



Spring Cleaning Time!

Please sort through your clothes, books, CDs, and household items and donate the ‘brightest & best’ of these for our

Upscale Rummage Sale
(A Unique Flea Boutique)

which will be held downstairs on Saturday, April 26.

Bring items to the church on April 20, 21, 22, or 23 (alas, not before). Space for storing items for sale will be designated at that time. Thank you ☺

—Joann Collins

Breakfast with David

At last year’s fall planning retreat, your vestry decided it was high time we did something (specifically, a fundraiser) to support the work of our own beloved Dr. David Johnson. Now we are holding a special, gourmet breakfast—complete with blintzes, no less!—prepared by you-know-who: the unsurpassed chef de cuisine, our culinary queen: Pat Sharkey! The breakfast on Saturday, April 26, starts at 8:30 AM.

Tickets for the breakfast are \$25 per person. They’ll be available at church and at The Grapevine.

After breakfast, David will give a slide presentation about his work in Pakistan and the Dominican Republic. In the D.R. he is working with a team of local folks to improve sanitation and clean water. The ERD (Episcopal Relief & Dvelopment) helps support David there, but he is responsible for funding his projects.

The Unique Flea Boutique will be housed downstairs.

David needs \$7,000 by June just to keep his program operating. Our 2008 budget includes only \$1500 for David’s work. We hope to raise another \$1500 at the breakfast and a matching \$1500 from our Unique Flea Boutique!

How Can I Help?

- To ensure the success of this event, we need you to come! Please also try to recruit friends for a table of 6 or 8.
- Pat needs 3 or 4 kitchen helpers. Please call her at 682-9375. She will be in the church kitchen doing prep work starting Friday, April 25 at noon. Help is also needed early on Saturday.
- Of course, we need your stuff for this—that is, your *good* stuff! (Please bring to the church April 20, 21, 22, or 23.) And of course, we need folks to help us set up the Unique Boutique on April 23, 24, or 25.

As always, thank you for helping bring the Kingdom to earth☺

—Joann Collins

Search Committee Update

Greetings from the Search Committee at St. Thomas! We want to keep you abreast of what’s happening with our search.

First, let me say that you have an awesome search committee working for you. The group members bring valuable points of view and discerning minds to the process. Excellent assessments and insights about candidates result.

To remind you: the group consists of Kerstin Davis, Tom Bailey, Lynn McLure, Diana Donovan, and our tireless chair, Jim Haaga. I am the vestry liaison. Dave Zurbrick, who went into Hospice care this year, has been able to participate a little. The committee is working with our adviser, the Rev. Barry Kramer, and the Bishop’s Canon, the Rev. Jim Pritchett.

We have been blessed with a variety of well qualified applicants, who seem very interested in serving as our priest. Even those who refused our invitation to complete an application have been most positive in their appraisal of St. Thomas. We have a great parish Profile out there, written by a number of us and expertly formatted by Kerstin Davis. It’s available on our website (www.stthomasonline.org) and if you haven’t seen it, it’s worth taking a look at.

SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE. *continued on p. 4*

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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.

St. Thomas Medical Group to the Dominican Republic

Jim and Margie Haaga, David Johnson, and Tom Niehaus

In February, a good idea came to fruition. It all began with a conversation of Dr. David Johnson, our Episcopal medical missionary in the D.R. (Dominican Republic), with friends in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. Plans were laid for a medical mission trip from St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Wilkesboro to the D.R.

"There is criticism of mission trips that supply only Band-aids," said Joe Fesperman, a Wilkesboro doc and the trip organizer. The group's answer is given in words of Thomas Morris, rector of St. Paul's, who said, "I think we learn so much when we significantly engage fellow Christians who live very differently than we do. This trip gives us the opportunity to reach out to the poor of the world, a portion of those 2 billion people on our planet who live on two dollars a day and who lack basic human needs like clean water, minimal health care, and basic education. This mission to the D.R. is the realization of that hope."

Plans crystallized into a six-day mission to Santana Bani. Margie and I were asked to help round out the medical component for the trip. We got the invitation just after we had decided not to go on our annual trip with the Minnesota group to Honduras. How could we say no?

So my wife, Margie, a nurse practitioner, and I flew over with the Wilkesboro team. The Reverend Tom Niehaus flew early, to help David prepare for the team, and to stay and help translate. Tom's work was a huge task and helped ensure the success of the mission. Our church member Dr. David Johnson, already elsewhere in the D.R., joined the team as well. Other members of the team included more doctors, a physician's assistant, a pharmacist, nurses, and ten folks with no medical background—including two priests and a videographer/bluegrass guitar player.

The St. Thomas vestry and Ministry & Mission committee supported the idea. St. Thomas gave a little more than \$600 to help with travel and medication expenses. St. Thomas also prayed for the success of the trip and the safety of the team.

Over 500 patients were served at the clinic at the San Matias Episcopal church and school.

When our group arrived, we entered San Matias Episcopal Church, where the Reverend Ercilia Peralta and her con-

Map is from:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/caribbean/dominican-republic/>

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gregation of about 250 parishioners waited for us all to join them for communion services. The principal of the San Matias Episcopal School played the drums that had been presented as a gift by the youth group from St. Paul's. The "joint was jumping" with hymns sung to a fast Caribbean beat. All the meals for the team were prepared and served by members of the San Matias congregation at Reverend Peralta's home, adjacent to the school and church.

The medical clinic opened Sunday afternoon, and continued through Thursday, with one exception. We were barred from work on Wednesday, February 27, which is Independence Day in the D.R. All work ceased that day, and we joined in the school parade. Wednesday afternoon a small group from the team visited a nearby Haitian migrant worker community to assess the needs of that impoverished group and how these needs might be met in future visits. Wednesday night the mission trip participants were treated to a musical program of skits, gymnastics, and dancing by the San Matias parishioners.

On working days, our team—two young Dominican doctors, and four other docs—all conducted examina-

ST. THOMAS TO THE D.R. *continued on pp. 3,4*



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Dominican Republic

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Medical Trip



Margie Haaga during medical clinic hours



Dr. David Johnson dispensing meds



The Reverend Tom Niebaus during a service

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San Matias School's Independence Day parade

ST. THOMAS TO THE D.R. *continued from pp. 2, 3*

tions, provided treatment, and prescribed medicine. Exit reviewer Dr. David Johnson, a pediatrician, gave medications for parasites to the children and arranged needed follow-up care. The final clinic session, which was conducted on Thursday morning, served over 100 clients.

In addition to medical care, members of our mission team engaged in cultural exchange: We taught line dancing to about eighty of the local people and some of our team members. Father Tom Niehaus preached in Spanish and English, and participated in all the church services including the Blessing of Hands for about three hundred people.

“Our goal was not only to provide acute care, but also to have an opportunity to return and make a dent in the ongoing needs of the community,” Thomas Morris explains. Long discussions were held into the evenings with our new Dominican friends on how we might help address issues such as water quality and care of chronic medical conditions.

“You have planted seeds that will grow here,” said the Reverend Peralta when we were ready to leave. “The difference between the St. Paul’s team and a team that visited here two years ago is the special relationship—the friendships that have been established. God’s hand is at work here.”

Father Morris agreed. “I believe we have begun a relationship between our folks and the people of Santana Bani that will benefit both communities in ways both material and spiritual.”

We (Jim and Margie) are not sure if our next overseas medical venture will be to the D.R. or back to our friends in Honduras. If folks at St. Thomas are interested in developing a sister relationship with San Matias, going on the next mission trip, or participating in other ways, we are invited to join with St. Paul’s in Wilkesboro. They have made a three-year commitment to the project. Perhaps we should discuss this in gatherings. Please give us a call for more information (675-9040).

—Jim Haaga, M.D.

SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE. *continued from p. 1*

Now, as to the candidates: We have, at the moment, narrowed our focus to three very strong applicants. (We have interviewed them and several others, in person and/or by phone, and have reviewed information on them.) We hope to discern our final selection on April 24, or possibly on April 30. This person will then be subject to Vestry approval and, of course, to the candidate’s acceptance.

So, we are getting very close! Although, at times, this diocesan process of rector search has seemed complicated and slower than we had hoped, we have come to see the wisdom of this process as we have followed it as requested by the diocese.

Please keep the committee and the entire St. Thomas family in your prayers as we bring our rector search to a close and begin to welcome our new rector into our midst.

—Faithfully in Christ, Joann Collins
Rector Search/Vestry liaison

OUR CURRENT PRAYER LIST

Dave Zurbrick and family

Bob McMillan

Jim Peek

Lynn McLure

Billy Donovan

Kate

Carol

Jennifer

Penelope

Alray

Bob Slaughter

Reid

Steve

Travel: Tom & Julie Niehaus until April 20

Search committee through late on April 20

PRAYER CHAIN AT ST. THOMAS

In addition to the prayer list we use during worship hour, St. Thomas offers a prayer chain as another avenue to give and receive prayers for well-being. Do you wish to have prayers said for self or others? Do you want to be a member of the prayer chain, and be called when prayers are requested? If so, notify Diantha Stevenson, our prayer chain leader. She can be reached at home, at 682-3188.

—Diantha Stevenson

Please continue to keep your Rector Search committee in your prayers, especially on April 24 and April 30, when we hope to come to a final discernment on the excellent candidates that the Holy Spirit has sent to us for consideration.

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.

Along these lines, see Dee Bobbe's article on Counting Prayer and the Billion Prayer March on pages 9 and 10 of this newsletter.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

The prayer shawl ministry involves knitting shawls or scarfs for people while praying for that person who will receive the shawl. The knitted gift is then blessed at church before being given to the recipient. This ministry is another hands-on way to share God's love and care for all people. You can be part of this good work by donating either yarn or money to buy yarn, or by knitting shawls or scarves. For more information, please see p. 5 of the August 2007 *St. Thomas Tidings* or ask Diantha Stevenson. Her phone number is 682-3188. —Diantha Stevenson

From a Prayer Shawl Thank-you Note:

What a lovely gift! The shawl is beautiful and the process by which it was made is beautiful too. I truly feel blessed that you thought about me as you created it and I will feel blessed and wrapped in lovingkindness every time I wear it. Thank you so much for your general action toward someone you hardly know. I will pass on the generosity to someone else in need of care.

Book Review: *Three Cups of Tea*

Are you looking for an easy secular read that sheds a ray of hope? If so, I recommend *Three Cups of Tea*. It is the story of young man who survived getting lost after a failed attempt to summit on the Himalayan peak K-2. He not only spent a night in freezing temperatures at high altitude with almost no appropriate clothing, but after he found his guide, he got lost a second time and barely made it to stumble into the “wrong” mountain village in the northeastern mountains of Pakistan. There he was cared for until he was well enough to return to the States. Asking what he could do to show his gratitude, village elders met and requested a school that would educate both girls and boys. Such serious discussions take place over cup after cup of tea.

The story of how Greg Mortenson raised funds and returned to Pakistan only to be told that the village had changed their minds is a page-turner. His ghost writer helps Mortenson tell the story of how—with a reasonable amount of money—differences can be made, even in villages where the a person from the USA arrives with the burden of having to prove himself respectful of local ways. School after school grew from his efforts, schools that educate children in ways that honor a moderate Islam.

Why educate girls in traditional Muslim rural areas? Mortenson is not trying to westernize them. He argues that the education young women return to the villages in higher numbers than do the men, and when they return, they are able to pass on their knowledge to children in their villages. This spreads the good effects.

Mortenson gives credit to the Pakistani people rather than focusing the story on himself: the works could not have been accomplished, he says, without the many Pakistanis and Afghans who saw him for what he was—an honest, caring man who wanted to work with them to realize projects that they need and can sustain.

—Diana Donovan

*Something I have said before. I shall say it again.
 Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,
 To arrive where you are, to arrive from where you are not,
 You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.
 In order to arrive at what you do not know
 You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
 In order to possess what you do not possess
 You must go by the way of dispossession.
 And what you do not know is the only thing you know
 And what you own is what you do not own
 And where you are is where you are not.*

—excerpt from “East Coker,”
 No. 2 of *Four Quartets*, T. S. Eliot

(quoted in *The Fullness*, a blog of Rev. Mark Francisco Bozuti-Jones, found at:

<http://www.trinitywallstreet.org/outreach/?blogs-view&blog=28>)

Christianity Today

Traditional Yancey Countians often see this county’s identity tied up with families “from here” —families with names like Wilson and McKinney. Yet the present reality is that Yancey has become a global village. Not only is much of the county not “from here,” we have people from China, Pakistan, the Philippines, Lebanon, Nicaragua, and India.

Our mainline Christian churches, too, have a tendency to look at themselves through a rearview mirror. Some of us who identify ourselves as Episcopalian also practice Buddhist meditation and are knowledgeable about the Eightfold Path. Others of us find inspiration in the mystical arm of Islam (Sufism), or in Shinto tradition, or . . . We all take communion together, however, because we agree on beliefs like the one God in this universe.

In the book *Encountering God* a Harvard professor born in Bozeman, Montana, speaks of having studied Hinduism in Banaras to the point where she incorporates Hindu practices into her Methodist religion. Church developers tell us that the average churchgoer changes church seven times in one life; many of these changes are denominational moves.

All of this helps us to see how we all mix culturally in ways our predecessors did not. The awareness of the fruits of our cultural borrowing reminds us to continue looking forward for identity, not only backward. Our mixing is similar to that of our Latino friends who send their children to a Baptist Sunday school, an Episcopal class for First Communion preparation, and to Catholic celebrations of High Holy Days. In DeKalb, Illinois, where I once lived, I saw Emilia and Sergio attend the Lutheran *misa* (mass) each Sunday. But they crossed the street to St. Mary’s Catholic church to baptize their son. Both that Catholic priest and that Lutheran pastor would probably have scolded the couple if they had been aware of these actions. But why? since they were the decisions of adults.

Latino theologians like Leonard Boff, in *Ecclesio-genesis*, tell us that “out-people” today are reinventing the church. They are creating a new theological context, much as early Christians did—not by writing books but with their feet. Those of us who walk from one denomination to another are making something entirely new, but it is still a church that is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Let us walk forward with them, singing together “In Christ There Is No East or West.”

—Eloise Kaeck

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Reynaldo 7, and his godparents Florentino Lemus and Yolanda Tomas



Antonio, 12, and his godfather Abel Romero Juarez. The candidates are being presented one by one, kneeling before the bishop, and then moving around the sides of the room.

Confirmation with

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Bishop Johnson

Confirmation at St. Thomas

Sunday, April 13, 2008, was a joyous day for St. Thomas. Twelve candidates from the Latino community were confirmed by Bishop Robert Johnson (retired). Assisting as lectors were Etelvina Madrigal and Roberto Madrigal.

The young people studied the Bible and learned about Baptism, Holy Communion, and how the Protestant churches relate to the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. A team including the Reverend Bob Reese, our interim priest; John Davis, senior warden; Nancy Byrd, and Eloise Kaeck worked with the candidates. The confirmands also participated in choir practice.

During the worship service “*Una Espiga Dorada por el Sol*” was sung. This communion hymn about the sun ripening the grain of wheat for Holy Communion, when all become One Body, was an apt choice for the service. After worship, refreshments, including tamales and a delicious *tres leches* cake were shared.

St. Thomas has been involved with the Latino community for over five years. Together, the Latino community and St. Thomas have celebrated Guadalupe Day, on which Mexicans explained the religious meaning of La Virgencita, and a Day of the Dead dinner. The dinner was held close to November 1, All Saint’s Day, complete with sample decorations from the graves. The customs concerning departed loved ones displayed the Mexicans’ rich heritage from American Indian, African, and European origins.

Confirmands:

- Antonio Madrigal Tapia
- Margarita Madrigal Tapia
- Juana Madrigal Tapia
- Carlos Daniel Tomas Pahuamba
- Adolfo Catarino Guerrero Huerta
- Yoni Daniel Guerrero Madrigal
- Alma Brenda Madrigal Sebastian
- Reynaldo Romero Cejas
- Karina Ortiz Fabian
- Salvador Ortiz Fabian
- Santiago Ortiz Fabian
- Anayeli Martinez Luna

—Karen Miller and Joann Collins



Input Opportunities

These are listed in order of closeness to St. Thomas Episcopal Church and include dates through end August 2008. As you learn of Input and Output Opportunities, please email Diana, diatoday@msn.com.

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Opportunities . . .

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. . . to Grow

• St. Thomas Religion & Violence Lecture Series

In the next few weeks, St. Thomas EC will host a series of 4 lectures given on DVD, the same lectures given in January through the NY Episcopal Trinity Institute. Each an hour long, the lectures will be on four consecutive weeks and followed by an opportunity to discuss the content of the lecture and action you would like to take in response. Watch our St. Thomas weekly announcements for details.

• Southern Dharma Retreat Center

Among the various types of retreats offered at Southern Dharma are Christian approaches to contemplative prayer. A Centering Prayer retreat will take place May 2–4, with May 5 as an option. Cost is \$130 for two nights. For the more actively oriented, Sufi-inspired Dances of Universal Peace is offered June 27–29. Cost is \$195 for two nights. Southern Dharma's charge is for facilities and teacher's travel only. The center offers a chance to donate to the teachers too. Scholarships and private retreats available. Contact 828-622-7112 or southerndharma@earthlink.net or through www.southerndharma.org.

• Valle Crucis Conference Center

Weekend Writer's Workshop, August 15–17. Cost is \$180 to stay at the center (double, triple, quadruple); \$140 to commute. Contact the center at 828-963-4453 or go to the website: <http://www.highsouth.com/vallecrucis/events.php4>.

• Lake Logan Episcopal Center

Centering Prayer retreat, May 12–15. Cost: \$260. No "register by" date; the retreat is limited to 17 people. Contact the center at 828-646-0095 or 800-616-0095 or reservations@lakelogan.org. Website is <http://lakelogan.org/html/programs.html>.

• Kanuga Conference Center

Province IV Women's Conference, June 2–4 with June 1 as an option. Cost is \$335 for a single; \$275 for a double; \$165 to commute. Register by May 2.

Spirituality Conference, June 8–13. Cost is \$740 for a single; \$585 for a double; \$375 to commute. Register by May 15.

Contact the center at 828-692-9136 or go to www.kanuga.org/conferences/2008.

• NC Council of Churches

Statewide conference, Greensboro College, May 13: *From Hostility to Hospitality: Immigration and People of Faith*. The Council says: "With all of the heated rhetoric out there, it's time for North Carolina's people of faith to learn more about immigration firsthand . . . [in order] to demonstrate . . . that North Carolinians of faith stand for hospitality and justice." "Register by" date: May 7. Contact 919-828-6501, nccofof@nccouncilofchurches.org or www.nccouncilofchurches.org.

• St. Francis Springs Prayer Center

The Emersons tell us about this center in Stoneville, NC, not far from Eden (!). What better place to follow the examples of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare, and rejuvenate your spiritual journey through contemplative prayer and action? Group retreats and private retreats are available. There are quiet brookside trails within the 140-acre reserve. Some offerings:

Several weekend Justice and Peace Experience gatherings during April, May, and June. See the brochure on the church bulletin board or call the center at 336-573-3751 or see their website at www.stfrancissprings.com.

Contemplative Outreach of WNC offers a 5-day intensive Centering Prayer retreat June 16–20. Cost is \$385 for a single; \$310 for a double. Reservations are preferred by May 1. Contact the center (above) or Joan Ricci Hurst at 336-765-0865 or jrh9540@earthlink.net or see the brochure on the church bulletin board.

• Get on the Bus

July 12–18 or July 13–19 (depending on Jimmy Carter's Sunday School schedule). Sponsored by our WNC diocese.

<http://www.centersforchristianstudies.org/being-christian-in-a-pluralistic-world/get-on-the-bus-a-civil-right-pilgrimage> gives details. Cost: \$500; does not include lunch and dinner.

Counting Prayer

for the MDGs and Political Conventions

In order to put together a photo album about the Millennium Development Goals for the children's Sunday School class, I was browsing around the U.N. site about MDGs (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>), and looking at what our diocese has to say about them (<http://www.diocesewnc.org/index.php?content=902.08>). See also back issues of *St. Thomas Tidings* and the Lenten booklets on MDGs at the back of the church.

I found a group called Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation (EGR), and a project called Counting Prayers, which aims to have people and congregations—lots of people and lots of congregations—repeat a simple prayer that focuses our attention on addressing the MDGs. I thought we at St. Thomas could commit to doing this if enough of us are interested in it. I find the idea intriguing. The link to more information about Counting Prayers is www.countingprayers.org. Please let me know what you think. Informational excerpts are below. —Dee Bobbe

A Mission Surrounded by Prayer

"History belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being."—Walter Wink

Prayer is the way we join our work with God's work, our hope with God's hope, our actions and love with the mission of God. Without prayer, all we have is the limits of our own imagination, efforts, and stamina. With prayer, we are joined to and supported by something much greater—the movement of God's Spirit, continually luring the whole creation forward more deeply into the hear of the divine.

The EGR (Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation) Prayer

*Most loving God,
as your desire for mercy for the poor is unrelenting,
may we be unrelenting in our pursuit of mercy for all;
as your compassion for the suffering of the poor knows no limit,
may our hearts overflow with compassion for all;
as you long for justice for the poor,
may we strive for justice for all.
Open our eyes to the structures of oppression from which we benefit,
and give us courage to accept our responsibility,
wisdom to chart a sound course amid complexity,
and perseverance to continue our work until it is finished.
Breathe your life-giving Spirit afresh into your Church to free us from
apathy and indifference; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*
(written by Rt. Rev. Jeffrey Rowthorn)

The Counting Prayer

The Counting Prayer is a worldwide interfaith movement to pray
COUNTING PRAYER. *continued on p. 10*

2008 One-Time Grant of \$2,000

Ministry & Mission is 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 May M&M meeting, or email or call a committee regular: Tom and Julie Niehaus, Jim and Margie Haaga, Diantha Stevenson, Maryallen Estes, Eloise Kaeck, and Diana Donovan. ☺

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Output Opportunities

... With Hands

- Kitchen help is needed for the fundraiser breakfast (p. 1). April 25, 26. Contact Pat Sharkey at 682-9375.
- Yard sale hands, backs, and donations are needed. April 20—26. Contact Joann Collins.
- Whenever you can, St. Thomas could use:
 - Teacher assistants for Godly Play. Contact Kerstin Davis.
 - Cleaning team members for St. Thomas. Contact Margie Haaga.
 - Coffee hour volunteers. Contact Julie Niehaus.

In order to grow this list, please email need & contact info of your favorite groups to diatoday@msn.com.

... With Heart

- Spring UTO Ingathering
Pick up your blue box at church and return for the May 18th collection.
- Bring friends to the April 26 David Johnson fundraiser
- Emergency in Durgapur

Dear Friends,

I was very moved to read in the April Highland Episcopalian (p. 7) of the eviction of families in Durgapur, resulting in 25 children leaving school. Bishop Probal Dutta is desperately trying to raise funds to provide housing for these children.

I'll be sending a check to the Diocese of WNC with the memo: Durgapur Emergency. I hope many of you will join me. I'm certain even a small amount will go a long way. Updates can be found at <http://www.diocesewnc.org/> (click on Slum Eviction).

I read further that, since becoming our companion, the diocese in Durgapur has created three child development centers serving, altogether, 750 children—the poorest of the poor. It costs \$20 a month for one tribal child to attend a center and receive at least one meal a day, clothes, and health care check-ups. I will also support one child in this way and mentally set a place for her at our table each evening!
— Joann Collins

COUNTING PRAYER. *continued from p. 9*

for the will to end extreme poverty. The site www.countingprayers.org tells how we could add our congregation to those praying daily and weekly for the will to make poverty history.

The world now has the means to end extreme poverty; we pray we will have the will.

The most interesting part to me is the **Billion Prayer March**, which is Figurative, Literal, Virtual, and Courageous.

Figurative

When the inaugural prayer was offered on 9/23/07 at the historic “little chapel that stood”—St. Paul’s—at Ground Zero in New York City, the first step in a figurative Billion Prayer March to end extreme poverty was made. While you may never even stand up when offering the Counting Prayer, when fulfilling your personal and/or congregational pledge, you have joined the quest.

Literal

The Counting Prayers Liturgical Act: Please consider further pledging that at least two persons before, after, but preferably *during* each worship service will briefly go out-of-doors and offer the Counting Prayer at least ten times. Then we all will be at least twenty prayers further along on the Billion Prayer March to end extreme poverty. When a congregation of 100 goes out-of-doors, and says the prayer 50 times, we are all 5000 prayers further along on the Billion Prayer March, to praise the progress made, and bear witness to what is still left to be done to end extreme poverty.

Virtual

The virtual counter on the Counting Prayer website can also be on our website by applying the banner code on the Banner & Prayer Card page. It updates daily, and visitors to your website will see the extraordinary numbers of prayers offered to end extreme poverty.

Courageous

Official Coordinated Billion Prayer March Events for a remarkable show of will:

If 40,000 houses of worship with 100 congregants and 25 invited guests on the same two consecutive weekends march out-of-doors and offer the prayer 100 times, then the first billion prayers on the Billion Prayer March will be completed. And these billion prayers will manifest in wondrous and creative ways. Hearts will open, souls will listen, and the world will change.

We can take these extraordinary Billion Prayer Marches whenever we as a local, national, denominational, faith, or global society need the strength to fulfill our promises, and the moral imperative to end extreme poverty. And . . . there is no cost. All it takes is the will, and a little time.

The dates being considered for the first two coordinated Billion Prayer Marches are the weekends preceding each major U.S. political party’s national convention, to bear witness to how each party and candidate plans on addressing our millennium promise.

There are more prayers for this mission on the websites (see above).

—Dee Bobbe

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Social News

10

Recipe

Friday Night Potlucks

Our first Friday evening potluck was a great success! Held on April 11, we had a little over 20 people. The food was yummy—nothing new for St. Thomas. Beth Kelly’s chocolate coconut pies were a big hit. (See her recipe below.)

Besides the great food, we had music, courtesy of Bob Reese, Jim and Margie Haaga, and Gail Ataway. Barry Kelly sang a hilarious Irish ballad, and the rest of us sang along.

The date for the next evening potluck hasn’t been decided yet, but you won’t want to miss it.



CHOCOLATE COCONUT PIE

- pie shells
- 2 c. coconut
- 3 c. sugar
- 5 Tbsp cocoa (I use dark)
- 4 eggs
- 1 can evaporated milk (fat free)
- 2 Tbsp butter, melted
- 1 tsp vanilla

Put half the coconut into pie shells, and mix the remaining half with the sugar and cocoa. Mix the liquid ingredients (eggs, milk, butter, and vanilla) and add to the dry ingredients. Pour into pie shells and bake 45 minutes at 350°.

How easy is that! Thanks to Keitha Swaim for giving me this recipe.

—Beth Kelly

St. Thomas

TIDINGS

APRIL 2008

TREASURER'S REPORT

The following compares year-to-date Income and Spending vs. year-to-date Operating Budget, as of March 31, 2008. The year-to-date Budget assumes the money is spent evenly through the year.

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Income	\$21,041	\$23,875	-\$2,834 (Unfavorable)
Expenses	\$17,091	\$23,400	\$6,309 (Favorable)

We are about 12% Unfavorable on income, with most of the difference in the Giving vs. Current Year Pledges area. Letters to contributors will be going out this month to advise each parishioner of his/her status at the end of the first quarter.

On the spending side, we are almost 27% Favorable. About \$4,000 (63%) of this is due to spending not yet incurred for our rector search, and for hiring and relocating our new rector. Another substantial favorable area is in Diocesan Outreach, where St. Thomas has not yet made a payment on the 2008 pledge to the diocese. After considering those two items, we are almost exactly at budget spending year-to-date.

—Charlie Stover

BUILDING FUND REPORT

The Building Fund continues to receive donations, for which we are extremely grateful. Those 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 moneys only.

Our current Building Fund balance is \$6,909, versus estimated costs for Memorial Garden construction of about \$7,035. Memorial Garden planning will resume in the near future. Please see Peg Emerson if you would like to participate in that planning. Stay tuned for news on the plan. We will surely need volunteer construction and planting help, and may need additional funding to see the Memorial Garden completed as we'd like.

The downstairs space has seen lots of use for meetings, choir practice, and Godly Play for the children.

—Charlie Stover

St. Thomas has donated so far this year:

January: \$450 Toe River Access
 February: \$450 Penland summer camp
 March: \$450 U-Turn Ministry
 April: \$450 Adult Daycare

February: \$602 medical mission trip to the Dominican Republic (pp. 2-4)
 \$100 memorial brick for Spruce Pine Hospital
 \$486 Valentine's dinner exp.
 \$2250 to Reconciliation House
 \$1000 to diocesan Habitat team to Mexico

(Some of these amounts are rounded.)

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: alicejohnson@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
 Secretary (on-site Tues. & Thurs. morning): Kristi McGrath. Send requests for announcements to her at: email@stthomasonline.org.

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

APRIL 2008

Calendar:

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Events

Come to the . . .

- ☛ Adult study hour. Sundays at 9:00 AM. Our interim rector, Bob Reese, gives us deeper insight into biblical passages.
- ☛ Choir practice. Sunday mornings, after church for about a half hour, downstairs.
- ☛ Centering Prayer. Tuesday mornings by the altar, 9:00 AM. Takes about thirty minutes.
- ☛ Earth Day. Tuesday, April 22. Do something for this planet the Lord has given us to share.
- ☛ St. Thomas Hispanic committee meeting. Tuesday, April 22, 5:00 PM. Join us.
- ☛ St. Thomas Vestry meeting Wednesday, April 23, 6:30 PM.
- ☛ Breakfast (please donate \$25 each) and slide show on David Johnson's work in the Dominican Republic and the Unique Boutique sale to help support that work. Begins Saturday, April 26, 8:30 AM.
- ☛ First Friday silent prayer for peace. Friday, May 2, 12:00 noon till 1:30 PM, by the altar. Come for a few moments or longer, or join us in your hearts, wherever you are.
- ☛ National Day of Prayer. Monday, May 5. Look for events or pray.
- ☛ Religion & Violence lecture series. May. Watch for announcements on this series of four gatherings.
- ☛ Order of St. Luke. Thursday, May 15, 6:30 PM. Watch for news on this meeting's speaker and healing service format.
- ☛ Ministry & Mission committee meeting. Tuesday, May 20, 5:00 PM, at church. Please join us or give us your ideas.

Don't forget . . .

- ☛ *Not receiving the Highland Episcopalian? Email your name & address to thewillardgroup@earthlink.net or leave a note for our secretary to submit your request.*
- ☛ *Send your articles and announcements to the newsletter editor, Diana Donovan, at diatoday@msn.com*



St. Thomas Episcopal Church

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