



# *The Epistle*

## *February, 2015*

### **Father Bob's message:**

I was recently re-reading some of my sermons. I do this from time to time. As I did, I realized that there was something that I needed to clarify. First I believe that at the heart of being a Christian...to follow Jesus... is to seek to live and treat others as Jesus did, embracing the values of inclusiveness, love, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing that Jesus exemplified in word and deed. Here to me is the real response to the invitation to "follow" him. Not just words but acts and deeds. But as I re-read some of these sermons, I realized that maybe I was more focused on the fruits...dare I say "works"...of the Christian life and only slightly on the central fact that you and I are justified by faith, and faith alone. Please note that I began by saying that at the heart of BEING a Christian, not BECOMING a Christian. We are invited into and promised a secure place in the Christian community only by and through the grace, mercy and love of God which we receive as a gift in our Baptism. This is totally and completely apart from any effort on my or your part. Indeed it could honestly be said that is apart from any merit on our own. Works

simply have nothing to do with BECOMING, but works do have everything to do with BEING. Having said and affirming this, I believe that the day-to-day benefits that you and I experience from being included in the Christian community are affected dramatically by whether or not we try to live into that identity that is this gift given to us at baptism, that we are children of God. God will always treat you and me as His beloved child, even when you and I do not always act as His beloved children. But it is when we do. When you and I try to live into that identity which Jesus has called us to be and do and know, and then we receive the joy of acting like one. Could it be that this is why so few Christians today do not feel that their faith, their church is relevant to their life, that it is just something that I do on Sunday, a routine that I learned as a child. Or could it be that we have heard so often that our reward for following Jesus is a place in heaven, that the old medieval idea of the "flesh" having to be endured in this world as we wait our going to the next is so deeply ingrained in us that that we fail to remember that God became flesh, Emmanuel, God is with us. Did we not just celebrate the Incarnation? Is this not really the point of Christmas? God so loved His creation, that He took upon himself human form, Jesus and came that we might have joy abundantly in the life that God has given to us, in this world that He created. My point is that it is not about becoming "better disciples" of Jesus, but about knowing whose we are and experiencing the joy of that identity that has been given to us. It is about following him by being more like him and doing what he did. Of caring about each other and those beyond our community as he did. It is not about me

but about us, them, all of God's creation. It is about the here and the now. If we live in the here and now as Jesus showed us to live then we need not be concerned about the future or eternity. This is what it means I believe to follow Jesus. Jesus said that we are to love the Lord our God with all your heart and mind and soul and to love each other as you love yourself. We are called daily to see Him and ourselves more clearly and follow Him more nearly every day...Note that Jesus did not qualify the other for the other are all of God's children whether they know and act it or not. Before I end, I want to thank those of you who made your pledges to the budget of St Stephen's a couple of Sundays ago. Thank you for your response. I would ask that those of you that have not, to please prayerfully consider doing so. It matters not how much is pledged but whatever you prayerfully considered be pledged so that your Mission Committee can plan what can be and cannot be done in ministry and mission outreach, to prioritize what we must do to support both the ministry and mission of St. Stephen's and the whole of Christ's Church. And I again thank you who have pledge and those who have not but will in the future.

God Bless,  
Fr. Bob

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### Senior Warden Update

The week of February 15<sup>th</sup> will be a busy one. Starting on Sunday the 15<sup>th</sup> Bishop Charles Duvall will be visiting St. Stephen's. We are planning a covered dish lunch after the service and ask that everyone sign up for a little something. The sign up list is on the bulletin board

in the hall. We hope that many will be able to be there as the visit of a Bishop is always an important celebration.

Following right behind the visit on February 17<sup>th</sup> we will be having our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. We will have the usual menu of pancakes, bacon, sausage, plus the normal assortment of drinks. We will be serving from 6:30 until everyone is satisfied. If anyone knows where the aprons are please let John Davis or me know.

We will have our Ash Wednesday service the following day on the 18<sup>th</sup> beginning at 7:00 PM. **If anyone has last year's palm crosses, would you bring them to the church on your next visit and deposit them in the container on the table by the organ. They will be burned to produce the ashes for the Ash Wednesday service.**

I hope that everyone knows that the Church Directory has been completed and is available for pick up in the church office. No matter how much editing, I know there will be some errors in it. Please review your information and if any errors are found, please make a copy of the page, circle the error and make the correction. We will wait until April and make the corrections for distribution. Please read the foreword which explains the process for keeping the directory a living document. We will follow that process for changes, as they are necessary.

In keeping with the fact that many hands make light work, we are asking that everyone consider the possibility of becoming an Acolyte or a Eucharistic Minister. With the limited number of both, the service schedule is heavy for those serving. If we could get just a few more volunteers we would lessen the workload on those currently serving in those most important positions. Both Fr.

Bob and JoAnn Palmer have said they would be happy to go over the duties and work with anyone who is willing to consider becoming one or the other. As many of us have witnessed, the Eucharistic Minister has done both jobs several times and, while that can be done, it isn't a good situation. We really do need the help! Please talk to Fr. Bob or JoAnn about what you can do to help. The Hospitality list is still available on the bulletin board for sign up. Please take a look at it and find a time that will be convenient for you. We will be taking it down and typing in the names after the service on February 15<sup>th</sup>.

Fr. Bob made a great point a few Sundays ago about giving to the church. He said that we need your help to determine what we can and can't do this year at St. Stephen's. If you will share your giving intentions it will help us plan.

Not everyone may pledge but it would help us plan if we knew what everyone feels they can give to the church. The pledge forms have a statement on the bottom that says "Your pledge can be changed or cancelled at any time by notifying the Church Treasurer". We need all the pledges we can get to keep the church functioning. If you think you know about what you can give this year please fill out the form. The pledge amounts are held in strict confidence by the Treasurer and no one else, including Fr. Bob, knows what anyone pledges. The only person who knows what was given is also the Treasurer and the accounting firm that reports that number, for tax purposes to the Treasurer, who in turn reports it to you and you only. Please consider letting us know by filling out a form, putting it in an envelope, sealing it, and marking it

Treasurer. You can put it in the alms basin or give it directly to the Treasurer.

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## **Our Archives and History Team has this to add:**

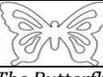
### ***A Short History of the Chrismon Tree:***

In 1957 Frances Kipps Spencer (a member of Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia) started thinking about how to decorate the church Christmas tree that would be more suitable for a worship setting. She believed that the bright Christmas ornaments used in the past were inappropriate.

Mrs. Spencer decided to place the name of Jesus and his title, Christ, on the tree by using the Greek monograms "Chi Rho" for "Christos", the Greek word for Christ. The "Chi Rho" became one of the earliest Chrismons (ornaments) and, with some crosses, decorated the first Chrismon tree. Over the years she added more designs, based on signs and symbols used by the earliest Christians, to depict Jesus' life, ministry, and teachings. Chrismons are now used as decorations throughout the Christian year in countries all over the world. There are commercial sources for Chrismons now, but those created by groups and individuals for their churches - from finding or creating the patterns to the finished Chrismons - are preferred. They have been made with love and each one has its own history.

***The Chrismon Tree at St. Stephen's:*** To each of us (whether we're young, old or somewhere in between) the Chrismon Tree is a well-loved tradition. We only see it for a short time - from Christmas

Eve through the Sundays after Christmas Day - but we would miss it if it wasn't there. Following are some of the Chrismons that adorn our tree each year, many of them made by Ms. Sara Faucett, with a short explanation of what they symbolize. If you haven't had time to look at them closely, there's always next year...

 <p><i>Chi Rho – First two letters in the Greek word for Christ</i></p>	 <p><i>Descending Dove Symbolizes the descent of the Holy Spirit's on Jesus at his Baptism.</i></p>	 <p><i>The Crown - Symbolizes Jesus as King of the Jews, fulfilling prophesy and the exalted Christ as the King of Kings</i></p>
 <p><i>Alpha and Omega "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Rev.22:13)</i></p>	 <p><i>The Trinity - The points represent the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The continuous, interwoven line</i></p>	 <p><i>The Cross</i></p>
 <p><i>The Butterfly Symbol of the resurrection of Christ and of the resurrection of believers.</i></p>	 <p><i>Agnes Dei The Lamb of God</i></p>	 <p><i>The Fish or Ixthus An acronym for the Greek words meaning Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior</i></p>

**Reflections on Advent and Christmas, and What Was Different or New This Year:**

Bishop J. Neil Alexander (Dean of the School of Theology, University of the South) reminds us that the readings in Advent create a tension between the joyful anticipation of the first coming and what he describes as the "lingering themes of fear and dread" that accompany the proclamation of the second coming. During the Advent season we are invited to live into this

tension, to use it as a time of preparation, reflection and anticipation.

The Advent wreath and candles serve as visual reminders, marking our journey through the season as individuals and as a worshipping community – like a "countdown clock" – when all four Advent candles are burning, time on the clock has run out. *What was different this year?* Throughout the four weeks of Advent the wreath held only the four Advent candles. The Altar Guild removed them as they prepared the church for the Christmas Eve service, placing the white Christ candle in the center. The Advent journey had been completed and the Christ candle, symbolizing the light of Christ in the world, burned alone on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Wreath and stand were removed from the church before the service on the First Sunday after Christmas Day when we observed the feast of St. Stephen, our Patron Saint.

*What is new this year in the liturgies from Christmas Eve to the Second Sunday after Christmas Day?* After the opening hymn the liturgy begins with the Acclamation and moves immediately to the *Gloria in excelsis*, and after the Prayers of the People we exchange The Peace. The Collect for Purity and the Confession and Absolution have been omitted. Again from Bishop Alexander: The two great festivals of Christ - Incarnation and Resurrection – are each preceded by lengthy seasons of introspection, self-examination and penitence. During the festal seasons that follow them "it is desirable to remove some of the penitential elements from the liturgy *to acknowledge the spiritual labor that has already been accomplished.*"

.....by JoAnn Palmer

**Episcopal Church Women News!**

The women of St. Stephens will have an informal get together and dinner at Lizard Thicket in Blythewood on Wednesday, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm, the address is 711 University Village Drive and the phone number is 451-8400, for those of you who have not been! We met at the “Thicket” in November with an attendance of 6 including Bob Eldridge and had a good dinner and conversation! Those present decided we would like to get together more often, we can discuss how often we would like to get together when we meet Wed., Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> ! Hope to see you then!!! MJ Lever

Thank You St. Stephens!

I'd like to extend a big thank you to all those who participated in our Home Alone outreach ministry project for Thanksgiving and Christmas 2014! We are truly blessed to have such caring and loving people at St. Stephens!! Our bags this year were overflowing for Christmas and we ended up filling 24 bags instead of 20 for both holidays! Amazing for our size church!!!! I know that we made many older adults happy who were remembered in such a special way. The women of St. Stephens will be organizing Easter bags at the end of March for Easter 2015, which falls on April 5<sup>th</sup> this year, so it's not too early to start thinking of cute ideas and purchasing items to fill our Home Alone Easter bags! I will give you more information as the time grows closer. Again, I want to say thank you for your participation in the Home Alone program, it means so much to those who may feel forgotten and are unable to get out. MJ Lever

**DID YOU SIGN UP FOR HOSPITALITY SOON?**



**FEBRUARY**

February 1	Beale/Langdale
February 8	OPEN
February 15	Bishop's visit – covered dish –ALL
February 17	SHROVE TUESDAY
February 18	ASH WEDNESDAY
February 22	OPEN

**MARCH**

March 1	Patti Earle
March 8	OPEN
March 15	McMaster – St. Pat's Day
March 22	Berk/Koenig
March 29	PALM SUNDAY

*Please wish the following people, a Happy Birthday*



**February**

2/2	Gen Palmer VII
2/2	Buck Rowe
2/6	George L.Langdale
2/10	Allie Robinson

2/15	Heather Langdale Ryes
2/18	Bob Arndt
2/20	George S. Langdale
2/28	Patti Palmer

### March

3/4	Mike Swofford
3/4	Robbie Robinson
3/11	Porter Reyes
3/13	Ashley Lever
3/14	Sara Berk
3/16	Sarah Arndt
3/20	Matthew Langdale
3/22	Marjorie Pratt
3/26	Jim Milling



Johnson Family quartet at St. Stephen's for the Ridgeway, December 5<sup>th</sup> Christmas on the Ridge celebration

### Remembering the holidays and special moments of 2014 at St. Stephens



Fairfield Sheriff deputies: DJ Wilson (L) and Ron Mull ® deliver our Christmas bags this year.



(L-R) MJ and Ashley Lever, Kayla Branham, Lee Eldridge, Beverly Anderson, Dee Dee Branham and Erin McMaster assembled the Christmas bags this year. This is a project of E.C.W.



Eleanor Milling's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday at St. Stephen's.