

APRIL 2025



# The Evangel

## FATHER BAILEY

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### Why Holy Week? The Best Approach

A few days ago, a friend approached me and gave me a hard but playful slap on the back while I was chatting with a couple of other folks. I happened to be holding a hot cup of coffee which spilled all over my hand and down on the floor. Thankfully I did not spill it on the people next to me or all over my clothes, but my hands certainly objected to the scalding liquid that poured all over them. My friend, clearly embarrassed, walked off. Later, we chatted and were able to laugh about the incident. I won't lie – for a brief moment, I wanted to let him have it. To his great credit, he articulated that, even as it was a playful greeting, it was important to be very intentional in how we approach and greet anyone, whether friend or stranger. There is a level of respect that, even as we feel comfortable in laughing and joking with one another, must be expressed in our interactions with one another.

It struck a chord with me that Lent is the season that, among many things, we become very intentional about how we approach God. One of the ways we have been doing that in worship each Sunday is by moving the confession to the beginning of the service instead of its typical place just before the Peace. We recognize our need to confess and repent of our sins. Even more so, it is a stark reminder that we approach God not as a friend but as the Creator, the Ruler, and the One who is beyond our understanding and comprehension.

As Easter draws very near, how do we approach God in celebration of this indescribable gift of forgiveness, of new life, of literally being made the daughters and sons of God through the resurrection of Jesus? If anything, we hear in Lent the words of Jesus, "If any wish to follow me, they must deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow me." We recognize these words as an invitation to follow Jesus. But where is he going? If I'm going to follow someone, I want to know where that person is headed before I tag along!

The answer we hear in Scripture, in our liturgy, and in the prayers is that Jesus is headed back to the Father – he is returning to the nearness and fullness of God's presence. You know, he is the Son of God after all, but Jesus never makes a presumption in any of the gospel stories that he can just casually stroll back into heaven, give his Father a slap on the back, and say "Thanks for the trip down with the humans! That was pretty cool!" No, by his life he shows us that the way to God must go through the cross. He shows us that we cannot

*Continued on next page*

## FATHER BAILEY (CONT.)

demand signs on our terms that God will be there on the other side. We have to go with him on the hard path he journeyed, submitting ourselves to the necessary but difficult to accept reality that we are utterly dependent upon God. If you can distill this lifelong journey down to one expression, the best approach to this path that I believe we offer is Holy Week.

Holy Week was the place I truly first heard God's call to me to become an Episcopalian and to take my faith very seriously. Coming from a very non-liturgical church that didn't even celebrate Easter as a special day, I was awestruck the very first time I walked the path of Holy Week at the cavernous All Saints Chapel at Sewanee. But it wasn't the glorious liturgy or the inspiringly beautiful place in which I celebrated it. It was the starkness, the solemnity, the utter realness of this journey that especially contrasted with this otherworldly cathedral space. I recognized instantly that the best approach to seeing the true joy behind Easter – this intimate union with God - that is expressed by but lies beyond the gorgeous flowers and celebratory music was that I had walked the path with Jesus to get there through the bumpy paths of Holy Week.

Indeed, our tradition argues that the best and only approach to God is to follow the path of Jesus. To do this, we must be open to having God speak to us in powerful words and symbols that are not on our terms but on God's. I am renewed and reminded every year that this approach to God on God's terms also humbles me to approach and engage other people not on my own terms but on theirs. In other words, if I truly want to learn about others and build a true friendship with others, I need to approach them with a sense of respect and curiosity about where they are, even if I can't fully understand.

I invite you this upcoming week to join me in our Holy Week observances so that Easter may be more than just a beautiful service or a happy season for you. The best approach to God and to the world is expressed most profoundly in these humbling but powerful services of Holy Week. The good news is that, in sharing these journeys with each other, our approach is strengthened by the fact we do this together. God's call to us to experience and share the riches of the divine grace as a community of believers is what makes us the Church. I cannot wait to walk with each of you as we approach the gift of God's presence in the deepest places of our hearts and minds and bodies.

Christ's Peace,

Bailey



# HOLY WEEK PART II

## The Services at the Heart of Holy Week

Now that I've given you my overview of WHY I think Holy Week is so important, let me say a little bit about each of our services. In particular, this is helpful for those of you who may never have done Holy Week and know very little about it or the individual services.

### **PALM SUNDAY (April 13) – 8 and 10:30 AM (10:30 is streamed)**

Palm Sunday is our regular Sunday service but serves as the beginning to Holy Week. The focus of Palm Sunday is on the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem days before his death where his disciples and the crowds who came to see him spread their cloaks and “leafy branches” (hence, the palms) as the king coming to his rightful place. This service, because it assumes a lot of people won't come to the rest of Holy Week (which won't happen here at St. Stephen's!!!), becomes more solemn after the celebratory beginning. This is highlighted by the reading of the Passion Gospel, the section of the gospel (Luke for this year) that is about the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus.

### **PALM SUNDAY: FAURE REQUIEM – 4 PM**

We are delighted that our parish choirmaster and organist Simon Ballintoy and our parish choir are offering the Requiem, a piece of seven movements composed by Gabriel Faure. A requiem is a Latin term used to describe a service or mass for the dead as traditionally done in the Roman Catholic Church. Faure's piece is especially appropriate as an entrance into Holy Week as, in his own words, it is a “piece dominated from beginning to end by a very human feeling of faith in eternal rest.” The Requiem is especially meaningful to our choir and parish as it is being offered in memory to Judy Digregorio, a very active and faithful parishioner and choir member who entered into this eternal rest last year.

### **STATIONS OF THE CROSS (April 14 and 15) – 6 PM**

On Monday and Tuesday evening, we will walk the Stations of the Cross along the walls of our Nave. The stations follow the story of the path when Jesus is first condemned before Pilate through when he is laid in the tomb. The stations are great ways to hear and meditate on the journey of Holy Week. It is especially a great service for kids in that the liturgy is short and there is a lot of walking and moving.

### **COMPLINE (April 16) – 7 PM**

Following the conclusion of our Wednesday night Lenten programs, everyone (whether present for the program or not) is invited to join us for a short spoken service of Compline. Compline is an ancient prayer which is said at the beginning of nighttime or just before end. It is a quiet yet beautiful service which can be said anytime but has special meaning during Holy Week in our asking God to shelter us in the darkness and while we sleep.

### **HOLY TRIDUUM**

The following services traditionally have been called the Triduum, a Latin word for “three.” These services – Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil – are considered to be one extended service spread out over three days. While you can attend one, they are best experienced by attending all three.

### **MAUNDY THURSDAY (April 17) – 7 PM (Streamed)**

The Triduum begins with Maundy Thursday. Maundy is a word derived from the Latin word “mandatum,” meaning “commandment.” The Gospel for Maundy Thursday always centers around the text in John where Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment to love one another as he has loved them. This is expressed

## HOLY WEEK PART II (CONT.)

especially through washing of the feet, a ritual which we carry out. You do not have to participate in this to attend, but it is a powerful part of this service. Following communion, the altar area is stripped bare as a sign of the impending death of Jesus and the more immediate remembrance of the disciples waiting with him in the Garden of Gethsemane up until his arrest. The service ends quietly in the dark.

### **Maundy Thursday Vigil – 9 PM to 7 AM**

Immediately following the Maundy Thursday service, the congregation is invited to remain in vigil as a remembrance of the watch with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. We invite you to volunteer to come for a one-hour block during the night (you are welcome to stay longer!). While you do not need to, it is helpful to sign up so we know each shift is covered. Please call or e-mail the church office to sign up for a shift.

### **GOOD FRIDAY (April 18) – 2 SERVICES**

#### **Seven Last Words and Good Friday Liturgy – 12 PM to 3 PM (Streamed)**

The first Good Friday is a special service in which we begin and end with the Good Friday Liturgy out of the Book of Common Prayer. In between, seven parishioners will each offer reflections on each of the Seven Last Words of Jesus from the cross. While there are a few die-hards that stay for the whole service, most of the people who attend come and go – you do NOT have to stay the whole time! But I invite you to stay for as long as you can. In particular, the reflections are always a gift in how they draw us in to the meaning and power of what Christ is doing this day on the cross.

#### **Good Friday Liturgy and Communion from the Reserve Sacrament – 7 PM**

This service is strictly our Good Friday Liturgy, which is beautiful and stark like the day itself. In our tradition, the only day where a bishop or priest cannot consecrate or bless bread and wine at the altar is this day. However we share communion this day out of the reserve sacrament, which is the bread and wine that is kept for the clergy and our Eucharistic Visitors to take out to those who can't physically be at church.

### **HOLY SATURDAY (April 19) – 9 AM**

While this service is technically not a part of the Triduum, it is a short and beautiful service reflecting upon the reality of Jesus' body lying in the grave and his spirit ministering to the dead before his resurrection. There is no communion at this service

### **EASTER VIGIL (April 19) – 8 PM**

The grand conclusion to the Triduum, I say somewhat tongue-in-cheek that this is the “real” Easter service. The Easter Vigil begins in the dark since it connects back to the end of Maundy Thursday. It is a service that reflects the deep connection between the Passover – the salvation of the Israelites from slavery and death – and the Paschal mystery of Christ (Paschal being the Greek word for Passover) in which we are saved from the power of sin and death. Old Testament lessons are read in the darkness to remind us of God's saving power to people long before Christ. When it comes time to proclaim the good news of Christ's resurrection, suddenly the lights come on, bells begin ringing, and the organ begins joyfully bellowing out anthems of celebration. Having the Vigil on Saturday night reflects the ancient tradition that Easter actually begins the sundown before Easter morning.

## HOLY WEEK PART II (CONT.)

**EASTER SUNDAY (April 20) – 8:30 and 11 AM**

**Parish Breakfast 9:30 AM**

**Easter Egg Hunt 10:00 AM**

Ah, the big day is here! Yes, while it doesn't have the richness of the Easter Vigil, this is the big celebration of Easter with so many people gathered to celebrate the resurrection of Christ and the birth of this new hope in our hearts! For both services, our children are invited to bring flowers (if you forget, we'll have some for you) to enter in the opening procession and flower the Easter cross! Please note the other opportunities for good fun and fellowship on this Easter morning!

Christ's Peace,

Bailey



# ALTAR GUILD



Hi, Annie Altar Guild here. Nice to meet you.

I thought I'd share a bit of what goes on behind the scenes before and after a church service. It's not unlike what the stage hands do during a theater production. It's just that we do our work with a quiet reverence.

You come to church and find that the "table is set." An Altar Guild person has filled the candles, put out all the vessels, books, and linens required for the Eucharist and laid out the priest's vestments. Following the service, another Altar Guild member "closes the service" which involves clearing the table, cleaning the vessels and putting everything away ready for the next service.

That describes a normal Sunday preparation. I thought you might be interested in what happens during Holy Week. The church has been without adornment since Ash Wednesday. The Stations of the Cross have replaced the banners.

The Bainbridge Cross over the altar has been draped. The altar frontal and hangings have been changed to purple. There have been no flowers. The processional cross has changed to the crucifix, and the gospel procession has been solemn. Musically there has been no prelude or voluntary. The "Alleluia" has been absent.

Many preparations have been made prior to Palm Sunday. Palms have been ordered and palm crosses made. Bulletins have been created if not actually printed yet. Schedules have been populated. Extra musicians have been engaged. Bread has been baked. Flowers have been ordered.

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday. The drape on the Bainbridge Cross will be changed - from purple to oxblood red. This is the red that you will see in the Lenten Array that now is on the changed altar frontal and hangings. Palm branches are on the retabes, the shelves on either side of the altar. Palm crosses and branches are given to all who attend. This year there will be a special afternoon service at 4:00 p.m. when the choir will be offering Faure's Requiem in memory of Judy DiGregorio.

We walk through Holy Week beginning with Stations of the Cross being led at 6:00 p.m. Monday and Tuesday. Compline will be offered on Wednesday. Minimal Altar Guild preparation is required for these days. Thursday begins the Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.

Prior to the Maundy Thursday service, the drape on the cross is removed and the frontal and hangings are changed to white. The service is a normal Eucharist for the Altar Guild with a few additions. The washing of feet commemorating Jesus' washing those of his disciples is added to the service. Basins, warm water, and towels are added to the service preparation. A Garden of Repose is set up on the floor of the nave to hold the reserve sacrament and to provide a focal point for those meditating during the night. There will be no consecration of bread and wine again until the Great Easter Vigil on Saturday evening.



## ALTAR GUILD (CONT.)

At the close of the Maundy Thursday service, the chancel and sanctuary will be stripped of everything leaving a bare altar and empty ambry. This will be done quietly by clergy, acolytes and Altar Guild members while Psalm 22 is being chanted. The congregation will leave in silence. If a person chooses, he/she will come to the church during the night to “watch and pray” just as the disciples were asked to do.



On Good Friday, the drape is changed to black. Good Friday does not require much Altar Guild attention. There will be a three-hour service from noon to 3 p.m. marking the Seven Last Words of Christ. The Friday evening Eucharist is held with the reserve sacrament present in the Garden of Repose. From Good Friday until the Great Easter Vigil is the only time of the year that the ambry is empty.

Then comes Saturday. And what a day it is! There is much activity. The day begins at 9 a.m. with the Holy Saturday Liturgy - prayers and readings appropriate to this day when there is no celebration of the Eucharist. The musicians and choir are practicing. Flowers are being arranged all around the nave, chancel, sanctuary, narthex, outside at the doors. The Stations of the Cross are carefully packed away until the next Lenten season. The banners are rehung. Candles are filled. The frontal and hangings will come back—in the white color of Easter. Everything that was removed on Thursday evening from the sanctuary and chancel will be put back. The vessels and vestments will be readied for the Easter services. Bread has been made and will replace the wafers for communion. In the grove, a fire will be laid in preparation for the lighting of the Paschal Candle.

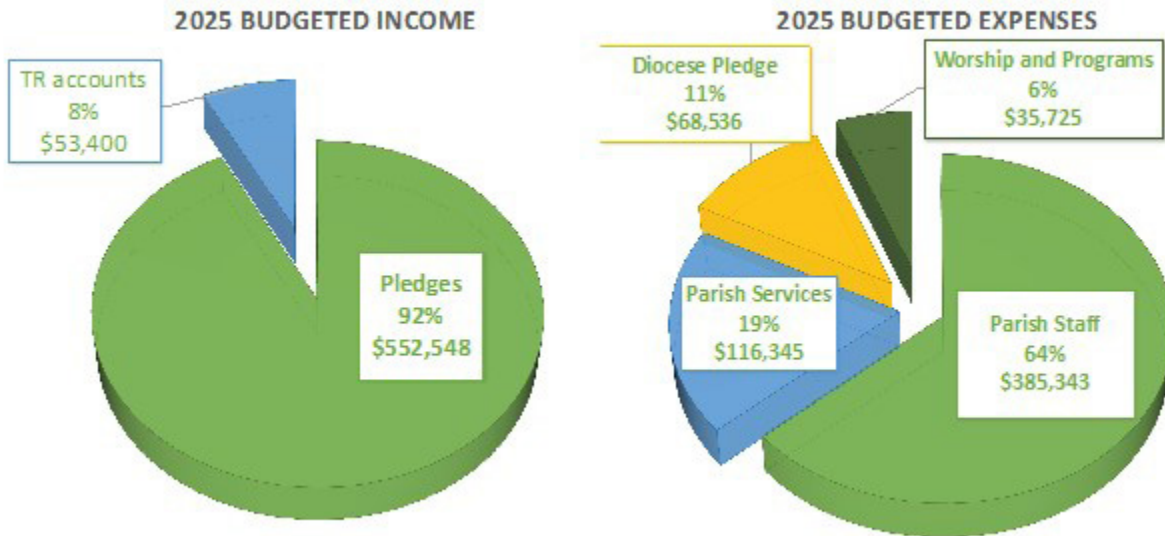
All is ready for the Great Easter Vigil Saturday evening and the two festive Easter services on Sunday. Our Lenten journey has concluded and the celebration of Easter has begun. Much has been done to prepare for this festive day by the Altar Guild. However, others especially the choir and musicians, Christian Education supervising the children's egg hunt and Parish Life preparing the luscious Easter brunch—all contributing to a wonderful Day!

Easter Monday is a day of rest for everyone - clergy, musicians, and altar guild.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

As we conclude the first quarter of 2025, the Finance Committee would like to update you regarding the status of St. Stephen's operating fund. This operating fund, also known as the General Fund, pays for St. Stephen's operation and some of our ministry. The following pie charts show what this fund provides (budgeted expenses) and where the monies come from (planned income) for 2025. Please note that your pledges provide more than 90% of the General Fund income.

## 2025 GENERAL FUND: \$605,950



The tables on the following page depict cumulative income vs. expenses through the first quarter of this year.

### Key points include:

- Planned 2025 operating costs exceed forecast pledge income, the difference of \$53,000 will be paid from interest income and available funds in other restricted accounts.
- Through March, our income has exceeded expenses by approximately \$98,000.
- Through March, we have received approximately 42% of the 2025 pledge commitment.



# WARDEN'S CORNER

**MARCH 2025**

25%

	<i>Annual Budget</i>	<i>YTD Actual</i>	<i>Actual/Budget %</i>
Total Income	\$552,548	\$ 230,449	42%
Total Expenses	\$605,949	\$ 132,504	22%

**SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)\*\*** **(\$53,401)**

**TOTAL INCOME - EXPENSES  
GENERAL FUND ONLY**

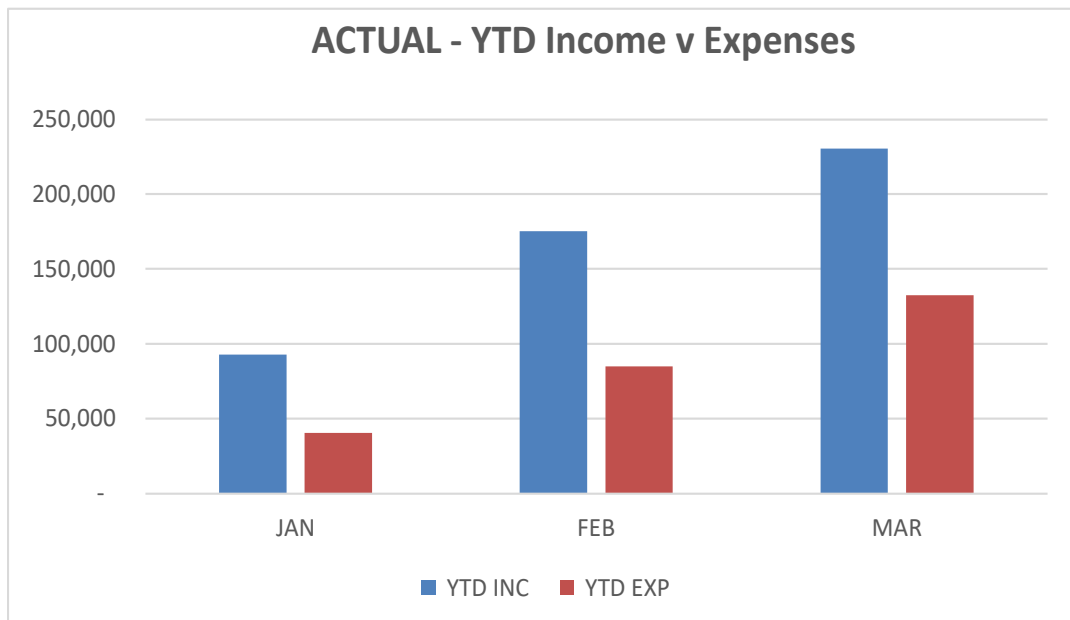
**\$97,945 YTD  
\$7,881 MTD**

<b>Pledges received*</b>	<b>230,699</b>	<b>42% received to date</b>
<b>Total pledges*</b>	<b>552,548</b>	<b>25% "earned" to date</b>

\*per Realm

**\*\* Funds available for "deficit"**

EI126 - Endowment Income	8,985
HI125 Heritage Income	5,712
Trust Company interest	4,930
Other TR accounts	30,000
	<b>49,627</b>



## Doing God's Business

This is my second time to serve on the Vestry, and I quickly learned in my first term that we are very much like the Board of Director's for a corporation. In many respects, we are a corporation, and are in the business of doing "God's business."

Our Parish is organized around the use of committees. Indeed, per our Policy and By-Laws (F-1); "Committees are used to aid the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry to carry out the program work of the Parish as effectively and efficiently as possible." Quite simply, we depend on our committees to help us accomplish "God's business." Every Vestry member is a liaison to at least one committee, and in some instances, they act as the Chair of that committee. For these committees to work well, and by extension, for our Parish to work well, communication and collaboration must take place.

Jr. Warden Ben Shassere uses the term "interchurchural" communication; I honestly believe he made it up, but it paints an accurate picture of what needs to happen! We need to talk to each other, and wherever possible team up to accomplish our common goals.

We can all play a part; there is no shortage of opportunities, whether introverted or extroverted, skilled or unskilled, young or not-so-young! We have no fewer than 18 different committees here, and many of those committees have sub-committees. We have a place for you and would love to have you come be a part of our "interchurchural" conversations!

## The Vestry Listens

Each month a member of Vestry will be in the parish hall between services and following the 10:30 service to answer questions and to listen.

January 12: Leah Bailey

February 9: Courtney Manrod

March 9: Ben Shassere

April 13: Tyler Walker

May 11: Carol King

June 8: Craig Brent

July 6: Ashley Hillis

August 10: Julie Webber

September 7: Cleon Hartman

October 12: Alan Liby

November 9: Beth Bailey

December 7: Roger Johnson

# MINISTRY UPDATES

## Evangelism

The Evangelism Committee at St. Stephen's Church is committed to spreading the Word of Christ both within the church and throughout the surrounding community. With a mission to foster a deeper connection of faith, the committee works diligently to create opportunities for both parishioners and local community members to grow spiritually and personally. The Evangelism Committee aims to accomplish these goals through a variety of initiatives, including planning and hosting both internal and external events that encourage spiritual engagement through playing an active role in volunteering at community events and sharing Christ's teachings through both words and actions.

One of the core programs of the Evangelism Committee is the Invite, Welcome, and Connect initiative, which ensures that newcomers to St. Stephen's are embraced and supported in their faith journey. Through this program, the committee fosters a welcoming environment where individuals can feel like an integral part of the church community.

One of the next significant events for the parishioners of St. Stephen's was their participation in the Oak Ridge Civic Music Association Fun Run on Saturday, March 29, 2025. The church participated in the 5K and Fun Run, with parishioners proudly sponsoring the race bibs for the event.

In addition to this event, the Evangelism Committee also holds monthly meetings to plan and strategize further opportunities for outreach. Currently, the committee is working alongside Emily Doane to form a Bible study group specifically for women, further expanding opportunities for spiritual growth within the congregation.

## An Overview of Clearfork, 2025

The Clearfork Learning Camp is one of St. Stephen's most important outreach ministries. Many of our parishioners have worked with local volunteers each year to help organize and deliver a week-long series of activities and fellowship for the Clearfork youth.

We're looking forward to welcoming many young participants aged 6 to 16 at camp this year. We're excited to help create a memorable experience for everyone. We need volunteers from Clearfork and St. Stephen's. Having enough volunteers daily is the key to creating a safe and successful program for all.

This year's camp theme focuses on fun S.T.E.M. activities, demonstrating our commitment to adapt to community youth's changing interests and age groups. We have adjusted our camp programs to ensure the kids remain enthusiastic and involved, creating a meaningful experience each time!

At St. Stephen's, we aim to boost the number of camp volunteers. To ensure safety and oversight, all volunteers who work with the children and youth must complete the Episcopal "safe church" prerequisites before camp participation. Before the camp starts, we will offer a session for those interested in meeting these requirements.

We hope you'll think about volunteering for this wonderful ministry. There are a variety of ways to help. Your involvement is greatly appreciated; we couldn't make the camp a reality without your support.

# MINISTRY UPDATES (CONT.)

## Parish Life

Our 3rd Annual Mardi Gras Family Fête continues to be a hugely popular event. The gumbos, jambalayas, étouffée, and all the other yummy creole/cajun dishes were delicious. Many thanks to all who participated!

The Lenten Wednesday Night Simple Soup Suppers have started. Each Wednesday features a variety of soups, along with various breads, sandwich spreads, crackers and fruit. We have had a higher number in attendance and have expanded to three different soups per night.

Parish Life events in April included Bunco for the ladies on the 5th and the University of Tennessee Chamber Singers' Choral Eucharist on the 6th with a reception following. On April 13, our choir will present the Fauré Requiem on the 13th in memory of Judy DiGregorio with a reception following, and our Annual Parish-wide Easter Brunch and Egg Hunt on the 20th.

## Looking Ahead

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| April 27 | Celtic Service   |
| May 4    | Cinco de Mayo themed Parish Potluck<br>Parish Midterm Meeting immediately following the potluck              |
| May 11   | Youth Sunday<br>Our guest preacher will be Cyril Meredith IV   |
| May 17   | Smokies Game at the new stadium?<br>Tickets will go on sale April 27th in the Parish Hall                    |
| May 25   | Lemonade in the Grove begins--weather permitting--following the 10:30 service and will run through Labor Day |