



# *The Epistle*

## *March, 2016*

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

It is hard to believe but as I write this, Easter is but a few weeks away. As I have been reading the gospel accounts of that first Easter morning, the one thing that they all have in common is that absolutely no one expected the resurrection.

Even though Our Lord predicted his resurrection several times during his ministry, no one greets the news with "Praise God!" No one shouts "Hallelujah"! Absolutely no one, hearing the news of the empty tomb and that death itself could not hold the Lord captive, said, "Yes, I knew it, just as he said."

No one expected the resurrection and no one seems to have believed it at first. And this is true across all the gospels.

In Luke, this unexpectedness and this lack of initial belief is very much evident. The women come to the tomb prepared to anoint Jesus' body. The fact that is why they came indicates that they did not expect to find an empty tomb. It is only when they are reminded by "two men in dazzling clothes", do they even remember Jesus' promise.

When they run to tell the others, the women are greeted with complete skepticism. The disciples regard what the women were saying as an "idle tale." The Greek word

translated as idle tale is actually the root word for our English word "delirious". It was used to describe something so utterly unbelievable, even a bit mad or insane, crazy, nuts and just plain nonsense.

Just stop for a moment and think about what the biblical narrative is saying. Resurrection is not simply a claim that Jesus' body was resuscitated; it is the claim that God entered the stage of human history in order to create an entirely new reality all together. The dead simply do not come back to life. What these women were telling the disciples on that first Easter morning was something totally confusing, beyond human comprehension and to be honest more than a bit frightening. It could even be said to be threatening. You see the problem for the disciples and may be for you and me in getting our head around resurrection is that it breaks all the rules by which we live and order our lives. Now most of us will admit that while the old rules are not perfect and indeed are sometimes awful, at least we know them. They are predictable, a known quantity and in this sense comforting. Resurrection upsets all of that. As one author put it, "if the dead do not stay dead, what can you count on". And this is why I would say that if you and I do not find resurrection at least a little hard to believe, you and I are not probably taking it very seriously.

One of the saddest things about the church today is that we have heard the story of the resurrection so often that it hardly makes us blink, let alone shake with wonder and surprise. The resurrection, this promise, as difficult as it may be to believe initially is huge, and when it sinks in and lays hold of us, absolutely everything looks a little different.

Let me close by saying that when we struggle with the resurrection we are in good company for as our reading tells us the disciples struggled to believe and so have many of those among the faithful through the centuries of Christ's Church. They like many today struggle with the resurrection

because they recognize the incredible scope and titanic implications of the biblical witness that when God raised Jesus from the dead God was creating a new reality. God was overthrowing death, sin and all that would oppress us. God was declaring once and for all that life is more powerful than death and love more enduring than tragedy. Resurrection faith came slowly to most of the disciples. But when it came it changed everything. Resurrection faith may be slow in coming to us today, but when it does come it will change everything. Please note that I did not say "if" it comes but "when" it comes.

On Sunday, 24 April, Bishop Waldo will be making his visitation to St Stephen's. I would ask that you place that date on your calendar and plan to be with us for Sunday Eucharist.

May God continue to give you a blessed and holy Lent that you may greet with great joy the resurrection of our Lord on Easter morning.

Fr. Bob

### **Senior Warden Update**

The month of February has been a busy one at St. Stephen's for improvements. David has been hard at work and while the improvements are not all that visible they are in place. The duct system under the church was replaced. An additional vent was added to the sacristy and it is now heated and cooled. The mold has been abated in the sacristy and the church.

March will be a challenge as the church door replacement contract is let, a vapor barrier under the church is decided upon. Plans for water abatement are completed for presentation to the Mission Committee. Another report on the progress will be given in April.

The pancake supper was a success. There was plenty of sausage, bacon and pancakes

to go around and the cooks and those helping to serve did a great job. Everyone had a good time.

Easter is quickly approaching. As always, Easter lilies are available, this year at \$13 each. The forms for ordering and dedication are available on the table near the organ. There is also a form in this copy of the Epistle. If you can't make it to church and wish to order a lily, fill out the form, attach your check and mail it to St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Post Office Box 26, Ridgeway, SC 29130. The forms all need to be in by Palm Sunday March 20<sup>th</sup>.

(see last page for copy of form)

As Father Bob mentioned, the Bishop is coming in on April 24<sup>th</sup>. A food and help signup list will be posted on the bulletin board for the occasion. This is always an important time at St. Stephen's and always a great time to visit with the Bishop and here what is going on in the Diocese. Please plan on attending. We need a big turnout for his visit.

### **A message from M.J.**

Please bring items for our Easter outreach ministry, the Home Alone bags. You may bring items to the church hall any time from now to March 20<sup>th</sup>. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, after church the bags will be assembled. The bags will be picked up by the Fairfield County Sheriff's Department for distribution during the week. Those bags mean a lot to so many.

DID YOU SIGN UP FOR  
HOSPITALITY SOON?



**MARCH**

3/6	Dee Dee Branham
3/13	OPEN
3/20	OPEN
3/27	EASTER

**APRIL**

4/3	OPEN
4/10	Beverley Andersen
4/17	OPEN
4/24	OPEN



*Please wish the following people  
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
4/20	Jarrett Palmer
4/20	Charlotte Floyd
4/21	Ava Langdale
4/23	Tonya Rowe
4/29	Jennifer Autry
4/29	Ken Baldwin



# Saint Stephen's Flower Order Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Poinsettia for Christmas or Lily for Easter

Quantity Requested \_\_\_\_\_ Price per Item \$13.00 Extended Cost \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Given By: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of

In Thanksgiving for

In Memory of

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please check one:  I will or  I will not pick up my plant(s)

**Please Print    Make Check to St. Stephen's noted (for flowers)**

**Put in Collection Plate or Treasurer's Mail Box**