



The Epistle

March, 2015

Father Bob's message:

In January, I attended a Diocesan Mission Congregations Conference held at All Saints Episcopal Church in Clinton. The conference began with a briefing by members of the leadership of The Episcopal Church in Okatie, South Carolina. This new Episcopal community was formed by individuals who wished to remain Episcopalians after their parish voted to leave the denomination. Now until this conference, I had not given much thought to the impact on individuals directly involved in this schism. I had not put a face or a voice to those impacted by what was happening. On this Saturday, I finally saw a face and heard voice, actually four faces and heard four witnesses. What these folks said struck a deep chord within me, one which continues to resonate within to this day. They were forced to leave the building where they had been baptized, grown up; married and their children baptized. They were forced to leave the building where they had gathered in grief and celebration of the life of loved

ones for whom the bell tolled. They were forced to leave a place with great and abiding importance to them. They left because they were Episcopalians and wanted to remain Episcopalians. They left with no idea of what lay ahead. They left grieving and angry over the loss of this significant place in their lives. But, as these folks testified, something happened in that uncertainty, grief and anger, they began to come together, to understand that the Church was not a building but a people, a community of faith. They began to see that what was important in the eyes of God is not a building but the people who make the place holy. The Church is not the building, it is the people. It may seem strange to say this but I think that you and I must be reminded of that periodically. They set about to find a place where they as a community could gather together not only in worship but to be in ministry to each other and to their community. They found a storefront in a strip mall. A strange place to find an Episcopal Church with on one side a Chinese restaurant and on the other an ABC store. There between them is Church, the Episcopal Church and every Sunday they put out Episcopal Church flags along the road in front of the strip mall to let the world passing by know that in here, of all places, is The Episcopal Church giving witness to Christ in the midst of life. This group gave witness to the resurrection for they had to let go of what was, grieve their loss, but in that they found that they experienced the resurrection with new meaning and vitality for a new life, a new witness and an energized life of worship and service as a new faith community.

OK, so what has this to do with Lent?
What has this to do with St Stephen's?

My answer to the first questions is that while traditionally Lent is seen as an individual time; a time of our putting ourselves through a spiritual health check-up, it is also a time when we as faith community should also put ourselves as a community through a spiritual health check. My answer to the second part is another question, how are we living the gospel in the world and in our corporate life as the Body of Christ? At the Conference, each mission attending was asked to answer three questions. Who do we say we are? Where do we say we are going? Why? I would ask that as part of your keeping a holy Lent that you and I spend some time thinking about these questions and sharing them with each other and me. Out of this dialogue with ourselves, each other and with Christ through His gospel, we too can experience a resurrection to new life as a community of faith that we did not think possible. God Bless.
Fr Bob

Senior Warden Update

On Sunday February 15th Bishop Duvall visited St. Stephen's. Attendance was good and those who attended enjoyed his visit and the meal that followed. As we all know, our members can provide some of the best food found anywhere. Thanks to Carter Siegling for the pictures in the Epistle. March will be a quiet month at the church as we observe Lent. Every Tuesday, during Lent, we will be having two very significant happenings. At 6:30 in the evening, the Stations of the Cross will be held. This will be followed by Fr. Bob leading a study in this year's Lenten readings. You are encouraged to attend,

either or both. So far every session has been very informative and thought provoking.

During Lent it is especially appropriate to remember those in need. As we all know, there is a basket in the church hall for Food Bank items. It would be wonderful to see it filled with items from the people of St. Stephen's weekly. This could be a good project to undertake this Lenten season. A list of the items needed is posted on the wall above the basket. We will have our usual Palm Sunday procession into the church, weather permitting.

Episcopal Church Women News!

Home Alone Bags!

Time just passes too fast, I can't believe it's almost time for Easter bags for our "Home Alone" group, but it is! I hope everyone is already collecting things for our very special group of adults! The things we usually place in the bags are items that anyone can use, male or female, such as Kleenex, socks, pens, pencils, hand lotion, little Debbie cakes, candy, cookies (individually wrapped), fruit. You also may want to contribute toiletry items such as shampoo, soap, deodorant, if so please place them in zip lock bags separate from other items. Our bags will be put together Sunday, March 29th during our Hospitality time, so please plan on staying to help with this important St. Stephen's outreach ministry. All hands are needed. I do realize this is Palm Sunday but if many volunteer to fill our "Home Alone" bags it won't take long! Thank you in advance for your commitment to this important outreach ministry of the Episcopal Women of St. Stephens. MJ Lever

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



MARCH

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

APRIL

April 5		Easter Sunday
April 12		Beverley Anderson
April 19		OPEN
April 26		Harwood

*Please wish the following people,
a Happy Birthday*



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

April

4/2	Doug Bryant
4/8	Ann Ellison
4/9	Gavin Reyes
4/13	Beverley Anderson
4/17	Andrew Saless
4/20	Jarrett Palmer
4/20	Charlotte Floyd
4/21	Ava Langdale
4/23	Tonya Rowe
4/29	Jennifer Autry
4/29	Ken Baldwin

We had a busy month Let's reminisce



Bishop Duvall with the Rev. Bob Eldridge at St. Stephen's on Sunday, February 15th, 2015.



Bishop Duvall greets David Ford after the service on February 15th, 2015 at St. Stephen's.



Hospitality is important at St. Stephen's. Everyone contributed for Bishop Duvall's visit on February 15th. (L-R) Amanda Ford, Greg Koenig, John Davis, Bishop Duvall, Bob Moore, Beverley Anderson, Ken Baldwin and Phyllis Baldwin.

A LOOK AT THE PAST

by Carter Siegling



Ridgeway Mayor Charlene Herring, poses with St. Stephen's Rex Pratt painting titled, "April, 1861 'Marching as to war'", with St. Stephen's in the background, during the Fairfield Remembers Sherman event at the Century House on Saturday February 21st, 2015 between 9 and 11:30AM. The afternoon events took place at the Fairfield Museum in Winnsboro. Visitors came from Charleston, Mt. Pleasant, Greenville, Ridgeway, Winnsboro, Blythewood, Columbia and Lexington. Rex Pratt was a member of St. Stephen's. In 1988 he painted three scenes around Ridgeway, in addition to the St. Stephen's Painting titled "1862, Home from Virginia" and "February 17, 1865, Beauregard's Retreat." All three were on display at the Century House. General Beauregard stayed at the Centruy House (formerly the Coleman Plantation House" which was located

across the road from the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad and telegraph line. On February 17th, Sherman's troops burned Columbia and passed through Fairfield County and Ridgeway on February 21st. According to NGS, Sherman's troops "left a wide swatch of destruction in their wake." The paintings may be seen in the Mayor's office at the Century House.