

April 2008

The Grapevine

The newsletter of St Albans Episcopal Church,
Brandywine Hundred, DE



The Rector's Thoughts

An early Sunday morning following a Friday crucifixion, an empty tomb, and then a man mistaken for a gardener—Mary sees the resurrected Christ.

Last Sunday, as worship begins, two folks sit together talking, one a member and one here for the first time—I see the resurrected Christ.

During worship, bread shared, wine poured, a people gathered sharing the gift of God's love—I see the resurrected Christ.

After worship, one person sharing the pain of grief, the other offering a hug—I see the resurrected Christ.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: parents listening to children, neighbors helping neighbors, phone calls, prayers, a greeting, a job carefully done—not seen by me, but certainly the resurrected Christ.

Sadly, however, also pain unheeded, prejudices unexamined, self-hatreds, gossip, a lack of compassion for the “least of these”—Christ yet waiting resurrection.

God is still at work raising Christ in us and among us. We open ourselves to that transforming love in worship, as we gather around God's Word and Holy Supper. We remember the Easter moment when Jesus was raised, but we do more than only remember. We open ourselves that it might also happen in us. Alleluia, Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Jim+

PS: Many of you have been asking when the search process gets underway. The answer is April 6 after the second worship service, at least for your part. Please join your brothers and sisters in Christ for a conversation about St. Albans history and how that will inform the future here. Plan for a session that will last until 2:00.



Choir is planning a special evening's entertainment for Friday, May 16 beginning with a covered dish supper at 6:30 PM and featuring special entertainment throughout the dinner hour followed by a concert of popular numbers from "Broadway, Hollywood, and beyond!" Solos, duets, trios, and full chorus presentations of wonderful music selected to thoroughly entertain one and all. Please bring a favorite dish and plan to spend an evening relaxing and enjoying your church family while the choir shows off its "smiling-secular" side. *Don*

The Tuesday morning book group will resume on April 1st, with discussion of "Seeking Enlightenment Hat by Hat: A Skeptics Path to Religion" by Nevada Barr. For this first meeting we will read the introduction, pages 1 through 13. If you are interested, contact Joan Lynch for more information.



The shelves at the Food Closet are nearly bare. Donations of any type of canned goods or boxed items would be welcome. Suggested items would include peanut butter, grape or strawberry jelly, dry cereals, oatmeal, canned baked beans, and fruit juices. We are now working at the Food Closet on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Alice Ritzinger, Sr. Andrea Davis, and I will each be there one afternoon each week and would love to have others assist us. Please sign up on the yellow sheet in the Narthex. I pray that each of you will have a Blessed Easter Season. Faithfully, *Sister Sheila Brigid*

The Mats and Pats have reserved Memorial House for Mon. May 12th through Thurs. May 15th. We welcome any St. Albans folks who would like to join us for all or part of that time. It is a very low key relaxing time, with the main activity just enjoying the surrounding beauty and amenities. We always attract some members and friends from Grace Church, so there is usually a mix of new and old acquaintances. The price is right: \$250.00 for a three night stay, which includes nine meals. See Joan Lynch for more information. *Joan*

Reflections on Lent Returning from the Good Friday service, I was struck by the richness of offerings St. Albans has provided for keeping a holy Lent. The last week provided services for healing, Tenebrae, Maundy Thursday, the Good Friday Passion, Stations of the Cross, and the Easter Vigil, leading up to Easter Sunday. My faith has grown with the services I attended, and I am the poorer for having missed some. Jim's loving care and spiritual depth have been evident at every turn. The services were enhanced by the music of Don and his choir and the beauty provided by the Altar and Flower Guilds. Each individual involved dedicated hours of precious time so that we all could experience a deepening of faith. *Joan*



Envisioning Our Community of Faith The transition period between rectors is a valuable time for parish reflection and renewal. This is a time to share our ideas, hopes, and dreams about **who** we are as Christians, **what** our commitments are to each other and to our community, and **how** we plan to achieve our spiritual and other goals. It is only after we have developed our vision for the future that we will identify the specific characteristics that we will seek in a new rector.

We must remember that the role of a rector is to support and guide us as we work together to fulfill Christ's mission for us as individuals and as a community of faith. It is not the role of a rector to tell us the direction in which we should be heading, but rather to help us get there. Each parish has an enduring core mission as well as certain aspects which evolve over time.

A transition team has been formed to help the parish reexamine, renew, and refresh its mission and priorities as a community of faith. Greg Cuprak is the chair of this team. The other members are Steven Davis, Judy Gwaltney, Jerry Harrell, Ruth Norman, Jim Wolford, and a consultant, Rae Booth. Bill Gail serves as the Vestry liaison.

The discernment process will take three months, April – June. The process has three components: reflecting on the past, characterizing the present, and envisioning the future. The transition team has made a commitment to lead the process, evaluate the outcomes, and communicate the findings. We need your commitment as well! In order for this to be successful, we need everyone to participate actively and to keep St. Albans in their prayers. Everyone's insights and spiritual priorities are important.

We will start by reflecting on the past. Share your memories (even if you are a relatively new member) at a lively tabletop discussion that will take place after church on Sunday, April 6th. What was your experience the first time you walked into St. Albans? What people and programs here have been important to you? What are some of the funny things that have happened? Who knows what will come up? A light luncheon and childcare will be provided. After eating lunch, plan for around 2 hours of discussion and reflection on what the ministry of St. Albans has meant for each of us.

Following these discussions, questionnaires will be handed out for you to take home and fill out. Questionnaires for parishioners who were unable to attend the history discussions will be mailed out on April 7th. Completed questionnaires can be placed in a designated box in the narthex by Sunday, April 13th or mailed to St. Albans. **All questionnaires must be received by April 14th.** We need to ask your help in completing and turning in the questionnaires very quickly because: a) we want to finish the discernment process before everyone disperses for summer vacations, and b) we are using Percept, a church research database service, to help us analyze the questionnaires. It takes 3 weeks for Percept to complete the computerized analysis.

Why are we using Percept? Percept has collected an enormous amount of information about communities and churches all over the U.S. This information comes from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, consumer marketing surveys conducted by Claritas (affiliated with AC Neilson), and Ethos Surveys conducted by Percept. Using a standardized questionnaire, Percept will compare the characteristics and preferences of St. Albans parishioners to those of our community. These findings will help us view St. Albans "from the outside in" -- how do we look to the community – as well as "from the inside out" – what are our own spiritual priorities. An example of a typical Percept report will be posted on the Transition Team bulletin board in the parish hall.

All questionnaires will be anonymous and will be treated confidentially. In addition to the standardized Percept questionnaire, we will include an open-ended questionnaire that will permit you to express your specific preferences and ideas. There will also be a special youth questionnaire, for confirmed youth up to the age of 18. All input will be aggregated.

After the standardized questionnaires have been analyzed by Percept and the open-ended and youth questionnaires have been analyzed by the Transition Team, we will share and discuss the outcomes with you in a series of 3-4 focus groups. This is the opportunity for envisioning our future! We will provide you with information about these focus groups shortly. They will take place on Sunday mornings (9:20 or 11:45) or Wednesday evenings (7:00) during May and possibly early June. Choose whatever time slot is more convenient.

The next few months will be very busy for us all! The discernment process is vital to our future. Thank you for contributing your time, prayers, perceptions, and creativity to this process. Now, back to the first part of this process, please mark Sunday, April 6th, from 11:30 – 2:00 on your calendar. Let us come together to talk and listen as we search for God's plan for each of us and for our parish. Also, feel free to talk to the members of the transition team at any time to discuss your ideas or any questions you might have. *Ruth*

Cookie Bakers for Emmanuel Dining Room St. Albans has always served home made cookies at Emmanuel Dining Room South each month. Our chief cookie bakers for the last several years, Bunny Dodge and Elaine Ringle, are taking a break from baking giving an opportunity to others to help the hungry. We usually take 12 to 15 dozen cookies each month, so the task can be shared easily by two or three people.



This is a good job for students who need to accumulate some public service hours as well as those who have been looking for an opportunity to be of service but have limited time due to work or other restrictions. Upcoming dates for Emmanuel Dining Room meals are: April 24, May 22, and June 26. If you are interested in helping, please call Susan Barefoot at 479-5871.

Vestry Highlights There will be a meeting on 4/6/08 after the 10:30 service to get updates from the Transition team Hope to see you there! Planting, mulch and church spring cleaning (inside and out) is in the works. Pancake supper was a huge success. \$607 will be donated to the ERD. \$11,100 is available from the Barnabas funds designated for outreach. Choir activities are planned for May. Be on the look out. Thanks. *Jenny*



APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Michael Palermo 4/2
Scott Peters 4/2
Gus Chandler 4/4
Barry Traxler 4/7
Juliana Attilio 4/9
Winnie Harris 4/9

Greg Cuprak 4/14
Woody Evans 4/14
Myrna Vest 4/15
Susannah Wright 4/15
Bradley Stoughton 4/16

Amy Harra 4/18
Deborah Appleyard 4/19
Alice Ritzinger 4/19
June Roux 4/26

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

Bryan and Debbie Renz 4/15

Remember to pray for Jimmy Jimmy McKeon, Thomas Kerr, Erin Brennan, Doris Wissler, Nancy Norman, Roger Goldyn, George Wood, Mary Kelly, Jane Weber, Hazel Yeagle, Bob Lenhart, Connie Yoncha, Arlene and Mary Morrow.

Church Services: Sunday, Holy Eucharist Services: 8:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. – Wed. Eucharist & Healing Service: 5:45 p.m.

Office Hours: Mon.-Wed. 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; Thur. 9:00 to 1:00 p.m.; Fridays - Closed

Contact Information: St. Albans contact information: Phone: 478-7778; Fax: 478-7762;
Interim Rector: The Rev. Jim Wolford; Phone: 443-553-9172;
Organist/Choir Director: Donald McFarland;
Website: www.stalbansde.org