

## Senior warden busy at St. George's

### Kennison keeps things running during transition

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Focus on Faith, stories about the spirituality of people of the Capital Region, appears monthly in The Daily Gazette.*

BY BILL BUELL  
Gazette Reporter

David Kennison will tell you that his belief in God never wavered. What he was lacking, however, was discipline.

"I never lost my faith," said Kennison, the senior warden at St. George's Episcopal Church in the city's historic Stockade section. "What I lost was my discipline. I found it was easier to just roll over than to stand up and get out of bed on Sunday mornings."

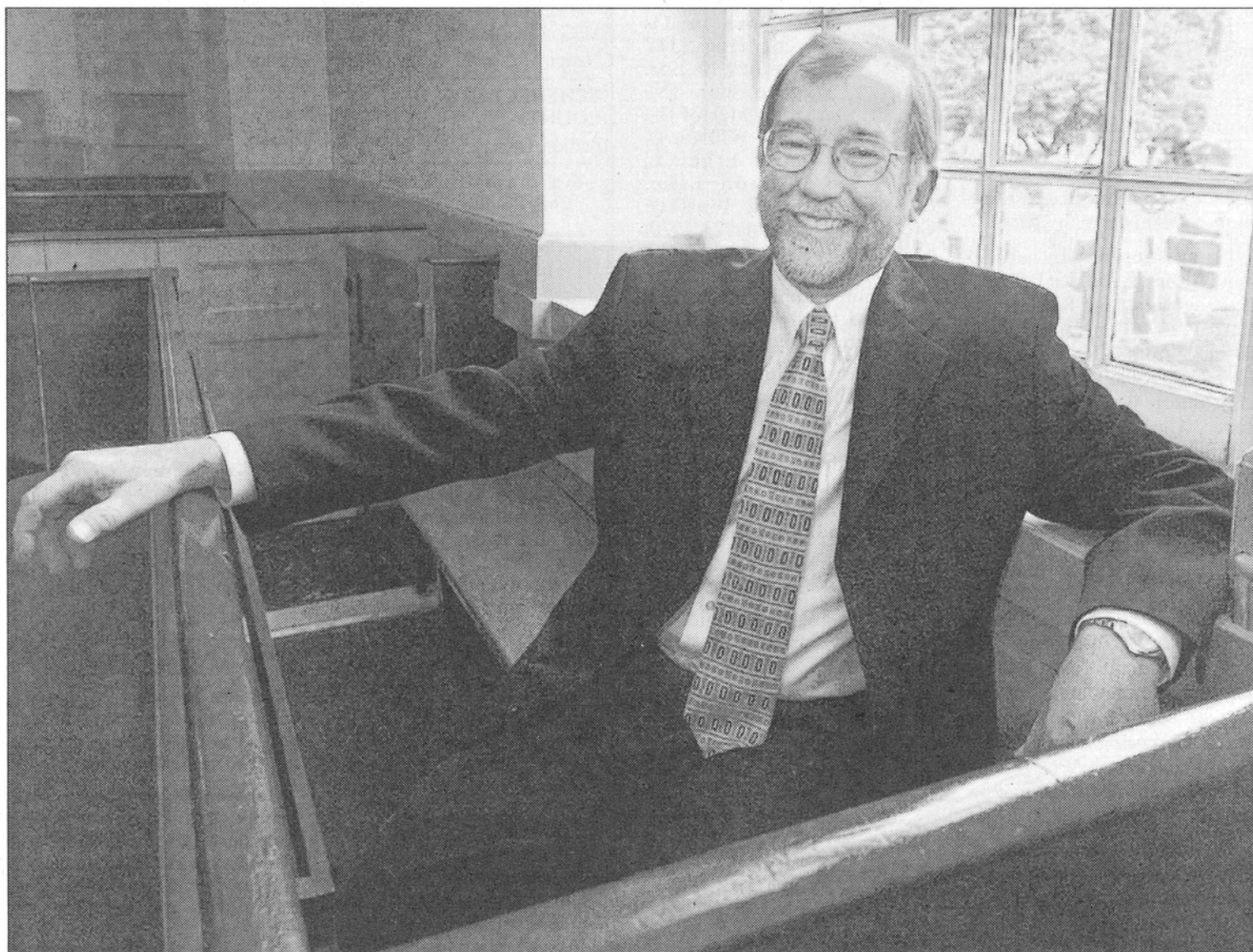
Kennison, a Schenectady native who now lives in Niskayuna with his wife, Anne, grew up going to church at St. George's with his parents, and eventually found his way back to that parish. An engineer with MTI Instruments in Albany and a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute alumnus, Kennison said it wasn't college that affected his spirituality. It was life in the real world.

"We all have those times in our lives when we didn't go to church, and I'm no different than anyone else," said Kennison. "But it wasn't college for me. No matter what time I got in Saturday night, I still got up and went to church. It was after college, when I started working and traveling. Fortunately, I rediscovered the church, and the beauty of the liturgy. Once that comes back to you, your spirituality is even more significant to you. Now I know I'll never leave it again."

As senior warden, Kennison has a number of duties at St. George's.

"The senior warden essentially heads up the vestry, and quite frankly I do a little bit of everything," said Kennison. "We have a large role in overseeing all the affairs of the parish other than Scriptural, and it's the senior warden who leads the vestry and also acts as the intermediary between the pastor and the congregation."

These days at St. George's the senior warden's job is a busy one. The congregation is in the middle of a search for a new pastor, with the Rev. Dr. William David McSwain moving to North Carolina last October, and as might be expected with a building that is the oldest church structure in Schenectady, there is plenty to do to keep it maintained.



MEREDITH L. KAISER/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

David Kennison is senior warden for St. George's Church in Schenectady's Stockade.

### Focus on Faith

"If we did not have Dave Kennison right now, I don't know how we would be functioning," said Lynn Paska, who has been attending St. George's for eight years and is currently a member of the vestry. "He's the glue that's holding everything together during this transition period of looking for a new rector. He gives us 150 percent, and he's very knowledgeable. He knows all the rules and regulations. He would have been great in the priesthood himself."

### COMFORT IN TRADITION

Kennison is well-schooled in the Episcopalian denomination, and never had any desire to look elsewhere for a spiritual connection.

"The Episcopal Church has always been my home," he said. "It combines the best of the old Catholic liturgy with the Protestant Reformation, so it's right in the middle."

"I feel as if it has the fullness of

the Catholic Church without being under the oversight of the pope.

"There's a saying in the Episcopal Church that it is built on a three-legged stool of Scripture, tradition and reason," said Kennison. "We take Scripture very seriously but it's not the only resource we have. We have to use our reason to apply the Scriptural teachings to everyday life today, and like many other denominations we have people who are polar opposites. Our parish, being quite historical, actually predates the Episcopal church, so we're very traditional in our style of worship. Yet, this congregation has a forward-thinking social conscience, so I think we offer the best aspects of both worlds."

Along with the canon of the Episcopal faith, Kennison is quite familiar with the history of St. George's.

"Our building is well known for being one of the finest examples of Colonial church architecture in the country," he said. "It was built in the 1750s with hand-laid bluestone from Fonda. There was an expansion of the church in 1840, and in 1952 it

was restored to its original Colonial style. There's always plenty of work to keep a building that old in good shape, but it's a glorious old building and we're very proud of it."

Even stronger than the building's structure is the foundation of the congregation.

"We are a wonderful, spirit-filled group," said Kennison. "It would have been easy after our last rector left to have fallen down a bit, and yet I feel the spirit of our parish is extra high. It's hard to describe or put into words, but I think we've really pulled together as a congregation."

Kennison is viewed as one of the big reasons why.

"He's very organized, very energetic and very good at motivating people," said Donna Vrooman, the church's administrative assistant. "He's very good at delegating work and letting others follow through on it, and mostly he's very devoted to this place."

"He's very articulate, but he also listens to other people," said Paska. "It's not just, 'Well, I'm the leader and

what I say goes.' David lets everybody talk and share their ideas. But he has a very logical mind, and usually people come to the same conclusion as David. I'm not saying there's no discussion and we all agree on everything, but he really is an excellent leader."

Sermons at St. George's are currently being performed by a retired priest, the Rev. Canon D. Delos Wampler, as well as other supply clergy found by Kennison. Kennison and his search committee hope to secure a new senior pastor for St. George's by the end of this year.

"We're at the point where we're still receiving applications and are about to begin evaluating," said Kennison. "Each parish takes the primary responsibility of selecting its own pastor. It's a long and intensive process and finding a new rector is very important to us. We're taking it very seriously."

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