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McKinney Chapel Christmas Pageant set for Saturday Dec 11

12.05.10 - 08:00 am

Neighbors are wrapping little old McKinney Chapel in lights, as a time-honored gift to the legions who treasure a country church Christmas celebration -- coming to the chapel at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 11.

As always, seating will be tight in the ancient pews, and those who'd rather enjoy the rustic nativity spectacle from inside, than through the windows (as does happen!), are advised to arrive well before the 7 p.m. procession of angels and shepherds and possibly a lost beagle or so. The solitary aisle is the entryway for heavenly host, holy family, searching wisemen and all who were a little slow arriving, so it can get amiably crowded.

A tradition in the Eastatoee Valley of northern Pickens County since the chapel's resurrection from its ruins, in 1981, the pageant has gone on, pretty much unchanged, through hard times and flush, births, family changes and deaths. Many, such as local mailman Gene Chapman, its founder, and his son John who helped with it from his teens, have died. Many a Baby Jesus, who lay remarkably quiet in the manger, now is grown and independent.

Gene's wife Georgia, producer of the pageant from the first, is still putting it together, with the help of her daughter Gail Edwards. Part of its charm is the relaxed direction. "If a child comes up, and wants to be in it, well, we put 'em in it!" Georgia says. Often an angel or a wiseman came, unaware, as a spectator. But there just happened to be an extra, homemade costume hanging up, waiting for somebody, and Gail or Georgia spied "the perfect fit" -- and a star was born.

There is something in the all-inclusive spirit that touches each simple effort, and makes it divine.

As always, it's completely free, as is the party that always follows, under the chapel's brush arbor. It's nice when people bring a tray of Christmas refreshments to share on the long table, beside the bonfire, but it's not a "have to." Everybody is welcome.

This year, Hospice chaplain Rev. Beverly Kelly will lead the service, and Dr. James Mahanes will be the narrator. A team of Jewish praise-dancers will take part, along with a volunteer choir and other performers from the community.

McKinney Chapel is on Cleo Chapman Highway, in Eastatoee, near the Lake Keowee end of the road. Though it's inside the gate of the Cliffs Vineyards development, all going to the chapel are admitted. For more information call Georgia Chapman at (864)868-2555.

Read more: The Easley Progress - McKinney Chapel Christmas Pageant set for Saturday Dec 11

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