

The Epistle of St. Paul's, Bristol Parish Petersburg, Virginia

December 2009

Dear St. Paul's Friends,

A philosopher, perhaps it was Soren Kierkegaard, once told a story about a father and his son who stopped on a walk they were taking through a field to observe more closely a colony of ants. The young boy knelt down on his hands and knees to gain a better view of all the frantic activity involved in providing food and shelter for the thousands of ants. The father stood quietly above his son as he waited patiently for the inevitable questions to come, "What are they doing?" Why do they never seem to rest?" "Where do they get their food?" "Do they need water?" The boy continued to watch one group of ants struggle to carry a large section of leaf into the ant hill. "Daddy, how can I help them?" The father remained silent. "Maybe if I became an ant, I could better show them how to do it." The father said gently, "Just what Jesus must have been thinking right before he was born in Bethlehem."

The Incarnation of God that we celebrate during the Christmas season provides all of us with the opportunity to reflect on God's incredible capacity for compassion. From God's vantage point, we truly do need all the help we can get – probably a lot more than those ants who seem to get a lot done in a day when left to their own devices. Not only does God see that we need his help, but he also provides the help that we so desperately need. The young son could only identify a possible solution to the problem of the ants' struggle with the section of leaf; he did not have the capacity to carry out the solution. God, however, is able and willing to bring the solution of his presence with us and amongst us to earth. In Jesus Christ and in

the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, we can experience the direct saving activity of God in our lives on a daily basis. We are not limited to relating to God as a distant, silent, albeit patient "Father" standing off to one side. God is involved in the everyday activities of our lives – always showing us a better way to live.

Lest we think that Jesus chose to provide us with his help "from on high" – remaining untarnished by the world, we have the compelling story of his birth into less than ideal circumstances. From all the stories that the adult Jesus tells, we realize that Jesus intimately knows all the sorts and conditions of human kind. Jesus knows about economic hardship and he knows about emotional trauma, grief, and loss. Jesus knows about the comfort and joys of family traditions and friends. Jesus knows the depth and darkness, the height and light of life's downs and ups. Jesus knows the human heart in all its richness and its shallowness. We have a Savior who knows the enormous difficulty inherent in saving even one of us, let alone all of us.

As we come yet again to hear the angelic host proclaiming the awesome birth of God on earth, we have the chance to contemplate the meaning of the Incarnation: God with us, Emmanuel. Who's heart is so hard as not to be moved by the love of God poured into our lives through the loving presence of Jesus Christ? May this Christmas season be one in which you come to know the overwhelming peace and power of God our Father, the strength and glory of Jesus Christ, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Peace, Rick

Highlights of December Events

Thursday, December 3rd – 6:30 p.m.

Social Club gathering at the Johnsons
All are welcome!

Sunday, December 13th – Advent III

Holy Eucharist at 8:00 a.m.
Morning Prayer at 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School Choir will sing at 10:30 a.m.
Advent Lessons & Carols at 4:00 p.m.
Annual Christmas Dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 20th – Advent IV

Holy Eucharist at 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.
Children's Christmas Pageant at 10:30 service

Thursday, December 24th – Christmas Eve

Christmas Music at 10:30 p.m.
Festival Eucharist at 11:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 27th – Christmas I

Holy Eucharist at 8:00 a.m.
Baptism & Holy Eucharist at 10:30 a.m.

Concerts by Candlelight

Every second Friday of the month
as part of Petersburg's *Friday for the Arts*.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11TH AT 6:30 P.M.

Annual Christmas Gala and Sing-A-Long
This Year Featuring Charles Lindsey, Jr., *Organ*

Donations to the Whittle Music & Arts Fund are gratefully accepted. Please look for the yellow envelopes and place them in the plate at the door.

*These contributions fully support
St. Paul's Music Ministry in downtown Petersburg.*

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## ***Advent Lessons & Carols***

***Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m.***

*with*

***The Christmas Dinner to follow at 5:30 p.m.***

*Santa Claus will be making a special visit  
to St Paul's during Dinner.*

Adults: \$10  
Children (6-12): \$6  
Children (5 & Under): No Charge

To make a reservation for the Christmas Dinner,  
please call the Parish Office or fill out and return a  
Reservation Envelope no later than ***Wednesday,  
December 9<sup>th</sup>***. Envelopes may be found  
in the Narthex & Foyer.

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Christmas Eve at St. Paul's

*Special music provided by St Paul's Choir,
The Bristol Ringers and Instrumentalists.*

Carols for the congregation will begin at 10:30 p.m.

The Festival Holy Eucharist

celebrating

The Incarnation of Our Lord

will begin at 11:00 p.m.

Offerings for Greens and Poinsettias

It is not too soon to make your contributions for decorating the church in the name or memory of a loved one. Donating for this special effort *now* will allow us to purchase just what we need to make the church look absolutely beautiful for Christmas! Look for the special contribution envelopes in the Narthex and Foyer just beyond the Baptistry.

Offerings for Christmas Music

If you would like to contribute toward the cost of instrumentalists and special music for the Christmas Eve service, please consider making a contribution in honor or in memory of loved ones. Contribution envelopes are available in the Narthex and Foyer.

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## ***2010 Time and Talent Survey***

Enclosed in this month's *Epistle* is a two-sided survey form which the Vestry will use to develop a stronger committee system to carry out the various ministries of St. Paul's. Some of the committees have been working quite effectively in the past and in the present, but would very graciously welcome some additional help. Other committees have not yet begun to function, but not for lack of a pressing need! We simply haven't been able to recognize all the resources that we have available amongst our members. This survey will be a very helpful tool in identifying the skills and interests with which the people of St. Paul's have been blessed.

If you come to the end of the survey and find yourself saying, "But my particular gift is not required by the church," please describe your gift on a separate piece of paper and attach it to the survey. One gift that has been given to everyone is the ability to pray. If you would like to join a regular monthly prayer group, please speak to the Rector and a convenient date and time to meet will be determined.

Please feel free to drop your completed survey in the offering plate or slip it through Susan's door in the Parish House. We promise to get back to you about putting your time and talent to good use!!!

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2010 Flower Chart

The 2010 Flower Chart will be made available on Sunday, December 20th. The cost of flowers will remain the same next year: \$40 for the Main Altar, \$30 for the Chapel Altar and \$60 for both altars on the same date. Please sign up on a first come – first serve basis.

Adopting a Family (or two) for Christmas

Efforts are still being made to learn from the folks at Petersburg City Social Services the names of two or three deserving families for the people of St. Paul's to "adopt" at Christmas time. Last year's family was so appreciative of their Christmas gifts and the invitation to join us for the Christmas Dinner that we will repeat that experience again in an even greater way this year. As we publish this December newsletter, we are still awaiting the necessary specifics from Social Services to share with those members of the parish who would like to buy a gift or two for a needy family.

Short-term Mission Team to Continue Meeting

Plans are being put together for a short-term mission trip to Centro Buen Pastor (the Good Shepherd Center) in the Las Flores barrio in the southeastern city of San Pedro de Macorix in the Dominican Republic. We could provide a team of simple laborers: painters, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, repair-persons, childcare providers, Vacation Bible School leaders, and just folks who want to be of some help to the many families who come to the center for food, education, medical help, and worship. We would probably stay for a week with a day for travel on either side of that working week. We are currently looking at the second or third week in June 2010. If you think you would like to join in this very exciting ministry or you would just like to learn more about the possibilities, then please come join us for an exploratory meeting in Bristol Hall during Wednesday Night Dinner, December 9th. Coming to the meeting does not mean you have to go with the team. Listen to "the still small voice" of the Holy Spirit and learn more.

2010 Stewardship Campaign Update

One week after the In-Gathering of Pledge Cards on Sunday, November 15th, the Vestry is very pleased to announce that forty pledges have been received for a total amount pledged of \$92,766 which comes to an average pledge of \$2,378. Twenty-four of the forty pledges or 60% of those received thus far reflect an increase in the amount pledged. Six pledges or 15% are new and nine pledges or 23% remain at the same level as 2009. The 2010 goal of seventy pledges for a total pledge and plate offering of \$160,000 is certainly within reach! Reaching the goal of \$160,000 would lower our dependence on the Robertson-Bernard Fund to under \$115,000 which is nearly a 20% decrease in the draw on that fund.

The Vestry would very much like to have a firm grasp on the final figures for the 2010 Stewardship Campaign by the end of calendar year 2009. Pledge cards will remain available in the Narthex and in the "Middle Foyer" beyond the Baptistry through out the month of December. Please make every possible effort to have your pledge card returned to the Parish Office by the end of the calendar year. Thank you!

Little Notes from You

Dear Friends and Family,

Thank you for your calls, cards, and e-mails. Many of you are aware the situation was identified by a routine chest x-ray while searching for the cause of on-going headaches. Thankfully CT Scans and MRIs of my brain have not provided any proof of a connection of these issues. Actually the headaches are 98% improved!

The first chemotherapy treatment went well. I give God the glory! Two more treatments are scheduled, later this month and in December, followed hopefully soon after by surgery. I will let you know of my progress.

We pause at the threshold of the Thanksgiving season to count our many blessings including your thoughts and prayers that continue to serve as encouragement.

Sincerely,
Bob Odom

December Birthdays

1 st	Bet Poarch
2 nd	Hibernia Cuthbert, Bob Zemp
5 th	April Greenwood
8 th	Ted Ruhnke, Marie Spencer
15 th	Andy Sheetz
16 th	Joe Aldrich
17 th	Jackie Blake
22 nd	Charles Lindsay, Jr., Shirley Van Landingham
24 th	Martha Lee Romaine
27 th	Cade Cannon
30 th	Sam Cuthbert

December Anniversaries

2 nd	Andy and Pam Sheetz
4 th	Robbie and Cary Cannon

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary?

Please forgive us! If we did, let us know. We may not have had the information. As a parish family, we really do want to remember each person's birthday and anniversary.

2010 Time and Talent Survey
based on the St. Paul's Organization Chart of Ten Committees:

Where do your gifts belong?

Revised November 25, 2009

1) Fellowship Events

- Cooking for Wednesday Night Dinners
- Cooking for Sunday Morning Breakfasts
- Helping with Special Events
 - EGODS
 - Christmas Dinner
 - Receptions
 - Epiphany Bonfire
 - Summer Picnic
 - Back-to-Church Picnic
- Participating on Kitchen Committee

2) Worship Committee

- Serving on the Altar Guild
- Joining the Flower Guild
- Serving as an Usher
- Helping with the Acolytes
- Being a Layreader
- Becoming a Greeter
- Participating in Planning Liturgy

3) Music Ministry

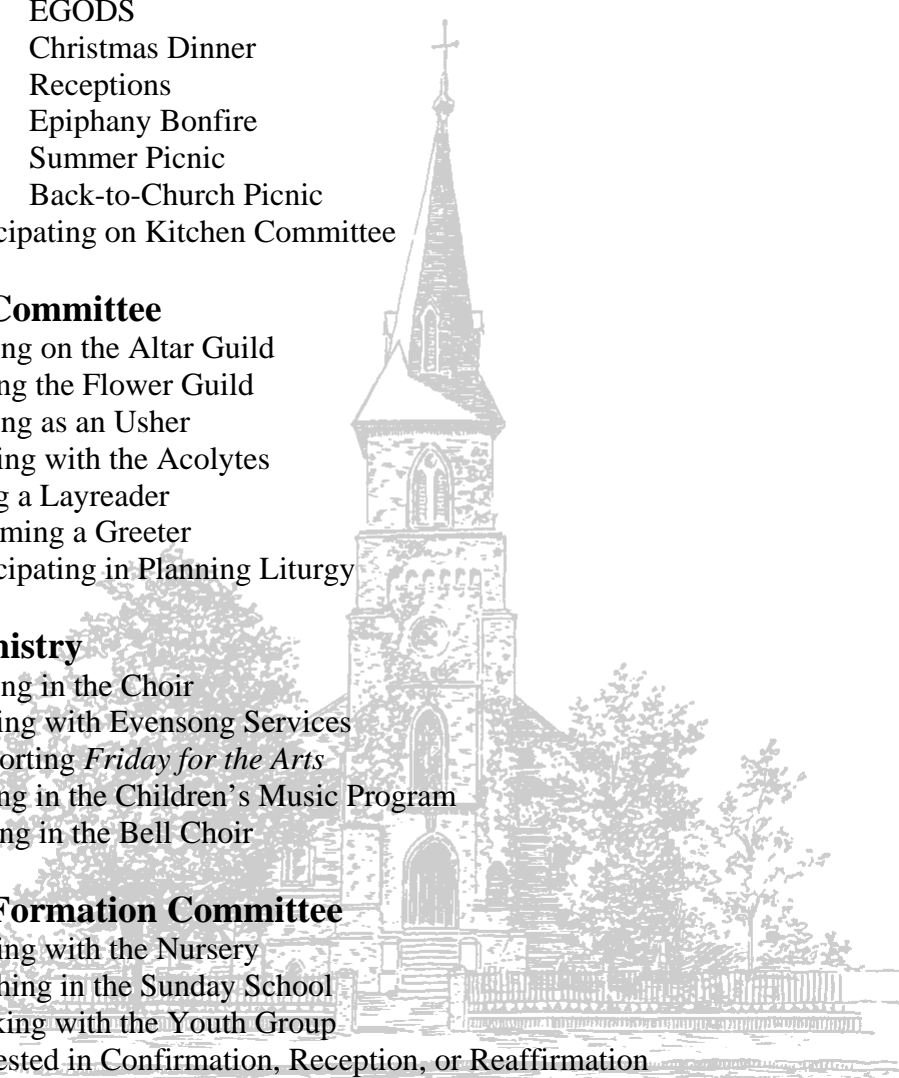
- Singing in the Choir
- Helping with Evensong Services
- Supporting *Friday for the Arts*
- Joining in the Children's Music Program
- Playing in the Bell Choir

4) Spiritual Formation Committee

- Helping with the Nursery
- Teaching in the Sunday School
- Working with the Youth Group
- Interested in Confirmation, Reception, or Reaffirmation
- Participating in the Social Club
- Becoming involved in promoting Adult Education

5) Pastoral Care

- Support Inreach Card Ministry
- Interested in developing a Parish Nurse Program
- Participating in Hospital Visitation Ministry
- Volunteering for Home Visitations
- Joining the Prayer Team Ministry



6) Outreach

- Local Area Outreach
 - Mentoring at AP Hill Elementary School
 - Working on the Petersburg Project
 - Volunteering with Habitat for Humanity
- National Outreach
 - Mission Trip to Appalachia (West Virginia)
 - Mission Trip to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation
- International Outreach
 - Short-term Mission Trip to Nuestras Pequeñas Rosas in San Pedro Sula, Honduras
 - June 2010 Trip to Centro Buen Pastor in San Pedro de Macorix, Dominican Republic

7) Buildings & Grounds

- Organizing Time and Talent Utilization
 - I have Carpentry skills
 - I have Electrician skills
 - I have Plumbing skills
 - I have Painting skills
 - I have Woodworking and furniture repair skills
- I will help with Landscaping around the church
- I enjoy Horticulture
- I will work on improving Energy Efficiency

8) Communication & Growth

- I want to help with the Website
- I have some Marketing ideas
- I will write for the Newsletter
- I will help send out E-mails
- I will participate in the Newcomer Ministry
 - I will help with the next Newcomer welcome event
 - I will help with Newcomer follow-up
- I will help with folding bulletins
- I can help with weekly office tasks

9) Stewardship

- I will work on the Year-round Stewardship Campaign
- I will follow-up with Time & Talent Inventory

10) Finance

- I will help prepare the Vestry Financial Reports
- Joining the Finance Committee
- I can help with Audits
- I will support the work of the Trustees
 - Property
 - Endowment Fund
 - Bernard-Robertson Fund

Name: _____

The best phone number by which to reach me is: _____