



St. Thomas

From Our Interim Pastor

We are now well into the season of Lent. This forty-day season has been recognized by the church since its earliest times as a season of repentance and renewal for all members of the congregation. We are called into a deeply spiritual time of self-examination, reading, and meditating on God's holy word, and prayer on behalf of ourselves and all humanity.

The Sunday services in Lent take on a more austere appearance as we remove flowers from the altar and replace them with, at the most, greenery only. All references to "Alleluia" are removed from the services, and the purple color of the season represents penitence.

Besides our Ash Wednesday service on February 6, in which we followed the sixth-century tradition of imposing ashes on our foreheads as a sign of penitence, St. Thomas is helping us seek God's forgiveness of our sins and God's guidance for our lives.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY—Sundays at 9:15, led by Bob Reese. Please join us!

Anyone who has attended worship in the Episcopal Church has heard the reading of the sacred texts we call the Bible and its New Testament and Old Testament. It should be clear from these readings, especially from the Gospels, that the story of Jesus is the focus. His story stands at the center of the early church's understanding of itself and of the lives and experience of those early church leaders who left us this rich legacy. And yet, hearing the New Testament readings in worship gives only a hint of the depth and diversity included in these pages.

If you would like to deepen your understanding and relationship with our Lord, join us on Sunday mornings. Our group is informal, and everyone has an opportunity to participate as we delve more deeply into these texts. What a great way to enrich our observance of Lent!

CENTERING PRAYER—Tuesdays at 9 A.M.

This group takes 30 minutes to have a short reflective reading, an appropriate scripture selection, and then a time of silent prayer and reflection. The input by the leader and the structure of the time aids spiritual growth. Join us for this special time with each other and with God, especially during our Lenten season.

I hope we will help support each other on our spiritual walks through this special Lenten season 2008.

Thanks,
(The Rev.) Bob Reese

TIDINGS

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YEAR 2008 ISSUE 2

Notes from the Vestry

Joann Collins, Bob Reese, and I recently attended a small-church workshop at the diocesan offices. In addition to an interesting program on leadership and challenges in small churches, we had the opportunity to meet vestry members and leaders from other small parishes throughout the diocese. While talking with these church leaders I came to realize how truly special the St. Thomas family is. While some churches are experiencing issues with growth or with getting members to contribute their time, talents, and treasures, we at St. Thomas are blessed with an abundance of people and generosity of talents. Our members truly are the presence of God both in our faith community and the larger community of Burnsville.

While we will have our share of challenges in the future, I am confident that together we can overcome them to continue to grow in God's love and service.

Speaking of talents, I want to thank the search committee members for their continuing work on our rector search. Their hard work is now starting to pay off as they are getting close to evaluating candidates for our opening. For more information on the search process, see Jim Haaga's rector search update in this newsletter.

—Peace, John Davis, Senior Warden

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For a color version of this newsletter (if you are reading a b&w printed edition), go to www.stthomasonline.org and click on the NEWSLETTER dropdown menu, or request one by emailing Diana at diatoday@msn.com. Whether you are reading the printed or the on-screen version, please take a moment to tell John Davis that we're grateful for his time and for his company's willingness to donate the printing of this newsletter.

Profile: February is Black History Month and February 13 is the feast day of

ABSALOM JONES, a slave who became an abolitionist and the first African American Episcopal priest, ordained in 1802. He established St. Thomas' African Episcopal Church in Philadelphia and became known, among other things, for his New Year's Day antislavery sermons.

One such sermon is available on the web at: <http://antislavery.eserver.org/religious/absalomjones/religious/absalomjones/absalomjones.html>. It is worth taking the time to read all of this Thanksgiving Sermon of January 1, 1808, which is the day the bill to abolish the trade of slaves in the USA was to take effect. The sermon is excerpted below. I wonder who today—200 years later—celebrated this anniversary on January 1, 2008, as Rev. Jones envisioned.

... Fifthly, and lastly, Let the first of January, the day of the abolition of the slave trade in our country, be set apart in every year, as a day of public thanksgiving for that mercy. Let the history of the sufferings of our brethren, and of their deliverance, descend by this means to our children, to the remotest generations; and when they shall ask, in time to come, saying, What mean the lessons, the psalms, the prayers and the praises in the worship of this day? let us answer them, by saying, the Lord, on the day of which this is the anniversary, abolished the trade which dragged your fathers from their native country, and sold them as bondmen in the United States of America.

[prayer:]

Oh thou God of all the nations upon the earth! We thank thee, that thou art no respecter of persons, and that thou hast made of one blood all nations of men. We thank thee, that thou hast appeared, in the fulness of time, in behalf of the nation from which most of the worshipping people, now before thee, are descended. We thank thee, that the sun of righteousness has at last shed his morning beams upon them. Rend thy heavens, O Lord, and come down upon the earth; and grant that the mountains, which now obstruct the perfect day of thy goodness and mercy towards them, may flow down at thy presence. Send thy gospel, we beseech thee, among them. May the nations, which now sit in darkness, behold and rejoice in its light. May Ethiopia soon stretch out her hands unto thee, and lay hold of the gracious promise of thy everlasting covenant.

Destroy, we beseech thee, all the false religions which now prevail among them; and grant, that they may soon cast their idols, to the moles and the bats of the wilderness. O, hasten that glorious time, when the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea; when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them; and, when, instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree, and, instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtle tree: and it

Profile: ABSALOM JONES. *continued on p. 5*

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Lenten Meditations

Looking for inspiration for your Lenten reflection times? If you have a computer, Trinity Church on Wall Street in New York has a meditation booklet posted on its website. Called *Lenten Meditations 2008* and beautifully designed, it is available in pdf format (Acrobat Reader) at:

<http://www.trinitywallstreet.org/welcome/content/files/LentenMeditations08.pdf>

Its Ash Wednesday entry reminds us not to try to get *ourselves* into better spiritual shape, but to let God do it for us—not unlike Bob Reese's message last Sunday (i.e., to be born again, we need to let God do the labor and delivery). This first entry of *Meditations 2008* is a guide for all our efforts.

... *It is good to begin our season of Lent with the words of the prophet Isaiah warning us not to fast to "serve our own interests." The self-examination and spiritual disciplines of Lent are not to prove to ourselves what we can do without or even an opportunity to end a bad habit or pick up a new (and good) one. Lent isn't a time of personal growth in terms of "self-help" where we undertake actions which we or others think will make us "better" or "more" in the eyes of the world. Lent is a time of reflection and evaluation—repentance—in order to help us return to God's will for our lives.*

God's will for our lives isn't something that we can find on our own—no matter how dedicated we are to the search and no matter how hard we work at it or on ourselves. We can't do it on our own. God's will for our lives can only be determined in relationship and conversation with God.

Self-reliance and self-improvement are the catch phrases of our self-help society. Relying on God to show us the ways in which we need to change or improve is the way and means of honest self-evaluation and spiritual disciplines. And we needn't be afraid to let go because God's will for us is always in our best interest.

—Rev. Ruth Anne Garcia

PSALM 103 OR 103:8-14; JOEL 2:1-2, 12-17 OR ISAIAH 58:1-12

CORINTHIANS 5:20B-6:10; MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

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Be at peace.

Do not fear the changes of life,
rather look to them with full hope as they arise.

God, whose very own you are,
will deliver you from out of them.

He has kept you hitherto,
and he will lead you safely through all things;
and when you cannot stand it,
God will bury you in his arms.

He will either shield you from suffering,
or will give you unfailing strength to bear it.

Be at peace
and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.

—St. Francis de Sales
submitted by Maryallen Estes

*Please continue to keep Dave and Maggie Zurbrick in your prayers.
Dave has cancer and is in hospice.*

Also, please pray for: Lutie Culver, Jim Peek, Bob McMillan, Billy Donovan, Dani Le Hardy, Jennifer Ballard, Corbin Laws, Susie Edwards, Richard Freeman, David Doyle, Thomas, Barbara, Lisa, Jim, Allen, Hack, Ashton Villars, Sally, Katharine, Melody Wood, Wanda Tyburski, Sara Wilson, Ruth Peake, Bob Hackler, Nikolai Frank, Judy Ziemann, and the family of Bobbie Samel.

Cam Rose, wife of David Rose, former rector of Trinity EC, Spruce Pine, was killed on February 11 in an auto accident near their home in Vermont. She was on her way to teach French and must have hit some ice or something; she swerved into the other lane and was killed when a truck ran into her car. The Roses have three daughters who are school age—Hannah, Eliza, and Sadie. Please keep the family in your prayers.

According to CNN.com last week, more than 900 people have died as a result of the bitter cold and blizzards engulfing central and western Afghanistan this winter—a winter considered the worst in three decades.

Let us continue to pray for the victims of violence of all kinds, whether at the hands of beings or of the environment. As we do so, let us particularly keep in mind the world situations of need and war. Let us pray that soldiers, peacekeepers, activists, and leaders be inspired to listen with love, act with love and justice, and be given charisma to lead us all through these dark times.

Flourless Chocolate Cake (La Bête Noire)

Cake:

- 1 cup water
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- 9 T (1 stick plus 1 T) unsalted butter, diced
- 18 ounces bittersweet (not unsweetened) or semisweet chocolate, chopped
- 6 large eggs

FOR CAKE:

Preheat oven to 350° F.
Butter 10-inch-diameter springform pan. Line bottom of pan with parchment round; butter parchment. Wrap 3 layers of heavy-duty foil around outside of pan, bringing foil to top of rim. (Use extra-wide foil.)
Combine 1 cup of water and the sugar in small saucepan. Bring to boil over medium heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat.
Melt butter in large saucepan over low heat. Add chocolate and whisk until smooth. Whisk sugar syrup into chocolate; cool slightly. Add eggs to chocolate mixture and whisk until well blended.
Pour batter into prepared cake pan. Place cake pan in large roasting pan. Add enough hot water to roasting pan to come halfway up sides of cake pan. Bake cake until center no longer moves when pan is gently shaken, about 50 minutes.

Remove cake pan from water bath; transfer to rack. Cool completely in pan.

Ganache:

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 8 ounces bittersweet (not unsweetened) or semisweet chocolate, chopped

FOR GANACHE:

Bring whipping cream to simmer in small saucepan over medium heat.
Remove from heat.
Add chocolate and whisk until smooth.
Pour over top of cake still in pan.
Gently shake pan to distribute ganache evenly over top of cake.
Refrigerate cake in pan until ganache is set, about 2 hours.
Run knife around pan sides to loosen cake; release sides.
Serve with lightly sweetened whipped cream.
—submitted upon request by Gail Bredehoeft from *Bon Appétit*, September 2006

Snapshots of Godly Play

The October *Thomas Tidings* described the basics of the Godly Play program we offer our young children. These photos give a glimpse of how engaged the children become when a teacher tells a Bible story with a sense of wonder and asks the children to interact with the story. After story time, the children use any of the classroom's resources during their hands-on response time. While one child moves statuettes across the desert of the Exodus, another may move characters along the road of the Good Samaritan parable. Still another may choose to paint a picture or even wash the tables with a spray bottle and cleaning cloth. When response time is over, the class gathers for a prayer of thanks followed by a feast before joining the adults upstairs for communion. This Godly place, with its time of respect, creativity, and church wisdom, can't be beat.

Right: *Kerstin Davis places rocks and water for the Good Shepherd and his sheep while the children wait to see what she will place on the mat next.* Clockwise from Kerstin are: *Lillian Kline, Ethan Ballard, Jessica Ballard, Evelyn Kline, Gavin Henry, and Isabella Davis.*

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In a Godly place . . .

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. . . Godly Play



Left: *Detail of the dynamic church calendar, which the children address at the beginning of class. This calendar was created by Dee Bobbe and restored by Kerstin.* Below: *Gavin Henry baptizes a babe during response time.*



Rector Search Committee

February 2008 Update

This article is to be sure parishioners know the search for our new priest is really under way, even though there is little to show for it in the way of names. Unfortunately, we will never be able to have names to share with the church, and we are asked by the diocese never to discuss names of candidates with the parish or even the vestry. Not even with our spouses. One reason for this is to avoid damage to the current ministry of an applicant, who may be in a parish that doesn't know he or she is job hunting. We are also asked to keep a prayerful attitude as we compare an applicant with our church's ministry needs, as determined by our survey, and to avoid letting the search become a personality contest between candidates.

Our first task was to help St. Thomas consider where we are and where we want to go and with what type of leader; we did this with our survey. Our second task was to compile our Parish Profile. This fine document created by your search committee is on the St. Thomas website, www.stthomasonline.org. The wonderful parish history in it was written by Peg Emerson, with input from Dave and Maggie Zurbrick. These tasks, along with weekly prayers for our search, have built the foundation for the nitty-gritty job we have now embarked on.

Our third task was to get the name of St. Thomas out to a fair pool of applicants. This is being done by word of mouth from parishioners, postings on four national and regional church job lists (Positions Open Bulletin, the WNC diocesan website, the Transitions Ministry website, and Province IV websites), and an ad in *Episcopal Life*, a national church magazine that is circulated in both a paper edition and a digital edition on its website. Names that come to our attention through any of these sources are sent an invitation to submit a letter of interest about being our priest, plus a resume and one or two sermons.

When persons respond expressing interest, we will submit their names to Canon Jim Pritchett to get diocesan okay to proceed further. Once we have that approval, we'll narrow the group somewhat if necessary, and begin phone interviews, followed by in-person interviews or visits. Whether we search committee members visit them, or they visit us, will depend partly on geography.

Finally, we will submit a single candidate's name to the vestry, who will then interview that person and make a decision. If the vestry decides yes, we are finished. If not, we return to our candidate list.

Each of us at St. Thomas may have strong feelings about wanting one or another person to become our priest. The search committee appreciates that. On the one hand, we would like to spend time listening to your reasons for advocating a particular person. But we are asked not to do this—not to take a poll of the church to see who is the favorite. Each candidate will have a chance to represent him- or herself in a letter, a resume, and written sermons, and also in interviews.

We all have the opportunity to ask the Holy Spirit to guide the committee throughout this important and delicate process. We search committee members appreciate your prayers and patience, and we will all try to work hard to deserve your confidence.

—for the Search Committee, Jim Haaga, Chair

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Profile: ABSALOM JONES. *continued from p. 2*

shall be to the Lord for a name and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

We pray, O God, for all our friends and benefactors, in Great Britain, as well as in the United States: reward them, we beseech thee, with blessings upon earth, and prepare them to enjoy the fruits of their kindness to us, in thy everlasting kingdom in heaven: and dispose us, who are assembled in thy presence, to be always thankful for thy mercies, and to act as becomes a people who owe so much to thy goodness. We implore thy blessing, O God, upon the President, and all who are in authority in the United States. Direct them by thy wisdom, in all their deliberations, and O save thy people from the calamities of war. Give peace in our day, we beseech thee, O thou God of peace! and grant, that this highly favoured country may continue to afford a safe and peaceful retreat from the calamities of war and slavery, for ages yet to come. We implore all these blessings and mercies, only in the name of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. And now, O Lord, we desire, with angels and arch-angels, and all the company of heaven, ever more to praise thee, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty: the whole earth is full of thy glory. Amen.

Some easy-to-find resources are:

◆ Websites that relate to the Rev. Absalom Jones and St. Thomas' African Church:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absalom_Jones
- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3h85.html>
- <http://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI8703281/>

◆ Resources on slavery are:

- *Amazing Grace*, the movie with Albert Finney (not the movie of the same name about hymns) that tells of Wilberforce's growing understanding of how to work within closed political systems in order to banish slavery in Great Britain. Thanks to efforts like his, trafficking became illegal there in 1807 and slavery in 1833.
- *Amistad*, the movie about a mutinous slave ship that unexpectedly was blown into US waters after the slave trade was illegal here. Background on the *Amistad* is at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/amistad/>
- <http://www.american.edu/TED/slave.htm>
- <http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/timeline/atlantic.slave.trade.html>

Conference Opportunity

You may have noticed that more attention has lately been given to the practice of trafficking in persons. Trafficking includes forced labor of men, women, or children, and coerced sexual work. The January Atlanta diocese e-newsletter tells of a campus forum hosted by the Episcopal chaplain at Georgia State University and Georgia Tech, the Rev. Chris Hannum. I contacted him and he gave me some sources of information. One is the US Department of State's 2007 Report, available at <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007>. The website has this statement from Secretary Rice.

Trafficking in persons is a modern-day form of slavery, a new type of global slave trade. Perpetrators prey on the most weak among us, primarily women and children, for profit and gain. They lure victims into involuntary servitude and sexual slavery. Today we are again called by conscience to end the debasement of our fellow men and women. As in the 19th century, committed abolitionists around the world have come together in a global movement to confront this repulsive crime. President George W. Bush has committed the United States Government to lead in combating this serious 21st century challenge, and all nations that are resolved to end human trafficking have a strong partner in the United States.

—Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

The United States has tightened laws to make it difficult to traffic here, but it does happen, both in terms of initiating trafficking and of hosting traffic destinations. Atlanta is a top sex tourism destination in the USA. Because it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between voluntary and coerced illegal activities, Atlanta-area activists from law enforcement, social work, tourism, and churches are working on recognition factors and victim assistance.

North Carolina is not free of this plague, but full statistics are difficult to find. According to articles in the *News & Observer*, there have been efforts to educate law enforcement, especially in rural areas, to enable more accurate reporting and treatment of trafficking problems. In the past few years, a group of male workers in bondage was reported in Johnston County, and a few coerced female prostitutes were found in Raleigh, brought from Asheville.

On April 3 and 4, the Carolina Women's Center at UNC-CH will sponsor its second international conference on trafficking issues. This year's conference, entitled "Combating Sex Trafficking: Prevention and Intervention in North Carolina and Worldwide," is at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill. Cost for both days is \$45. Information and registration forms can be found at: <http://womenscenter.unc.edu/08conference/registration.html>.

The conference will focus on advocacy for survivors of trafficking; shutting down demand for commercial sexual exploitation; the role of the travel & tourism industry; legal research and advocacy; local prevention models; the media's impact in educating the public; and the role of faith-based, corporate, private, and nonprofit sectors in dealing with this problem. It will provide training to first responders, educators, health professionals, and the legal community, with the purpose of developing a working plan to stop sex trafficking in North Carolina and beyond. —Diana Donovan

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an interfaith dialogue on

religion
& VIOLENCE

untangling the roots of conflict

Conference Report & Upcoming Lecture Series

Trinity Institute's webcast of this year's conference was held at Deerfield at the end of January. Bishop Jefferts Schori opened the conference. Scholars gave talks and then fielded question-and-answer sessions. There were two Christians (James Cone and James Carroll), one Jewish scholar (Susannah Heschel), and one Muslim scholar (Tariq Ramadan). Each addressed human tendencies to dominate others and the positive and negative ways that religions have dealt with those tendencies. A special treat was a pre-release screening of Carroll's movie *Constantine's Sword*, an attempt to educate Christians on the history of Christian violence, in light of Christian charges of Muslim violence. (First take the log out of your own eye . . . —Luke 6:42)

At the conference, one point made is that when we recognize suffering we become more honest Christians. Another point is that dominance of any kind is violence, and it sets up the conditions for more violence. A way to spot such situations is to look at how much power is being shared—in our churches and in other institutions, as well as in our daily lives. It is not shared, for example, in a given decision-making structure that is not consciously transparent. A third point made is that, in addition to religious practice, education is critical to eliminating violence.

The format of the conference included discussion after each talk. The group at Deerfield was mostly white, but it included some range of ages and some mix of religious faith.

The basic goal of the conference was to raise awareness and encourage discussion that can lead to action. St. Thomas has bought the conference DVD, and will host an area-wide lecture series/discussion forum in the next few months. *Stay tuned!* ☞

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2008 Valentine's Day Fundraiser Touches on MDG #1

Although the money we've raised to help Yancey Countians stay warm through the Reconciliation House fuel fund doesn't work toward *eradicating* extreme poverty and hunger (MDG #1), it does at least help alleviate one form of poverty and address a hunger for warmth. Julie's report is as follows.

The people of St. Thomas have proved once again that they are talented and hardworking when it comes to Outreach ministries. The 2008 annual Valentine's dinner/dance raised more than \$2300 for the fuel fund at Reconciliation House. The 80 tickets sold in a

matter of days, despite minimal advertising, and almost everyone in the parish helped in some way to pull off this event.

The guests enjoyed a delicious heart-healthy meal of shrimp appetizer, winter squash soup or Tuscan salad, beef tenderloin served with sweet potato and peas, and a choice of desserts. A volunteer jazz band provided music during dinner. Gred Gross, Scott Paquin, Bob Early, and Carl Peverall played so well that diners were still dancing when clean-up was well under way. Smiles were seen everywhere, and as one diner said, "It's so nice to have an opportunity to dine in Burnsville where there's excellent food, ambience, and the money goes to real need, not just to buildings."

The list of thanks to our St. Thomas family is long. If I've left anyone out, I apologize. Julie Niehaus chaired the event and managed ticket sales and seating. Pat Sharkey joyfully offered the three days needed to prepare the heart-healthy, gourmet menu, not to mention weeks of planning. Nancy Byrd advised on decorations, even though she was out of town during the dinner itself. She and Peg Emerson used Enid Smith's 1920s Valentines to form a huge heart on display. Emma Peterson transformed the sacristy into a drinks-serving area and filled glasses as waiters needed them. Three of the younger persuasion—Noah Davis, Lily Bartleson, and Rachel Murray—expertly waited on tables along with older folk. Other workers prepared food (soup, entrees, and dessert), waited and bussed tables, worked in the kitchen, laundered and/or ironed tablecloths and napkins and kitchen towels, and set tables, cleaned up, and organized the room for church on Sunday. In alphabetical order, these helpers include Carol & Tom Bailey, Jana Bartleson, Gail and Steve Bredehoeft, Jean Chuvala, Joann Collins, Kerstin and John Davis, Diana Donovan, Maryallen Estes, Mike Foster, Margie and Jim Haaga, Alice Johnson, Jack Kaeck, Stacey Kline, Libby Miller, Robbie Robertson, Diantha Stevenson, Charlie and Jane Stover, and Becky Wilson.

As we all catch our breath, now that the event is over, let us be grateful that, with love and cooperation, we have again contributed to our neighbors' relaxation while helping those in need and reaffirming the presence of St. Thomas Episcopal Church here on a hill in Burnsville.

—Julie Niehaus



Donations We've Made

♥ Toe River Access ♥

As we heard during Cheryl Craigie's presentation on February 10, Toe River Access provides medical and dental care to those who otherwise would not be able to afford proper attention. St. Thomas gave its January local outreach donation of \$450 to Toe River Access.

In addition, St. Thomas bought a brick to help support the Blue Ridge Hospital (formerly Spruce Pine Hospital) expansion. The hundred-dollar brick will be engraved as follows.

ST. THOMAS
EPISCOPAL
BURNSVILLE

Presiding Bishop's Lenten Message (excerpt)

Keeping a holy Lent: prayer, fasting, almsgiving
by Katharine Jefferts Schori, February 05, 2008

This Lent could be an opportunity to learn new ways of praying, or what the apostles teach, or what Jesus says about money. It could also be a time to take on a new prayer discipline—maybe practicing seeing the image of God in every person on the street, or being grateful for the hidden blessings of the parts of creation that challenge us (gray days, viruses, mosquitoes—I'm still working on mosquitoes!). We might practice compassion for the coworker who drives us crazy (and perhaps seek help in learning more effective ways to relate).

The ancient tradition of fasting is about self-discipline in what we eat and drink, and in today's world it is also about judicious consumption of the world's goods—not just what we buy at the mall, but how we use water, how we leave the air around us, how we deal with “garbage,” and the size of our carbon footprint. It is a recognition that how we use the blessings of creation has a vast relationship to how our neighbors can also enjoy those blessings.

Giving alms means caring for those in need. The word comes from the same root as *eleison*, as in Kyrie eleison (Lord, have mercy), and it really means compassion. How do we approach and respond to the people around us and far away who are “crying in the wilderness”? The work of Lent is about cultivating a compassionate heart that will shape all our encounters in the coming year and years. Sunday schools often take on a specific alms aim during Lent, like filling a penny jar for Heifer Project, or serving lunch at a homeless feeding center. Almsgiving has traditionally meant acting compassionately with one's treasure, but it is just as appropriate to think about how we use our time and talent mercifully.

As we approach Lent . . . let me invite you to join in tuning up your spiritual life. Take an hour to make an inventory—what mechanics know as a squawk list. Which spark isn't as hot as it might be? Which tire is going flat? What kind of oil are you going to add this time? And what are you going to do with the old, dirty stuff? That's what the altar is for, in a spirit of repentance and return, and it's not unlike recycling the old so it can be used for good. A blessed trip this year!

NOTE: The full text of Bishop Shori's message can be found at:
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79901_94558_ENG_HTM.htm

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Ministry & Mission (M&M)

2008 Monthly Local Outreach Grants

Ministry & Mission hopes to set most of the 2008 monthly grant recipients at its next meeting, Thursday March 6 at 5:00 P.M. at church. Grants are in the amount of \$450 each. Please pray for this selection process. Then come with your ideas to the March M&M meeting, or enter them on the forms at the back of the church—they'll be there until after church on Sunday March 2, or email or call a committee regular: Niehauses, Haagas, Diantha, Maryallen, and Diana.

January's grant has been given—to Toe River Access. One other month's grant has been allocated to the Creative Grant project, (see either M&M's November 2007 minutes at the church website or the report on this project on page 6 of the January newsletter (“New Idea #1”). Thanks for making these grants possible.

2008 One-Time Grant of \$2,000

Ministry & Mission is still planning to give this grant later this year. Do you have ideas where it might best be used? Perhaps in a way that goes beyond charity and moves into a project that can become self-sustaining and self-directed by recipients? Please pray for this selection process. Then come with your ideas to the March M&M meeting, or enter them on the forms at the back of the church—they'll be there until after church on Sunday March 2, or email or call a committee regular: Niehauses, Haagas, Diantha, Maryallen, and Diana.

Lenten message

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Outreach needs...

CONTACTS (all phone numbers listed are area code 828):
Interim Rector: Bob Reese, home: 225-6477; email: revsreese@mac.com
Deacons: Jeannette Reese, Bill Thomsen
Senior Warden: John Davis, 682-6043 email: johnd@data-tech.com
Junior Warden: Joann Collins, home: 675-5645; email: mjcllns@juno.com
Other Vestry members: Neal Culver, Charlie Stover, Stacey Lane, Karen Miller
Treasurer: Tom Bailey, home: 675-0141; email: wtbailey3@verizon.net
Building Fund Treasurer: Charlie Stover
Buildings and Grounds: John Davis and John Sterr
Stewardship: Joann Collins, home: 675-5645; email: mjcllns@juno.com
Adult Formation: Jane Stover; Simple Suppers: Joann Collins
Pastoral Care: Alice Johnson, 682-3957; email: alicewjohnson@gmail.com
Healing Ministry: Maryallen Estes, Margie Haaga, Jim Haaga, Alice Poltrock
Prayer Chain: Diantha Stevenson, 682-3188; email: dwstevenson@trconline.net
Ministry & Mission: Diana Donovan, 675-5918; email: diatoday@msn.com
Visitation of the Homebound: Maryallen Estes, 682-7264; mbestes@webtv.net
Please send requests for announcements to Joann Collins.

St. Thomas

FEBRUARY 2008

TIDINGS

2008 Confirmation Class Continues

Over the last few weeks, after most of us leave on Sunday, a whole new group enters and transforms our space into one of preparation. Mothers nurse babes, children too young for class play happily but quietly, parents and godparents listen and reply to questions asked of them. Up front, members of the confirmation class participate in the lessons planned for them. I sat in and watched the classes in action.

Classes continue through February 24. There are fifteen young people ranging in age from 7 to 17 who will be confirmed. Pupils who miss classes at the church, on a given day, receive instruction at home.

The classes are bilingual, with Mexicans sometimes reading and translating. Teachers include Rev. Bob Reese, Deacon Jeannette Reese, Deacon Bill Thomsen, Senior Warden John Davis, and Eloise Kaeck and Nancy Byrd.

On April 13, Bishop Robert Johnson will come to St. Thomas to confirm the children. Plans for the event are in process.

—Diana Donovan



John Davis reads the story of the Good Shepherd to the class, in both English and Spanish. Children listening to God's care for them are, from left to right: Adolfo, Carlos, Anayeli, and Brenda.



Family members follow a lesson based on Matthew 25:31-46 (the story of the sheep and the goats, in which Jesus tells how God rewards those who help those in need and punishes those who ignore need).

Classmates receive different amounts of canned goods during a lesson on social justice based on Acts 6: 1-7. Left to right: Tony, Margarita, Karina, Carlos, and Reynaldo.



Year's End 2007
Statement of Financial Condition
St. Thomas Episcopal Church
General Operating Fund

St. Thomas

TIDINGS

FEBRUARY 2008

Assets

United Community Bank Checking Account

Ending Balance 12/31/06		\$52,143.27
2007 Deposits & Credits	133,297.72	
2007 Debits/Withdrawals	<u>110,537.07</u>	
Net Difference		<u>22,760.65</u>
UCB checking acct. Ending Balance 12/31/07		\$74,903.92

Other Cash Assets

UBS Money Market Account (prepaid pledge)		<u>5,999.04</u>
Total Bank / Investment Accounts		\$80,902.96

Restricted Funds / Not For Operation

David Johnson Fund	963.00	
Bill Thomsen / Mexico Fund	<u>928.00</u>	
Total Non-Operating Restricted Funds		<u>\$1,891.00</u>
Cash Available for Operations		\$79,011.96

General Fund Operating Reserves

Community Bank CD (matures 5/08)	11,504.60	
Community Bank CD (matures 11/08)	<u>10,775.94</u>	
Total Operating Emergency Reserves		<u>\$22,280.54</u>
Total General Fund Cash & Reserves 12/31/07		\$101,292.50

Other Assets:

Land / Building / Furnishings (estimated)		<u>700,000.00</u>
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Total Assets \$801,292.50

Liabilities

Diocesan Interest-Free Loan		
Original Amount \$25,000		<u>19,999.98</u>
Total Liabilities		\$19,999.98

Assets Minus Liabilities = Net Worth \$781,292.52

NOTE: Assets and/or liabilities of Building Fund are not included herein. See separate Building Fund report.

—Tom Bailey, 12/31/07

YEAR'S END 2007
BUILDING FUND REPORT

The Building Fund continues to receive donations, for which we are extremely grateful. These continuing donations have taken us from a likely deficit (requiring a sizable transfer from the parish General Fund), to possibly completing construction from Building Fund money only.

Our current Building Fund balance is \$7,305, versus expected expenditures of Memorial Garden \$7,035 and Landscaping at perhaps \$1,500. (I hope you've noticed the excellent clearing work at the hairpin corner, and the view from the five large windows in the sanctuary.)

Planning for a Memorial Garden to house cremains will resume in the next week or so. Please see Peg Emerson if you would like to participate in that planning. Green flags have been set out in the area north of the kitchen, and straddling the "white rock drainage ditch," which is the general area designated by the vestry to allow room for our next building when we outgrow our present space. Stay tuned for news on the Memorial Garden plan—we will want volunteer help, and we may need additional funding to see the Memorial Garden completed as we'd like.

The entrance drive and parking lot were re-graded and regraded in early February, to reduce the amount of mud creeping up.

The downstairs space has seen lots of use for meetings, choir practice, and Godly Play for the children. If you've not checked that space out, please do so. The work done by Kerstin and helpers has made a very welcoming and interesting room for kids and adults as well.

—Charlie Stover

St. Thomas Parish Family is a joyful, warm and ever-widening circle of God's people prayerfully committed to serving Jesus in our community and our world. Through prayer, study and intellectual discourse on God's Word we seek Truth. Through Eucharistic fellowship we celebrate the gift of abundant new life. Through mutual care of one another and vigorous service to all of God's people and creation, we proclaim God's love and hope in Jesus.

St. Thomas

TIDINGS

FEBRUARY 2008

Church Bulletin Bloopers

(continued from the January newsletter, courtesy of Carol Thomas)

16. A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.
17. At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What Is Hell?" Come early and listen to our Choir practice.
18. Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.
19. Scouts are saving aluminium cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.
20. Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.
21. Attend and you will hear an excellent speaker and have a healthy lunch.
22. The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility.
23. Potluck supper Sunday at 5 P.M. Prayer and medication to follow.
24. The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.
25. This evening at 7 P.M. there will be a hymn sing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.
26. Ladies Bible Study will be held Thursday morning at 10 A.M. All ladies are invited to lunch in the Fellowship Hall after the B.S. is done.
27. The pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday.
28. Low Self-esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 P.M. Please use the back door.
29. The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7 P.M. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.
30. Weight Watchers will meet at 7 P.M. at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.
31. The Associate Minister unveiled the church's new tithing campaign slogan last Sunday: "I Upped My Pledge—Up Yours."



St. Thomas Episcopal Church

www.stthomasonline.org
372 Reservoir Road
P.O. Box 591
Burnsville, NC 28714

Come to the . . .

. . . Adult study hour. Sundays at 9:00 A.M. Our interim rector, Bob Reese, is leading us into deeper insight about biblical passages.



. . . Centering Prayer. Tuesday mornings by the altar at 9:00 A.M. Takes about thirty minutes.



. . . Videos that introduce Centering Prayer—how it is similar to non-Christian meditation and how it is uniquely Christian. Each Saturday during Lent from 10:00 until 11:30 A.M. at church. Come for one session or many.



. . . Chalice Bearer Training. March 2 after church. Everyone serving as chalice bearer or who is interested in doing so is urged to attend.



. . . Simple Supper. March 5, 6:00 P.M. Bring soup, salad, bread, or dessert and enjoy this small-group fellowship. The March program is part of our parish response to the bishop's request that we deepen the presence of the Episcopal Church in WNC and strengthen our identity as Episcopalians.



. . . Ministry & Mission committee meeting. Thursday, March 6, at 5:00 P.M., at church. Please join us or give us your ideas for 2008 grant recipients.



. . . Silent prayer for world peace. First Friday of March (March 7) at lunchtime—noon until 1:30. Drop in for a few moments and pray silently in common for this desire of our hearts.