

THE EPIS TLE

RIDGEWAY, SOUTH CAROLINA
JANUARY, 2008

OF ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

FROM THE DEAR PEOPLE OF GOD,



Happy New Year! What will the Lord bring us in this new year? One thing is certain, God does not rest on his laurels and will not let us do so either. There will be new challenges to face in this new year. The fact that we start this year with a budget that shows a shortfall is an indicator that challenges await us. Yet, something to keep constantly in mind is that the Lord allows challenges to come to us only for our benefit; that in those challenges we would grow in faith and in dependence upon Him to provide.

In this past year we have plenty of evidence that God's provision is indeed faithful. Please note that I did not say that things were therefore easy; they seldom are when we step out in faith. Consider the Liturgical season of Advent alone. We entered Advent this year thinking that we just would not have the necessary financial and/or human resources available to do all the things we were able to accomplish the year before. As a result, the Mission Committee decided we should probably not attempt a parade float for the annual town Christmas parade. And rightfully so, based on the few people who seemed to be willing to put a float together on the same day that the Chrismon Tree was due to be placed and the greening of the Sanctuary was to happen. But some dedicated souls decided that that was not an option. Consequently, both the greening of the Church and the construction of a float were completed. God did provide! His provision was to inspire the people of St. Stephen's to take on both events, and his grace allowed both to be successful.

On a financial basis we were not sure how we could accomplish the kind of outreach to the poor that we accomplished last year. Answer: God's people once again. The town council discovered that some "Pig on the Ridge" funds from several years ago were never disbursed to us; yeehaa, a windfall. We combined that with this year's funds to provide a local family with a much needed infusion of Christmas Spirit. A parish family also spoke with me and asked that I find a suitable Ridgeway project in which to use a very generous donation for Christmas. Answer: the Geiger Angel Tree. We were able to provide Christmas for four children that would not have had a Christmas otherwise. With some additional funds from the Discretionary Account we were also able to donate coats to the Cooperative Ministries annual coat drive.

That's not all. Lynn and I took a few items to Samaritan House in Winnsboro as we usually do. These days, Samaritan House provides temporary housing for the needy. In the process of making our delivery we found out that although they had sufficient foodstuffs for the residents to eat, there was nothing that would constitute a Christmas dinner. Lynn and I decided we would make that part of our own Christmas outreach, but soon discovered that we could not provide enough for the expected twenty-three residents. Answer: you guessed it, God's people again. On very short notice (the day before we were to deliver the food) I made an announcement at the Sunday service. People generously provided enough for a turkey, a ham, and all the trimmings. God did indeed provide again.

What does this have to do with 2008? It shows us that God's provision is sure; that we can trust God to provide what we attempt in faith. Even though new challenges await in this new year; when we faithfully look for where the Lord is leading, and we step out in that effort in faith, there is no question that the Lord will provide. When Christ entered this world, "The light [shone] in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:5) So, "Challenges, shmallenges! Where Lord would you have us go and what would you have us do?" May God's Spirit, peace, grace, and blessings fall mightily upon each of you in this new year.

God bless you and keep you,
and hold you always
in the palm of his hand,
Fr. Tommy+



**HERE'S TO ALL
THE SAINTS
CELEBRATING IN
JANUARY**

Lynn Dwyer	00/05	Michael Kennedy	01/18
Pat Palmer	01/12	Gloria Hood	01/19
Bob Ellison, Jr.	01/12	Dee Dee Branham	01/22
Rebecca d'Erizans	01/15	Elizabeth Levister	01/26
Kathy Rogers	01/16	Mary Jan Lever	01/30
Tommy Dwyer+	01/16		

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARADE

Well, the annual Ridgeway parade took place Sunday, December 2nd with another glorious and inspired float from St. Stephen's included. Our float developed the theme of "Winter's Real Wonder" in response to the town theme of "Winter Wonderland."

When it came time for the judging, young Buck Rowe was heard to tell his grandfather (Don Babb) that he didn't think we would win anything this year and asked, "Do you have a lump in your throat?" Apparently, because no one was riding on the float, we lost points in the judging. Yet, it was still the best looking float in the parade - at least in my unbiased opinion. Thanks again to the many hands that made the float possible.

Sorry, but at the time we needed to go to press, there were no pictures to include with this article.

2008 ROTA

The Rota for 2008 is currently posted on the bulletin board. Wherever possible, special requests have been included in individual schedules. Please, review the Rota for your participation in 2008. Should you determine that a conflict exists, please follow the normal procedure of finding a person with whom you will switch, or a suitable replacement, and then notify the Church Office so the Rota can be updated and the Epistle Calendars printed accurately. Also, there are still several open dates for Altar Flowers and for Altar Guild; please review these open dates and volunteer where you are able to fill them.

LENTEN SCHEDULE

Lent comes to us very early this year - as a matter of fact, two weeks earlier than last year. Ash Wednesday this year is February 6th. Following is the schedule for Lenten activities:

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

February 5 at 6:30PM in the Parish Hall - sponsored by MOSS

Ash Wednesday Service

February 6 at 6:30PM - Imposition of Ashes and celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Lenten Soup Suppers and Study

February 13 at 6:15PM in the Parish Hall, and each Wednesday thereafter until March 12.

YOUR MISSION COMMITTEE

Sr. Warden:	Doug Bryant	2009
Jr. Warden:	Tom Willingham	2009
Member:	Patti Palmer	2008
Member:	Mike Floyd	2008
Member:	Mike Autry	2010
Member:	Bob Moore	2010
Treasurer:	Tom Harwood	2008
Secretary	Carter Siegling	2008

INSTALLATION SERVICE

Epiphany Sunday is January 6th and is the service at which we will commission the Mission Committee for 2008; new Senior Warden, Doug Bryant; our returning Junior Warden, Tom Willingham; and, new Mission Committee members Mike Autry and Bob Moore. Please plan to attend.

HOLY HANDS

A special thank you goes out to all who participated (with very short notice) in providing Christmas dinner for Samaritan House of Winnsboro. We supplied a turkey, a whole ham, and all the fixings - some homemade, some store bought. It was greatly appreciated by all the residents.

What an opportunity to help others and feel the real blessings of Christmas.

May God bless you all,
Lynn Dwyer

YOUTH PEOPLE'S PAGE

DIOCESAN 2008 CALENDAR OF YOUTH EVENTS

February

Feb 8-10: Diocesan Youth Leadership Training Conference Camp Bob, Kanuga
(9th-12th grades)

March

Mar 7-9: Happening #59 Bishop Gravatt Center
(10th-12th grades)

April

Apr 25-27: Junior High New Beginnings Bishop Gravatt Center
(6th-8th grades)

July

July 8-13: Episcopal Youth Event 2008 Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas
(9th-12th grades)

TBD: Senior High Summer Mission Project
(9th-12th grades)

Information about the structure, mission, and organization of youth ministry in the diocese is available on the Parish Hall bulletin board.

ACOLYTES/CRUCIFERS

Contrary to popular belief, it is not necessary that you be a teenager to be an Acolyte/Crucifer. In fact there is an older person currently being trained. The next scheduled training session is Saturday, January 12th at 10:00AM and you are welcome to attend. Becoming an Acolyte/Crucifer is a less intimidating way to enter the ministry of serving during worship services. Please see the Vicar about *your* interest/calling.

SHRINE CIRCUS

The Jamil Temple Shriners contacted the Vicar again this year to announce their annual circus. The circus will perform at the Jamil Shrine Auditorium in Columbia on Friday, February 29th, Saturday, March 1st and Sunday, March 2nd, 2008. Proceeds from the circus go to help children of the Midlands. The Vicar is holding 12 coupons that are redeemable for tickets (at no expense) at the Jamil Temple Center. If you and your family would like to attend, contact the Vicar for greater details.

HAPPENING

Happening is a weekend event for youth in grades 10-12 that is focused on encountering Christ within community and learning how to strengthen our relationship with Christ and each other. The weekend is structured on a National Program with local flavor and tradition.

If you have "made" a weekend, you can still participate in other ways. The Happening Committee consists of youth and adults who have previously attended a weekend.

The next scheduled weekend is March 7 to 9, 2008 and the deadline for registration is January 25, 2008. If you have ever even considered a weekend but were not sure of just what it is like, then perhaps you should speak with Ryan Floyd and/or Jenna Upchurch, both of whom attended a weekend in 2006.

Information concerning registration is available from the Youth Coordinator (Rebecca Harwood-Orman) and/or the Vicar. There is a cost; however, "scholarship" funds are available to help.