



# SAINT AUGUSTINE SAINTS NEWS

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SINCE 1858

For Parents, Alumni, Parishioners and Friends of St. Augustine School in Washington D.C.

## A Stone of Hope

Dear Parents, Faculty, Alumni, Parishioners and Friends,

I recently had the privilege of attending an Officer Promotion Ceremony for one of our parishioners and school parent that took place at the site of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. Upon arriving, I realized that it has been several years since I had visited the site. For those who have been there, you know that the memorial's most dominate feature is three massive stones two of which represent a "Mountain of Despair" from which is carved out "A Stone of Hope." Dr. King's likeness is, of course, carved into this "Stone of Hope."

A hundred and sixty-seven years ago, a small faith community of Black Catholics here in Washington, DC were facing what was by all appearances, a genuinely hopeless situation. In 1858, seven years before the official abolishment of the enslavement of black Africans in this country, this same community carved out of the massive mountain

### From the Pastor Column



of chattel slavery, despair, dehumanization, human trafficking and unconscionable cruelty... *a stone of hope!* The name of this particular "stone" would eventually come to be known as Saint Augustine Catholic School. Anchored by their faith in Christ and the indomitable love of God, and undeterred by unjust laws which forbade the education of Black children, the community taught them anyway!

Recently I was listening to the anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing!"

by James Weldon Johnson. The lyrics are very powerful but one set of verses particularly stood out to me:

***Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us...***

Did you catch it? "...A song full of faith that the dark past has TAUGHT us"? Some people, maybe most even, live as victims of their suffering but others learn valuable life lessons from the adversity they have experienced. The great faith celebrated in the anthem is not a faith borne of easy times, sunny beaches, quiet meadows and safe harbors. No, it is a faith born of courage and perseverance in the face of injustice, persecution, discrimination and violence, a faith borne from standing up to, rather than running from, the pains and struggles of life.

It is this supernatural gift of faith that sustained our ancestors and

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# Message from the Principal

Dear Saint Augustine School Friends,

It is a joy to welcome you to the 2025–2026 school year! As we begin this new chapter together, I look forward to all that lies ahead for our students, families, and staff.

This year, our theme is “*Anchored in Hope.*” An anchor provides stability in uncertain waters, and in the same way, our faith in Christ holds us steady and reminds us that we are never alone. With this hope as our foundation, we can embrace challenges, celebrate successes, and grow together as a school community.

At St. Augustine Catholic School, we believe that education is more than academics. It is about helping students discover their God-given gifts, encouraging them to think with



curiosity and creativity, and guiding them to live lives rooted in faith and service. Our dedicated teachers and staff work each day to create a safe, supportive environment where every child can thrive.

I am especially grateful for the

partnership of our families. Their commitment and involvement strengthen our community and enrich the experience for every student. I encourage you – whether you are a parent, parishioner, alumnus, or friend – to stay engaged through school events, volunteer opportunities, and our communication platforms, including the school website, FACTS, Instagram, Facebook, newsletters, and regular updates.

Thank you for entrusting us with your children. Together, let us move forward with hearts *Anchored in Hope* for a year filled with growth, joy, and blessings.

Educationally yours,

**Dr. Anika Logan**  
Principal

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## From the Pastor Column

made it possible for them to believe with conviction and declare with confidence that God could and would deliver them from their torturous circumstances! *What their dark past taught them was to NEVER give up on God no matter how bad things seemed; to never stop singing the song full of hope that God's presence brought them.*

Fortunately, today we not only have the struggles of the past to teach us but an inspiring legacy of faith to *remind us* that the God who has been our help in ages past, is with us in the present and future! With this faith, we can expect to reach the unreachable, defeat the unbeatable, remove the unmovable and expect the incredible. With

this faith, we can move forward with confidence even in the extraordinarily precarious times we are facing today. Rather than being overwhelmed *by them*, we must carve out of them a stone of hope – just like our ancestors of faith did before us!

With you in the Lord's Vineyard,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick A. Smith".

**Rev. Patrick A. Smith, Pastor**



Preparing for the start of the school year on Sept. 2, Ms. Cheryl Hanton, our longtime Fifth Grade teacher, readies her classroom. At the beginning of next school year, God willing, she will celebrate her 50th anniversary of being a teacher.

# School nurse brings academic, practical knowledge to work



After earning her advanced degree in May, Dr. Susan Macyko, DNP, initially considered working full-time at Catholic University of America, where she had studied for her doctorate of nurse practice for four-and-a-half years.

The pull of Saint Augustine Catholic School was too difficult to resist, however, and Dr. Macyko decided to continue working as a part-time school nurse for the 2025-2026 school year.

“I love St. Augustine,” she said, interviewed in her office, wearing her white CUA nurse’s coat in the lower floor of the school building. “I love working with schools, working with families.”

Dr. Macyko is a pediatric nurse practitioner licensed to practice in Maryland.

She sees her job as one of being a resource for teachers and staff, since she is not present in the school building most days, occupied

as she is with her classes teaching 40 senior nursing students at CUA and supervising a group of eight instructors and their students on practicums. Although this work takes up chunks of four days, it’s considered a part-time job.

At Saint Augustine, Dr. Macyko works on the School Assessment Team, in conjunction with Dr. Anika Logan, principal, Ms. Helene Cropper, vice principal, Ms. Jailyynn Myers, student advisor, and an ad hoc group of teachers to help assess how best to work with students who are experiencing academic, behavioral, and health challenges.

She has trained four teachers and staff members with being delegated medicine dispensers, so they can manage students who receive medication, when Dr. Macyko is not present.

During the Tuesday morning when she was being interviewed, Dr. Macyko had a steady stream of visitors, including two third graders who complained about headaches. Dr. Macyko gave them each a cold cup of water with animal crackers. “Say hello to your brother for me,” she said to one of the children, whose brother attends DeMatha Catholic High School in Hyattsville.

A former active duty Navy nurse, Dr. Macyko began working in Catholic schools in 2010, when her youngest child entered PreK at Little Flower School in Great Mills, Md. The family later moved to Calvert County in Southern Maryland, where she started working with Cardinal Hickey Academy in Dunkirk, after initially living in St. Mary’s County.

She came to St. Augustine in the Fall 2020, when her daughter was enrolled in the ninth grade at St. John’s College High School, N.W.

The connection to Catholic schools and healthcare seemed destined, since Dr. Macyko’s father was a family practice doctor in Buffalo, N.Y., while her mother was a fourth grade teacher in a Catholic school. The wooden bench in Dr. Macyko’s office, where up to three students can sit, is a “healing bench” from her father’s medical office.

Dr. Macyko and her husband have four children, with their father a retired Navy helicopter squadron leader whose final assignment brought the family to Patuxent River Naval Air Station in 2006, after they had previously lived and served in Jacksonville, Fla., Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Naples in Southern Italy.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a particular challenge at St. Augustine, with four out of 20 children in the sixth grade during the 2021-2022 school year losing a parent, according to Dr. Macyko.

One child, in fact, came to St. Augustine School that year in the sixth grade after losing his mother, when he came to the District of Columbia to live with his grandparents. The grandparents formed such a bond with Dr. Macyko that they came to CUA in May 2025 to attend the graduation ceremony in honor of their friendship with her. Their son is a tenth grade student at Archbishop Carroll High School.

“I love what I do,” Dr. Macyko said. “I wouldn’t trade it for the world.”

# Where Are They Now?

For a man whose youth as an Air Force dependent took him to many places, including Okinawa, Japan, Spokane, Wash., Hampton, Va., and England, Fr. Michael Kelley has found stability and a long-term home on North Capitol Street in Ward 5.

He became pastor there at St. Martin's Church on St. Patrick's Day in 1992, taking over a church community that was recovering from the closure of its parish school in 1987 and the sudden departure of the previous pastor, who had embezzled funds from the Cardinal's Appeal, with other financial irregularities, according to Fr. Kelley.

***Where Are They Now is a feature in our newsletter that profiles former Saint Augustine School staff, as well as former parish leaders.***

The move was so rushed that Fr. Kelley, after initially resisting leaving St. Augustine Parish, where he had served as associate pastor for 10 years, had to come to the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center in Hyattsville to be installed by James Cardinal Hickey on Fr. Kelley's day off, dressed in jeans.

Using a unique combination of logistical and financial know-how and recognizing the importance of social outreach and building community at St. Martin's, Fr. Kelley has built a parish from 250 registered families to 850 households during his three decades serving there.

Coming from the "biggest, baddest Black parish," in DC, St. Augustine, where he had formed a unique partnership with Fr. John Mudd, Fr. Kelley admitted that had "came in with a bad attitude" at St. Martin's.



Rev. Msgr. Russell Dillard, then the pastor at St. Augustine, allowed Fr. Kelley to continue to live at the St. Augustine Rectory for three months, while Fr. Kelley made the St. Martin's Rectory a safer place to live, after years of neglect.

In May, Fr. Kelley celebrated his 50th anniversary of priestly ordination, and he has taken some time to reflect on his vocation, which initially led him to St. Thomas More Parish, S.E., before he was assigned to St. Augustine in 1982.

He thinks that he identifies with African Americans because his father's service in the Air Force required the family to move every other year, and this experience led him to feel like an outsider during his youth, a sentiment that some Black Americans have experienced in American society, a theme in the writing of James Baldwin.

He remembers that some other acquaintances from school would hesitate to invest time getting to know him when they found out that he was in a military family, reasoning that he would be moving away, so it made no sense to get attached to him. Experiencing such rejection was difficult.

He entered St. Mary's Seminary in 1967 in Baltimore in the heady years after the Second Vatican Council, instructed by professors who included ordained clergy from other denominations, including a Lutheran minister who later became his therapist.

Initially assigned to do ministry at a retirement home, the seminarian later switched to a Baltimore parish, where he met Black grandmothers whose faith in Jesus was strong, despite challenges they encountered with their children and grandchildren. Their faith convicted him that he should invest his heart, just as much as his head, in his spirituality and belief.

As pastor, his guiding mantra has been to "reach people where they are," as opposed to setting up rules that would tend to constrict who can participate in parish life, including the sacraments. He's baptized the children of military personnel who are in town for a month, rather than requiring them to attend a series of classes or to be registered members of his church.

He slowly built up the parish Gospel Choir, beginning in 1992, which performs at the Noon Sunday Mass.

He has built up his parish community and given his flock spiritual nourishment through annual IMPAC (IMPproving My Act with Christ) retreats. Parishioners preparing for confirmation as well as those entering the Catholic Church generally attend the weekend retreats, and Fr. Kelley estimates that 40% of his parishioners have attended an IMPAC retreat.

Taking over his parish at the tail end of the crack epidemic in

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## Where Are They Now?

Washington, DC, Fr. Kelley worked with his neighboring churches and Metropolitan Police Department narcotics detectives to dismantle an open air drug market just off his church grounds on T Street.

He permitted narcotics detectives to surveil the drug dealers, and undercover officers through months of work showed evidence in court of a drug conspiracy, effectively ending the dealing.

“Loose lips sink ships,” Fr. Kelley said, noting that he told no one about his work with the MPD, even having the detectives, dressed in construction uniforms, come at 4 p.m., when the parish secretary was gone for the day. He noted that his actions helped free older Black women who lived on the block and felt powerless to stop the drug scourge.

Recognizing that drug use can cripple individuals and communities, Fr.

Kelley has welcomed the expansion of Narcotics Anonymous at his parish, which hosts nine groups, the most of any church in the city.

His parish regularly writes checks and helps people who struggle with needs such as clothing, food, rent, and school supplies. Interviewed in September, he had just given money to a young “underemployed” man to help him replace a cracked window shield in his car. The parish can help more people because Fr. Kelley did not hire a cook or a full-time secretary, saving the parish about \$100,000 a year.

Giving during the COVID-19 pandemic did not drop because Fr. Kelley had effectively promoted automated giving, and they also quickly pivoted in 2019 to offer a prerecorded weekly parish Mass, which is posted online every Saturday at 5 p.m.

Capping three years of work in partnership with Catholic Charities, Fr. Kelley, the parish, and its partners opened a four-story affordable

living apartment complex on the site of the former St. Martin’s Convent. St. Martin’s donated the 2.5 acre property to Catholic Charities and got the property rezoned for higher density housing, which necessitated more than 100 neighborhood meetings and a six-month door-to-door campaign, after Fr. Kelley and his parish had effectively partnered with neighboring churches. The building is managed by Victory Housing.

As he looks toward the future, Fr. Kelley is concerned that few younger priests seem to have an inclination to serve at urban parishes, preferring suburban churches where they can assume roles that are more strictly sacramental in nature, where their status as clerics is obvious, established, and well-respected. He is concerned about who will ultimately replace him and other long-serving clerics, such as him, Fr. David A. Bava (Holy Redeemer) and Fr. Patrick A. Smith (St. Augustine).



*Clergy of the Year*

**Rev. Raymond B. Kemp**

Georgetown University  
Former pastor, St. Augustine Church  
St. Augustine School

*Please join us...*

## *CBN-DC Annual Gala*

**Thursday, Nov. 6 at 6:00 p.m.  
Four Seasons Hotel, Georgetown**

*Volunteer of the Year*

**Tiffany Austin**

Home & School Association  
President



*Business of the Year*

**John Navolio**

St. Augustine Parish Bookkeeper  
Clavis LLC Principal, SVP

**Individual Tickets: \$275.00**

The Catholic Business Network of Washington, D.C. (CBN-D.C.) is an independent, non-profit organization of businesses and individual professionals working together to create valuable networking opportunities while supporting the Catholic Church’s education mission in Washington, D.C. Purchase tickets at [www.cbndc.org](http://www.cbndc.org) and let Bill Murray, development director, know you’ll be joining us so we can seat you at one of our tables: [bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org](mailto:bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org)

# New Staff Roundup



**Sister Jennifer Agbaja, HHCJ** (Fourth Grade) is a native of Nigeria who has been a Handmaid of the Holy Child Jesus for 11 years.

Capping four years of study, in May, she earned a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education/English Language Arts (Summa Cum Laude with Outstanding Education and English Student Awards) from College of Saint Mary in Omaha Neb. She enjoys reading, writing, singing, volunteering, and gardening for pastimes.



**Tyrone Beaman** (Math/Sixth Grade Homeroom) is a native of Niagara, N.Y., who earned an undergraduate

degree in Sociology from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tenn., and a minor in Psychology, where he played point guard for the Vols basketball team for four years. As a child, growing up in a family of nine children, he took academics seriously, but Math was a challenge that he had to work at to comprehend.

"Math is a subject you need," he said. "Without Math, you're not lost, but you're behind."

He has worked in education for 14 years, including four years as a Math teacher at Benjamin Stoddert Middle School in Temple Hills, Md., and two Catholic schools: St. Francis International School in Silver Spring, and St. Bartholomew School in Bethesda.

"My goal is that 10 years from now, my students will remember me as

their teacher," and had positive connotations with Math, he said.



**Audra Degesys-Lykos** (Director of School Operations) brings over two decades of experience

in organizational development, education, and program management to her role as the school's first Director of School Operations. She has served with the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Peace Corps, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), where she oversaw programs in Ghana, Nigeria, Syria, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus. Her teaching and teacher-training experience spans the University of Maryland, the Middlebury College Language Schools, elementary schools in the U.S., and national teacher training institutes abroad and even Sesame Street!

Holding master's degrees in Bilingual Education and Conflict Resolution, Ms. Degesys-Lykos is committed to preserving Saint Augustine School's heritage while fostering sustainable growth. At Saint Augustine, she is helping the executive team to refine operational systems, streamline communications between the school and its stakeholders, and broaden awareness of its remarkable legacy.



**Krithika Gnanaguru** (Science) is a Connecticut native who earned a master's degree in Physiology and

Biophysics from Georgetown University after matriculating from

the University of Vermont with a bachelor's degree in Microbiology.

"The students here are very welcoming," she said, interviewed in her classroom during the first week of classes. She tries to use some of the GenZ lingo, such as "lock in" (which can mean "quiet down") to reach her students.

Ms. Gnanaguru is looking forward to helping her students better understand the complexity of science, as they develop over the school year, including building research questions that they can explore in their Science Fair projects in the spring.

The MAP Growth assessments, taken three times over the academic year, will help her better understand the progress of her fifth and eighth grade students.

Ms. Gnanaguru decided to teach in a Catholic school in part because one of her Georgetown friends has had a good experience teaching at a local Catholic school.



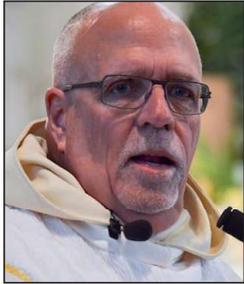
**Jailynn Myers** (Student Support Coordinator) is a District of Columbia native who earned her bachelor's

degree in Psychology and Human Services from Old Dominion University, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. She is working on a Master's degree in Child and Adolescent Mental Health at Grand Canyon University.

She previously worked at George Washington University's Neurology Department and at Howard University Hospital, where she supported medical school students applying to graduate school. She also worked at the inpatient psychiatry

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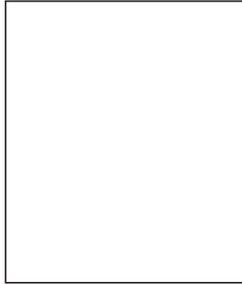
# Saint Augustine honors parent volunteer, parish bookkeeper



Fr. Raymond B. Kemp



Ms. Tiffany Austin



John Novalio

## **Fr. Kemp also to be given award at CBN-DC Gala**

At the 11th annual Catholic Business Network – DC Gala, Saint Augustine School is honoring Home & School Association president with a Volunteer of the Year Award, while the parish’s bookkeeper has earned our Business of the Year Award.

Meanwhile, our former pastor, Fr. Raymond B. Kemp, is being honored by CBN-DC at the Nov. 6 Gala at the Four Seasons Hotel in Georgetown with its Clergy of the Year Award.

Fr. Kemp is a DC native who was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Washington in 1967. His first assignment was at St. Augustine Parish, where he helped to invigorate the parish in part through introducing the Gospel Choir and cultivated the talents and skills of young people, especially males.

Fr. Kemp also served at Holy Comforter-St. Cyprian Parish and is the special assistant for community engagement to the president of Georgetown University.

**Ms. Tiffany Austin** (*Volunteer of the Year*) became a member of our community when her niece began attending Saint Augustine in 2017. She became a Saint Augustine parent in September 2021 and began volunteering in her early

months, leading to he becoming HSA president in September 2022.

Since she began volunteering, the HSA has hosted the first Middle School Sneaker Ball and worked with the Area Neighborhood Commissioner and Ward 1 council member to adjust parking and update street signage in front of the school, to make pick-up and drop-off safer and easier for parents.

She’s also volunteered with Garden of Eden, the parish group that tends to our gardens, on Saturday mornings. Tiffany has attended and supported school field trips, including coordinating a school trip for students to visit the White House. She’s reintroduced the concept of classroom parents and even expanded it to include “room parents” for the special subject teachers (Music, PE, Art).

She’s organized the first coat drive at Saint Augustine, resulting in the donation of over 100 coats to Martha’s Table in Southeast Washington, DC. She’s also hosted annual uniform sales to help make uniforms more affordable and provided holiday gifts for all students while raising funds to help support the 8th grade class for their annual trip.

**John Novalio** (*Business of the Year*) of CLAVIS LLC has been working with our parish and school for

more than two years now, since the Summer of 2023, after a period when we had significant turnover in our bookkeeper role, going through three people during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. John, who has significant experience working with parishes, cleaned up our accounts and stabilized our cash flow to enable us to be better stewards to our resources.

In addition to financial services, John also assists with strategic planning and operations management. These are significant areas for us, since we are a parish that operates a parish school. Like many Catholic churches, we have an aging infrastructure that is costly to maintain, with some expenses that are unexpected, so having a good bookkeeper is important.

*Parishioners, parents, and friends of St. Augustine are welcome to join us at the St. Augustine School table on Nov. 6 at 6 p.m. for the CBN-DC Gala at the Four Seasons Hotel in Georgetown. Individual tickets are \$275.00. Please contact Bill Murray, the school’s development director, if you are interested in joining us.*

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## **New Staff Roundup**

unit at Children’s National Medical Center.

She is excited to bring her skills to St Augustine where she aims to support their emotional and academic growth while deepening the school’s mental health services. As the school year began, she was learning the dynamics of Saint Augustine School and wants to help students “regulate their emotions properly.” She added, “They remind me of my siblings.”

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U.S. Navy Commander Deniqua Freddie, mother of Traivis (middle school), held her promotion ceremony at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial on Sept. 18. Fr. Patrick A. Smith led the opening and closing prayers. Commander Freddie's husband, Travis, is a CYO basketball coach at Saint Augustine, and the family are active parishioners at St. Augustine Parish.

### *In Memoriam*

*Harry Anderson '53*  
*Janice Gaskin Foster*  
*(Cordell Gill year)*  
*Ann Nash '53*  
*Rolumanin Quander*  
*Doran Thomas '89*

May the souls of the faithfully departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

[www.staug-dc.org](http://www.staug-dc.org)

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Story ideas for the newsletter? Please contact **Bill Murray** at [bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org](mailto:bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org).

Would you like to update your address for our records?  
Please complete an alumni contact form at [www.staug-dc.org/alumni.html](http://www.staug-dc.org/alumni.html).

We welcome inquiries from alumni, former students and anyone interested in our school.