

The Epistle of St. Paul's, Bristol Parish

Petersburg, Virginia

November 2011

Dear St. Paul's Friends,

Why does anyone go to church? There are as many answers to this question as there are people. But I think it would be safe to say that most people go to church because they "get something out of it." The Catechism in the back of the Book of Common Prayer would have us believe that we go to church to "praise God, not to obtain anything, but because God's Being draws praise from us." This is certainly true in both a theological and an ideal sense, but in a common, everyday sense, we go to church because something happens to us during worship and we would miss out on this "something" if we were not to go to church.

Part of the "something" that people experience in church is a connection to the other people worshipping, i.e. there are definite benefits to corporate worship that are different from those gained from one's private prayer time. After worshipping in one congregation for several months, we begin to count on seeing particular people in particular pews. We know where everyone should be and we notice when they are absent. We talk after the service with those who sit near us and we learn about their lives. We share various aspects of our lives with others. We become part of a larger family. We fit in. We belong. We feel at home. Most people who come to a new church are looking for this type of connection, but would probably not write it down on a checklist of priorities. As churches add new members because of their ability to make people feel comfortable and welcome, it becomes more difficult to maintain a warm family atmosphere. There is a tendency for larger churches to become focused on "economies of scale" and "cafeteria-style" ministry options. The initial greeting shifts away from "We're so glad you're here!" to "Look at what we have to offer!" even though newcomers still just want to be embraced as one of the family.

St. Paul's very much wants to grow its membership, but we want to do so while remaining committed to our core value of welcoming newcomers into a loving fellowship that has room for everyone to be equally important. We are developing new ministries that carry out God's command to be of service to others. We are delivering bread to the needy and the hungry. We are providing clothing to the less fortunate. We are serving the world by sending a mission team to the Dominican Republic. All of these ministries help us to direct our attention outward which is definitely a good thing, but we also need to make sure that we are taking good care of each other as well.

In order to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to each and every member, some churches organize pastoral care teams, train members to become Stephen ministers, or hire a staff member to be in charge of membership ministry. Given the size of our congregation at this moment in our history, I think we can utilize another approach - a more biblical model. St. Paul writes to his young congregation in Philippi, "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." Our mindset at St. Paul's can be one of genuine love and concern for our fellow members. When we come together to worship God, we can also come together to care for one another with warm hearts and generous hands. Peace, *Rick*

Highlights of November Events

Wednesday, November 2nd at 7:00 p.m.

All Souls Evensong

Friday, November 11th – Veterans Day

Veterans Day Concert, *Appomattox Chamber Ensemble*

Sunday, November 13th – 11:30 a.m.

Annual Meeting

Sunday, November 20th at 10:30 a.m.

Landon Sawyer's Baptism

Sunday, November 27th at 10:30 a.m.

Ladies Home Sunday

Wednesday, November 30th at 7:00 p.m.

Virginia Benefit Chorale

Annual Meeting on November 13th

The 2011 Annual Meeting of St. Paul's Episcopal Church will be held immediately after the 10:30 a.m. service on Sunday, November 13th. Because the Vestry would like to have as many of the members of the parish in attendance as possible, a new wrinkle will be added to the program. Several budding thespians have been honing their nascent acting skills by performing brief comedic skits for the Sunday School during Children's Chapel. This acting troupe will perform for the entire congregation's pleasure during the Annual Meeting! Of course, there will be the usual round of reports and a review of the 2012 Annual Budget, but one would not want to miss your friends having a bit of theatrical fun.

The Nominating Committee made up of those off-going Vestry members, Denée Tuck, Jason Chandler, and Justin Keeler, would like to ask for the names of eligible parishioners who would be willing and able to serve on the Vestry. Those members of St. Paul's who are 16 years of age or older, regular in attendance at the Eucharist - meaning that they receive communion at least three times per year! - are confirmed Episcopalians, and "are known to the Treasurer" - meaning that they contribute to the financial support of the church - are eligible to be placed on the ballot. Nominating forms are available in the Narthex and in the Foyer. Please ask for the permission of your nominee before submitting their name to the Committee.

OCW Group to Continue November 2nd

The Old Coots & Wanna-Be's (OCW) will meet for the second time in the back room of King's BBQ on Crater Rd. on Nov. 2nd at Noon. The first meeting in October was a roaring success as the men truly enjoyed one another's company and conversation. We were brave enough to talk about both religion and politics with no fisticuffs breaking out! We also talked easily about society, grandkids, growing older, new technologies, and the way that things ought to be. There is no pre-established agenda - only plenty of good food and good conversation. The purpose of the OCW is to offer a male alternative to the ECW in which the men of the parish can find fellowship and fun. Please be encouraged to bring friends who are not members of St. Paul's!

A Fall Program of Music and Worship

Wednesday, November 2nd at 7:00 p.m.△

All Souls Evensong

St. Paul's Choir and Charles K. Lindsey, Jr., Organist

Friday, November 11th at 6:30 p.m.*

Veterans Day Concert

Appomattox Chamber Ensemble

Wednesday, November 30th at 7:00 p.m.*

Virginia Benefit Chorale, Steve Davis, Artistic Director

Friday, December 9th at 6:30 p.m.*

Christmas Concert

Rebecca Perlstein, Soprano and Edward Schutt, Organ

Sunday, December 18th at 4:00 p.m.△

Advent/Christmas Lessons & Carols

St. Paul's Choir and Charles K. Lindsey, Jr., Organist

△ **Free will offering accepted * \$5 admission charged**

ECW Activities

During its October monthly meeting, the members of the St. Paul's ECW reviewed the plans for their upcoming activities. The long-lost mitten tree was finally found and set out in the middle foyer to receive donations of mittens, gloves, hats, and socks to be distributed to the poor at Christmas time. United Thank Offering (UTO) boxes were also set out in the Narthex and in the middle foyer. The UTO In-gathering Sunday has been set for the Second Sunday in Advent (December 4th). Monies collected in the "blue mite boxes" will help fund designated UTO grant recipients in the U.S. and around the world. Please be aware that only half of the ECW outreach budget has been funded by the Vestry, i.e. the ECW will be hosting at least two fund-raising activities in the near future to cover the cost of its worthy outreach efforts.

New Usher Schedule Initiated

During the month of November, a sixteen member Usher Schedule will be implemented for the 10:30 a.m. service whereby a team of four men will be assigned to each of the four Sundays in the month. Simple instructions will be given as to how and when to count the congregation, to escort people to their seats, to take up the offering, to guide people to and from the communion rail, and generally to see to it that things run smoothly during the service.

Summary of October Vestry Meeting

After an opening prayer, approving both the agenda and the minutes of the September meeting, the Vestry heard reports of the Senior Warden on the initial OCW gathering, the upcoming Ladies Home Sunday event, the Blessing of the Animals, and the plans for improving in-reach efforts within the parish; the report of the Junior Warden on the repairs to the roof of the church and the replacement of the windows in the Rectory; and the report of the Rector on the Grow My Church! Committee, the new Usher Schedule, and his hopes for a new Lay Readers Schedule.

The majority of the remaining time of the meeting was devoted to a thorough review of the 2012 Annual Budget. The most exciting and challenging decision made by the Vestry was to place a hard cap on the amount of money that could be withdrawn from the Robertson-Bernard Fund. In years past as much as \$145,000 has been drawn out of the Robertson-Bernard Fund in order to balance the budget. In an effort to wean the parish from its heavy financial dependence on the Robertson-Bernard Fund, the Vestry set the 2012 cap at \$90,000 meaning that the bulk of the income portion of the nearly \$260,000 annual budget must be made up in pledge and plate offerings. Everyone will be called upon to do their fair share in meeting the demands of this challenging decision.

2012 Stewardship Campaign

The Vestry has worked very hard to match our 2012 expenses to historical average of the last five years and often made further cuts based on more recent efforts to "scrimp and save" at every possible turn. The 2012 expenses kept to an absolute minimum total nearly \$260,000. With a hard cap established on the draw from the Robertson-Bernard Fund at \$90,000, with \$6,000 in anticipated rent from the AA/NA groups that meet in the Rectory, with \$2,500 hoped for from the loose plate offerings, and with a few folks paying their 2012 pledges at the end of 2011, we are setting the 2012 pledging goal at just over \$155,000. In order to reach this goal, we would need to add five more pledging units to the 2011 total of 57 at an average pledge rate of \$2,500.

A stewardship letter with an enclosed pledge card will be mailed out on the first of November. Please pray about your financial offering to St. Paul's and

do all that you can to support the on-going ministries of the church. Pledge cards may be returned to the Parish Office at any time, but there will be a special in-gathering of pledges on Sunday, November 13th, the day of the Annual Meeting.

Biblical Humor

GOOD SAMARITAN

A Sunday school teacher was telling her class the story of the Good Samaritan. She asked the class, 'If you saw a person lying on the roadside, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?' A thoughtful little girl broke the hushed silence, 'I think I'd throw up.'

HIGHER POWER

A Sunday school teacher said to her children, "We have been learning how powerful kings and queens were in Bible times. But, there is a Higher Power. Can anybody tell me what it is?"

One child blurted out, "Aces!"

Little Notes from You

Dear Friends at St. Paul's,

The ladies of the Petersburg Home for Ladies so appreciate the wonderful gifts from St. Paul's and delivered by our Senior Warden, Tom Raines.

God bless you all,

Frances Johnson

November Birthdays

- 7th Sacadi Powell
- 10th Mary Ann Myers
- 12th Meg Bryant
- 13th Maggie Cuthbert
- 16th Jacque Hatcher
- 19th Charles Cuthbert Jr., Chris Johnson
- 20th Evelyn Johnson
- 21st Laura Brooke McCarney
- 23rd Alex Maclin

(No anniversaries this month)

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.