
Amazing Grace

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

I have learned a great deal about the generosity and faith of Cathedral parishioners in the past year, and especially in the past two months. In December of 2003, we on the chapter and on the staff realized that our financial needs were overwhelming. You read what we announced: we needed over \$600,000 in end-of-year gifts in order to finish the year in the black.

In fact, that December need is rather typical for the Cathedral of St. Philip. Many of us make good-faith pledges for the year, but we do not actually fulfill the pledge until the end of the year. Every December, for the past five years, we have received about one-sixth of our annual gifts.

But this past December seemed different, didn't it? Many around the country were watching the Cathedral of St. Philip to see if we would suffer serious shortfalls because of General Convention actions. One notorious writer on the national scene used our December announcement and our own parish, the Cathedral of St. Philip, as examples of the serious shortfalls besetting the Episcopal Church. (Our local newspaper, in the Fall, had also telephoned many of you asking about unfounded rumors whose sources they themselves would not identify.)

This past December was indeed different. We have been challenged in the past year, whether we wanted to be challenged or not, about our faith and about our Church. Many of us have been asked to ponder issues about which we would rather not have to make a public statement. Some of us have been disappointed; others of us have been jubilant. No matter what our individual claims, each of us has read things about our Church that has caused us bewilderment and even embarrassment.

What could God possibly be doing in this Church?

Our unofficial 2003 financial results are in. We received over \$700,000 in end-of-year gifts this past December. We set a Cathedral record for gifts in any one month in history.

I am literally amazed at the grace of the Cathedral of St. Philip. I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the generosity of this parish. Some of you were not able to fulfill earlier pledges, because of financial hardships or spiritual disagreements; but others of you gave generously and abundantly. I am reminded of Jesus's words in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

On behalf of this parish, and on behalf of our ministries and programs and needs, I thank each and every one of you for giving in 2003. Thank you.

We do still have a way to go. I continue to pray for this year, for our 2004 pledge needs. We still need \$300,000 in pledges just to reach our 2003 level; and many maintenance, utility, and insurance costs have increased for the year. We may have to cut critical elements of our ministry. We also need at least 300 more households to pledge to our 2004 ministry year. There are still folks questioning their pledge to the Episcopal Church. Yes, many of you reading this newsletter have not pledged for 2004.

We need those 2004 pledges in order to maintain even present ministries here. But we need more than those pledges. We need people's hearts and souls. This Cathedral needs every member, even you on the outskirts (especially you on the outskirts!), to re-join this new community of amazing grace. God wants to do a great thing in the Church. God wants to redeem us and renew us.

I have been changed in this past year, changed by amazing grace; and I hope I will be changed in the coming year, too. I want to be part of a Christian community who is always learning, and re-learning, what it means to be renewed in Christ. Whoever you are, and wherever you are in your journey, I believe that God needs you here, too, as part of a community of new life at the Cathedral of St. Philip.

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler