

An Update from the Rector

May 4, 2010

Dear Friends,

As you know, on Sunday, May 2, St. George's Church suffered major flooding damage related to the weekend's torrential rains. The overflow from the creek that runs through our church property was unprecedented, and every portion of the facility on ground level was flooded. The major water damage occurred during what would have been our normal Sunday morning worship schedule.

Of course, we are all aware of the catastrophic damage to our entire city caused by the flooding, and our prayers go out to all those who have suffered property damage, injury, and especially the loss of loved ones. Sadly, St. George's membership has not been unaffected in this way.

I very much regret having to inform you that stalwart and beloved church members Frankie and Bill Rutledge perished in the flash flooding. It seems that the Frankie and Bill were on their way to church for the 8:45 service when they were overtaken by raging waters that engulfed Harding Road. Their bodies were discovered by courageous search parties organized by concerned friends and fellow church members. This event is a terrible tragedy, and I know that you will pray for the repose of the souls of Bill and Frankie, beloved friends and faithful servants of Christ.

At this time funeral arrangements are pending, but be assured that we will communicate this information when it is known. It is unlikely there will be any worship services in our church nave or chapel this week. My hope is for us to worship together on Sunday in the church. On this matter further information will also be forthcoming.

Again, the water damage to the church is significant. We are blessed to have flood insurance, but it remains to be seen if our damages will exceed our benefit. We anticipate that it may take as long as a week to have a full assessment of these costs. While we appreciate the many offers of volunteer help with clean up and repair work, at this time we are asked to allow the professional workers to do their job unimpeded.

You are invited to visit the St. George's website in the coming hours to let us know of your desires to volunteer in any way. As with the physical cost estimates related to the flooding, our assessment of volunteer needs will become clearer in the coming days. Please know that we are tremendously thankful for your generous outpouring of support and help in this very difficult time.

Finally, we remember that every negative event is paradoxically an opportunity to turn toward God in hope and gratitude. I am moved that in the last 48 hours many of you have shared your love for our beautiful facility and ache to see it damaged. And yet you have also recognized that we are called into being as the church not because of our buildings but because of the grace of God in Jesus Christ

On Sunday morning during what would have been the 11:15 service, about 25 of us who were here in the building trying to move our furnishings and church valuables to a higher level decided to gather upstairs in Dandridge B for a hastily organized service of Holy Eucharist. We read these words from Isaiah 43: "But now says the Lord, 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you....'"

May these hopeful words sustain and strengthen us for the days ahead. I must say, I have never been more proud and grateful in my life to belong to a particular community of faith. Already I have seen how this terrible event that has brought great sadness and distress upon us has nevertheless also brought out the most remarkable kindness, compassion, and generosity. I am not surprised, but I am most grateful. By God's grace, I am confident we will emerge from these days a stronger and even more tightly-knit community of faith.

Yours in Christ,

Leigh Spruill