

FEBRUARY 2010

# THE WITNESS

## Sunday Schedule

8:30

Mass

9:30

Nursery Opens

Adult Forum

10:30

Mass

After Mass—  
During Lent

Soup & Sacrament

## INSIDE

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## **Communal Lament for Lent 2010 and Other Fun Stuff**

Lent begins and soon! Ash Wednesday is 17 February.

### **Ash Wednesday Liturgy: 8:30 A.M. & 6:30 P.M.**

On Ash Wednesday we all will be invited, in the words of the Book of Common Prayer, "to the observance of a Holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word" (265).

In liturgical churches, special programming is customarily offered during Lent that we might come to the joy of Easter with hearts renewed and lives changed, ready to receive afresh the power of God's Spirit to carry out the church's mission to pray, worship, proclaim the Gospel, and promote justice, peace, and love (BCP, The Catechism, 855).

So how shall we observe Lent this year? And what difference will it make not only in our individual lives before God but in our life together, as the church, as members of one Body?

Suggestions to the contrary notwithstanding, there is, on the one hand, no set formula for personal and corporate renewal, no simple "plan of salvation" set forth in the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. On the other hand, there may be observed in God's Word clear and recurring patterns.

But there is a pattern which is as observable as it is repeated through the scriptures: (1) God's gracious action in creation and redemption; (2) faithful response—one that is repeated as often as necessary—to God's action seen in repentance (turning around and then going a new, life-giving direction) and an active belief witnessed in both word and deed. As our response is impossible without the *prior* action of God, the response is unsustainable without the *continued* action of God.

This Lent, we will consider in different ways God's action and our response.

  
THE  
EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH  
WELCOMES YOU



The book which will guide our study of solemn assembly and corporate repentance is described thus by the publisher:

*Sanctify the Congregation* contains over a dozen powerful sermons calling the Church to fasting and to solemn assembly. A look through an index of early American publications reveals the wealth of attention that America's founding fathers gave to this issue of corporate repentance, and a selection of sermons preached between 1645 and 1753 is included here, along with calls to corporate repentance issued by government bodies and in church covenants. A chapter on the solemn assembly has been included by the editor, providing valuable background on a subject that much of the modern church seems to have forgotten.



Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
 sound the alarm on my holy mountain!  
 Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
 for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near--  
 a day of darkness and gloom,  
 a day of clouds and thick darkness!  
 Like blackness spread upon the mountains  
 a great and powerful army comes;  
 their like has never been from of old,  
 nor will be again after them  
 in ages to come.  
 Yet even now, says the LORD,  
 return to me with all your heart,  
 with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
 rend your hearts and not your clothing.  
 Return to the LORD, your God,  
 for he is gracious and merciful,  
 slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,  
 and relents from punishing.  
 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,  
 and leave a blessing behind him,

a grain offering and a drink offering  
 for the LORD, your God?  
 Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
 sanctify a fast;  
 call a solemn assembly;  
 gather the people.  
 Sanctify the  
 congregation;  
 assemble the aged;  
 gather the children,  
 even infants at the breast.  
 Let the bridegroom leave his room,  
 and the bride her canopy.  
 Between the vestibule and the altar  
 let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.  
 Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD,  
 and do not make your heritage a mockery,  
 a byword among the nations.  
 Why should it be said among the peoples,  
 "Where is their God?"

**Joel**  
 2.1-2,12-17

# SUNDAYS AFTER THE 10:30 MASS

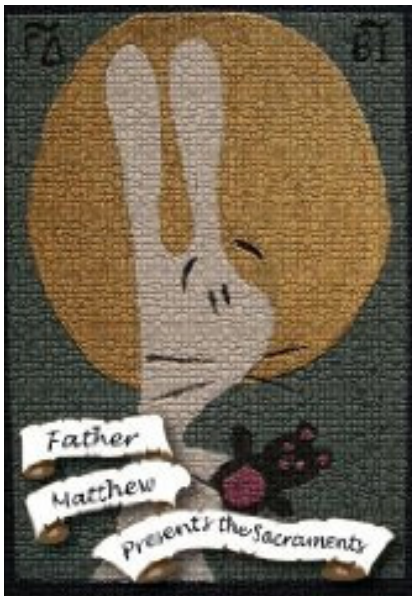
## Join us for Soup and Sacrament: Yummy for All Ages

This Lent, beginning with Lent 1 on 21 February, we will share in the warmth and fun of Christian formation with our Soup and Sacrament fellowship hour during Lent.

After enjoying soup and breaking bread together, we will have one 5-minute video on the Sacraments from the acclaimed Father Matthew Presents series, followed by brief question-and-answer session in this format intentionally designed to appeal to all ages.



### Father Matthew Presents the Sacraments



What do flying babies, helpful disembodied hands, and a T. Rex bride have in common? Take a tour with Father Matthew and find out! Join Father Matthew as he takes you on a light-hearted yet educational tour of the sacraments of the Episcopal Church. Both young and old are invited.

Each sacrament is explained by a short video no more than five minutes long.

This collection of eight "webisodes" is taken from the "Father Matthew Presents" YouTube video blog, remastered for higher fidelity, and published in DVD format for general use.

This series, part of the emergent church movement, has been regularly updated by the Rev. Matthew Moretz since 2006.

**HELP US BY SIGNING UP TO ASSIST WITH BRINGING SOUP, BREAD, & SALAD!!**

### A NOTE TO PARENTS . . .

In renewing our Christian Formation program for all ages, we as parents have an essential role in ensuring that our children will receive the necessary education for growing "into the full stature" of Christ where they are prepared for life not only academically but morally and spiritually as well. As we are committed to the full participation of children in all aspects of church life, we are committed to encouraging parents to show their children what is really important to them.

An Amazon Review for Father Matthew Presents series. (Saint Stephen's now has both of his current DVD's, and his wide-ranging material is available on YouTube and other sites on the Web.)

By The Rev. Scott Petersen (Tequesta, FL)

*Let's face it... Religion and video don't always translate. I mean did you ever see Hollywood getting excited about God? (The Bells of St. Mary's was released when? You get the point...) Father Matthew has done something important here. He has found a way to make the Sacraments of the church interesting. Through the use of humor, creativity, and music he engages adults and children alike to think about how God works. Father Matthew Presents the Sacraments is a wonderful entry point to discover the depth and significance of the Sacraments. It should be a must own for any Priest, Sunday School, educator engaged in helping the faithful discover the depth of God being present amongst us.*



**The Rev. Matthew Moretz** is the creator of the "Father Matthew Presents" series of video blogs. The light-hearted pieces focus on issues of faith and ministry from the perspective of an Episcopal priest. He is also the Curate at [Christ's Church, Rye, NY](#).

The website [Anglicans Online](#) recently wrote that *Father Matthew Presents* is "brimming with youth, creativity, and humour... addictive, like good candy."

## Ecumenical Lenten Gathering at Bethany UMC: Wednesday, 10 March, noon

Each year we participate in the ecumenical Lenten services held at Bethany United Methodist Church just off of 221 on the way to Bedford: 1720 Bethany Church Circle, Forest.

Father Chris will lead the 30-minute service and the ladies (and willing men) will provide lunch for 100 at 12:30. The suggested donation for lunch is \$5.00, with all monies go to Bedford Christian Ministries, which provides a range of outreach services to those in need living in our community. So the Lenten program (offered each Wednesday in Lent) provides for spiritual and nutritional fulfillment even as it gives opportunity to reach out in love to our brothers and sisters in need. Please let Linda Thomas (540.586.0285 or [linge2000@aol.com](mailto:linge2000@aol.com)) know if you can help through commitment of time and/or money.



# The Mission of the Church of God

The vestry of Saint Stephen's Church held its annual retreat on Saturday, 16 January, and focused the entirety of the morning on considering the Mission of our church as it is understood in the context of Holy Scripture and the baptismal promises found in the Book of Common Prayer (304-305). Reflection during the Gospel response on what excites us about being at Saint Stephen's was followed by small group engagement of a variety of questions about our life together as a church, what scriptural verses "speak" to us, and what God calls this church to be and to do as we work together to fulfill the mission of the church as described in The Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer:

The mission of the Church is to restore all people  
to unity with God and each other in Christ.

*What draws you to Saint Stephen's Church?*

- Liturgy and worship.
- A community of faith.
- A sense of community found in deep connections.
- An honoring but not being bound by tradition.
  - Deep friendships leading to mission.
  - Kids and youth like this church.
- The pastor knows the members of the congregation personally.
  - It is a resilient congregation.

*What scripture about mission excites you?*

We are a blessing to others even in our brokenness. *Genesis 12.1-3*

Here I am. Send me. *Isaiah 6.8*

The Great Commission. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to me: go and make disciples . . . and remember I am with you always." *Matthew 28.18-20*

Repentance for the forgiveness of sins . . . proclaimed to all nations. *Luke 24.46-48*

Jesus said, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you." *John 20.21*

By grace you have been saved. *Ephesians 2.8-9*

Equip the saints for the work of ministry. *Ephesians 4.12*

*What part of the mission defined in the Catechism and in the Baptismal Promises excites you?*

- The church is the foundation where our gifts for ministry are nurtured.
- To pray, worship, and promote the Gospel by justice, peace, and love.
  - To seek to serve Christ in all.
- We carry out our mission through *all* our members.
  - To equip one another for the work of ministry.
    - We are the "hands and feet" of Christ.
      - To proclaim good news.
    - To minister out of our own brokenness.
    - Being Spirit-filled and free of worry.

The work was both engaging and exciting, demonstrating both a deep love for and a strong belief in this parish church and its mission going forward as we come closer to our bicentennial and prepare the church for ministry in its third century of existence. The work of defining a mission statement will continue at the February vestry meeting.

## Other News from the Vestry

The church ended 2009 right on target of where it was projected at the December 2008 annual meeting, namely with a \$27K deficit of plate, pledge, and investment income. This deficit was addressed by the unanimous vestry designation in January 2009 of a \$26K bequest of which the church was notified in the week following that 2008 annual meeting. (*See parish hall bulletin board.*)

We are blessed both by the continuing generosity of our parishioners, many of whom raised their commitments for 2010 and by the amazing generosity of those who were never parishioners, including most recently in the Woolridge Trust (a neighbor of the church), of which this parish received a one-fifth share of the assets distributed in 2010 and of land (behind Food Lion) upon its eventual sale.

Brian Elliott (2013) was elected to a three-year term as trustee, joining Richard Pew (2012) and Carol Woody

(2011). Jim Hite's term expired at the end of 2009, after having served many years as trustee for which all are grateful.

At the December vestry meeting following the 2009 Annual Meeting in December, Les Hawthorne and Richard Pew were elected senior and junior wardens respectively, with Tom Mohr being reaffirmed as treasurer. Tom Eppes was elected by the vestry to fill the position vacated by Paul Deacon. At the January retreat, Jill Flores was selected as clerk of the vestry. All elections were unanimous.

The 2010 vestry unanimously affirmed the vote of support for the rector (taken at his request and in his absence) in November. The vestry further instructed the wardens to share with the Bishop that rector and vestry are moving forward together in support of the mission and ministry of this church.

## A Sprout in New London

In December 2009, following our Annual Meeting and with the blessing of the Bishop, some fifteen or so of Saint Stephen's active members withdrew from the church and were joined by some inactive members to start a new fellowship that is now planned for New London.

In November, the Reverend Karen Joy Kelly was given permission by Bishop Powell to serve as pastor to the "sprout," as called by its organizers.

At this writing, the group—now called All Saints' Fellowship—is holding services (eucharist once a month

when they have Mother Karen with them and morning prayer on other Sundays) at the Disciples headquarters in Wyndhurst. There has been some discussion of moving eventually to a storefront in New London area.

The process to become recognized as a parish takes time and is spelled out in the canons of the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia. Let us keep them in our prayers, and let it be with us as in the closing words of Mr. Lincoln's second inaugural address:

**W**ith malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

—President Abraham Lincoln, 4 March 1865

## Radical Hospitality

This church is a place of welcome for all people. Look around on any given Sunday, and you will find a people welcoming newcomers into our midst, be it for the hour of worship or into our church fellowship. It is not just to fill pews—which we pray will be increasingly full—or to give money to support our mission and ministry—which we hope that each person will do cheerfully as he or she is able—but rather we welcome others as our brothers and sisters, believing that God has brought them here and they are a blessing through whom God will *change* us and make us more what God calls us to be.

Since December, we have had a number of visitors who are now quickly becoming a part of who we are. There is the La Fon family, Angela and Larry, with children Brady and Lee. Brady is lively ten year old who at her own initiative has not only become an acolyte but cooked all the goodies for a Sunday fellowship hour. There are former parishioners Karen and Bill Warner, along with their family. And there is a young couple, Kelly and Ryan, who have visited several times and plan to come to Saint Stephen's in April when Kelly moves to the area. There are also young people who are now regularly coming to the church during the week for coffee and conversation, in what is emerging as kind of a coffee house fellowship, replete with free web access for those who bring their laptops. These persons bless us, and we give thanks to God and pray that we will continue being a place of welcome and hospitality for all. In the words of Saint Benedict, the founder of Western monasticism, say "thanks be to God" when someone knocks at our door and then,

**“Receive all visitors as Christ.”**

**Saint Stephen's Church**  
**1695 Perrowville Road**  
**Forest, VA 24551**

### **SUNDAYS 8:30 & 10:30 A.M.**

**16 Feb, Shrove Tuesday**  
**Pancakes, 6:30 P.M.**

**17 FEBRUARY, ASH WEDNESDAY**  
**8:30 a.m. & 6:30 P.M.**

**10 MARCH, WEDNESDAY @ BETHEL UMC**  
**Saint Stephen's provides**  
**Noon Service & 12:30 Lunch**

**21 FEBRUARY, LENT 1**  
**Mass, 8:30 & 10:30 A.M.**  
**Sung Mass with incense, 7 P.M.**

**1 APRIL, MAUNDY THURSDAY**  
**6:30 P.M.**

**2 APRIL, GOOD FRIDAY**  
**6:30 P.M.**

**4 APRIL, EASTER DAY**  
**Vigil & Mass, 6:30 A.M.**  
**Mass, 10:30 A.M.**

THE REVEREND R CHRISTOPHER HEYING, RECTOR † THE REVEREND BILL BUMGARNER, DEACON