
New Year Blessings and Thanksgivings !!

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip**

I am wondrously astounded.

Many of you heard my remarks last month as Christmas approached. The Cathedral of St. Philip needed you to fulfill financial pledges and to make extraordinary gifts. By our best estimates, we needed \$949,000 in December gifts in order for our 2008 income and expenses to break even.

Yes, we needed \$949,000. Yes, that is a lot of money; and it is even more so during our current economic anxiety and financial downturn. Yes, we needed \$949,000. So, how much did we receive?

We received \$941,000.

That is wondrously astounding to me. The entire Cathedral community of St. Philip participated. People made extra gifts, ranging from \$10 to over \$40,000. People volunteered to make end-of-year telephone calls. One by one, and family by family, this beautiful community responded. You gave ever so generously.

In addition, the loyal staff of the Cathedral continues to cut expenses in every way we can. In fact, we began cutting back as long ago as last summer. We have left major staff positions unfilled. We have frozen salary and compensation levels. We have delayed purchases. But we have tried not to cut any major ministry and pastoral efforts. I continue to tell our staff, and our parish, that our best ministry does not need money at all. All we really need are people. Our best ministry is people.

Because of those expense cuts, and the enormous generosity of this parish, it looks like the Cathedral of St. Philip will actually break even for the official 2008 year; we might even realize a very small surplus. This is incredible for such an economic time as this.

I am astounded. I am gratified. I am overwhelmed by the commitment that God's people have for this church. I am tempted to call it a miracle. But, as I preached last Sunday, miracles do not happen randomly or by accident. Miracles happen when people are prepared and disciplined and committed.

This parish, the Cathedral of St. Philip is prepared and disciplined and committed. We may be quite large and scattered and complex. We may have more than our share of problems. But we are a faithful parish, committed to using whatever resources God gives us to proclaim the gospel and hope of Jesus Christ our Lord.

One more thing: When I note, every December, how much cash the Cathedral needs, there are always those who use the information to denigrate our work and identity, or who use the occasion to cry like Chicken Little, "the sky is falling!" Well, once again, I say to them: The sky did not fall. (And even if it had, God's Church would still be here! We are committed to being God's Church.)

Thus, the Cathedral of St. Philip begins this 2009 year with much blessing and with great thanksgiving. But we know this will be a challenging year. I preached last Sunday on "holy relationships," for I believe that is our calling this year. Here are the closing words from that sermon:

"The Church has a critical role in this next year, a year of new political realities, a year of inevitable accidents, a year of certain economic challenge. The Christian Church will be the place that trains us for holy relationships. And holy relationships make for miracles in an emergency. Holy relationships can become political strengths. Holy relationships are sometimes all we have left when financial assets have tumbled.

Jesus came for holy relationship. That is why the message of Jesus is best communicated from person to person "face to face and hand in hand. Come and see this year. Come and see."

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler