

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

April 2016



Oh my! We have had such beauty before us at Mepkin Abbey this past month. The Camellias, the Azaleas, the Spirea, the Lady Banks Rose, the Daffodills, and the Hawthorns have all praised God in His work in this place. The most important event, of course, was Easter. And Father Guerric did his usual wonderful job of decorating the Church and bringing the Alleluia Chorus to crescendo with the Easter Lilies, Hydrangeas and other flowers. The simplicity of the Church with the flowers spoke volumes of the Trappist way.





As is their custom, the Garden Volunteers placed blooming plants on the graves of the deceased Brothers.



Garden Updates

Store:

As promised, the Store has statues now of Our Lady of Mepkin Abbey for sale.



Isn't she lovely?

Outside the Store, the Lady Banks Rose is full of blooms.



Cloister:

This past week, the students of the Father Ryan High School of Nashville have again made their trip during Spring Break to repair, sand, paint and generally fix anything that Brother John has for them to do. The major effort this year was the work at the 10 man cottage.



They enjoyed their work among the beautiful Azaleas Father Isaac had cleaned out and pruned at the Old Dorm.



Next to this area, the new steps down into the Old Dorm looked particularly lovely, as we had planted the window beds also.



At the top of the steps are George N's raised beds, which are not only delicious to eat from but a feast for the eyes as well!



Hawthorn

At the far end of the Old Dorm, there is a Patio we renovated and furnished for the Brothers last year. We have reopened it recently and hope they will enjoy being out there with the fabulous views of the Cooper River.



The Orchard:

The orchard crew had our annual controlled burn. This year we focused on the labyrinth and the fields surrounding it. The other fields we have burned in the past were mowed instead. The burn went very well in fact the best to date. There was a light breeze and the dew had evaporated before we started. Craig helped Norm and myself, ensuring that the fire didn't get out of bounds. The area around the memorial trees and large live oaks had been mowed beforehand to minimize the chance of damage. The burned area has been bush hogged and looks uniformly spring green.

Norm and I continue to work on weeds around the brambles. We don't want to use pesticides too close for fear of damaging the plants. It is slow going but hopefully worthwhile. Brother John stopped by today to see what we were doing on our knees

but was satisfied and amused when he found out.

The citrus has lots of flower buds and the blueberries are looking good although probably at least a couple of years away from a significant harvest. I can't imagine 38 degrees by the end of the week. Keep your fingers crossed.

Howard

Luce Garden:

For the past three weeks, there has been a steady stream of cars visiting Luce Garden. The photos say it all.





Azaleas



Spirea

Across the Lower Pond on the embankment, Peter has been busy clearing the overgrowth. Much to our surprise, the Azaleas, although severely pruned, have bloomed! We call these “Brother Stan’s Azaleas” as he planted some them years ago! They will only be more beautiful as they are kept free of vines and overgrowth.



Stan's Azaleas

Retreat Center:

Retreat Exploring the Power of Story May 20 -23,
2016

As human beings and as Christians, we are people of story. As John Shea says, "We turn our pain into narrative so we can bear it; we turn our ecstasy into narrative so we can prolong it. We tell our stories to live." As humans we are hardwired to make meaning through narrative, and as Christians we are connected to the never ending story of redemption and salvation.

This retreat will outline basic themes of the Christian life such as calling, surrender, hope, struggle, resurrection, and prepare participants to tell corollary stories from their life. The objective is to witness how the story of faith is not merely recorded in the Bible but in our lives. When we share our story with fellow pilgrims on the Way, we discover our common story.

Facilitated by The Rt. Rev. G. Porter Taylor is the sixth bishop of The Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina. He is the author of two books: *To Dream as God Dreams: Sermons of Community, Conversion, and Hope* and *From Anger to Zion: An Alphabet of Faith*.

The suggested donation for this retreat is \$350 for weekdays and \$300 for weekends.

Because of the demand for this retreat a preregistration fee is required to assure a space. Please send \$200 to: Story Retreat, 1098 Mepkin Abbey Rd. Moncks Corner, SC 29461 (Make Check payable to Mepkin Abbey)

Odds and Ends:

Our program continues to be so fortunate to attract Volunteers. Two of our Mormon Sisters have been talking up our program, and several of their fellow Mormon Missionaries asked if they could come for a tour of the gardens. We were delighted, and we had picnic lunch at the new memorial bench that overlooks the Bluff.



Here our visitors have a familiar resident who smells treats! (Abbey)



After lunch, Ursula toured them through all the gardens.



Ursula with Visitors in Luce Garden

The icing on the cake was that we have four new Volunteers from this group! Sister Leila has been transferred but we still have Sister Sophie plus these additions!



Sister Ethel and Sister Georgia (Ursula has run out of saints' names, I think.)



Elder Anthony and Elder Bernard

In case you are wondering and new to the Newsletter, these young people do not give out their first name, so Ursula named them after saints! They are so much help to us and it has been a wonderful experience for both of us to be exposed to our various religions. In the garden program, we really don't know who is with an organized religion and who is not. We welcome, as is the Trappist custom, everyone as if he or she were Christ.

Another great surprise and present was Alexis Clark (the daughter of Craig and Laura) and three of her friends... they came one Saturday and cleaned up the

entrance sidewalk to St. Anthony. Many, many thanks girls!



Hannah, Laura, Alexis and Savannah

Many thanks to Howard for the Orchard Report, to Craig and Father Jonas for the photos, and to Langhorne for editing this issue. This is much too long this month, but the Abbey has looked so special and so many people have helped us, I just had to include it all. Needless to say, without our regular group, the Abbey would not look so good. Our Volunteers are loyal beyond words and their willingness to help us and each other out is phenomenal. Do you think God has a hand in all of this? I suspect so, as we get so much more out of this work than we put in. Hope your Easter was special. He is Risen! Dottie

