

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

June 2009

Dear St. Paul's Friends,

At a recent meeting of interim pastors in the Diocese of Virginia, my wife April heard Stephen VanVoorhees, the consultant to the St. Paul's Discernment Committee, offer the following amusing image. "Evangelism for Episcopalians," Steve opined, "means taking the beautiful 50-gallon aquarium that is your particular church down to the beach and hoping that the fish have enough strength and coordination to jump from the ocean into the tank!" Evangelism scares most Episcopalians because it conjures up expectations of cold-door knocking and street-corner preaching. And, if this isn't enough to send you screaming off into the night, then there is the equally terrifying prospect of taking a person through the four effective steps of conversion and salvation. Ugh! There must be a better way to grow a church!

A recent survey conducted on behalf of the national Episcopal Church revealed some very interesting statistics. Whereas it was discovered to be true that the clergy of a congregation are more than twice as effective as print or radio advertising for drawing visitors to church, nothing comes even close to the most effective means of getting people to come to church: word of mouth. A personal invitation from one person to another is ten times more likely than the encouragement of a clergy person to get someone to step inside the front door of a church. This kind of invitational evangelism is not unlike what we would do to help a friend find a new restaurant, or a good doctor, or an inexpensive auto mechanic. When we know something is of value or a person is particularly helpful, we are more than ready to share our knowledge with others. Inviting others to church is no different.

The next part of the assimilation process takes place once people are inside the doors of the church. Are there folks waiting to greet newcomers? Ushers have their responsibilities before, during, and after the service. But greeters are free to welcome people by shaking hands, extending a kind word, letting them know where Coffee Hour is held, and even where the bathrooms are. Greeters should not be introverts who are forcing themselves to do something because they have to, but rather they should be naturally extroverted people who like to socialize. The ability to greet people on a Sunday morning can be thought of as a spiritual gift. Some have it. Some don't.

Once people have been invited to church and once people have come to church, then their initial visit needs to be followed up by a thank you note, a phone call, an e-mail, or even a personal visit. Follow-up after an initial visit is essential to the process of welcoming newcomers into the community of the faithful – into "the tank" so to speak. Again, these follow-up efforts do not need to be overwhelming or difficult, simply a part of the natural desire to make sure that people feel comfortable in church.

Once people decide to come back to church for a second or third time, they will want to know how they can fit in, where they are needed, how they can participate in the life and ministry of the church. The inside doors of the church must be as open as the outside doors. Everyone is welcome to offer their gifts and to grow in their faith. Such a welcoming and open church will be a growing and healthy church! Thanks be to God!

Peace, Rick

## *Summary of the Vestry Meeting held May 17<sup>th</sup>*

Chris Johnson, the Senior Warden, discussed his report. He reviewed the format for the upcoming small group sessions. The Vestry will meet once more to finalize the details. Information letters will be mailed to the congregation followed by telephone calls from the Vestry.

Mike Smith, the Junior Warden, reported the air conditioning was working properly.

Mike Tuck, Treasurer, gave details about a recent gift to St. Paul's.

The Rev. Rick Greenwood presented the Rector's report. He discussed the idea of presenting a "mature life issues" workshop, addressing topics such as will preparation, funeral expenses, estate planning, etc. Rick referenced a document for this purpose previously prepared by Beth Cuthbert. The Vestry agreed to have Rick respond to the Bethlehem Christians organization regarding the sale of religious items at St. Paul's. Rick inquired about any interest in working with Olan Mills to provide a pictorial directory. There is no financial obligation for St. Paul's to participate. Justin Keeler will lead this effort. Rick reviewed recent Sunday attendance charts which indicate a 32% increase in recent months. The same increases are reflected at Sunday breakfasts and Wednesday dinners.

In new business, Jim Wynne discussed the need for additional handicap parking spaces in the back lot. There was a discussion about continuing breakfast on Sunday during the summer. Jason Chandler suggested conducting a survey to include this topic as well as others. Responses from the congregation will help determine the continuation of breakfast this summer.

## *Concerts by Candlelight*

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

**FRIDAY, JUNE 12<sup>TH</sup> AT 6:30 P.M.**

Bryan Sheetz Steel Drum Ensemble

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 fully support St. Paul's Music Ministry in downtown Petersburg.*

## *News and Notes*

### *The Annual Church Picnic*

will be hosted by Chris & Peachie Johnson at their home on June 21<sup>st</sup> after the 10:30 service.

Hamburgers, Hot Dogs and ice will be provided.

Please see the sign-up sheet in the Narthex  
(or call the Parish Office)

indicating the number attending  
and the side dish/dessert you will be bringing.

Last Names A – L bring a side dish

Last Names M – Z bring a dessert

*Please remember to bring a chair!*

**Please call the Parish Office if you need a ride.**

### *Invite-a-Friend to Church Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>*

We had so many wonderful guests and friends join us for worship on Pentecost Sunday at the end of May, that we want to invite all those people (and more!) back again to join us on the third Sunday in June for worship and an opportunity to get to know them better at the Johnson's for St. Paul's Annual Church Picnic. Please invite everyone you can think of who doesn't yet have a church home. The more, the merrier!

### *Did you know?*

On the sixteen Sundays since February 1<sup>st</sup>, the number of people attending worship at St. Paul's has increased 32%. Average Sunday attendance has jumped from 65 people at both services to 86. How can we get that average Sunday attendance up over 90 people per Sunday? Let's invite our friends to church. Let people see your new bumper sticker! Talk about the good things happening at St. Paul's with the folks you meet.

### *Ukrop's Golden Gift Certificates*

Please think of Saint Paul's when you receive your Golden Gift Certificate. By turning in your certificate to us by June 7th, Ukrop's will, in turn, make a donation to Saint Paul's. You may place your certificate in the Alms Bason on Sundays, drop them off at the parish office Monday through Thursday or drop them in the mail. THANK YOU!!

## ***Shrine Mont 2009 Conference***

### ***Remembering, Resting and Rejoicing***

After thirty-six wonderful years, Shrine Mont's annual Adult Formation Conference is coming to an end. Join them for their "last hurrah" as the tradition of their annual gathering is celebrated one last time. Memories will be shared with friends, old and new, as the history of Shrine Mont Conference is joyously commemorated. Brochures and registration forms are available at the conference website: [www.shrinemont.tripod.com](http://www.shrinemont.tripod.com), Shrine Mont's website: [www.shrinemont.com](http://www.shrinemont.com) or by calling the parish office.

### ***New St. Paul's Bumper Stickers Available***

The beautiful, brand new, red, white, and blue St. Paul's bumper stickers are now available! Featuring both the traditional Episcopal Church seal and the catchy slogan, "Offering new life in Old Towne," these bumper sticks can be acquired for a donation of just \$1. We have produced 500 stickers at a cost of \$355, meaning that we can give away 145 stickers for free once the cost of producing the bumper stickers has been recouped. If folks are willing to donate more towards the purchase of the stickers, then we can give away more of the stickers for free to newcomers and to prospective members. The stickers will be made available at the Wednesday Night Dinners and the Sunday Morning Breakfasts as well as in the Church Office. This is a great way to advertise our church and our new mission "to offer new life in Old Towne!"

### ***Pet-Food Donations***

Peachie Johnson has offered to deliver pet-food to area animal shelters to ensure that every pet does not go hungry during this current economic crisis. Please bring dry or canned dog or cat food to church with you on the second Sunday of each month and Peachie will make sure that it all gets delivered to the right place.

### ***Donations to St Joseph's Food Pantry***

We continue to collect food for St. Joseph's Food Pantry on fourth Sundays each month. We give thanks to John Van Lingham for carrying the food over for our neighbors to distribute each month. Many of us are aware of an increased need for the simple things, such as food, by many families who are not normally dependent on others. Please continue to remember the unemployed and those who cannot help themselves.

## ***"Symbols and Sentiment"***

### ***A Special Family Event at Blandford Cemetery***

Meet at Blandford Church's reception center on June 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am for a family friendly "seek and find" treasure hunt to discover the meaning behind the symbols and verse on old grave markers.

Participants will be provided with a map and written clues to follow to each destination. Questions about each featured marker are to be answered and prizes will be awarded for the most correct responses.

The Arch/Memorial Avenue section of the cemetery near Memorial Hill will be the focus of the treasure hunt. Wear your walking shoes, your sunscreen and join us for a fun stroll through a scenic and serene area of the cemetery.

Co-sponsored by the City of Petersburg Museums and the Petersburg National Battlefield. For more information, contact Martha Atkinson at 804-733-2396.

*Admission is free.*

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

Dear St. Paul's,

Mickey and I want to thank St. Paul's for remembering him on his birthday. The lovely card made his day all the more special.

Thank you,

*Stephanie and Mickey*

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### ***June Birthdays***

1<sup>st</sup> Elizabeth McKain  
2<sup>nd</sup> Ben Parks  
5<sup>th</sup> Nancy Kail  
5<sup>th</sup> Wayne Thompson  
19<sup>th</sup> Kelly Vernon  
23<sup>rd</sup> Henry Alley  
23<sup>rd</sup> Margee Whittle  
27<sup>th</sup> William Hatcher  
30<sup>th</sup> Chris McCarney

### ***June Anniversaries***

4<sup>th</sup> Bob and Carla Odom  
7<sup>th</sup> Jim and Pat Ryan  
8<sup>th</sup> Craig and Susie Parrish  
29<sup>th</sup> Joe and Pat Aldrich  
29<sup>th</sup> Scott and Karen Guthrie  
29<sup>th</sup> Richmond and Elizabeth Zehmer