The Cathedral Preservation Society was established last year to support the Cathedral Heritage Endowment Fund and is very important to insure the future of our beautiful Cathedral. The contributions are building up the Endowment which will provide funding for ongoing repairs and preservation.

This year’s appeal for the Cathedral Preservation Society was quite successful. At the celebration dinner on November 4 at the Savannah Golf Club, attended by those who had donated $500 or more, Dr. Luke Curtsinger, (page 5, bottom center) again Chairman of this year’s appeal, announced that we have raised approximately $130,000 thus far and more should still continue to flow in. That will bring the total Endowment to about $2,100,000.

Only a portion of the interest generated by the fund is disbursed each year and those funds are not sufficient for the ongoing structural repairs and maintenance on the Cathedral. Our ultimate goal is to build the Endowment to at least $5,000,000, so that we will have sufficient revenue each year to meet the maintenance needs of the Cathedral.

Bishop Hartmayer thanked all of the generous donors and benefactors, who were able to make a donation to this annual appeal. “I appreciate the sacrifices that you continue to make for the good of our Cathedral. It really is a treasure, and something of which we should be rightly proud. Visitors to our Cathedral marvel at its beauty and covet how fortunate we are to have it.”

Fr. Schreck was most appreciative of those who were able to contribute this year. “As I look at our Cathedral, I often ask myself, ‘How did
they do it? How did those faithful Catholics of Savannah make the sacrifices to find the funding to build and rebuild such a magnificent Church? Obviously, they did it by faith and by a passion to make a statement about the Catholic faith in the city of Savannah. Our Cathedral is in itself a great tool of evangelization. It is amazing to see the awe and wonder in the eyes of visitors who enter the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. As fortunate as you and I have been to be able to worship in such a grand church, we must do what we can to preserve this Cathedral for future generations of Catholics and visitors to Savannah.

If you haven’t already done so, please consider becoming part of the Cathedral Preservation Society. Every donation, no matter what amount, is appreciated.

We invite everyone interested in helping to maintain this glorious setting for worshiping God, to make a donation to the Cathedral Heritage Endowment Fund. For more information go to: http://savannahcathedral.org/join-the-society/.
Children are the future of the world, and of the Catholic Church. They are a gift from heaven and it is a blessing that the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist offers nursery during the 10 AM Mass.

Every Sunday morning the nursery is filled with beautiful children ranging from newborns to 5 year olds, giving their parents an opportunity to give their full attention to Mass. Just as the parents are receiving something from taking their child to nursery, so should the children get something from nursery as well.

The volunteers will help the children learn how to make the sign of the cross and become familiar with the principle Bible stories such as Noah’s Ark, Jonah and the whale and many more. This way the children will be fed spiritually as well as physically with the Cheerios. Eventually, they’ll leave nursery ready for “big” church and CRE where they will prepare to receive the sacraments.

For this to occur the nursery needs volunteers. We currently have 4 volunteers and more are needed to run the nursery. With an average of 6 children attending nursery every week, at least 2 volunteers are needed to watch the children, sometimes more. Not all the volunteers can work every Sunday so it is necessary to have more volunteers to help fill out the empty weeks.

Safety for the children is top priority. Each volunteer must have a background check and be certified in VIRTUS, a program to help adults protect children from predators.

The plastic gate to keep the children in the room has been replaced with a Dutch door, which will keep the children from climbing the gate and potentially hurting themselves. The old chalkboard has been repainted and will now be used for Bible story telling. All of these changes wouldn’t have been possible if it weren’t for Karen Gelow, the former nursery supervisor for the past 13 years. She gave so much of her time to the children and is an example for all the volunteers.

A big thank you to Fr. Schreck who helped fund the changes in the nursery; all the children love it.

Anyone interested in volunteering to help with the Nursery please contact Krystyna at krystswi@gmail.com.
The Religious Education/Adult Faith Enrichment programs currently offer a diverse agenda of events and there are many more planned for the New Year. Our programs provide a superb way to dig deeper into your faith, thereby enriching your life, and afford a path to achieve closer union with Our Lord. As a member of the Cathedral Parish Council, I have the responsibility oversee these activities that, taken together, form the Religious Education/Faith Enrichment programs for our parish.

This coming Lent, Bishop Hartmayer has directed all parishions in the diocese to participate in the Lenten renewal program called “Living the Eucharist.” It is a dynamic, parish-based program designed to help revitalize parish life and mission through a more profound experience of Sunday Mass. This multi-media program includes materials, which are comprehensive, proven, and easy to use. You will be getting much more information on this great program before Lent starts. We encourage all members of the parish to participate in this new program, which will run for three Lenten seasons.

The overall religious education program of the parish includes the three principal programs currently being conducted by Moira Novack and Glenda Sanders:

- **The Bible Timeline Course** that has been running for sixteen weeks covering the Old Testament. The sessions are on Monday at 6 PM in the parish hall. After the Christmas break the group will examine the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. All are welcome to come and join to explore the meaning and depth of that Gospel as well as the Acts. Following the Lenten break a new multi-media program will begin. Watch the bulletin for the start dates and the subject. The online portion is working well for people who miss class for any reason but most participants attend the classes in the parish hall.

- **There is a Book Club** that meets every Wednesday at 10 AM in the parish hall and most go to the noon Mass on completion of the discussion. They have delved into various fields from Mary Shelley’s famous book *Frankenstein* to Father Martin’s *My Life With The Saints*. All are invited to come and join in or to just sit and observe.

- **The Prayer Group** meets on Thursday at 6 PM in the parish hall. This group is participating in a 32-week retreat program called *Ignatian Adventure*. This program is designed to provide similar benefits as the 30-day retreat at a Jesuit retreat center. The group will take a break during the Lenten season for participation in another parish program. Anyone can join at any point in the retreat.

In addition, there is the Savannah Campus Ministry under the direction of Ms. Krystyna Swierczewski and to round out our offerings, Deacon Dewain Smith presents the RCIA Program on Tuesday evening to those who want to learn about the Catholic faith as well as Catholics who want to better understand their religion.

All these programs are designed so that you can explore the depths of our religion and grow in knowledge about it. Please use them and participate in these great programs.
During the past year the Cathedral parishioners have given of themselves unselfishly to help others and raise funds to support a variety of good works. Here are just some of these wonderful projects:

- **Adopt a Grandparent**
- **Food Drive**
- **Potty for a Price**
- **Family Promise hosts family**
- **Feeding the Hungry**
- **CCW Rummage Sale**
- **P.A.C.K delivers food supplies**
- **Seniors Mass and Luncheon**
The recent “Musique de France” organ concert performed by Olivier Latry, a titular organist at Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, was preceded by a re-dedication and Papal blessing for the Noack organ, whose rich sound has filled the air in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist for the past 30 years. Music Director McDowell Fogle introduced the concert and turned the Papal blessing over to Bishop Gregory J. Hartmayer. According to Mac: Popes grant blessings to objects used during the sacred liturgy. Since this organ has been used for over 12,000 of them, Pope Francis granted a Papal blessing. In addition it has been heard during 2,000 weddings and funerals, numerous special events from the city as well as many St. Patrick’s Day celebrations—it’s amazing the number of lives this organ has touched. People come to church for different reasons. The organ brings the architecture and the murals to life. It adds another depth and dimension to the experience in that space. It just adds to the wonder of the Cathedral.

Fr. Pablo Migone beautifully describes the role of music in our spiritual lives in his “Music of God” article recently published in the Southern Cross:

I have been fortunate to visit Paris several times and always stopped by the remarkable twelfth century gothic cathedral dedicated to Our Lady, Notre Dame de Paris. The flying buttresses, rose windows, towers, and uplifting interior pointed to a higher place, encouraging us to lift up our minds and hearts to a transcendent and eternal God. During a visit in 2000, I attended Mass on Pentecost Sunday. It was during that visit that my mind and heart were uplifted not only by the architecture of the place but by the spectacular organ music. I imagined the notes swerving through the arches and filling every nook and cranny of the church. The sound emerging from the pipes shook my insides, the sound waves passing through me unseen, but certainly felt, in the same way the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

Last month, Mr. Olivier Latry dazzled about three hundred people at an organ concert at the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist. The night before the concert, I went into the cathedral before going to bed as I often do to pray. I found myself sitting close to the altar while Mr. Latry rehearsed on the opposite side of the church up in the choir loft. Exquisite music gushed effortlessly out of the pipe organ. “What a privilege,” I thought. I was overwhelmed not only by the beauty of the music but by the singular opportunity to sit in the church for an impromptu personal concert by a world renowned musician. “All that beauty being created now, and I am the only one who gets to hear it.”

As I sat on the deacon’s bench, I was overcome with a sense of God’s personal interest in my life and his fatherly care. As incredible as this singular concert was, how much greater is the symphony God writes for each person he creates! “Even the hairs of your head have all been counted” (Luke 12,7).

Suddenly, the organist represented God the Father playing beautiful music just for me to enjoy. God is a gardener who tends every flower individually. He is not a distant entity who governs the world from afar sitting on a throne; He is near. “What is man that you should keep him in mind? Mortal man you should care for him? (Psalm 8:4). Notre Dame came to Savannah, and Christ, her son, was near. “Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you (Isaiah 49:15).”
We have published many articles in the past about the beautiful stained glass windows in the Cathedral, even showing the cartoons (drawings) of the windows before the fire. We discussed how some of the saints pictured are not on display in the rebuilt Cathedral after the fire, as a window or even in a mural. But due to spatial considerations we didn’t do a side by side comparison of how those saints looked in the old windows versus the way they look in the Cathedral today.

Here is the cartoon of the pre-fire aisle window containing St. Patrick and St. Lawrence. St. Patrick is currently displayed in the second window from the front on the south aisle, without a snake while St. Lawrence is pictured as the central figure in the Five Martyrs mural on the north wall above the center aisle.

The next two cartoons display St. George, who appears in the Cathedral today as a lancet window in the south transept and was the subject of the 2016 Christmas ornament and St. Henry of Bavaria, who is pictured in the Four Kings mural above the north center aisle.
The cartoon of St. Peter in the Sea is not a window in the post fire Cathedral. But today we have a window of Jesus giving the Keys of the Kingdom to St. Peter on the north aisle wall. It is most interesting to me that, although the subject matter of the windows is different, the arrangement of the figures is essentially the same with Jesus standing and St. Peter kneeling.

The Prodigal Son cartoon looks quite familiar as we currently have a mural in the north transept depicting this scene as well as the etched glass panel in the center door of the Confessional that also shows this image.
Many of you may have noticed the new decorative feature in the Cathedral as Bishop Hartmayer’s coat of arms was recently affixed to the upper arch of his throne, or cathedra. It was made by Carl Fougerousse, one of our parishioners, at the request of Fr. Schreck. Carl founded Red Fern Studios in 1998 to execute ecclesiastical works steeped in the tradition of Catholic figurative and decorative art.

He designs and produces various stained glass, mosaics, murals and sculptures for churches, healthcare facilities and universities in his studio in midtown Savannah. Carl and his wife Marisa have been members of our parish community for 10 years.

To execute the piece, Carl obtained a digital image of the seal from Mike Johnson at the Southern Cross, sized it to fit the space, traced the image on the wooden substrate and skillfully painted the coat of arms on the surface.

The familiar coat of arms of the Diocese of Savannah is on the left; Bishop Hartmayer’s personal Coat of Arms is on the right and represents his personal heritage. The background of wavy blue and white is a symbol for water as he is a native of Buffalo, NY, the Queen City of the Great Lakes. The eagle serves as a symbol of both the Bishop’s German heritage and of St. John the Evangelist, since his father’s name and his middle name is John.

The Celtic Knot, or Triquetra, represents the Bishop’s Irish heritage on his maternal side. And finally, the Tau is a reference to his vocation as a Conventual Franciscan Friar.

Behind the shield is the Cross of San Damiano. The Franciscan movement began when St. Francis, praying at the Chapel of San Damiano, heard the crucifix speak to him and say, “Francis, go rebuild my Church for it is falling to ruins.”

His motto beneath the shield, Pax et Bonum – Peace and Good – are the words used by St. Francis in his greetings to others.

If you’d like to see more of Carl’s work, visit his website at www.redfernfineartstudio.com.
What is the Immaculate Conception?

Few doctrines of the Catholic Church are as misunderstood as the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which we celebrate every year on December 8. Many Catholics think that the Immaculate Conception refers to the conception of Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. That event, though, is celebrated at the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, on March 25, nine months before Christmas.

The Immaculate Conception refers to the belief that the Blessed Virgin Mary was free from Original Sin from the very moment of her conception in the womb of her mother, Saint Anne. We celebrate the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on September 8th; nine months before that is December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX promulgated the infallible dogma of the Immaculate Conception. This ex cathedra statement made official the eternal sinlessness of Mary, showing that from the moment of the creation of her soul she was granted a unique grace from God to be excluded from the stain of original sin, enabling her to carry Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in her womb.

In the Apostolic Constitution Ineffabilis Deus, Pope Pius IX wrote "We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."

This is a teaching that had been widely believed throughout the Church for at least 250 years, but once the doctrine was declared infallible, it became a teaching that all Catholics are bound to believe by faith.

Original sin was not removed from her soul as happens with baptism, but in fact was never even present there to be removed. It was because of the merits of Christ that this was able to occur, because no one can have that debt of original sin removed or excluded without Christ’s actions and the grace of God.

At Lourdes, France in 1858 – just four years after the dogma was proclaimed – Mary herself confirmed this to St. Bernadette during one of her 18 apparitions, telling Bernadette “I am the Immaculate Conception.”

We reaffirm this dogma very time we say the Hail Mary which begins with the familiar salutation of the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.” And her Cousin Elizabeth’s greeting during the Visitation, as recorded in St. Luke’s Gospel, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb,” is a further confirmation.

This aspect of Mary has become one of the most popular Marian devotions and she was officially declared as the patroness of the United States with this title, by the first Council of Baltimore in 1846.

Here at the Cathedral we are fortunate to have the magnificent Assumption stained glass window in the south transept, with Mary portrayed as La Purísima Inmaculada Concepción by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 1678, now in Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Sources: Catholic Encyclopedia, ThoughtCo.
Come, long-expected Jesus.
Excite in me a joy responsive to the Father's joy.
I seek His will so I can serve with gladness, singing and love.