



Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As I mentioned in my sermon last Sunday, New Years is not a Christian observance, yet it is (like all times) an opportunity to give thanks to God for the many blessings he has bestowed upon us. 2009 will not be remembered as one of our better years. This is true, I think, not only for our parish family, but also for the church at large, the community, the state, our nation and the world. The good news is God's love "never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning; great is his faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23). It is our calling as the church, even through our difficulties, to be the endless thread that binds history together as we proclaim the Good News of God in Christ.

So, as we begin this new year at the Good Shepherd I would like to share with you some thoughts on how we might move beyond our present difficulties and into the future with confidence and joy.

In the King James Version of the Bible, Proverbs 29:18 tells us that "Where there is no vision, the people perish." The Church of the Good Shepherd in York, South Carolina lacks vision. A tough word to be sure, but there it is none the less. As your rector, this failure of vision ultimately rests squarely on my shoulders and I accept this. At the same time, all of us, as the Body of Christ, share in this responsibility and all of us (meaning you) must accept that we have fallen short (Greek - hamartia). But, just as God's mercies are new every morning, so is the opportunity to turn things around (Hebrew - shuwb).

If we use the King James version of Proverbs 29:18, we can come to know the importance of vision in that if we don't know where we are going, we are sure never to arrive. One of the difficulties in formulating a vision is that each of us has the means of visualization. Each of us has an idea of what we "would like to see" at the Good Shepherd. Consider these two responses: 1) "I would like to see Good Shepherd become a big church with lots of resources so we can attract more young people." 2) "I would like to see Good Shepherd remain small so that everyone will know they are valued and appreciated." It would be tempting to base our vision on which of these two (admirable and enviable) goals appeal to the majority, or would be easiest to implement.

However, the New Revised Standard Version (the version of the Episcopal Church lectionaries) of Proverbs 29:18 is: "Where there is no prophecy, the people cast off restraint." A good example of this is the last verse in the Book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Hopefully, you remember enough from Sunday school to know this did not turn out well, and indeed the people were dispersed. Some other ways to translate Proverbs 29:18 are "When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild" (New Living Translation) and "If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves" (Eugene Peterson: The Message).

In other words, our vision needs to come from God, and not from us. Our calling is to gather as the Body of Christ and try to discern what is God's will for the Good Shepherd. How can we do this? By grounding our deliberations in God's self-revelation, the Holy Scriptures. To know God's will by knowing what is in God's heart.

In a large part, we can begin to discern God's will by looking at the gifts he has given to the people of Good Shepherd. Each baptized Christian is given a gift so that they may contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God – No one comes without a talent, and there are no lesser or greater talents. All are vital if we are to enact our vision.

Another great gift we possess as Episcopalians is *The Book of Common Prayer*. In the Anglican tradition, our portion of the church operates under the assumption of *lex orandi, lex credendi* – the law of prayer is the law of belief. In other words, if you want to know what we believe, listen to what we say in our prayers, listen to what we say in the liturgies of the church. In the same way, listen to the words of the hymns we sing.

In my discernment of what God might have in store for The Church of the Good Shepherd in York, South Carolina, these three things (The Scriptures, each of us using our God-given gifts and the faith and order of *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Hymnal*) are essential if we are to formulate an enduring vision.

There is an old saying: "Without Him, we cannot do it. Without us, He will not do it." This will be a challenging year for Good Shepherd. Let us Pray:

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior, the Prince of Peace: Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer – page 818)

Worship & Study Opportunities

Sundays

The Holy Eucharist

8:00 a.m. (*Lake Wylie*)

10:30 a.m. (*York*)

Christian Education

9:30 a.m. for Everyone

Wednesdays

11:00 a.m. Healing Service (*Parlor*)

7:00 p.m. Bible Study (*Parlor*)

Saturdays

5:00 p.m. The Holy Eucharist



Annual Parish Meeting

The annual parish meeting will be **January 17, 2009** immediately after the 10:30 a.m. Eucharist in York. We will elect three members to the Vestry as well as receive reports from the various committees and program groups of the church. Other business relevant to our common life as a congregation will also be presented. All members who are adult communicants of this church, and have regularly attended the Church of the Good Shepherd for three months, shall be Voting Members.

Vestry Nominees: Cheney Baltz, Charles Crittendon, Jeanne Ferguson, Rick Norment, Connie Salisbury, Debbie Shiflet and Meade Wilson.

Annual Parish Meeting packages are located in the Bell Tower or you may view the package on our web site:

<http://www.goodshep.net/candidate.htm>

Stewardship Committee

PLEASE - REMEMBER

Please be faithful to Good Shepherd Church with a pledge this year and do it now. Our economic situation is taking its toll. We need to pay salaries and we need to pay expenses, which are going up. It is so much better to be able to plan and count on income through pledges. So far, the number participating is too low. We need you and we all need each other.

Parish News

God willing The Reverend Dr. Joe D. Mills will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the sacred priesthood Thursday, **January 28, 2010**. Solemn Mass will begin at 7:00 p.m. at Good Shepherd, York. Your prayers and presence are requested. A reception will follow both services. No gifts please. If desired, Thank You offerings may be made to church or charity of your choice.

P.A.T.H. Needs

Laundry Detergent, Dish Detergent, Soap, Tooth Paste, Tooth Brushes, Shampoo, Soups, Meats, Baby Products, Diapers & Wipes

Prayer Concerns

We continue to pray for the Episcopal Church.

We pray for the Sick, especially for...

Billie Gabbitas, Emily House, Sylvia Noble, Patricia Rice, Bettie Matthews, Sarah Waring, Glenn Garrison, Martha Garrison, Sue Franklin, Pat Ford, BJ Landers, Dot Hunter, Jack Devinney, Phyllis Paden-Adams, Landon Pertuset, Yoland Burton, Nita Callaham, Judi Smith, Roy Critcher, Gary Maynard, Stan Burrous, Donna Capel, Glen London, Mary Durbin, Scott Sears, Martin Williams, Roy Hutchins, Mildred Cushman

We pray for the Shut-ins, especially for...

Bee Decker, Elsie Castle, Margie Miller, Mamie Miller

We pray for the men and women serving in our military, especially for...

Geoffrey Gibson, Jonathan Morrison, William Stanley, John Kerns, Paul Mishoe, Mario Fonseca, Tiffany Eakin, Brian Carnes, Michael Moss, Robin Knowles

We pray for those with special needs, especially for...

York Place Board, Staff and Children, Pat Speck, Diane Linkous, The London Family, Jeff Burton, Jack Burton, Eileen Crichter, Raynor Moore, PATH and PATH Board, Emily Hollars & Family, Lynda Howie Lovelace

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