

# St. Mark's Chapel

P. O. Box 761, Port Royal, South Carolina 29935

*A Community of Episcopalians*

Chapel Committee  
stmarks@hargray.com

August 31, 2009

Rev. Dr. Robert R. Hansel  
Chaplain  
5 Apple Lane  
Okatee, SC 29909  
(843) 705-6251

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop  
The Episcopal Church  
815 Second Ave.  
New York, NY 10017

Rev Roger Wm. Smith  
Chaplain Emeritus  
15 Newpoint Road  
Lady's Island, SC 29907  
(843) 522-9271

Dear Bishop Jefferts Schori:

In August 2006, we wrote a note congratulating you on your selection as our Presiding Bishop and were delighted and inspired to receive a handwritten note of appreciation from you. Since your consecration as Presiding Bishop, we have followed many of your activities and admire the dignity and respect you show and bring to God's Kingdom throughout our church and the world. Three years having passed since that exchange, we want to update you on the progress of our small chapel, which began as a house church meeting late afternoon on Sundays and now meeting on Sunday mornings at a local Masonic lodge.

Scott C. Shaffer  
Warden  
108 Capers Street  
Beaufort, SC 29902  
(843) 525-0114

We continue to suffer from lack of formal Episcopal identity; initially we mutually agreed with our local conservative St. Helena's parish not to enter into a mission agreement because of our vast theological differences.

Alison Davidow  
Clerk  
31 Tuscarora Avenue  
Lady's Island, SC 29907  
(843) 522-9948

On two later occasions, as reviewed in our Vision Statement (enclosed), we were denied consideration for mission status by Bishop Mark Lawrence. In this, we first applied to become a diocesan mission; in essence, he seemed to judge us as immaturely developed and very candidly suggested that it would be folly for us to expect him to grant formal recognition to a group he knew to be antithetical to his theological persuasion. At that time, he relied on former Bishop Salmon's precedent of insisting that missions be created under local parishes vs. the diocese.

Charles N. Davis  
Member-at-Large  
118 Sea Otter Lane  
Fripp Island, SC 29920  
(843) 838-1108

With that in mind, we then approached All Saints' Parish on Hilton Head Island and were invited to become a mission of theirs. In a meeting with our new chaplain, our treasurer and warden, Bishop Lawrence again refused to approve us. A productive suggestion from the Bishop at that time was that we develop a vision statement to indicate clearly who we are and where we want to go. We are grateful to him for this suggestion as it provided a very positive period of discernment for us culminating in the attached document. Of course, it is not the kind of vision that he had in mind, but we are happy with it.

Anne B. Errington  
Worship  
5-B Marsh Harbor  
Lady's Island, SC 29907  
(843) 524-1481

Since our beliefs are expressed in the statement, we need not go into detail about where we stand other than to say that we firmly support The Episcopal Church and, in particular, recent actions taken at the General Convention. We continue to be a total ministry fellowship engaged in outreach and are organized to provide service, worship, education, evangelism and growth as well as pastoral care. We have been growing slowly but understand from the community that one reason for the pace is that people are reluctant to involve themselves in a non-formal Episcopal entity (without power/ability to receive or generate letters of membership, perform confirmation, etc.)

Gail S. Hodsdon  
Music  
354 Cottage Farm Drive  
Beaufort, SC 29902  
(843) 986-9088

We fear that this situation may also have a deleterious effect on our latest endeavor: possible

Robert B. Pinkerton  
Treasurer  
5-D Rising Tide Drive  
Ribaut Island, SC 29902  
(843) 522-3446

# St. Mark's Chapel

ownership of a small, historical AME chapel in the area. Our hope is that the AME congregation will donate the building to us to clear their land for sale as development property; we would relocate the building to donated land. Obviously, we are nervous about all that is involved in this scenario; however, we are optimistic and persistent.

It would be much more palatable to outsiders, potential members and donors if we did have a legitimate connection to the Episcopal Church other than our expressed desire to remain Episcopalians. It is very clear at this juncture that we will never be a mission in the Diocese of South Carolina; Mark Lawrence, as you know, has his hands full in deciding whether or not he wants to remain in the Episcopal Church. Our sense is that he does not and, in the long run, will not remain associated. In fact his recent call for a special Diocesan Convention on October 24 to pass a number of resolutions makes us feel even more unwelcome in this diocese.

We ask for your guidance as to how we might go about establishing ourselves as a legitimate Episcopal entity. Might it be possible through TEC (establishing communion with the General Convention), or to associate somehow with the Fourth Province, or perhaps with a neighboring diocese such as Upper South Carolina or Western North Carolina, both of which seem to be supporters of TEC? We are not sure what is happening in the Georgia dioceses except for the Diocese of Atlanta. Even Bishop Lawrence has spoken about effecting alternative episcopal oversight for progressive parishes who want it.

TEC is our *only* resource. Your guidance is critical for those of us "in exile" who want to maintain a viable Episcopal presence. To give you an idea of what we are facing, we are enclosing a recent full page local newspaper ad sponsored by three parishes within our county. It attacks and disassociates them from what supposedly occurred at the General Convention. Our response to this ad has been to avoid conflict and newspaper confrontations. We at St. Mark's have determined to move forward with plans to develop our ministry, Christian education and outreach programs. We intend to remain positive in our support of the Lord's work and attempted to get that idea across in the enclosed letter to the editor which followed the critical full page ad.

These are not the best of times in this diocese, but they are times when we feel called more than ever to put God's work first. It clearly appears to us that this is what you do. We are grateful, continue to hold you in our prayers and hope that you can advise us in our quest for status as "true" Episcopalians, and we look forward to possible dialogue with your staff.

Sincerely yours,

Scott C. Shaffer, Warden  
Robert R. Hansel, Chaplain

cc. The Ven. Richard Cluett, Jr.  
119 W. Johnston St.  
Allentown, PA 18103

# Welcome to St. Mark's Chapel

## A Community of Episcopalians

### Where We Are, How We Got There And Where We Hope To Go

*St. Mark's Chapel, Beaufort, SC*

*Viewing St. Mark's Chapel as a work in progress guided by the Holy Spirit, we envision this statement as well to be a work in progress which will continue to evolve and mature as we do.*

### Who We Are and How We Came to Be

Anticipating the population growth on Ladies Island, in the mid 1990's there was dialogue concerning establishment of an Episcopal mission in northern Beaufort County, an idea which unfortunately never materialized. The interest in such a mission resurfaced following the 74th General Convention of The Episcopal Church (TEC) in 2003 when St. Mark's Chapel formed under the leadership of The Rev. Mr. Roger William Smith, a retired Episcopal priest. Initially, eight people met at his house and began a ministry which now averages over 20 communicants each Sunday. Overall, our mailing list includes about 60 individuals, mostly confirmed Episcopalians. Upon Mr. Smith's recent retirement, the chaplaincy was assumed by the Rev. Dr. Robert Hansel, also a retired Episcopal priest.

Initially we were a house church that met in one another's homes bimonthly. Realizing the need for a "consistent" location (to avoid confusion and attract additional members), in the fall of 2007 we relocated to the Room by the Bay of the Sea Island Inn in downtown Beaufort. In April 2009 we moved to the Port Royal Lodge in Port Royal. We now meet there every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. Overall, we practice a shared lay/clergy ministry approach to worship and leadership of St. Mark's Chapel. We have been fortunate in the availability of several priests to celebrate Holy Eucharist. When clergy are not available to celebrate Eucharist, we enjoy lay-led Evening Prayer.

St. Mark's continues to be a Total Ministry fellowship engaged in outreach. Total Ministry means that we encourage all members, not just the ordained, to offer themselves to the community. Representing our chapel, St. Mark's members have been active in Family Promise, a program for homeless families in Beaufort

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County, and in RxAccess, an ecumenical effort to assist eligible clients in applying for free or reduced-priced medications. In addition to hands-on outreach, we have provided financial support for Habitat for Humanity, mission work in the Dominican Republic, the Child Abuse Prevention Association and have been one of the leading diocesan supporters of the Episcopal Relief and Development program.

We view church as existing to support, confront and challenge members to engage the world in Christ's name. We believe church life respects differences, openly addressing them directly while seeking resolution, reconciliation and acceptance. Accepting challenge, our chapel anticipates and welcomes change as part of God's action. Underlying all we believe is our commitment to follow Jesus' Great Command: Love God and love your neighbor.

We are shaped by an educational ministry which focuses on the teaching of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit for change in contemporary life. Due to the age of our members, we have not yet developed a children's program but look forward to that as we increase in membership. Several of our members have experience in planning and leading Christian education.

To understand St. Mark's Chapel, one must understand the context in which it has evolved. The Diocese of South Carolina is a group of primarily conservative parishes which tend more and more to emphasize their Anglican roots vs. the Episcopal. It seems to be leaning toward the theology of GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference sponsored by the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans). While we respect this difference in religious perspective, this apparent departure from TEC is a major concern of ours: We have no desire to leave TEC. We believe that the Holy Spirit is guiding us in ways to live via an ever-evolving understanding of the Message of Christ.

St. Mark's celebrated its fifth anniversary in November 2008. During those five years we have made several attempts to be recognized officially in the Diocese as a mission. Our first venture was a meeting with clergy and wardens of St. Helena's Episcopal Church (the only Episcopal Church in northern Beaufort County) to discuss the possibility of becoming a parochial mission of that parish. By mutual concurrence, vast theological differences precluded such a relationship.

Our next step toward formal Episcopal status occurred in the winter of 2007 when we attended at St. Helena's a meeting called by then Bishop Salmon who, over the years, had been supportive

of St. Mark's and posited that "it was not nice to be in exile," leading to our hope of becoming a diocesan mission. Present in addition to Bishop Salmon and Bishop-Elect Mark Lawrence were the rector of St. Helena's and his two wardens as well as their Bishop-in-Residence Alden Hathaway. The final decision about our status was passed to the hands of Bishop-Elect Lawrence who, after he was consecrated, declined to recommend to the Diocesan Convention the admission of St. Mark's as a diocesan mission. .

After that disappointment, a fruitful meeting with the vestry of All Saints Episcopal Church, Hilton Head, resulted in All Saints' request to the Diocese that St. Mark's become their parochial mission. In October 2008, a delegation from St. Mark's met with the bishop to discuss that possibility, and he, again, opposed the admission of St. Mark's to the Diocese even as a parochial mission. Since that meeting, the members of St. Mark's have entered into a period of discernment to explore who we are, decide where we want to go, and articulate our role in spreading the Gospel.

### **What We Believe**

In meetings of the chapel committee and in full meetings of the congregation, we have committed to continue as a nurturing, inclusive group, accepting all people regardless of ethnic background, age, lifestyle, economic circumstance or sexual orientation. While we would like to be recognized as part of the Episcopal Church, that need not be our primary focus. We will continue to follow the canons and liturgy of the Episcopal Church (and the Diocese of South Carolina as long as it remains within TEC). Eventually, we expect to grow from a chapel to a mission to a church with hope of being a fully accepted member of our diocese and TEC.

Our theological outlook is characterized by scripturally-based, intellectually rigorous, imaginative preaching and teaching. We see St. Mark's Chapel as a place of worship in the Episcopal tradition: We appreciate theology that invites questions and requires our intelligence as well as our discernment. Devoted to the Biblical sacrament instituted by Jesus, we view ministry as a privilege and obligation of all baptized persons. Baptized members have a vocation from God and the gifts necessary for ministry. The primary work of the laity is to support the needs of one another and of those in need and at risk. The primary work of the clergy is to equip members to care for one another and other children of God.

St. Mark's emphasizes an insistence on Christian morality (what is good and loving) but an avoidance of moralism. We accept the heritage of the apostolic faith and the Gospel of Jesus Christ as well as the apostolic order which was established within the church.

### **Aspirations**

*"Faith is the substance of things hoped for..." Hebrews 11:1*

St. Mark's Chapel's hope is to model the health and integrity of diversity in TEC by becoming a viable institution accepting The Episcopal Church's emphasis on scripture, tradition and reason as necessary for the Church's foundation. We base our hopes and intentions on two major considerations.

First, the demographics of our county strongly suggest the need for an additional Episcopal institution. The southern portion of Beaufort County has three recognized Episcopal churches offering diverse services to 72,000 people (an average of one church per 24,000 people). However, in our northern portion, only one church serves 70,000 people. By comparison, Charleston and its surrounding area has 31 Episcopal churches offering service to an average of 19,500 people. Clearly, there is a need for more Episcopal churches in Northern Beaufort County.

Second and primary is St. Mark's desire to meet the needs of Episcopalians in northern Beaufort County who seek a progressive Episcopal alternative, one that can be fully supportive of TEC. The only recognized Episcopal community in Northern Beaufort County is theologically conservative and limits its support of TEC. Our vision is to fulfill the need for an alternative as we continue evolving as a worshipping community of loving, caring, accepting, serving individuals. As a congregation, we expect to continue growing into the essence of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

We will continue striving to create a community that participates with the clergy and with the community, committed partners in ministry to the world that God has created for us, being good stewards of our earth and God-given gifts — providing the most effective ministry we can offer. Our witness and service to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit will be organized around five key elements of calling: **Service, Worship, Education, Evangelism, and Pastoral care.**

*"Our worship together celebrates and mediates the reality of God, our learning together draws us deeper into the way of Jesus, and our acting together seeks to incarnate 'the dream of God,' namely, compassion and justice in the world of the everyday." Borg, Marcus, and N.T. Wright. The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions, Harper-Collins, 1998. 245.*

## Organizational Vision

Our organization structure has a stewardship mission focus: The Vision is that of an ongoing commitment to being good stewards of the gifts that we have received from God—mobilizing everything for the most effective ministry we can offer. Our congregation patterns its witness to Jesus Christ by organizing around five key elements of the Chapel's calling:

- **Service** — Practical support and direct assistance to individuals and families in our community who are in-need or at-risk; paralleled by extended mission outreach and financial contributions for the alleviation of problem issues in the larger community of state, nation, and world.
- **Worship** — Using both the historical and contemporary resources and traditions of the Episcopal Church to enable people to experience in personal and corporate terms the presence and power of God.
- **Education** — Equipping people to understand the Christian Faith, to recognize its implications which touch all things, to work and give generously for the spreading of the Word, and to live creatively their Faith within the context of everyday life.
- **Evangelism/Growth** — Opening ourselves to the Holy Spirit's presence that alone has the capacity to change and renew all people as co-creators of the Kingdom of God.
- **Pastoral Care** — Supporting those who are struggling with illness, isolation, disease, and death by surrounding them with God's love as it is revealed by our own acts of compassion.

All members of our Chapel community are expected to become involved in at least one of these five areas of St. Mark's Chapel's calling.

St. Mark's Chapel, P. O. Box 761, Port Royal, SC 29935 - (843) 522-9636 - stmarks@hargray.com

# Welcome

*To all who are spiritually weary and seek rest; to all who mourn  
and long for comfort; to all who struggle  
and desire victory; to all who sin and need a Savior;  
to all who are strangers and want fellowship;  
to all who hunger and thirst after righteousness;  
and to whoever will come—this church opens wide her doors  
and offers her welcome in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

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## Where We Stand

Recent events in the American Episcopal Church have sparked strong reactions from people in nearly every Christian denomination. Even here in the Beaufort, Bluffton, and Hilton Head communities, many people have weighed in with comments both pro and con. Given the Episcopal Church's unique place in American history, and the fact that many of its recent decisions (particularly those regarding human sexuality) call into question long-standing Christian beliefs, none of this is particularly surprising. Issues of such substance naturally transcend denominational boundaries.

Therefore, it is important for the members of these communities to know that we, the leadership of The Parish Church of St. Helena, The Church of the Cross, and St. Luke's Episcopal Church, disassociate ourselves from the actions of the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church held in July 2009. During its deliberations, that body denied the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Holy Scriptures (Old and New Testaments), overturned the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman, and refused to abstain from the ordination of persons whose manner of life violates Christian tenets in practice for almost 2,000 years. These are actions we cannot condone.

Instead, we will continue to stand where the vast majority of the world's 77 million Anglicans stand and where the Anglican Church has always stood. We will continue to be faithful to the Scriptures and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ that has ever been sufficient to heal the sick, restore sight to the blind, and raise those dead in their trespasses and sins to the new life of grace—a Gospel that we remain convinced still has the power to do these things today! As always, the doors of these parish churches are open to everyone! We *all* have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. The church is not a place for those who have managed to "get their act together;" it is a hospital for sinners, of whom we are chief.

### THE CLERGY

The Rev. Jeffrey Miller  
The Rev. Mark Avera  
The Rev. Andrew Pearson  
The Rev. Chad Lawrence  
The Rt. Rev. Alden Hathaway  
The Rev. Charles Owens  
The Rev. Chris Royer  
The Rev. Greg Kronz  
The Rev. Tom Hendrickson  
The Rev. Kathie Phillips

Cindy Collins  
John Gray  
Jane Hinchey  
Maude Hornsby  
Jane Manos  
Ann McDuff  
Steve Melvin  
Gail Mullen  
Bob Mullen

Melba Outlaw  
Peter Payne  
Jan Pringle  
Sharon Sanders  
Charley Webb  
Bill Thompson  
Stew Brown  
Ray Cook  
Burt Harding

### THE VESTRIES

Natalie Mann  
Ken Miller  
Al Stahl  
Linda Wakefield  
Lisa Arraj  
Mike Blackshire  
John Brackett  
Will Bridgers  
Tom Conner

Marilyn Eitel  
Judy Kirby  
Brenda Lieberman  
Connie Rathman  
Mark Vanagel  
David Warren  
John Wigington  
Gail Znachko

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## THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. HELENA (EPISCOPAL)

507 Newcastle Street • P.O. Box 1043 • Beaufort, SC 29901 • (843) 522-1712 • [www.sthelenas1712.org](http://www.sthelenas1712.org)

SUNDAY SERVICES: 8 a.m., 10:15 a.m., 6 p.m.

## THE CHURCH OF THE CROSS

110 Calhoun Street • 495 Buckwalter Parkway • P.O. Box 278 • Bluffton, SC 29910 • (843) 757-2661 • [www.thechurchofthecross.net](http://www.thechurchofthecross.net)

SATURDAY SERVICE: 5:28 p.m. SUNDAY SERVICES: 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 10 a.m.

## ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

50 Pope Avenue • Hilton Head, SC 29928 • (843) 785-4099 • [www.stlukeshhi.org](http://www.stlukeshhi.org)

SUNDAY SERVICES: 7:45 a.m., 9 a.m., 10:45 a.m.

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## Alternatives available for local Episcopalians

Published Friday, July 31, 2009

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Recent events in the Episcopal Church, the Diocese of South Carolina and Beaufort County have shown once again that there is disagreement. For many of us, there is renewed hope and excitement from the actions of the Episcopal Church at its general convention.

For Episcopalians who share that hope and excitement and desire to worship in a traditional Episcopal manner, we want to make it clear that there is a place for you at St. Mark's Chapel, currently meeting at the Masonic Lodge on Ribaut Road in Port Royal.

For more than five years, we have been a total-ministry fellowship committed to the canons and liturgy of the Episcopal Church. We accept the Episcopal Church's historical emphasis on Scripture, tradition and reason and have organized to witness to and serve Christ and the Holy Spirit within a structure of service, worship, education, growth and pastoral care. Our chaplain is the Rev. Dr. Robert Hansel.

Everyone is welcome to join us in evolving as a worshipping community of loving, caring, accepting and serving individuals. For information, call 843-522-9636 or go to [www.stmarksc.org](http://www.stmarksc.org).

Scott Shaffer

Beaufort