



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Newsletter

A Church for People Who Wonder

Our mission:

to make Christ known and to spread the good news of the Gospel; to nourish the spiritual growth of the congregation, to serve the local community and the world in Christ's Name; and to be responsible stewards of our time, talent and treasure.



September 5-11, 2010

Dear People of St. Stephen's,

The scripture for this past Sunday touched me deeply. The word "invite" was very prominent, as was "hospitality." As I preached, these are things St. Stephen's does well, particularly in terms of the invitation to the poor and needy. There is a deep awareness that the goodness that we have received from God should (and does!) get a response of gratitude and generosity.

St. Stephen's has long had that spirit, and I want to share with you a little piece of information I learned this week. I met with leaders of the AA group so that we could work out a schedule that would allow St. Stephen's to add some Adult Christian Education programs to our schedule. They were very grateful to St. Stephen's for our hosting the meetings that are held here. They shared with me that St. Stephen's was one of the first places in Georgia to host AA. We are either the second- longest or third- longest continually-running groups in the state, meeting at St. Stephen's for over 50 years. AA is a wonderful program, which has literally saved lives and saved relationships. We are fortunate to be in a position to make our space available to the friends of Bill W. They have become like family to us and are an important way that we minister to this region.

Sunday evening members of the Vestry, the Finance Committee and some invited guests met with Roger Sherrard, part of the Diocesan Stewardship Commission. Roger made a presentation on the spirituality of stewardship, following up on a workshop that Alesia Fortier and I attended a week earlier. Part of that way of thinking calls us to become aware of how much we have to be grateful to God for having bestowed on us. When you think about how blessed we are, it can certainly make you humble. Life itself is a gift, family and community, the blessings of liberty that come about as a result of being an American, skills and interests that led to a career, health and home, just to name a few. When I think about all that, it does awaken a spirit of gratitude. How can I make some response in gratitude?

A wedding is coming up in my family; my only nephew will be married in October, and a gift is, of course, in order. As Mel and I thought about a wedding gift, we pondered things like "what does this couple need? What do they like?" Surely on gift-giving occasions, you have asked the very same questions. If some response is appropriate to God's generosity, then what does God need? What does God like? The answer to the first question, on face value, is, God needs nothing. God created all things, and everything already belongs to God, so we are incapable of giving God anything that God doesn't already have. But there is one thing that God does not necessarily have...that is our love. Because God gave us freedom, we can withhold our love, we can be stingy with our love. And what does God like? The scriptures of the last few weeks have been very clear that God likes justice—not the kind that we usually think of, punishment for wrongdoers— but the kind of justice that sees the love that God has for all the people of this world, and treats the things of this world as ways in which God has provided for the needs of all. It is painfully true that some of God's children are sorely lacking some of the very essentials of life, and they live with constant worry about their very survival. Others are blessed with abundance. This gives meaning to the notion of stewardship in its truest form. Every one of us has been given a variety of gifts from God for the sake of God's purpose in this world. They are God's and not ours, but God has placed them in our keeping to use as God would have them used. Much of that was given to us so that we and our families could have a decent life, but, truth be told, God in God's

abundance has given us more than we really need. So it is left to us to try to work out how we will use the excess. That's where the old system of the tithe came in. It was obvious to just about everyone that they could live on 90% of the harvest, and probably even less than that. In an agricultural economy it was easy to see that there was obviously a portion of what God's earth produced that people couldn't consume. It might even go to waste.

But they could easily see that that portion could be put to good use, so it was given over to God's purpose. They didn't wait until they were sweeping up the leftovers in the barn, either. Last week as I was studying Acts of the Apostles we read a passage about all the Jews who came to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost, the feast at the end of the harvest. It was obvious that they had come to bring their tithe to the holy city, and God used that occasion to bless them with the message of Jesus preached by the Apostles.

Inviting and showing hospitality please God, and when we do that, we give a part of our selves in God's name.

Fr. Don+

Propers for the 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 **Psalm 1**

Philemon 1-21 **Luke 14:25-33**

The loose collection on the first Sunday of each month is designated for the Rector's Discretionary Fund. Your generous support of this fund is greatly appreciated.



Dear St. Stephen's family,

First, let me say how much I missed seeing all of you this past Sunday when my schedule in Atlanta prevented me from worshiping with you at St. Stephen's. But do let me say too how much you were in my heart and prayers as I participated in an all-day Saturday workshop in Atlanta sponsored by JustFAITH Ministries. What a calling to *diakonia* (servant ministry) that experience was—and *is* for the hundreds of individuals throughout the United States who are already participants in this particular "contemplation into action" experience. Space will not permit me to go into detail here, but I invite you to contemplate with me the primary questions posed by JustFAITH: What would it mean for me to love *without exceptions*? and Do I dare take the next step that God may be calling me to take? I met many persons this weekend whose lives have been changed by their participation in this program. I experienced a change in me—a change for good—just by participating in the introductory workshop! I am still meditating on what "next step" I might be able to take in my diaconal role at St. Stephen's to share or to share in this experience with you.

Canon Debbie Shew, who oversees the training of deacons within the Diocese of Atlanta, was present also for the JustFAITH workshop, and we met again late afternoon at another, related workshop called Justice-Walking, designed specifically for college students and young adults. I loved meeting active "J-Walkers" in the Atlanta area, and I am excited about sharing with ECM mentor Doug Keith and our local ECM collegians the rich possibilities of a "Gospel into action" program that some of our own young adults may want to claim for themselves.

My current vocational role—caring for the sick and the dying in the intensive care units of St. Joseph's Hospital—is deeply meaningful and richly rewarding for me. I am so grateful for your words of encouragement and your prayers of support as I serve now in two settings! Husband Jim has accepted an invitation to serve as a Lay Eucharistic Minister at midweek Eucharist at Canterbury Court, retirement and assisted living facility in Atlanta for Episcopalians and friends. Through him, I relay to you greetings from Marilyn McLaughlin and also from Fr. Milton Murray, rector at St. Stephen's when our Parish Hall was built! It is wonderful to

make new friends of old friends in the newest capital of Georgia and, in the capital city built before the “new capital” was conceived, to renew acquaintance each week with all our St. Stephen’s friends and family. Thanks to you, we have a strong anchor that holds even in the big city!

Many blessings,

Deacon Georgia+

Birthdays: Margaret Chambliss, Mary Helen Edwards, Doug Frey

Anniversary: Tony & Angie Frazier, Kathe & Dee Fuller, Elise & Wayne Walker

Special Prayers: Bob Ethier, Betty Peptonone, Cooper Brown, Joe Davall, Ann Shadwell, Stella Moore, Ruth Hart, Teresa Miller, Chris Flury, Hannah Layfield, Joy Crowe, Meredith Griffith, Griff Griffith, Frank Rule, Doris Rule, Betty Manning, Jonnie Tenold, Les Tenold, Rufus Murray



The 2010 St. Stephen's Auction is scheduled for Saturday, October 2. The silent auction will begin at 6:30 pm and the live auction will follow. Ticket prices will be \$25 and will include food and beverages.

Very soon everyone will be receiving a letter with a list of suggestions for items to be donated, and the auction committee will be asking for volunteers to help with our biggest fund raiser of the year.

Please mark your calendars for this important date!

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER GROUP

The Contemplative Prayer Group continues to meet on Saturdays at 10 a.m. in the Garner Room. All are welcome to join us for sharing, silent meditative prayer, and teaching.

CHANGE IN MEETING LOCATION FOR THURSDAY NIGHT BOOK GROUP

For the past three years Laura King has graciously hosted our Thursday Book studies. We are extremely grateful to her, however it's now time to give her a rest from hosting. Beginning with the next study of *An Altar In The World* by Barbara Brown Taylor beginning on September 9, we will meet at the Church in the Garner Room, 7-8:30 p.m.

ADULT SUNDAY FORUMS RESUME ON SEPTEMBER 12!

Our first Adult Forum on Sunday, September 12, will focus on Spiritual Gifts. What are they? How do we find out which gifts we have? How can we use our Spiritual Gifts? Join us at 9:15 a.m. in the Garner Room for an informative presentation and group discussion. All adults are welcomed to come and see how God has gift each of us and how we are being called to use those gifts to serve St. Stephen’s and the community of Milledgeville. Stop in the parish hall for refreshment first and bring your coffee to the Garner Room.

SOMETHING NEW COMING IN SEPTEMBER!!!

Have you ever felt like you had to leave your intellect at the door of a church? Have you questioned whether you can still call yourself a Christian because of your questions or doubts regarding scripture or a Creed? Do you believe you have more questions about your faith than certitude regarding the answers? Then this new offering is just what you need. *Living The Questions 2.0* will offer a setting where you dare to ask and discuss your questions. This will be an eight-week offering which includes one week of an orientation. I am currently looking for a team to assist in facilitating these sessions. If you are interested or have questions about it, please contact Mel at mcaron@windstream.net More details will follow soon.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION TEAM

The next meeting of the Spiritual Formation Team will be Wednesday, September 8 at 6:30 p.m. in the Garner Room. Anyone is welcomed to participate in the planning of upcoming programs and spiritual offerings. Contact any member of the group to share information — Kitty & John Gamble, Rob & Pam Viau, Margaret Chambliss, Linda McGee and Mel Caron are current members of the team. We would be thrilled to add some new members.

PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULTS TO GROW:

Monday Nights: (beginning 9/27) Living the Questions, 7-8:30 p.m. in the Garner Room (a progressive discussion on theology issues)

Wednesday A.M. (beginning 9/15) A study of the book of Mark, 10-11 a.m.

Wednesday A.M. (ongoing) A study of the book of Acts, 10-11 a.m. at Veteran's Home

Thursdays P.M. (beginning 9/9) Book Group — *An Altar In The World*

Sundays, (beginning 9/12) Adult Sunday Forums — various topics



Calling all singers and lovers of music!
The choir will resume rehearsals on September 8 at 7:00. Please mark your calendars and join us in our ministry of song. Questions? Contact Wendy Mullen at wendy.mullen@gcsu.edu or 706-484-2062. Hope to see you there!

Heavenly Gifts is closing
All of the items in the shop will be offered at drastic savings, and some will be selected for the parish auction. Plans have not yet been finalized concerning what will be done with furnishings and fixtures, nor how that space will be used in future.

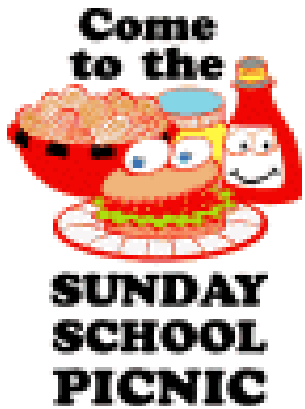


Come in before September 15 and get a bargain!

Employment Transition Ministry

Christ Church, Macon, is offering an "EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION MINISTRY", designed to aid those who are unemployed or underemployed. Through a team of parish volunteer facilitators, and a member of our clergy, visitors will be offered encouragement, practical advice on job-seeking, and spiritual support. Our ministry will not be qualified to offer professional counseling or professional job placement, although one of our goals will be to have referral sources for those seeking these services.

Our next meeting will be at 5 pm on Tuesday, August 31 in the Cloister Room. Christ Church members and nonmembers alike are urged to attend should they wish to learn more about this timely new ministry. For more information, contact Christy the parish office at 745-0427 or Christy@christchurchmacon.com. Christ Church is located at 582 Walnut St. Macon, GA.



The Sunday School Picnic will be Saturday, September 11th at 4:00 p.m. Burgers & dogs will be provided, and we ask that each family bring either a side dish, a dessert, or chips & drinks.

A sign-up sheet is posted in the Information Center. Please let us know how many will be here so we can plan properly.

Sunday School Classes for children age 3 years through 12th grade begin Sunday, September 12th at 9:15 a.m.



Set aside Sunday, September 26th for acolyte training after the 10:30 a.m. service. Lunch will be served, the training, and an activity to be announced later.



