

FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN...

Your eyes don't deceive you, the *Epistle* looks different - it's very plain and thinner than usual. Using Microsoft Publisher has a learning curve and using Church Art clip art to liven things up is a challenge which must wait its turn. Perhaps, in time, it will regain its former look. Is there anyone out there familiar with Microsoft Publisher? There's a ministry waiting for you...

Your Mission Committee is planning the first steps of our journey toward calling a new Vicar. Some of you have heard this before but, briefly, we will follow the middle road between forming a Search Committee (as we did after the Rev'd Chris Clements retired) and Bishop Henderson appointing a Priest-in-Charge, which is his right since St. Stephen's is a Mission. With your help, our goal will be to identify the congregation's vocation, define its mission, and compile demographic data and trends, all of which will result in a profile of St. Stephen's. This information will help the Bishop determine which candidates will fit us best. It will also be shared with the available candidates so they can decide if we fit them.

His representative, the Canon to the Ordinary, Michael Bullock, met with the Mission Committee in early April to talk about the process we will follow and to assure us that he is available for any assistance we need. At the meeting he urged us to go back in time and try to identify the founders' dream(s) for St. Stephen's; what did they hope for? What did they want it to become? He also suggested several other activities designed to help us define our vocation and mission: (1) A visual timeline of important events and people in the life of St. Stephen's. The timeline, drawn on butcher paper or something similar, will be put up on the walls of the Parish Hall and everyone will be invited to add their own ideas and memories of important events and people. (2) Hold potluck meals, open to all who want to come, to tell our own stories about St. Stephen's. With the approach of the late spring/summer season, hospitality usually moves out under the cedars, a much more informal gathering time. We feel that this is a good time to begin these meals - immediately after hospitality - for those who want to participate. Look for more information soon.

Each one of us has our own St. Stephen's story based on what we've experienced. Each one of us knows something about the church's history - it's old; members of its congregation served in the Confederate Army (there's a plaque on the wall); it's on the National Register... What we are setting out to do, with your help, is to weave our own personal stories with St. Stephen's story. God willing,

when all is said and done, we will have found our vocation and mission. Canon Bullock left the Mission Committee with a question to answer, a question which I will now ask you. If the greater community woke up one morning to find no physical evidence to show that St. Stephen's and its people had been there, what would the greater community miss because we were no longer there?

JoAnn Palmer

FROM THE TREASURER:

Roof Replacement: A heart felt thank you to those who donated the money to pay for the replacement of the roof on the hospitality wing of the church. Because of these generous gifts there is no need to take money out of the general fund. Our little church continues to be blessed with time and treasure by a faithful congregation.

Vicar's Discretionary Fund – A reminder: The Mission Committee approved the allocation of undesignated plate collections (cash and checks) on 5th Sundays (In 2009 they are May 31, August 30, November 29) to the Vicar's Discretionary Fund (VDF). Please remember to specify your wishes on the memo line of your check (e.g., pledge; operating, if that is your wish; VDF).

Management of the Vicar's Discretionary Fund: Until a new Vicar is installed, the Treasurer will receive requests for disbursement and manage the Fund.

Outreach: At it April meeting, the Mission Committee approved disbursement of outreach funds to the Fairfield County Food Bank, Harvest Hope, Camp Burnt Gin and the Cooperative Ministry.

Carolyn Babb

MAY BIRTHDAYS: *O God, our times are in your hand: look with favor, we pray, on your servants as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their lives. BCP*

Michael Rowe	5/01	Jenna Upchurch	5/12	Cathy Beale	5/23
Robert Arndt III	5/02	Ryan Floyd	5/15		
Michael Autry	5/03	Karen Kuehner	5/18		
Donna Guess	5/07	Amy Langdale	5/18		
Nancy Johnson	5/11	Sarah Rankin	5/20		

On their birthdays, please also remember Bo Whitmire (5/18) and Jim Gunter (5/19) who recently left us for the Greater Life. *We give you heartfelt thanks for the good examples of... your servants, who, having finished their course in faith, now find rest and refreshment. BCP*

We have another birth day to celebrate. Omega Hall, our Sexton, became a grandmother on Thursday, April 23, to Blakely Preston, 6 lbs 3 oz. Congratulations, Omega!

FROM THE MISSION COMMITTEE:

Congregational Vision Survey: Several people have asked for the opportunity to respond to the Survey again, others said they're satisfied with the surveys they submitted and don't want to complete a new one. The Mission Committee has agreed to honor the requests of both groups. The easiest way to replace original Surveys with new ones is to ask for the answers given to the first two questions on the original Surveys: (1) How long have you been attending St. Stephen's Episcopal Church? (2) On average, how many times a month do you attend worship services? Please contact the Senior Warden (spalmer@truvista.net; or 337-3394) if you want to complete a new survey.

EVENTS:

Mother's Day Brunch: **May 10th**, following the service, in the Parish Hall. In what has become an annual event, MOSS will host the Mother's Day brunch. Men are asked to contact Tom Willingham to offer assistance (twilling1953@yahoo.com, or twilling@bh.richland2.org). All members are asked to let him know if you are coming for planning purposes.

The Annual Lake Service: **May 17th**, 10:30am, at the Branham's Cottage, 2497 Deer Run Rd., Ridgeway. Driving directions: From the church, turn **right** on Longtown Rd. and go **8.9 miles**; turn **left** at Windmill Restaurant and go **3.3 miles**; turn **left** on River Rd. (Presbyterian Chapel on corner) and go **3.4 miles**; cross June, Martin and Rochelle Creeks; turn **right** on **Deer Run Rd. 2** and go **1.2 miles**. Branham Cottage is on the **right**. From the church via Highway 21, go to Ridgeway traffic light and turn **right**; take Hwy 21 toward Great Falls for **9 miles**; turn **right** on River Road at Lake Wateree Properties and go **6 miles**; just after crossing Dutchman Creek bridge, turn **left** on Deer Run Road **1** (Lake Wateree Baptist on right on River Rd.) and go **2.5 miles**; Branham Cottage is on the **left**. Maps will be available at the church.

Betty Branham will provide the fried chicken; the church will provide paper products and eating utensils. We are asked to bring one or more items from the following categories: salads, casseroles, desserts, rolls, drinks. ***Betty will need to know by Monday, May 11th how many plan to attend*** so that she can place the order with Steve Lever. ***Sign up sheets*** are posted on the bulletin board at the church. If you know you won't be able to sign up before May 11th, please e-mail (spalmer@truvista.net) or call (337-3394) me and let me know how many will attend and what you'll bring.

OTHER NEWS:

Altar Flowers: There are eleven (11) open dates on the Altar Flowers calendar. Please take a moment to look at the schedule on the bulletin board and sign up.

Books: There are books on various religious/spiritual topics in a box in the Parish Hall. They are seeking a new home. Any books not "adopted" will be given to a library.

Diocese Launches "Job Connection": The Diocese has just launched "Job Connection", a new resource to connect employers and job-seekers throughout the Diocese. Visit www.edusc.org/jobconnection to: post vacancies; offer resumés; review a blogroll showing useful resources. "Job Connection" was conceived and implemented by members of our Midlands Convocation.

If You No Longer Wish To Receive The Epistle Please Contact JoAnn Palmer at 803-337-3394 or (spalmer@truvista.net).