Prayer Vigil Launches Stewardship Season

At St. Nicholas Episcopal Church everything we do begins with prayer, including planning our finances.

This is because we recognize that every issue we face, every challenge that confronts us, is first and foremost a spiritual issue and a spiritual challenge. And spiritual issues and challenges are ultimately resolved by first wrapping ourselves in the love of Christ, the grace of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit through our individual and corporate prayer.

Therefore we begin our quest for financial health and spiritual strength in 2011 and beyond with a Prayer Vigil on Friday, September 30, 7.00pm-9.00pm and continuing Saturday, October 1, from 9.00am-3.00pm. The Prayer Vigil Coordinator is Terri Murphy.

Prayer vigils are times of devotional watching and listening for God. During these wakeful, 'watchful' times, the faithful join, silently or aloud, individually or in community, to focus their prayer on some particular purpose. Vigils can involve the use of scripture, recitation of prayers, hymnody, meditation, silence...Often it may involve the forgoing of sleep or food, as well.

...“Why would St. Nick’s wish to hold one? Well, first of all, it is part of our history and practice. St. Nick’s has a history rife with difficulty. There have been issues which would have killed a lesser congregation. Every time we have faced a challenge, we have turned to the practice of prayer vigils and then dusted ourselves off and gotten right back to the work of being church.”

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Big Ideas Summit Produces Really Great Ideas

The Big Ideas Summit and potluck lunch held on September 18th was a huge success.

As Father Ken commented “It was very exciting so see so many people (several dozen, representing all of our Sunday services) gathering together for great food, great fun, great fellowship, and to share their creative ideas for strengthening the future of St. Nick’s, this church that we all love.

“It was also wonderful to watch the ideas shift from a focus on fundraising early on to more and more ideas later on that focused on gathering either our spiritual community or the larger community around us (or both) for the kind of fellowship and service that are at the core of who we are and who we believe God is calling us to be. It did my heart good to see that, because in my heart-of-hearts I know that if we continue to seek the vision that God is bringing to birth in us, then everything else that we need for the health of our congregation, will be born along with it.”

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**Father Ken Resumes after Sabbatical**

The congregation of St. Nick’s was happy to welcome back Father Ken and his wife, Rhee at Church on September 11, 2011. Father Ken had been away on sabbatical for ten weeks.

Those attending church on September 18th were especially pleased to participate in an early celebration of Fr. Ken’s birthday, September 19th. They wished him Happy Birthday in robust song and toasted him with a rich chocolate cake.

**Chicks’ Visit to Maryland Renaissance Festival to be Rescheduled**

The Chicks of St. Nick’s had been looking forward to a visit to the Maryland Renaissance Festival, Annapolis planned for Saturday September 24th. This trip was especially anticipated as Tara Brown, a fellow ‘Chick’ was among the cast of actors at the faire. Tara had arranged for the Chicks as a group to have discounted tickets.

It was a disappointment therefore, when because of the less than favorable weather being experienced lately, the excursion had to be rescheduled because the grounds at the fair were too muddy for comfortable walking. The faire continues until October 23rd.

**BREAKFAST BIBLE STUDY CHANGES LOCATION**

Breakfast Bible Study continues to meet on Tuesday mornings at 7.30. However the venue has changed from the Woodside Deli, Germantown Commons, to the Corner Bakery Café, 19820 Century Boulevard, Germantown 20874. All are welcome to join in.

**EDITORIAL: A New Big Idea: The “Skills St. Nick’s” Database**

The Big Ideas Summit produced many great ideas and suggestions. Fr. Ken has also requested that we keep the ideas coming. It is expected that all ideas will be sorted and sifted in due course.

A new BIG IDEA is “Skills St. Nicks Database” a list dedicated to profiling the skills of job seekers who are members of St. Nick’s parish. This tool would attempt to bring together unemployed parishioners of St. Nick’s with job vacancies requiring their skills, which may have come to the attention of other parishioners. Its’ aim is to provide help to some of the less fortunate among our congregation, — those who have lost their jobs.

The current economic climate, rife with lay-offs and general unemployment, makes a venture such as this not only relevant but also urgent. The current national unemployment rate is 9.1 percent. It is not clear what the unemployment rate maybe for St. Nick’s parishioners, but it is fair to expect that they have been affected.

Those unemployed parishioners which this venture would seek to help, may once have been regular contributors to St. Nick’s finances. Now they are no longer able to contribute.

If by managing a “Skills St. Nick’s” database, the Church can help its parishioners find/resume employment, it may also be helping itself reduce its budget deficit.

E-mail your articles by the 15th of the month to The Editors, at newsletter@saintnicks.com. We reserve the right to edit all e-mails and letters for length, style and clarity. Thank you.
The children in the picture just finished Sunday School. Now they are going home. Use your pencil to draw a non-stop line through the maze to their house.

Excerpt from http://www.activitypad.com/maze.html
Prayer vigil ... (continued from page 1)

There are as many ways to observe a vigil as there are people willing to do it.

This seems such a medieval practice. Why would St. Nick’s wish to hold one? Well, first of all, it is part of our history and practice. St. Nick’s has a history rife with difficulty. There have been issues which would have killed a lesser congregation. Every time we have faced a challenge, we have turned to the practice of prayer vigils and then dusted ourselves off and gotten right back to the work of being church. We are a practical people. We look issues square in the eye and take steps to deal with them, never forgetting the Source of our resilience and focus. We dare not forget that Source now. We recognize that the Holy Spirit works hand in hand with us to witness to the world the love of Christ.

It is by wrapping ourselves and our challenges in prayer that we remain the Body of Christ in the world.

The Prayer vigil is the second part of a three-pronged approach to our campaign, which started with the Big Ideas Summit and potluck lunch on September 18th. The third prong will begin the following week with our stewardship campaign.

(Contributors: Terri Murphy and Ken Howard.)

Big Ideas ... (continued from page 1)

Thanks to Heidi Gant, Secretary/Registrar to the Vestry, who compiled and recorded a full list of the ideas presented. The list includes some sixty excellent ideas with variations to be added. A quick count showed the following ideas as being the most popular by vote:

- Use of St. Nick’s space as a wedding location;
- Add a Gazebo and picnic tables to the grounds;
- Provide more facility rental, especially Mon-Fri (for charter School, another church, etc.);
- Create a dog park;
- Create a Pet Cemetery;
- Promote a concert (Swing Band, Barbershop quartet, Celtic concert);
- Create a roses, irises garden;
- ‘Nick at Night’;
- Use the grounds to teach about the Life of Christ, Stations of the Cross (Labyrinth, Maze);

The Vestry has promised to review all ideas as soon as possible and to keep parishioners informed as to which idea(s) will be given priority action.

In the meantime Father Ken has requested that parishioners and friends keep those BIG IDEAS (and little ideas and crazy ideas, and just plain fun ideas) coming. Please keep checking the bulletin board, the church bulletin, our website, and our Facebook page.

MILESTONES

Congratulations to the following parishioners on their wedding anniversary:

Susan and John Stinson who celebrate on October 10
Cara and John Poirier who celebrate on October 10
Janet Parrish and Barry Berson who celebrate on October 13
Amanda and David Chapman who celebrate on October 16
Jessica Armstrong and Mark Brown who celebrate on October 22
Christianity 101, begins 9/18, 10:00-10:45am —
... and continues on the 3rd & 4th Sundays of the month.

For those new to church, to the Episcopal faith & those who would like a refresher course covering scripture, sacraments, liturgy and vocabulary.

All are welcome. Contact Terri Murphy 240-631-2800.

Christmas at St. Nicks Craft Fair
Saturday, December 3rd - 11:00 am to 3:00 pm.

This Fair to coincide with the celebration of the Feast of St. Nicholas. This will include the children’s gift buying opportunities that had previously taken place after services in the latter part of December. Details will follow.

Contact Lis Craft, e-mail: emonaco@starpower.net

Breakfast Bible Study
Tuesdays, 7:30am
the Corner Bakery Cafe, 19820 Century Blvd, Germantown, MD 20874

Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday, October 30, 2011, 10:00am - Noon

Agenda
- Elect new vestry members
- Reports of the achievements and plans of our various ministry areas
- Reports on our 2011 financial status and our target budget for 2012
- Update on the BIG IDEAS Project
- Update on the Every Member Canvas Listening Tour

All members and friends of St. Nick’s are invited
Welcome Sunday, September 11, 2011 — Ministry Fair Seeks Volunteers

Welcome Sunday usually takes the form of a Ministry Fair at St. Nick’s. It marks the beginning of the Church’s new program year. Ministry leaders take the opportunity to talk about their Ministries and to invite parishioners and friends to volunteer their participation. Each Ministry or sub-Ministry/service has a table, manned by a representative who tries to attract people with candy, cake or some other form of snack, to stop and talk or listen. There usually is no shortage of informational materials.

This year, Welcome Sunday was no different. Most if not all Ministries were represented. That some were perhaps better prepared than others was not surprising. While all areas of ministry are in need of volunteers, it is also true that some Ministries are more subscribed than others.

It was interesting to pass by the EFM table where Barbara Miles was recruiting for the course scheduled to start on September 9th. EFM stands for Education for Ministry. It requires a one-program year commitment for a 4-year program provided by University of the South. EFM is one of the Adult Formation offerings. Other Adult Formation programs are: Bible and the Sunday News, Christianity 101, and Breakfast Bible Study. Terri Murphy is the contact person for Christian Spiritual Formation.

Sunday School, represented by Linda Madden, was adjacent to EFM. Sunday School is one of those Ministries which is under-subscribed and is in need of volunteers to teach and read stories. Sunday School serves two groups; the pre-K learners through Kindergarten and Grades 1-5. Children in grades 6 through 12 are placed in the ‘Youth’ category. They meet on the first Friday of each month for film, food and discussion. Parents and Mentors are especially invited to help in this area.

The Outreach Ministry which includes Germantown Help, El Hogar, Adopt-a-Highway and Shady Grove Worship Service, was also well represented. This ministry is especially proud of the duration of its service at the Shady Grove Nursing Facility, its fundraising to support St. Nick’s sponsorship of students at the El Hogar School in Honduras and St Nick’s youth mission to Appalachia this summer.

Worship Ministries include the Choir, and the Altar and Acolyte Guilds which are under-subscribed. There is also need for Lectors and Chalice Bearers. Janet Cassard was recruiting for the Senior Choir. Carolyn Deibel, Interim Music Director is trying to start a children’s choir and is encouraging parents with children to participate. The Acolyte Guild needs a leader and persons of all ages and gender to serve as acolytes. Ruth Willbanks and Lynette Telford were drafting volunteers to the Altar Guild. Members (male and female) of the Altar Guild see to the preparation and clearing of the Altar before and after Communion respectively. They fill the candles with oil, and select and place the appropriate vessels and linens on the Altar and the Credence table.

While it is not yet clear how successful this year’s Welcome Sunday’s Ministry Fair has been in terms of volunteers for participation, it is certain that in terms of organization and presentation, it was great. All ministries will continue to welcome volunteers. Simply contact:

- Rev. Ken Howard, Rector  
e-mail: rector@saintnicks.com

- Terri Murphy, Director of Christian Formation  
e-mail: christianformation@saintnicks.com

- Sharon Barbee, Church Administrator  
e-mail: office@saintnicks.com

Program Year: Sunday Services Resume September 18 —

9:00 am: Family Holy Eucharist followed by Fellowship and Sunday School

11:00 am: Traditional Holy Eucharist, followed by Fellowship

5:00 pm: Contemplative Service, followed by *Fellowship

*Fellowship is a potluck on the 2nd Sunday of the month
This is My Story ... at St. Nick’s
Charlotte Rogers, Parishioner

From 1991 to 2004, I attended a mission Church in Germantown called Church of the Holy Spirit. Then in 2004, with little warning and less preparation from our point of view, the Bishop and Diocesan Council closed our Church. Along with all the other dedicated members, I was devastated. I did not blame God—although I was puzzled, hurt, and dazed. Realizing that I needed time to heal, I gave myself a sabbatical from even considering how to find another church home.

Just previous to 2004, my husband David had come to know Ken Howard as a friend and especially as a spiritual friend. Ken, who at that point was Vicar of the mission St Nick’s, understood how wounded we at Holy Spirit were feeling. He reached out to us as a group and to me as an individual. There were no conditions for the help offered.

Eventually the Vestry members of St Nick’s, on behalf of all the congregants invited Holy Spirit as a group to come and worship. We accepted and a task force of members of both missions constructed a liturgy of welcome and of passing on some of the sacred belongings from Holy Spirit.

Later Ken took time on Easter morning to gather with a remnant from Holy Spirit on our proposed Church property and helped us let go of our dream to have a church there. I remember the words from the Easter liturgy, “You seek Christ Jesus, but He is not here,” and we threw a stone to indicate that Jesus had moved on. For me the implication was that if I were going to continue to follow Jesus, I too needed to move on. It was powerful and healing and significant. Even though I had been predisposed to taking time off from attending church, I discovered that I could not resist the warm welcome and the caring I found at St. Nick’s. I found myself actually wanting to come, to worship, to receive greetings, and I noticed that I was missed when I was not there.

Looking back I realize that God’s love and presence were embodied in the love and presence of the people of St. Nick’s. I soon became aware that my heart had found a home.

Once I realized that I ‘belonged’, it seemed natural to want to participate. I began to read the lectionary and to be a chalice bearer. Then I decided to take the first year of EFM and stayed with it for 4 years. I had always enjoyed personal relationships and had no interest in organizational structures. Thus, the most amazing change for me—even more amazing than being willing to attend another Episcopal mission—was my willingness to serve on the Vestry. There is a mystery of ‘becoming’ that probably only God fully knows. Not only did I stay on the Vestry for the four years permitted but, I also served as Junior and Senior Warden.

I have just resigned from Adult Spiritual Formation and once again find that I need time to rest. However, this experience of rest is different. I BELONG. I HAVE A HOME and I truly know that God is actively engaged in my becoming. I wonder what is next.