

# *The Epistle of St. Paul's, Bristol Parish*

## *Petersburg, Virginia*

January 2012

Dear St. Paul's Friends,

A few weeks after Thanksgiving, a parishioner from my wife April's church dropped by the house to offer the use of his backpack leaf blower. He had noticed the great number of deciduous trees on our property and the enormous size of the leaf raking task that lay before us. "This machine will cut your work by three quarters!" Forrest announced. I was not at all skeptical of his statement as I stared down at the powerful engine and the robust long snout. "Just put your gas and oil here, prime it, set the choke, and pull the chord. Nothing to it!" I did have my doubts, however, about whether I would be able to stay earthbound once I hoisted the contraption onto my back!

After a few tentative moments and a tumble backwards over an unseen azalea bush, I really began to enjoy the power and efficiency of the device. I have nearly finished the job of clearing our yard of every leaf and delivering them to the side of the road to be picked up by the City of Richmond. Being of a theological turn of mind and having many noisy hours to think to myself, I have come up with an analogy between leaf blowing and pastoral work in the parish setting. The following is what comes of spending too many hours with a very loud motor on your back and a lot of leaves at your feet!

Each afternoon begins with a few hours of pushing an increasingly larger pile of leaves up from the spillway to the edge of the road. The blower is powerful enough to blast off wet leaves, years of old rotted mulch, bits of moss, sticks, and even a branch. A weed can catch a leaf or two, but when the full force of the air current is focused on a tangled leaf, the weed bends over and gives up its ghostly cargo. Leaves seek temporary shelter in the low knees of trees until the trunk spits up every last bit of dirt and gravel into my eyes and nose. Eventually, a pile is pushed to the roadside and carefully maneuvered into position with the overshot leaves straying out into the road. It is there on the beautiful clean, dark asphalt that I experience the greater pleasure of blowing leaves unhindered by the clutching shrubbery and the obstructionist tree trunks. After a few moments of complete control, I find myself heading back down the hill to start again the zigzag pushing of undisciplined leaves through the calamitous claws of the forest floor.

In the church year, there are often days and sometimes even weeks when the flow of the Holy Spirit seems devilishly impeded by the encumbrance of weeds, thorn bushes, old stumps, and English ivy. I long for the raised up valley, the lowered mountain, the rough place made plain, and especially the paved highway made straight. But cruising along in the power of the Spirit, I wonder about the weeds that need to bend, the knees of the trees that need to be cleansed, and the canes of the rose bushes that need to be cleared. Living in community is not always easy and can certainly be frustrating at times, but we are all becoming more familiar and more dear to each other all the time. Yes, I may be a snatchety weed to someone, but I'm your weed and you are my leaf to be caught in my momentary grasp. We live together. We laugh together. We cry together. And we grow together.

May the wind of the Holy Spirit blow out the dust from our individual lives and from the corporate life of our community. May we be cleansed of all that would separate us from one another. Finally, may our rough places be made plain and our crooked highways made straight.

Peace, Rick

## *Highlights of January Events*

**Sunday, January 1st**

**The Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

10:30 a.m. – Christmas Lessons & Carols

**Friday and Saturday, January 6th and 7th**

6:00 to 9:00 p.m. – Vestry Dinner & Retreat

8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. - Vestry Retreat

**Thursday, January 12th – Winter Concert**

6:30 p.m. – Organ & Piano Music

Presented by Historic Petersburg Foundation

**Tuesday, January 24th**

**Pre-Council Meeting**

7:00 p.m. – Christ & Grace Church

**Sunday, January 29th – Epiphany IV**

8:00 a.m. - Holy Eucharist Rite I

10:30 a.m. - Celtic Communion

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### *Vestry Retreat to be held*

*January 6th & 7th*

Members of the 2012 Vestry will gather for an informal dinner at the Petersburg Country Club on Friday, January 6th to begin their first Retreat Weekend together. In addition to the regular Vestry Meeting agenda items, members will tackle three tasks: 1) Discussion of three big measurable goals for 2012, 2) Election of Vestry Officers for 2012, and 3) Review of monthly financial statements. With regard to the first task, it will be an open-ended discussion of several possible goals for 2012 that will be narrowed down to the top three during the Saturday session. The challenge will be to determine how success will be measured with reference to the chosen goals.

Saturday's work will focus the Vestry's attention on a review of the 2012 calendar, assigning big events to individual Vestry members or Vestry Committees, and narrowing down the lists of goals from Friday night's discussion to just three.

The Vestry will gather once more for a second retreat in late May or early June to evaluate progress on the three major goals for 2012. If necessary, the steps toward accomplishing those goals will be adjusted and fine tuned to assure ultimate success.

### *Historic Petersburg Foundation to host Winter Concert at St. Paul's*

Accompanying a slide presentation of photographic flashbacks of historic Petersburg, Michael Holland will play historic pieces of wonderful organ music and the esteemed composer and entertainer Robert Sturbridge. Robert Flinn will offer songs played on the grand piano. The event will begin promptly at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday evening, January 12th in the nave of St. Paul's Church. The concert is free for all those who wish to attend.

### *Morning Prayer Services to be Scheduled*

Plans are being made for the initiation of a weekly service of Morning Prayer to be said on either Tuesday or Thursday mornings at St. Paul's. There has always been a deep appreciation for the moving rhythms of the Morning Prayer liturgy in the Episcopal Church and at St. Paul's in particular. After a few weeks of the Rector's leading the service in order to determine the optimum format, i.e. number of lessons, sequence of prayers, and possible forms of a homily, ample opportunity will be given to the laity to lead this mid-week service. It is very much hoped that as folks find comfort and solace in this prayer discipline that more days will be added to the schedule. Final plans will be announced in the church bulletin and sent out via e-mail.

## ***Walk Against Hunger Contributions***

Peachie Johnson and Rick Greenwood raised \$325 towards the support of the Downtown Churches United Walk Against Hunger by covering the 6.2 mile course through Petersburg on Saturday, November 19. There were reports of nearly 1,800 participants in this year's walk, so it would seem that the goal of raising \$30,000 is certainly within reach. Within a few weeks of the conclusion of the walk, over \$15,000 had already been collected. The monies collected from the supporters of the walk are used to fund the Food Pantry, the utilities program, and the prescription drug program offered through the Hope Center of Downtown Churches United. If you missed out on the opportunity to sponsor a walker, you can still contribute directly to the *Walk Against Hunger* by writing a check to DCU and mailing it to:

The Hope Center  
827 Commerce Street  
Petersburg, VA 23803

## ***2012 Flower Chart***

The 2012 Flower Chart still has several Sundays available for sign-up. The cost of flowers will remain the same as last year: \$40 for the Main Altar, \$30 for the Chapel Altar and \$60 for both altars on the same date. Please sign up on a first come – first serve basis.

## ***Next OCW Meeting***

The February gathering of the OCW (Old Coots and Wannabes) will gather on the first Tuesday in February (the 1st) at 11:30 a.m. at the Demolition Coffee Co. The Cafe is located at 215 E. Bank Street in downtown Petersburg with ample parking across the street and to the side of the Cafe. There will still be no set agenda. Just come and enjoy the food and fellowship!

## ***Valentine's Day Concert***

Friday, February 10th  
6:30 PM

Sidney Long & Friends  
*present*

A Concert for St Valentine's Day  
*featuring*

Favorite Love Songs for Voice & Piano

A freewill offering will be taken to benefit  
the Whittle Music & Arts Fund.

## ***Little Notes from You***

Dear Folks,

Thank you, every one, for remembering me on my birthday.

I have watched many of you grow up and have beautiful children of your own; and I hope you will all receive as many happy years as I have.

God bless you all,

Hibernia

## ***January Birthdays***

1<sup>st</sup> Betty Jordan  
2<sup>nd</sup> Nat Cuthbert  
17<sup>th</sup> Sam Bryant  
20<sup>th</sup> Gracelyn Parks  
29<sup>th</sup> Thomas Tuck  
30<sup>th</sup> Barbara Reynolds  
31<sup>st</sup> Shirley Willcox

## ***January Anniversaries***

20<sup>th</sup> Mickey and Stephanie Little  
24<sup>th</sup> Wayne and Heath Thompson  
25<sup>th</sup> Wayne and Marti Tuck

## ***Did we miss your birthday or anniversary?***

Please forgive us! If we did, let us know. We may not have had the information. As a parish family, we really do want to remember each person's birthday and anniversary.