

## THE EPISTLE - MAY 2010

✘ **OPPORTUNITY FOR RECEPTION OR REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL VOWS:** The Bishop will make his visitation to St. Stephen's on Sunday, July 25<sup>th</sup>. Episcopal visitations are not only for Confirmation but also provide for Reception (*recognition as a member of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church [Roman Catholic, Orthodox], and received into the fellowship of this Communion*) and Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows. If you would like to do either, please contact JoAnn Palmer (803-337-3394 or [spalmer@truvista.net](mailto:spalmer@truvista.net)).

✘ **ANNUAL SERVICE AT THE LAKE:** For the best of reasons, the annual service at the lake will not be held. The traditional date, the Sunday before Pentecost (May 16<sup>th</sup> this year), is also the date of the Richard Winn Baccalaureate. Kayla is graduating and our annual lake service hosts, the Branham family, will be preparing for this joyful occasion. Please take a moment on that day to pray for Kayla and her class.

✘ **THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER:** This is your opportunity to have input into the purpose and content of *The Epistle* – take advantage of it! Since May 2009, it has been a mixture of what Fr. Dwyer included in the newsletter, information provided by or requested from other contributors, and whatever else I could think up or find from diocesan and other sources. I invite your suggestions and comments. What would you like to see in *The Epistle*? What can you do without? If you have strong feelings or good ideas about what the newsletter should include, then replace those feelings and ideas with your pen or keyboard and become a regular contributor. I'm also looking for someone to take on the responsibility of putting *The Epistle* together each month. Consider this as a ministry or, if you prefer, as another Stewardship opportunity - the offering of your time and talent. Respond to these requests by e-mail [spalmer@truvista.net](mailto:spalmer@truvista.net) (if you receive *The Epistle* electronically, just place the cursor on the address, press Ctrl and click) or telephone (803-337-3394).

### ✘ **MAY MESSAGE FROM FR. BELTON**

Dear Friends:

By the time this issue of the *Epistle* is published I will be approaching the one year mark since I first talked with JoAnn Palmer about becoming the supply priest here at St. Stephen's. I had no idea that our time together would go on as it has, and I suspect that you didn't either. However, time has moved on for all of us, and during that time there have been some decisions made about moving; there have been some losses as those close to us have died; and there have been some new beginnings as children and grandchildren have been baptized while others have taken the next steps in the process of their maturing. All of these remind me that, like it or not, life is made up of a continual series of transitions. Our challenge is not how we might avoid them but how well we work at managing them.

How well we get through this process we call life depends upon how well we manage the end of one transition and make preparations to begin the next one. A man named William Bridges has written a book entitled *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*. In the book Bridges states that there are three components to the transition process. Every change begins with an *ending*. Recognizing an ending in a healthy manner makes it more possible to mobilize our resources so that we can move on and through

the change. Without this step it is virtually impossible to move on in a healthy way. This ending, by the way, should not be confused with finality which is the end. The second stage is called the *neutral zone*. For those of you who are rabid Gamecock or Clemson fans, this is not the space between the offensive and defensive lines. It is, however, that period of time after something has ended when it is easy to feel confused and disconnected. It is a time of "lostness" in which our disorientation needs to become reorientation. This is what we might call the interim period. It is that period which serves as the bridge from what was - to what will be, and ultimately, its length is determined by how well we define the ending and become ready to move into the third stage - *new beginnings*. This is the time when the power of the new takes over. Doors open. New rhythms and patterns emerge. Hope seems reborn. The future and life itself once again feels exciting.

Some of you might well be wondering to yourself about "interim times". As I noted above, you and I have just about completed a year of interim time together, and you might well find yourself wondering when life here will become more permanent. The truth of the matter, I think, is that all of life's transitions simply connect one interim time with another. We are always moving from what was to what will be. If we aren't, then we're dead.

I suspect that Jesus knew all about this business of life transitions and knew how difficult getting through them could be. He knew that his followers then and now would need assistance in making their transitions in healthy ways, and he promised them that they wouldn't have to go it alone. He promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the reception of this gift that we will be marking on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Day of Pentecost.

We can never know for certain what conception of the Holy Spirit Jesus had in mind. But what we do know is that over the years Jesus' promise of what was to come has been rendered in a number of ways. Early on descriptors such as "Counselor" or "Advocate" were used. Well, it turns out that the Greek word for "advocate" is "paraclete", and you may have heard the Holy Spirit referred to as "the Paraclete". "Paraclete" is formed from a verb that means, "to call alongside". So, in some sense the Holy Spirit is the presence of God that is always beside us, which is no further than an arm's distance away. The Paraclete is the one who does on our behalf what Jesus did on behalf of the disciples. Then, Biblical scholar William Barclay tells us that in the days of Wycliffe, back in the 14th century, the word "Comforter" was used to translate "Counselor". The word "Comforter" comes from two Latin words *cum fortis*, meaning with bravery, or with strength, or with courage. The Holy Spirit is the one who fills us with courage and strength. It is in this sense that the "Comfortable words" recited after the confession in The Holy Eucharist: Rite I are not necessarily words to make us feel good. They are words to fill us with strength and courage so that we might get on with work of reconciliation. Having strength and courage along side them, within an arm's distance, these were the gifts needed by all of us as we move from what was to what will be. These are the gifts needed by us in an age that requires bold, courageous, faithful action on the part of God's people in the work of bringing about reconciliation in a resistant world.

But, perhaps more important at the moment, these are the gifts for a congregation seeking clear guidance from healthy, committed leadership as it makes its way into a difficult and challenging future. As I have said from time to time in my sermons, I encourage you to remember that as you work through what lies before you as a congregation, you need to remember that you are not working alone, the Holy Spirit as comforter and counselor is always with you.

Let's close with these additional thoughts about Pentecost and the Holy Spirit.

In the May 24, 2000 issue of *The Christian Century* Jim Callahan wrote the following: *Some call Pentecost "the birthday of the church" I disagree. I sense that the church was born on Good Friday when Jesus, "just hanging around," as Robert Capon stunningly puts it, asked the Father to forgive us, and a few bewildered, broken-hearted women and men wandered off wondering how they were going to live with that. Pentecost was the day they got their answer: with great joy, and with wind and fire and the Spirit, making them look like a bunch of happy drunks in the midst of a numbingly sober and sour world. At last they knew that they were God's—every last one of them—and that God was Love, not just in poetic theory, but in palpable fact. They learned that in belonging to God they belonged also to each other. The joy derived from their trusting contained power, power not only to gladden but also to heal and redeem.*

J. B Phillips, author of the marvelous little book entitled *Your God Is Too Small* wrote: *Every time we say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," we mean that we believe that there is a living God able and willing to enter human personality and change it.*

And finally, in the May-June issue of *Sojourners* Michela Bruzzese wrote: *[The Spirit of Truth] descended upon individuals, but in community: "When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together" (Acts 2:1). Only together can we hope to discern if the real source of our claims to the truth are born of the Spirit or the powerful temptations of our own egos. Once again we are reminded of our faith's beautiful balance between individual agency and community discernment and action.*

*Though there are no hard and fast formulas for its deciphering, even in community, it's clear that the truth does not involve forms of death such as exclusion, hatred, and scape-goating. Rather, the Holy Spirit is always associated with new life, new beginnings, and new possibilities, as the Psalmist joyfully describes: "When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 104:30). Our claims of truth must always be on the side of life—renewing, redeeming, and co-creating with God.*

Allan+

## NEWS:

✘ **FROM THE MISSION COMMITTEE:** When Canon Bullock met with the Mission Committee in early April of last year he gave us, and the congregation, the task of identifying the congregation's vocation and mission - the important first step toward calling a new Vicar. Various requests for input were made in the *Epistles*, during Sunday service announcements and at other times. To those of you who responded – thank you. Your ideas, thoughts and concerns will be used. We did not, however, receive enough to input to move forward with this important work. As a result, the primary focus of the Mission Committee this year has been to complete the task. Meeting times have been devoted to it and that will continue until it's done; regular business has been and will continue to be conducted via e-mail whenever possible.

When the 2010 pledge drive was over, it was clear that pledge income would not support a full-time priest *and* meet operating expenses. (*Note: plate income wasn't considered in this determination because it's not a stable source of income.*) To provide for both priest and operating, membership and pledging units must increase. One way to accomplish this is to offer worship, programs and activities designed to attract new members. But, work toward this end will have no focus, no direction, without first establishing the church's vocation and mission. The absence of a full-time priest makes this task difficult but critical.

A different approach was needed. We turned to the other sources of information available to us – the opinions and desires expressed by those who responded to the HCI Congregational Vision and Bishop

Search Surveys which, with the input received this past year, now serve as the basis for our work. We used the SWEEP categories of the 1990's (Service, Worship, Evangelism, Education and Pastoral Care) as the framework for our considerations. The first step was for Mission Committee members to consider life at St. Stephen's *now*, and to identify and list its strengths and weaknesses in each of the SWEEP categories. This step was completed and the members, working individually, are currently assigning first and second priorities to each category's strengths and weaknesses. The individual results will be compiled and reviewed, and consensus reached on what the first and second priorities will be.

When the consensus priorities have been identified, the members of the congregation will receive our findings, offered the opportunity to comment, and asked to identify the two SWEEP categories they believe most closely represent their own thoughts on what the vocation and mission of St. Stephen's should be. After the comment period has ended the Mission Committee will use its work and the input from the congregation to identify vocation and mission, and begin developing a plan to protect/enhance the strengths and identify corrective actions to address the weaknesses. All members interested in participating in the planning process will be welcome.

It goes without saying that each SWEEP category had "absence of a fulltime priest" listed as a weakness. But as I mentioned above, we have to move forward nonetheless. The Catechism (pg. 855, BCP) asks the following questions: (1) "What is the mission of the Church?" The answer is "The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." (2) "How does the Church pursue its mission?" The answer is "The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace and love." (3) "Through whom does the Church carry out its mission?" The answer is "*The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members.*" We must actively work toward making St. Stephen's a place of worship, programs and activities that will allow us, individually and as a community, to reach our full potential as the Body of Christ; live into our baptismal vows (pg. 304-5, BCP); and make who and what we are attractive to others.

JoAnn Palmer, Senior Warden

✂ FROM THE ECW:

Upper Diocese

**"Backyards & Beauty Spots":** Garden Tour \* Lunch \* Art Sale \* Plant Sale

Saturday, May 8, 2010

Gardens open: 10:00am- 4:00pm

Lunch served: 11:30am-1:30pm Garden Tour: \$15; Lunch: \$7; Tour/Lunch: \$20

For additional information or reservations call: Jeanne Ferguson, 684-6020 or Betty Howie 684-4113

ECW of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, York, SC

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***The Gene Knight "Play for the Child" Golf Tournament***

To benefit York Place, the Episcopal Home for Children!

\$100.00 per person

Schedule: 9:30 Registration

11:00 Shotgun Start

4:00 Barbecue & awarding of prizes

Place: Spring Lake Country Club, York SC

Date: June 4, 2010

Entry forms are in the parish hall. Must be received by May 28, 2010

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Province IV Women's Conference: ***Believe in a Miracle: Come and See, Go and Tell***

June 7<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> at Kanuga

This year's event will have a new look and format to help all who attend have fun while sharing the good news of Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, study and service. The conference is open to all women!

Learn more, brochure and registration forms available, see Mary Jane Lever

### St. Stephen's

Our ECW year has been a short one, but much has been accomplished in such a short time.

I am proud to report we have donated money to the Diocese for our Annual Pledge, we have also given to the Bena Dial scholarship fund, World Mission Project, which was the Bread and Water project for Cange, Haiti, the National Mission Project, ECW Jericho Road House, New Orleans and the Diocesan Mission Project, the Chapel of the Transfiguration at the Bishop Gravatt Center.

I attended the ECW 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Upper Diocese of SC, which was held at York Place, the Episcopal home for emotionally handicapped children. It was truly a wonderful experience!

We are all in the process of collecting pocket change to fill our United Thank Offering boxes, which will be used throughout the world for mission and in response to compelling human need. Marge lets us all know to get those boxes in, full!

Other local fund raisers have been our St. Stephen's sweat shirts and our fantastic "Feeding the Flock" cookbooks, which are always available!

We have begun an Outreach Ministry geared toward our own members and the ECW hosted St. Stephen's Annual Community Easter Egg Hunt and hope to expand next year by inviting other groups to participate with us.

Our last meeting before the "lazy, hazy" days of summer will be held on Thursday May 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. We will have a "salad supper" so bring your favorite salad (enough for 10 people), and your husband or another friend and join us! We will have a special guest speaker!

Remember every woman in the church is a member of the ECW and we need you!

*Mary Jane Lever, ECW President*

✘ **FROM THE CONVENTION DELEGATES:** On April 18 Kathleen Harwood, Donna Guess, JoAnn Palmer, and Carter Siegling attended the second meeting of the 2010 Midlands Convocation at St. Michael and All Angels.

Earl Burch (Chair of the Bread and Water Campaign) presented a summary of the last 30 years of the Gifts of Bread and Water Campaign at Cange, Haiti. The program has become a model for success and has changed the lives of the people. However, the recent earthquake has increased the load on the hospital, food supply, and school. A planned new road will destroy part of the existing pipeline and about 70 houses creating an immediate need for a new water treatment plant and a redundant system. The estimated cost is \$1,100,000. Also planned is a vocational school concentrating on agricultural and mechanical skills. Of funds raised, 100% are applied to this great and varied need.

The Transition Committee reported on the May 22 consecration of the Rev. W. Andrew Waldo as the 8th Bishop of EDUSC at Christ's Church, Greenville. Tickets will be based on the number of convocation delegates and will be sent to the Senior Warden of each parish. All other information is on the website.

The next Convocation will be July 18 at St. Mary's. One order of business will be the nomination the next Midlands Convocation Dean.

*Donna Guess, Delegate*

✘ **ADULT STUDY:** Several members who participated in the Advent and Lenten Study program expressed interest in continuing the adult study group. One of the topics proposed is a study of the Church Seasons and Principle Feasts, a topic that will benefit participants in at least two ways: (1) the opportunity to learn about and understand purpose, historical context, liturgy, lectionary, and the role of music and color; which, in turn, (2) can draw one more deeply into the worship experience. *Suggestions for other topics are welcome; let the Senior Warden know what they are. If you are willing to or interested in leading a group – even if you do so on a ‘learn-as-you-go basis’ – let the Senior Warden know.* Responses to the Congregational Vision Survey expressed the desire and need for adult study opportunities. Whether at adult classes on Sunday mornings or in study groups; whether the topic is the Bible, the Episcopal Church, or one related to life events; study provides opportunities for spiritual growth and prepares us to serve God, the church, each other, and the greater community. It is said that the Episcopal Church looks to Scripture, Tradition and Reason to help inform its response to internal and external events, issues and concerns. We must continually increase our own knowledge and understanding of Scripture, tradition and reason, through personal and corporate study, *if we are to grow in spirit and in truth; if we want to more fully understand, as individuals, what we believe and why we believe it; if we want to take an active, informed part in conversations and discussions.* Time is a precious commodity and there’s so much that needs to be done in our personal and professional lives. But how can we leave the church each Sunday after hearing the words, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”, if we have no informed understanding of what that means and what is involved in doing it? Please don’t dismiss opportunities for study as “not possible, or not convenient” at the moment. You don’t need to attend everything offered, although you’re welcome to, but you should make time to for it periodically.

✘ **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	5/1	Jenna Upchurch	5/12	Sarah Rankin	5/20
Robert Arndt, III	5/2	Ryan Floyd	5/15	Michael Addison	5/22
Michael Autry	5/3	Jeremy Maglio	5/17	Catherine Beale	5/23
Donna Guess	5/7	Karen Kuehner	5/18	Derrick Montrose	5/28
Nancy Johnson	5/11	Amy Langdale	5/18	David Montrose	5/28
				Rebecca Ford	5/29

Please also remember, on May 5<sup>th</sup>, Tom Babb (Don Babb’s brother) who has entered into the nearer presence of our Lord. *We give you heartfelt thanks for the good example of your servant, who, having finished his course in faith, now finds rest and refreshment. (BCP)*

✘ **MAY DATES:**

- 9 Mother’s Day Brunch
- 12 Healing Service, 6:00pm, Church
- 16 Midlands Convocation Fund Raising Benefit for Haiti, 4-6pm, St. Martin’s-in-the-Fields
- 19 Mission Committee Meeting 6:00pm, Church
- 22 Consecration of 8<sup>th</sup> Bishop, the Rev. W. Andrew Waldo, Christ Church, Greenville
- 23 The Day of Pentecost
- 23-28 Senior Warden out of town
- 26 Healing Service, 6:00pm, Church
- 30 Fifth Sunday – Be sure to write “pledge”, if that is your intention, on the check memo line for a check placed in the alms basin this Sunday