-Kaufman while donning a choir robe over my blue jeans and white P-K shirt, entering the Chapel by the back door, playing and dashing back out. Weddings were usually quite brief, and work waited. Many of those couples return on their anniversaries. Some I remember, some I don't. But I am always happy theirs was truly a marriage, not just a wedding. Unfortunately, after I "killed" the third Chapel organ, no one would buy me another! For a few events, my own little Baldwin found its way to the Chapel in the back of a pickup.

The Episcopalians have held both Easter and Christmas services in the Chapel for many years. On numerous occasions events were SRO in the 110-capacity structure. And, with the exception of weddings, it was open to the public – free of charge.

Thousands of people have found their way to the Chapel to

gaze at Tiffany's magnificent stained glass window, or stand in awe before the lustrous beauty of the Armstrong window. They have marveled at he workmanship in the all-wood Chapel – the cypress shingles, the beams, the hand-hewn pews, and those six prodigious



the upkeep. Evidently, there is a very large power bill. And every decade or so, the roof needs repair. That takes money. When you think you can charge \$5 paid admissions on 500-600 visitors per month ... well....

So, on Feb. 1, 2016, Faith Chapel will no longer be open to the public at no charge every day. Not to the rich. Not to the poor. Not to anyone. On Jan. 31, I will lock the doors and turn in the key for the last time.

The volunteers from the Island churches – Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian – will no longer be needed, as JIA personnel will staff the Chapel.

Not long ago I stumbled across something in my Bible that made me pause and reflect. It was Matthew 21:12-13.

As chairmen of the Faith Chapel Committee of Friends of Historic Jekyll Island, I have earlier thanked the dedicated volunteer coordinators for their faithful service in booking sitters each month. Now I want to mention them here one last time: Dot Easterling (Baptist), Mary Stock (Catholic), Betty Murray (Episcopal), and Ame Ivanov (Presbyterian). No, I didn't miss one. That would be me, along with the many faithful sitters of the Methodist congregation. Each group took two months each year. No money changed hands. It was a privilege we wanted to share. A good friend recently wrote: "Change in inevitable, but not all change is for the better."

So, now we face the end of yet another era on our ever-changing isle. They call it progress. And little Faith Chapel stood in the way.

In remembrance,

Trish Clements
(Joined by Jack & Pat Overholt,
Tallu Fish Scott, Jean Poleszak,
Linda Arthur,
and Nana Ferguson.)

THE
ISLAND
PLAYERS

AUDITIONS

"The Cemetery Club"

By Ivan Menchell

Directed by Greg Santoro

Sunday, Monday and Tuesday

January 10, 11, 12 at 7pm

Casino Theater, Pier Village

St. Simons Island

4 Roles for Women; 1 for a Man

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