

ST. MARY'S, STONE HARBOR, TO CONDUCT ANNUAL FOOD BASKET DRIVE

The Branches, the outreach center of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Stone Harbor and St. Barnabas Church, Villas, located in Rio Grande in the Village Shoppes adjacent to *St. Mary's This 'N That Thrift Shop*, will be conducting their annual food basket drive to assist needy families in the community for the holidays. As in years past, food baskets consisting of everything necessary for a holiday dinner and additional non-perishable food items will be assembled and distributed locally. Over 100 baskets have been distributed both at Thanksgiving and Christmas for several years now.

The need is great this year. Social service agencies in the County are overwhelmed with new applications for assistance as more people are unemployed and struggling to provide for their families. This food basket drive provides a real, hands-on way for us to help. Due to this tremendous need, St. Mary's is expanding its appeal to the community. Your financial assistance is needed so that even more baskets can be assembled and distributed over the upcoming holiday season.

Your gift will be put to good use. St. Mary's has grown its outreach into the local community tremendously over the past several years. Its thrift shop is well known throughout the County and through *The Mustard Seed* has distributed over \$200,000 in grants through the County to programs that provide for the neediest among us. Through the partnership with St. Barnabas and the work at *The Branches*, hot lunches of soup and bread and dessert are served every Wednesday in the winter. Other programs at *The Branches* include legal aid, health fairs, NA meetings, a monthly "Movie Night," and soon a literacy volunteer program. *The Branches* has distributed over 100 backpacks annually for 3 years to needy children beginning school.

This year we are asking you to partner with us. Know that your donation to our annual food basket drive will reach the neediest in our County. St. Mary's has given much to our community and this year we need your help. Checks can be made payable to: St. Mary's Church and in the memo line, please write "food baskets." We are also accepting donations of turkeys, chickens and hams that can be dropped off at the church and will be included in the holiday baskets. Please join us in providing the gift of a holiday meal to our needy brothers and sisters.