

FROM FR. BELTON:

Dear Friends:

As I write this introductory piece to you all, I find myself, as I have done any number of congregations in my 43 years of ministry, preparing the people of The Church of the Epiphany, Spartanburg, for the next transition that they will face as a congregation. And, as always, the task is to try and create as smooth a transition as possible. As I thought about all of this I was once again reminded that life might be described as an ongoing process of transitions and that the length of a given transition varies from situation to situation.

How well we get through the process 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 football 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". Since I have spent most of my ministry with congregations during their interim time, I am never surprised when people begin asking about when life in a congregation will get back to "normal" or when things will begin to feel 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.

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 are 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. At this point you are early on in this particular transition, but I don't think that it is too early to remind you 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.

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FROM THE MISSION COMMITTEE:

Work has begun on Phase I of the Plan to Determine the Congregation's Vocation and Mission. It consists of three objectives: (1) Telling the Story – a visual timeline of important events and people. (2) Gatherings to share memories – potluck meals during the summer months. (3) Creating a Church Profile – combining St. Stephen's past and present with demographic, geographic and socio-economic data and trends. ***We need people to help with any of these activities. Tell any member of the Mission Committee if you're interested in joining the workgroups.***

Congregational Vision Survey: In the May *Epistle* the congregation was offered the opportunity to replace their original surveys or to submit one if they hadn't done so the first time around. We received one request. If you still want to take advantage of the

offer, before the surveys are sent off for analysis, let the Senior Warden know **by the end of June** (JoAnn Palmer: spalmer@truvista.net or 803-337-3394).

JUNE 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*

Beth Arndt	6/3	Sandra Rankin	6/18
Emily Matthews	6/4	Chad Langdale	6/20
Chris Kennedy	6/5	Carter Siegling	6/20

We have another birth day to celebrate: Michael Reese Addison, son of Ashley and Allan Addison and brother of Harmony, was born Friday, May 22. Welcome, Michael Reese!

EVENTS THIS MONTH:

June 7th: Brief meeting to schedule first organizing session for the reactivated Episcopal Church Women (ECW) will be held after the service. Mary Jane Lever reports that, so far, eleven women have expressed an interest in having an active ECW. This meeting will be very brief. *Bring your calendars.* If you didn't fill out the survey but you're interested, please come.

June 14th: The Rev. Allan Belton's first Sunday at St. Stephen's.

June 21st: Father's Day Brunch and the first of the Potluck Meals. The organizers of the Brunch and Potluck Meals have decided to combine the two events. Not only will we celebrate fathers, we'll set aside a little time to share some of the personal St. Stephen's stories and experiences. If you'd like to share yours, let Margaret Murtaugh know (cloudsaloft@yahoo.com or 803-754-7543). The menu for the day: Breakfast casserole (a favorite every year), fruit salad, bread/rolls, beverages (including virgin marys). **HELP IS NEEDED:** The organizers need volunteers to bring the food and beverages, and to help set up, decorate and clean up. Please contact Carolyn Babb (cjbabb@truvista.net or 803-337-8913) to sign up.

June 24th: The Rev. Thomas Allen returns to St. Stephen's to offer the Holy Eucharist and Healing Service. The service will begin at **6:00pm**. Please note the change in starting time. All are invited to attend.

OTHER NEWS/INFORMATION:

MISSION CHURCH CHAT LIST IS FORMING: A listserv is being set up for mission churches to exchange ideas and coordinate projects and youth events. The listserv is open to all members of mission congregations in the Diocese. If you'd like to join, please send an e-mail to Bethany Human (bhuman@edusc.org) with "mission church chat" on the subject line. She'll get you signed up.

E-MAIL UPDATES SOUGHT FOR E~DUSC LIST: E~DUSC is an electronic newsletter about diocesan events, people, opportunities and clergy news, as well as links to diocesan, national and world news. It also features inspirational/spiritual essays by Amy Sander Montanez. If you're not receiving it and want to, e-mail Bethany Human (see above).

TRINITY CATHEDRAL BOOKSTORE REOPENED MAY 26TH: Carrie Graves, former co-owner of The Happy Bookseller and lifelong member of St. Martin's-in-the-Field is the new Director. She says that the profits of the bookstore will be given to the glory of God and to the Bread and Water project in Haiti for the rest of this year. She wants us to join her in celebrating books and their ability to bring the word of God closer to us and enhance our understanding. She will also highlight the abundant talent we have in this parish and diocese by offering gifts created by our local artists, book signings and children's programs. Another goal she has is for the bookstore to be a resource for Christian educators and other church staff throughout the diocese.

SOME ST. STEPHEN'S HISTORY: Taken from Wikipedia.org and the SC Department of Archives and History. St. Stephen's is an historic Episcopal Church founded in 1839 as a chapel of ease for St. John's Parish, Fairfield (Winnsboro), and remained so until 1889 when it became a separate parish. Among its early rectors was the Rev. William Porcher Dubose, who served from 1865-1868. Built of wood in 1854 in the Carpenter Gothic style, it was designed by the Rev. John Dewitt McCollough, who later became its rector. The exterior was painted a maroon color. In 1920, its exterior wood was covered by brick veneer so that it appears today as a brick Gothic Revival style building on the outside while the interior retains its Carpenter Gothic features. A wing was added in the 1940s to create space for a parish hall and Sunday school. On May 6, 1971, it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Want to read more? Go to the website of the SC Department of Archives and History (www.nationalregister.sc.gov/fairfield/S10817720037/index.htm) (includes the nomination form for the National Historic Register), and to the Wikipedia website.

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