Faith formation is ongoing. The Children in the Religious Education (CRE) program at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist started their school year on September 28 and will continue until the end of May. Our mission is to provide faith formation for Cathedral children in collaboration with their parents, so we can put them on the path to become lifelong disciples of Jesus. We accomplish this mission in a safe and inspiring environment with catechists who provide age specific religious education.

Currently we have 70 children enrolled in our program in 5 different sections; kindergarten/1st grade, Eucharist preparation, 3rd/4th grade, 5th/6th grade and Confirmation preparation. Fortunately for the program, the catechists who participated last year have all agreed to continue to provide faith formation during this school year.
A major objective of CRE is to build on the Catholic foundation provided by the parents and grandparents in the home. We keep each parent involved in their child’s religious education through various means. Specifically, during weekly contacts with the catechists and the semi-annual reports that identify the Catholic faith traditions discussed during the past few months.

Each month, the students in one of the classrooms present a prayer assembly attended by all the children. Parents are also encouraged to attend these prayer assemblies. We also conduct an annual celebration for the parents at the end of the year to share what was presented during the school year.

Shortly after this school year began, we celebrated the annual Children’s Mass during the Cathedral’s 10:00 Sunday Mass. A majority of the children and their families were in attendance and sat together in the first four rows.

The children preparing to receive the Eucharist for the first time had the opportunity to take up the gifts and bring them to Bishop Hartmayer who celebrated the Mass. Father Schreck delivered the homily and acknowledged the importance of children receiving ongoing faith formation either in the parish program or while attending one of the local Catholic schools.

The CRE program is grateful for the support we receive from our Rector during his visits to our Sunday classroom sessions and the financial support we receive to purchase educational materials and supplies.

We also want to thank the parents who have enrolled their children and entrust us with Catholic education of their children. We are honored by their ongoing support of the CRE program and their support of their children who are on the path of becoming disciples of Jesus.

It is not too late to enroll your child in our religious education program. If you are a member of the Cathedral parish and have children who are not enrolled in a Catholic school, please call the church office at 233-4709 to enroll your child. We are confident that if children are enrolled in religious education throughout childhood they will most likely be active members in their Catholic community throughout adulthood.
On Sunday evening, October 5th, 2014 almost 450 Cathedral parishioners filled Lafayette Square for the First Stewardship Appreciation Supper. The purpose of this evening was to say a big and much deserved “Thank you” to our faithful parishioners who contribute so generously to the Cathedral, and who continue to share their time and talent for the good of the parish and the wider community.

It was also be a wonderful opportunity to meet and spend some time with one another. Our Cathedral parishioners come from many different parts of the city and the region. Most people attend a particular Mass on Sunday and may not even be aware of their fellow parishioners who attend a different Mass. It is important that we all have a sense of who belongs to our parish community, and who we are who share in the mission of the Cathedral parish. It was particularly heartwarming to see many little children running around the square enjoying themselves.

Hamburgers, veggie burgers and bratwurst were prepared by The Knights of Columbus Council 631 plus sides and some delicious desserts were also served. A special thank you to the women of the CCW who organized the event. Live music was provided by Equinnox and a good time was had by all.

“Thank you” to our faithful parishioners for all you do to support the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.
I just wanted to say thanks to the Cathedral Parish for supporting my mission trip to Honduras this past July. Finishing my first year at Mercer University School of Medicine, I was very excited for the opportunity to use my new medical and clinical knowledge in serving the people of Honduras.

The trip was very humbling and rewarding. We ended up being a group of forty five medical students, 6 doctors, and 2 nurse practitioners. We flew into Tegucigalpa, Honduras and traveled an hour and a half to Guaimaca, where we stayed on a missionary site. We set up clinics in the surrounding villages for four days. We were able to serve over 1500 people in these four days!

While most cases were bacterial infections, a majority of the families we saw needed the essentials we take for granted every day: Advil, Tylenol, muti-vitamins, Tums… We also had a donations room that gave families the chance to take home a new pair of shoes or clothing.

In addition to the medical clinics, we also participated in water ministry. The missionary site contained the only purified water system in a 2 hour radius. We would fill up one of the missionaries’ truck beds that had a huge water container and drive over to the next village to deliver fresh water.

Kids and families would see our truck coming down the road and run back inside to grab whatever sort of bucket they could. Little kids, as young as 4 and 5, would be chasing after our truck with milk gallons to fill with water. We would then help the families carry their buckets back to their houses.

This was truly eye-opening to see their living conditions. They would welcome us into their houses, and they were so grateful for fresh water. Some families gifted us with fresh mangos, and it was truly humbling that these families who have nothing wanted to give something back in return. The water ministry was one of my favorite days of the trip.

Again, thank you for your support. It is easy to get caught up “in the books” and forget why I am on this road to become a doctor: to serve others. This trip to Honduras has been a good reminder of how much passion for serving others I have and my determination in continuing this journey.
Christian Service Adds Another Ministry

By Nancy Bachner

Abandoned, Exploited, Homeless, Trafficked, Abused, Alone, Addicted, Afraid

These are the women residents of The Living Vine. As their brochure will tell you, “standing strong against exploitation, standing firm for life.”

Last month I had the privilege to visit The Living Vine as a guest for one of their monthly breakfast meetings along with my fellow Christian Service Committee members Deborah Wade and Diane Farthing. We wanted to know more about The Living Vine in order to assess how our committee could be of assistance to their calling of caring for expectant women and girls who have chosen life but are unable to care for themselves. It was a revelation into the true meaning of Christianity.

“The Vine” has been in existence for 18 years in the heart of Savannah under the direction of the founder, Claire Hodges, R. N. The Living Vine is answering God’s call to minister to expectant mothers and their unborn children. It is a non-denominational Christian maternity home that provides a safe and loving residential program to women who have chosen life but have no support system for the duration of their pregnancy. The home teaches the principles of a disciplined Christian life, and building reconciliation in broken families as well as providing women with life skills which will help them break the cycle of poverty and the entitlement mindset.

Some startling statistics about the residents include, 29% are homeless, 45% enter the home with a chemical dependency, 84% are victims of sexual exploitation, and 97% lack financial and emotional support from their baby’s father.

The Living Vine is a 24/7 residential program for pregnant women in crisis which displays God’s love for life by opening doors and arms to women and their unborn children during the vulnerable and challenging season of pregnancy. They provide spiritual growth, homeschooling, job internship, parenting and life skills classes, exercise, and medical care and proper nutrition. All services are offered to residents free of charge. The Living Vine does not accept taxpayer money or public funding of any type.

Residents are taught life skills to enable them to cope with the outside world and some of its challenges after the birth of their child. A well-equipped classroom is designed for the comfort of an expectant mother during the hours that are spent maintaining current education or preparing for a GED.

Residents also earn points for being responsible citizens of the Living Vine home. The point system of 7.5 points per hour of attending classes and training along with behavior modification points enable the residents to purchase personal goods and baby items. With this process the residents learn about the responsibilities of holding a job, earning money and budgeting.

After our visit, we asked our Christian Service Committee if it were possible to add The Living Vine to our list of the local social services we support throughout the year. The answer was a resounding YES! We started small with an item of the month drive in the Cathedral Bulletin for November which solicited contributions of plastic storage bags, dryer softener sheets, and cleaning supplies. We will also have an “Angel Tree” dedicated to The Living Vine in the Cathedral during Advent. With the support of the Cathedral parish, we know we can bring some light into the lives of the residents of The Living Vine. “Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.” Psalm 82:3
Father Pablo Migone has been in residence at the Cathedral since July when he was named the Vocation Director of the Diocese of Savannah. In addition, he will also serve as the Chancellor of the Diocese and assistant to Bishop Hartmayer. Fr. Pablo will be very busy.

Born in Lima, Peru in 1982, Fr. Pablo grew up in the outskirts of Lima and attended a British school which was helpful when his family moved to Augusta in 1991 after years of threats from a Peruvian terrorist organization. His family still lives in Augusta today.

In 2000 he graduated from Aquinas High School in Augusta and enrolled at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina to pursue a history degree. While receiving an excellent education at Furman, he felt a strong calling to the Priesthood. At the beginning of his sophomore year in college, he remembered a priest who visited his high school in Augusta. He came for the day and spoke to every 10th grade religion class about vocations and asked if anyone had thought of being a priest before. The room got tense, people looked around, and no hands went up. He had thought about the priesthood already at that point, but the time was not right then. Now he remembered Father Brett Brannen’s talk, in his sophomore year in college, because the thought of the priesthood would not leave his mind. Since he had spoken about vocations, he decided to contact him.

“Thus began an unexpected and surprising adventure with God. My plans for the future all of a sudden seemed irrelevant and unfulfilling. I wasn’t entirely sure of what I was doing, but I felt God’s gentle call giving me strength to respond. I decided to take the plunge, to dive into the mysterious call I felt, and to let God lead the way and surprise me,” Fr. Pablo said.

After careful discernment for several months, Fr. Pablo decided to leave Furman and transfer to Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio and become a seminarian for the Diocese of Savannah. He graduated with history and philosophy degrees in 2005.

After graduation and spending the summer in Douglas, Georgia, Fr. Pablo continued his studies at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, Italy. Upon completion of his degree at the University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome, Fr. Pablo was ordained a priest at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist on June 20th, 2009.

His first assignment was as Parochial Vicar at Sacred Heart, Warner Robins where he served for three years. “It was overwhelming at first since every day brought new experiences,” he said. “I knew that the priesthood would be fulfilling and exciting, but after several months of being a priest, I realized that the priesthood was much more than I expected. I can’t imagine myself doing anything else.”

In 2012, he was transferred to his hometown of Augusta where he served for two years at Saint Joseph as Parochial Vicar. “It was a privilege to return home and to give back to the local church that gave so much to me. Returning home presented some challenges, especially when the Gospel passage on my first Sunday at the parish had Jesus saying ‘a prophet is not without honor except in his own town.’ ”

His new assignment will be very different from previous assignments, yet he looks forward to working with men who are discerning God’s will for their lives by encouraging and guiding them. He plans to visit schools and parishes throughout the diocese raising awareness of the unique call from God many receive and not all answer. He will also work closely with various organizations in the diocese that foster vocations, the priests, and of course with our current thirteen seminarians.
It is one of the details of the Infancy Narrative that we well remember. In the cold of Bethlehem, in December we presume, after a journey, Joseph and his pregnant wife Mary could find no place to stay. They found shelter in a stable or a cave, and it was there that Jesus was born. For the evangelist, this is no insignificant detail. Rather, it sets the stage for everything that this child would become. He would be a most unusual Messiah, who would redeem the human race not with power, but in powerlessness; not with wealth, but in poverty; not by adulation, but with mockery.

The Trappist Monk, Thomas Merton, once wrote this: “Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for Him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it, because he is out of place in it, and yet must be in it, His place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are disinherited, who are denied status as persons, who are tortured, bombed, and exterminated. He is mysteriously present in those for whom there seems to be nothing but the world at its worst.” In the course of his ministry, Jesus would be criticized for associating with sinners, for eating and drinking with prostitutes and tax collectors. And he would say quite clearly that it was for just such as these that he had come into the world.

The harsh conditions of his birth, that detail of the story that we remember well, fills our hearts and souls with warmth and comfort. Undoubtedly, there are times when we feel small; when we feel that we do not belong or fit in; when we know that we will never succeed to fame and wealth. Jesus Christ was born for us. He was born outside the city, apart from all that the world considers of worth. And he would die on a cross, outside the city, rejected and scorned. But in doing so He has won for us salvation and eternal life. The lives of the small, the poor, the marginalized are precious in the sight of God. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will!
The 14th Annual Cathedral Heritage Gala held on November 21, 2014 was a huge success. This year the Cathedral itself was the featured element in this exciting new format. Prior to the Gala Dinner and Auction, there was a reception on the Plaza in front of the Cathedral, beneath its soaring spires. Attendees enjoyed hors d’oeuvres and beverages under the stars, and then adjourned inside the magnificent Cathedral, to enjoy a concert enhanced by the amazing acoustics of the church.

The Gala Dinner and Auction, was held at the Chatham Club in the DeSoto Hilton, a marvelous new setting for this signature event. This venue afforded donors beautiful panoramic vistas of the Savannah skyline dominated by the illuminated Cathedral with its twin spires reaching upward towards the heavens.

The highlight of the evening was the Live Auction orchestrated by Sonny Dixon of WTOC News as our auctioneer. Energetically fueled by a couple of glasses of sweet tea, Sonny coaxed and cajoled attendees to buy many unique items including a villa in Tuscany, the St. Patrick’s Day “Luck of the Irish” Package which features dinner at the Firefly with Monsignor O’Neill and a special dinner at Kitchenware Outfitters with Bishops Hartmayer and Boland serving the food.

Multiple golf and cruise packages donated by O. C. Welch were again among the biggest money makers, amounting to over 40% of the total auction proceeds. Bishop Boland shamelessly serenaded the crowd to spur bidding on his painting which ultimately sold for $2800 and Bishop Hartmayer’s mystery item, a dozen raspberry muffins, made according to a secret aromatic recipe, also generated spirited bidding helping him to sell four batches at $1000 per dozen. When the final gavel fell, the grand total stood at over $50,000, a Gala Auction record.

“Although the figures have not yet been finalized, this year’s Gala was an outstanding success. We expect to raise about $145,000 to $150,000, which represents a substantial increase over last year’s total of $126,000 and a new Gala record,” according to Michael and Linda Lee Brown, Cathedral Gala Co-Chairs. “We are most thankful to all who attended and supported the Gala. You have helped preserve this magnificent Cathedral of St. John the Baptist for generations to come.”
Cathedral Parishioners Receive Gartland Service Award

On November 23, 2014, the Solemnity of Christ the King, Bishop Hartmayer presented Gartland Service Awards to Sister John Moravec and Frank Hester in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. Since 2000, the Diocese of Savannah has recognized long-standing service to the Catholic Church in South Georgia by conferring the Bishop Francis X. Gartland Service Awards on nominees from each parish. The Awards were established to recognize distinguished service to the Church community in the tradition of our first Bishop, Francis X. Gartland, (served 1850-1854). We congratulate Sister John and Frank on this well-deserved award and thank them for their many years of volunteer service to the Cathedral.

The gold and blue pin combines elements from Bishop Gartland’s episcopal coat of arms as well as the shield of the Diocese of Savannah. His motto *Vincit Veritas*, or “Truth conquers,” is inscribed on the pin.