

Dear Parish Family,

How is your New Year so far? I pray it has begun with the joy of Christmas still ringing in your ears. Christmas Eve and the Twelve Days of Christmas were indeed lovely. It was a blessing to have our nave filled. Our corporate gratitude for God's gift of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was palpable. During each of our Christmas Eve Services there were people who sat in the Parish Hall. While some stated that they would have preferred to sit in the nave, they found that the Parish Hall with its new audio/visual equipment was acceptable. I am thankful to the vestry for making that purchase this past year. In addition to meeting the needs for overflow at some events, people at the 11 AM service are finding the microphones in the nave to be helpful every Sunday.

Trumpet:

No doubt you have noticed that this letter does not accompany a Trumpet edition. We begin this year with a new plan for the Trumpet. We will publish it quarterly. We will continue to distribute/post (on the website) a copy of the calendar and Rota at the beginning of every month along with a note from me. The reason for the change is that publication of the Trumpet takes an enormous amount of effort and we find that fewer members contribute articles. We will try quarterly publication for a year and see how it goes. Hopefully, over time, we will find more people who will get involved with Trumpet publication and production and we can return to monthly publication.

Parish Finances:

The Vestry and I thank you for your faithful giving. The reports are finalized and I am grateful to let you know we have finished the year in the "black." There will be more detail in the Trumpet which will come out later in February. We are also in the process of completing the budget for 2012. Thanks for your financial commitment to support the general operating costs of maintaining our church community. We have many responsibilities but one of our most important is to provide worship in the Anglican Tradition as the only Episcopal Church in the Bartow County.

We also thank you for your specific gifts to various ministries throughout the year. Some people may be confused about pledging vs. restricted giving so I want to clarify that while many have special ministries they seek to support, we need financial support for general operations, ministry funding, maintenance, salaries, diocesan missions, and the like. We hope that restricted giving is over and above your pledge. The Vestry and Finance Committee seek to use your annual pledge gifts wisely. If you wish to know more about the finances and budget process of the church please come to the Finance Committee meetings. They are usually held the third Thursday evening of the month at 6:00 PM in the Parish Library. Also, after each vestry meeting the previous month's statement is posted on the bulletin board in the Parish Hall. Thanks again for supporting the work of the Church.

#### Organist Choirmaster Search Completed:

I am very pleased to announce that Randolph S. James has accepted the call to fill our position. He will relocate from Massachusetts to Cartersville and his first Sunday will be March 11. More will follow about Randolph in the Trumpet. Some have asked why we didn't offer the position to John Blankenship. John has a full time teaching position and said he would help out by playing during the interim and serve on the Search Committee. As the interim period winds down, please let John know how much you appreciated his gift of music to the congregation.

#### The Year Ahead:

2012 looks to be an exciting year! The Steering Committee and Vestry will be moving ahead to demolish the old apartment building. When the Vestry meets with our consultant to review your feedback (from the Congregational Surveys) we will have a clearer picture of how to prioritize our attention and actions in the year to come.

As we consider 2012 many of us think about the upcoming presidential election. It is my hope in these very polarized times that the voice of faithful reason will emerge from people of faith. You will find me preaching from the Holy Scripture throughout the year and never advocating for one party or candidate. And just to be clear, we Episcopalians do not believe that we are baptized into a club of likeminded people, but rather, "it is to share at the deepest level in the common humanity of other people, and to do this in Christ. For the deeper that one enters into a relationship with someone else, the more fully we are tested, and faced with our own humanity. That is what it means to be a part of Christ's body", the Church. (Quotation is from *The Mystery of Baptism* by Kenneth Stevenson.)

So those who have inclination and courage to enter into political discourse with people who think differently from one another, I applaud. I also recommend listening well. Speak in terms of your own opinion rather than making broad sweeping declarations, and then invite others to express their opinion as well. Agree to disagree agreeably. Share your dreams for our country with one another, and maybe just maybe, we can do our faithful part to help move our country forward. I believe the Christ who taught us to love our enemies would approve.

God bless America! And may God bless you abundantly in 2012.

Mother Mary Erickson