

The Epistle of St. Paul's, Bristol Parish Petersburg, Virginia

January 2010

Dear St. Paul's Friends,

While driving to St. Paul's after my vacation, I was listening to one of my sports talk radio shows as "the boys" were discussing how they had spent New Year's Eve. There was a little bit of good-natured exaggeration about the amounts of alcohol consumed and the late hours observed, but then there was a distinct change in the tone of the discussion when the host calmly admitted that he was in bed by 9:30 p.m. and soundly asleep by 10:00 p.m.! No one seemed the least bit surprised and no one thought that this confession was embarrassing or unmanly. Perhaps New Year's Eve is going the way of Dick Clark or I'm just becoming too old to get excited about "bringing in the new year properly."

One aspect of the several rituals surrounding the New Year that I think still does carry some weight and significance is the making of New Year's resolutions. Most of us at one level or another give at least some passing thought to making a resolve to improve an unwanted behavior or to making a fresh start of things in the new calendar year. "Eat less." "Exercise more." "Spend more quality time with my family." "Take up a new hobby." "Get more sleep." "Give up chocolate!" Oh, dear! I don't know about that last one, but many of us have made similar resolutions. We have all tried our best to keep them for more than a week or two, but sooner or later the willpower fades, the resolve weakens, and the old ways return.

What do we do when we fail to keep a resolve? This is a very good question and one that I believe merits a good answer. In the past, when I have fallen back into old habits and taken up again with my ingrained behaviors, I have just given up. "Well, there's always

next year. I'll try again then..." I may feel badly for a while about not successfully grooming a new habit, but even my regret does not spur me on to a second effort. I more or less accept that my hopes for a new me will be disappointed for another year.

My only resolve this New Year's is to renew my determination every day not to try harder or even to try again, but to ask God for the strength to continue on the right path (or get back up onto the right path again) for just one more day. I know from my own long-standing experience with myself that I will fall short of any goal that I set for my own self-improvement. This year, I wish to allow myself both the room and the grace to start afresh each day with enough energy and courage to make a better start on a new way of doing things. There seems to be real spiritual wisdom in this new singular resolve. I am intrigued by the possibilities!

Prayer #47 which is entitled *For Young Persons* on page 829 in the collected prayers at the back of the *Book of Common Prayer* speaks gently to this new way of understanding the process of change, "Help them (referring to God's children) to take failure, not as a measure of their worth, but as a chance for a new start." I do not hope to fail. I do not really even expect to fail. I just know that I will eventually have a pretty good chance of failing to keep a New Year's resolution. So, now that I have a plan to call upon God's strength to formulate and to sustain my New Year's resolution, I truly believe that in due time, God will guide me to better behaviors and a more faithful lifestyle.

Peace,
Rick

Highlights of January Events

Thursday, January 7th – 6:30 p.m.

Social Club gathering at the Wynnes
All are welcome!

Sunday, January 10th – Epiphany I

Holy Eucharist at 8 & Morning Prayer at 10:30 a.m.
Vestry Meeting after the 10:30 a.m. service

Thursday, January 21st – Pre-Council Meeting

From 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
St. John's Chester

Sunday, January 31st – Epiphany IV

Holy Eucharist – Rite I at 8:00 a.m.
Holy Eucharist – Rite II at 10:30 a.m.

New Vestry to begin serving in 2010

Three members of the Vestry finished serving their three-year terms at the end of calendar year 2009. Chris Johnson, Jackie Blake, and Wayne Thompson have each done a tremendous job of fulfilling their responsibilities as members of the St. Paul's Vestry. Chris Johnson has served as Junior Warden with overall responsibility for the buildings and grounds of the St. Paul's campus and has also served most recently in 2009 as Senior Warden with the unenviable task of helping the new Rector make a smooth transition into his new ministry. Chris was and will always remain a tremendous inspiration, counselor, and friend. Jackie Blake did a wonderful job of supervising numerous fellowship events through out her years on the Vestry. She continually set a very high standard when it came to cooking Wednesday Night Dinners. Who could ever forget her extravagant swordfish main courses? Now enjoying the liberty provided by the termination of her Vestry responsibilities, Jackie will be able to pursue her interest in Parish Nursing. Wayne Thompson has always been a delightful participant in every Vestry meeting – always quick with a humorous quip or different perspective. Wayne has been a faithful Greeter at the 10:30 a.m. service – always providing a warm welcome to every newcomer. We trust that Wayne will continue to bless us with his wonderful gift of hospitality in the years ahead.

Three new members of the Vestry were elected to serve three year terms at the November Annual Meeting: Gordon Finney, Tom Raines, and Kitty Hatcher. Gordon brings his lifelong experience of growing up in Petersburg and at St. Paul's as well as his significant experience in radio broadcasting to the work that he hopes to do with the Growth and Marketing Committee. Gordon is excited about the challenges that face St. Paul's and his energy will be extremely valuable to the work of the Vestry. Tom Raines has like Gordon Finney been around Petersburg for much of his lifetime. Settled now in his family's historic home at Oakland farm, Tom is ready to help develop the marketing strategies that will foster both spiritual and numerical growth at St. Paul's. Having managed several successful political campaigns for candidates running in the Petersburg area, Tom has extensive knowledge of the population of the local community. Kitty Hatcher has been the very capable leader of the Altar Guild for many years as well as a faithful member of the Choir. Kitty does not shy away from

hard work and she is thrilled by a job well done. Her experience in the worship life of St. Paul's will be invaluable to the Liturgy Planning Committee.

At the December Vestry meeting Jim Wynne was elected to be the 2010 Senior Warden and Mike Smith was re-elected to be Junior Warden. Jim will provide the Vestry with wealth of his academic experience in information technology, so we expect great things from the Communications Committee! Mike has been very, very active in restoring the operating functions of the church building putting in countless hours of his time updating and renewing the mechanical functions of the church building.

The 2010 Vestry will be going on a planning retreat over the last week-end of January to clarify their ministry together for the New Year.



2010 Stewardship Campaign Update

The latest information regarding the financial progress of the 2010 Stewardship Campaign is very encouraging. As of January 1, 2010, fifty pledges have been received amounting to a total pledged amount of \$116,632.00. The average amount pledged per household is \$2,332.64. There are six more households which pledged in 2009, but have not as yet turned in a pledge card for 2010. There are another twelve households which have been regular givers to St. Paul's over the years, but did not turn in a pledge card last year. If all eighteen of these households were to pledge at an amount close to the 2010 average, St. Paul's would gratefully exceed its targeted goal of \$150,000 for 2010! We are truly blessed to be this close to our projected goal.

The Time and Talent Surveys that have been returned also bring very encouraging news. Three new cooks for Wednesday Night Dinners and/or Sunday Morning Breakfasts have been identified. Interest was expressed in reviving the Prayer Team. Help was offered with Adult Spiritual Formation and Sunday School teaching. Volunteers for various outreach ministry projects were identified. Some areas of on-going ministry not even mentioned on the survey itself were pointed out.

The people of St. Paul's have shown in many, many ways that they are very energetic, enthusiastic, and engaged in the life and ministry of this church. Hoo-ray for St. Paul's!

Christmas Dinner a Huge Success

Nearly one hundred people enjoyed the superb music and fine Scripture readings offered during the Service of Advent Lessons and Carols on December 13th. The Christmas Dinner immediately following the service was also a gustatory delight! Our hearty thanks go out to all those who brought food, side dishes, desserts, or beverages to the event. Many thanks are extended to everyone who helped prepare Bristol Hall to look so festive. Table setters, servers, and dish-washers are also to be gratefully acknowledged. The greatest "Thank you!" is to be given to Joe Aldrich for his expert co-ordination of the entire Christmas Dinner. Joe, without you and your administrative experience, we would all still be looking for the serving spoons! Thank you, Joe, for doing such a great job!

Short-term Mission Team to Continue Meeting

By the third Wednesday in January, the 20th, there is the hope that more information will have been received from either the sisters at Centro Buen Pastor or the American deacon in the diocesan office in Santo Domingo. If we have heard from folks in the Dominican Republic, we can share this information with those interested in going on a short-term mission trip during the second or third week of June 2010. We plan on traveling on Mondays. Airfares listed at the present moment are in the vicinity \$ 550 and the hotel room (double occupancy with all meals included) should be no more than \$470 for the seven nights, so the total cost of the airfare and the hotel should be right around \$1,000. There is the possibility of group discounts negotiated by the diocese on the hotel and/or offered by the airline on the airfare at a group rate. Please join us at the Dominican Republic table during the Wednesday Night Dinner on January 20th for up to the minute information!

Concerts by Candlelight

Every second Friday of the month
as part of Petersburg's *Friday for the Arts*.

There will be no *Concert by Candlelight* in January.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH AT 6:30 P.M.

THE SYVATI DUO FROM ENGLAND PERFORM
Julian Collings, *Organ* Rebecca Hewes, *Cello*

Donations to the Whittle Music & Arts Fund are gratefully accepted. Please look for the yellow envelopes and place them in the plate at the door. *These contributions help support St. Paul's Music Ministry in downtown Petersburg.*

Our Christmas families say, "Thank you!"

The two families that were "adopted" by St. Paul's for Christmas have been thoroughly overwhelmed by the generous out-pouring of food, clothing, household items, and toys. They are very, very grateful for all the love and care extended to them at this time. They so much enjoyed having the opportunity to worship with us at the service of Advent Lessons & Carols and then to dine with us afterwards at the Christmas Dinner. We will continue to extend the invitation to both families to continue worshipping with us at St. Paul's on Sundays in the New Year. Each family has asked me to say, "Thank You!" to all of the generous members of St. Paul's.

Little Notes from You

Dear Mr. Greenwood,

This is Taylor. My Mom, Joshua, and I want to thank everybody at St. Paul's for all the Christmas presents! You made this the best Christmas ever. Thank you and Merry Christmas!

We love you,
Taylor Campbell

Dear Friends at St. Paul's,

Thank you so much for the good wishes and staff gift for Christmas. Your thoughtfulness and generosity are very much appreciated.

Peace to all,
Susan Wells



January Birthdays

1st Betty Jordan
2nd Nat Cuthbert
17th Sam Bryant
20th Gracelyn Parks
30th Barbara Reynolds
31st Shirley Willcox

January Anniversaries

24th Wayne and Heath Thompson
25th 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.