

FROM THE DEAR PEOPLE OF GOD,



Let's talk turkey about Christian Education. Jesus told the religious leaders that the greatest commandment included **loving God** with all [our] mind. The obvious implication here is that we know what God's Holy Word has to say to us. From the earliest days of the church it has been accepted that the Lord our God reveals himself to us in Scripture. Well, in order to know and love our Lord with all our mind it follows that we **need** to be constantly studying Scripture.

Two means of doing this are readily available to us and we need to be using both of them. The first way is Sunday morning. The Sacrament of the Word provides us with readings/lessons from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Psalms, The New Testament and specifically the Gospels. Every priest then does his/her best to interpret those passages to the people - as God would have his word proclaimed. Afterall, the priest is the one with the theological education. But this contains an inherent fault in that it is much like an old fashioned classroom lecture. We hear the words read and then someone **tells** us, "This is what it means." Regardless of denomination and/or congregation, most people are used to this method and are quite happy to go with the flow. This method means that we don't have to do any work for ourselves.

That brings me to the second and the most important method - study of The Scriptures, individually and/or in small groups. When we open our bibles and not only read, but hear God's word spoken to us right from the page, it has a more lasting effect. However, it does mean that we actually have to work at loving God with all our mind. It seems natural to us to work at other relationships in our lives, but when it comes to the relationship we have with the Lord, we are far less likely to work at it. You see, spiritual growth is not solely dependent on what some member of the clergy espouse on Sunday morning in a sermon. God desires, and expects, a personal relationship with each member of his creation. Over the millennia he has provided many and varied methods for us to want to relate to him as much as he desires us. Study of Scripture is one primary method.

Here at St. Stephen's there are several ways in which study of Scriptures can be experienced. Sunday School for both adults and children often follows the lessons for that Sunday, but other topics (i.e. books of the Bible) have been offered as well. To attend only requires that one get to church an hour earlier on Sunday. Yes, that does mean that we are dedicating a minimum of two hours a week to intentionally know God better (out of 186 hours a week - 1.1% of our time). On Tuesdays, the Adult Study Group also meets for an hour. Preparation for the class usually requires at least an hour on our own beforehand. So figure 3hours on average - that's 1.6%. Currently, a Confirmation class is also meeting on Thursday evenings for an hour with an hour prep time beforehand - another 1.1%. So, if you attended everything, that would mean 3.8% of your time a week would go toward getting to know the Lord your God better. Here's some food for thought, most people spend 5.6% of their week just eating. Hhmmmm!

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
OCTOBER

| | | | |
|------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| Don Babb | 10/01 | Betty Branham | 10/19 |
| Jason Branham | 10/03 | Robert Ellison, Sr. | 10/22 |
| Herman Harris | 10/13 | Jared Upchurch | 10/22 |
| Sieglinde Thomas | 10/15 | Kayla Branham | 10/23 |
| Carole Mullis | 10/14 | Bob Moore | 10/23 |
| Jason Upchurch | 10/16 | Robert King | 10/29 |

THE EPISTLE OF ST. STEPHEN'S

In an attempt to assist in cutting costs to the church, the Epistle will be distributed via eMail beginning in November. All members with known email addresses will begin receiving the Epistle as an email attachment at that time. Please be sure we have your email address. Should you not have access to email, you will continue to receive the paper version via "snail-mail". There will also continue to be a limited number of "extras" in the Parish Hall for visitors. This can save as much as \$1000.00/year in postage costs.



FAIRFIELD COUNTY FOOD BANK

Every Tuesday morning I am privileged to collect the nonperishable foodstuffs that you all have willingly brought to church, and take them to the foodbank in Winnsboro. The volunteers at the foodbank enthusiastically greet me each time; they need the goods desperately. Over the last twelve months the number of people in Fairfield County who come to the foodbank for help has **DOUBLED!** Thank you for continuing to bring donations and plopping them into one of the three doorside baskets. All nonperishable foodstuffs are welcome, of course, but the foodbank especially values the St. Stephen's commitment of supplying:

- Jiffy Biscuit (and bread) Mixes
- Evaporated Milk (small cans)
- Rice (particularly in the small "instant" sizes)
- Jellies and Jams in small jars

So please keep those categories in mind when you are out doing your own shopping.

Yours in Christ,
Bob King

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

NOMINATIONS

Have you ever considered exercising your ministry as an officer of St. Stephen's? Or, maybe you know someone who would like to serve. Well, it is time to



step forward and "throw your hat in the ring". Nominations are currently being accepted for the annual two vacancies of the Mission Committee - for election at the November Annual Congregational Meeting. In addition, the

Delegates (2) and Alternates (2) to Diocesan Convention must also be elected. And please, remember that if you are nominating someone, for any office (other than yourself), that you need to first obtain their permission. Nominations should be submitted to Mike Floyd or Patti Palmer by November 1, 2008 so that the names of the nominees can be promulgated to the congregation prior to the Sunday, November 16, 2008 Annual Congregational Meeting. As always, nominations are also possible "from the floor" during the annual meeting.

In light of the number of graduates the past 2 to 3 years, we are experiencing a shortage of Acolytes/Crucifers. Please remember that there is no mandate to be a teenager, anyone can serve. Please see the Vicar about your interest/calling. We have five active Acolytes/Crucifers at this time.

Chalicers are also needed. There are also five active Chalicers on the current Rota.

A Church Treasurer is needed. Tom Harwood will be surrendering the job at the end of the year. If you have skills at "keeping the books", please contact the Senior Warden.

Another position that will be empty at year's end is the position of "depositor." This ministry consists of depositing all funds received by the church to the appropriate accounts at the bank. In addition, recognition cards are sent out by this person for memorials and the like. Patti Palmer agreed to take this over for the duration of her term on the Mission Committee; however, Patti's term is complete at the end of the year.

HEALTHY CHURCH INITIATIVE

Healthy Church Initiative is way forward for Upper SC

By the Rev. Canon Michael A. Bullock

It has been rightly said that transitions are the only time for real, systemic change. Taking this truth to heart, Bishop Henderson marks his own transition as our diocesan bishop by taking concrete steps to complete his episcopacy in a manner that will present the healthiest diocesan Church possible to his successor. The bishop has called on Upper South Carolinians to focus on four goals, three ministry priorities and a fourth "measuring stick," as a faithful way to celebrate his leadership among us and as a reliable pathway into a healthy future.

Our goals: Christian formation; Health (congregational development & HCI); Mission (assertive evangelism); Outreach (MDGs)

Christian formation, congregational development, and mission (a.k.a., strategies for assertive evangelism) are the three priorities that the bishop has named for us, and the measure of how we progress in these is our work toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals. These are eight goals agreed to in 2000 by 189 heads of state and government, including the United States, to address extreme global poverty in the developing world. At the heart of the priority for congregational development stands our diocesan Healthy Church Initiative.

Begun more than a year ago through a generous gift to the bishop, the Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) brought church consultant Tony Watkins to the diocese. Since that time, Watkins has continued to meet with our congregations and communities to help them analyze what it would take to (cont'd in next column)

Business - Celebration - Leadership October 17 - 18, 2008

The Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center and the adjacent Hilton Hotel will serve as our site for the two days of Mission and Ministry. Friday, October 17th will be focused on the business of the Diocese. Elections, the Statement of Mission (SOM), possible Resolutions and changes to the Constitution and Canons will be the order of the day. In the evening there will be a grand celebration, complete with the Bishop's Awards recognizing Upper South Carolinians who have made extraordinary contributions to the life and ministry of our diocese. On Saturday, October 18th, the Bishop invites all those in various leadership areas of our congregations to come and be energized, empowered, and focused to take on his "four goals for a seamless transition". This will be a time to come together for worship, to share stories of mission and ministry, and learn how each one of our congregations can move forward. Weaving the Story we all share and the stories of our faith communities will be the Rt. Rev. Charles F. Duvall. Throughout the day he will inspire and challenge us to enter into the story, so that in our leaving we will share it with others.

Who should attend? Clergy, convention delegates, diocesan commission and committee members, vestry members, wardens, leaders in formation for all ages, leaders in outreach and justice ministries, worship leaders, evangelism and new member ministries - ALL who want to deepen their knowledge and skills for mission and ministry and desire to move their congregation into the next steps of growth and discipleship!

their most significant goals as healthy, faithful Christian congregations. To date, more than 44 of the diocese's 65 congregations have availed themselves of Watkins' expertise, and at least two of our congregations are in the process of building to realize their mission dreams.

The Healthy Church Initiative is not primarily about raising funds, but rather about establishing a disciplined process of strategic planning in each congregation, to the end that each local community in the diocese has a reliable map that concretely and publicly defines their mission and ministry. Through these strategic maps, each of our congregations can focus their vocational dreams and energies in a manner that truly changes lives.

In its essence, HCI seeks to establish fruitful partnerships among us for ministry and for mission. As such, the core of our movement toward congregational development through HCI includes three defining parts: Plan, Covenants, and Reviews, all of which call us to the business of the Church, which is resurrection, expressed in communion. HCI endeavors to put this business in the best possible position to succeed and to make sure that our diocesan vision—that we are one body, with one mission: changing lives—continues to be true.

This is the task to which the Bishop has called every congregation and community in the diocese. Maturely formed Christians create healthy congregations, which in turn reach out in faithful and dynamic mission.