

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

May 2011

Dear St. Paul's Friends,

"Give me a moment..." This is what people often say after they have been thrown for a loop by some extraordinary event. When we suddenly have to stomp on the brakes to avoid a car accident, we need a few minutes to push our stomachs down away from our throats. When a child successfully sneaks up on us and startles us from an unexpected afternoon nap, we need to focus our minds on the present and clear away the clouds of nostalgia. So, too, the first Christians, needed a moment or two to re-gather their wits about them after realizing that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead. "Give me a moment..." to begin to comprehend what it means that death no longer has the final word and that the power of sin is broken.

Since that first Easter morning, the early witnesses to the resurrection all needed some time to reflect on the meaning of the empty tomb for themselves and for the emerging church. The first challenging question was, "What do we do about celebrating Passover?" Not until the Council of Jerusalem around 49 AD - described in both Acts 15 and Galatians 2 - was it decided that converts to the Christian faith were no longer required to keep the Jewish law. The re-interpreted Passover meal, the Holy Eucharist, would be celebrated every Sunday not just once a year. And yet, the Church still recognized the need for a period of reflection and contemplation.

Just as Advent is a season of preparation for Christmas Day and the following season of Epiphany is a time for reflection on the significance of the Incarnation, Lent is a season of preparation for Easter and the following Great Fifty Days of Easter are set aside for reflection on the meaning of the resurrection. The first readings in the Easter season lections are taken from Acts to let us know more about how the early church dealt with the impact of the resurrection. The Epistle readings from I Peter let us know about the baptismal traditions of the first Christians which involved three years of preparation for the annual rite of baptism during the Easter Vigil. The Gospel lessons generally taken from the Gospel of John in Year A tell the wonderful stories of "Doubting Thomas," the Road to Emmaus, and the final discourse of Jesus.

"Give me a moment..." None of us can come to the amazing events of Easter morning and simply say, "Well, wasn't that something!" and just move on as if nothing much really happened. We need time and space to consider what the resurrection power of God means. We need to begin to incorporate the new framework which the resurrection establishes in our lives, the life of our family, our community, and the world. We cannot accomplish this change of perspective overnight. Thank God we have fifty days in the season of Easter to undertake this work. And, then, you all know what's coming next... Another of those "extraordinary events" that will just throw us for another loop: Pentecost! Good thing the Church allows us another six months to reflect on the meaning of that amazing day. Enjoy!

Peace, Rick

Highlights of May Events

Wednesday, May 4th

6:00 p.m. – Cinco de Mayo Dinner

Thursday, May 5th – Thursday, May 12th

Dominican Republic Mission Trip

Sunday, May 15th – The Fourth Sunday of Easter

12:00 p.m. – Vestry Meeting

Sunday, May 22nd – The Fifth Sunday of Easter

12:00 p.m. – ECW Meeting

Save the Date

EGODS will be held Saturday, June 11th

Details will be announced soon

Hope to see you there!

Planned Giving ~ Deferred Gifts

In the April Epistle we discussed Immediate Gifts, or ways of giving during our lifetime. This month we will continue our discussion with ways of giving at the end of life, deferred gifts. St Paul's has played an important role in many of our lives; many of us grew, developed and were nurtured by the church's witness and work. When we include a gift to St. Paul's as part of our estate plan, we help to ensure that future generations, likewise, will be nurtured by St. Paul's in their faith journey.

Wills

Perhaps the easiest and most common way of making a gift to the Church is through a will. Yet it is estimated that 50 to 70 % of all church members die without one.

If you die without a will, then the state makes one for you, generally passing your assets to your surviving spouse, or dividing them among your surviving spouse and children (if you are survived by children or their descendants who are not also children or descendants of your surviving spouse). The state will also appoint an administrator that may cost the estate large fees; and will appoint guardians of the person and property of your minor children, who may or may not be your choice. The state makes no charitable contributions, and it will ensure that your estate pays as much tax as possible.

By making a will, you decide the persons and charities to receive your assets and in what proportions; you name the guardian for your minor children; you can create a trust to provide for your family or establish a charitable trust for the benefit of your church or other institution; you appoint your own executor; and you can plan for and control applicable taxes.

A bequest to St. Paul's in a will can take the form of a set amount of money, a specific asset (i.e. real estate or stock), a trust with the church as beneficiary, or a percentage of your estate. Many people today worry about the cost of care during their lifetime and are more comfortable leaving a percentage of their estate to the church rather than a dollar amount or a specific asset. If you specify a stated amount or particular asset to be given to a person or charity, that bequest is satisfied first, regardless of the value of your estate. However, if you leave, for example, 10% of your estate to the church and 90% to your children, you will know that these percentages will apply to the value of your estate, whatever it may be at your death.

Sample language for including the church in your will might be "I give, devise and bequeath (state amount, particular asset or percentage of your estate) to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, currently located at 110 North Union Street, Petersburg, Virginia, to be used for (describe use) or as the Vestry deems appropriate. You may also consider naming the church as a contingent beneficiary (i.e. "If my niece does not survive me, I give, devise and bequeath my estate or a percentage of my estate to St. Paul's Church").

The following are some frequently asked questions.

Do I need to draft a new will in order to include a gift to my church? In many instances you may be able to add St. Paul's to your existing will by a "codicil." This legal instrument generally allows for changes to a will without the cost of redrafting the entire document.

Can I make my gift to St. Paul's contingent upon the existence of certain conditions (i.e., the continuance of St. Paul's in its current location)? Yes. However, a provision such as this must be carefully drafted in order to avoid future problems of interpretation and conflict among beneficiaries.

Can I specify how and where my gift is to be used? Yes. Any gift to the church, whether given for specific (restricted) or general (unrestricted) use is needed. However, many churches today, including St. Paul's, have funds that cannot be freely accessed to meet current needs as their use was restricted by the donor. Due to the age of our historic structure, our location and the needs of our community, St. Paul's is, especially, in need of funds that can be accessed as needs arise to keep our doors open, to grow and to serve God as this parish has faithfully done since 1643.

Life Insurance

In April we discussed making St. Paul's the owner and beneficiary of life insurance policies during our lifetime, allowing for an immediate income tax charitable deduction and a reduction in estate tax owed, if the deceased had a taxable estate.

Another way to give life insurance as a gift is to donate only the death benefit of the policy. In this case, the insured or owner of the policy gives the death benefit to the charity by designating it as the beneficiary of the policy. The donor retains ownership and control of the policy while living and still gives a gift to the church at death. This would keep the death benefit out of the policy owner's estate (gifts to charity pass free of estate tax) but still allow the donor to use the policy's cash value while he or she is still alive, if needed.

Retirement Assets

Retirement funds are one of the best assets to give to the church or charity because they are often exceptionally inefficient in passing wealth to heirs. Since the money that has accumulated in these plans has never been taxed, the IRS levies both an income tax on any distribution and an estate tax (if the decedent has a taxable estate), unless the beneficiary is a charity. After taxes are paid, in some cases, this may leave only about 20 to 30% of the assets for the remaining family. By naming the church as the beneficiary, this pitfall can be avoided, and the remaining retirement assets will pass to the church free of income and estate taxes. Consider a gift of other assets to family members and make St. Paul's the beneficiary of any remaining retirement funds.

We have discussed, in this article, only some of the ways of making deferred gifts to St. Paul's in our wills and by naming St. Paul's as the beneficiary of our life insurance policies and remaining retirement funds. There are many other creative estate planning tools which your insurance agent, financial planner and attorney can use to assist you in making St. Paul's part of your estate plan. If you have questions concerning these topics we will attempt to answer your questions or find someone with expertise in that area. You may ask us directly or email your questions to the church office at stpaulspetersburg@verizon.net. Remember, we have covered general information only, and you should consult your tax advisor before making any gift.

Vestry Highlights

- Sr. Warden report - The Vestry needs to set goals to be accomplished before the start of summer:
 - 1) Begin moving ahead on the "Cathedral" or "Open University" concept by looking for classes and/or lectures that can be offered in the fall;
 - 2) The draft of the windows brochure needs to go to the printer;
 - 3) Quarterly pledge statements need to be mailed out; and
 - 4) The treasurer needs to be at the next Vestry meeting to explain in detail the monthly budget report.
- Jr. Warden report - Only minor repairs have been needed at the church: small leak and a broken coffee machine. Chris has volunteered the church to sell hamburgers and hotdogs at the Wine Festival at Battersea on May 7th. At the last workday, yard work was done, blinds were hung, and silver was polished. An inside workday is scheduled for August. An outside workday is scheduled for November.
- Rector's report - The Rev. Chris Yaw from Michigan has offered St. Paul's a program called "Grow My Church!" for which Rick already has a committee together that will meet on Wednesday evenings. Rick says that he wants to set an example of gratitude, i.e. he is going to start with writing thank you cards. A member has asked for new juice glasses for breakfast and soup bowls. Costs for these items will be researched. The church needs to buy the AED equipment already approved by the Vestry.

ECW Notes

The ECW is collecting new and 'gently used' children's books to take to the Petersburg Housing Authority for the children at Pecan Acres and Pin Oaks, and to the Petersburg Police Department as a local outreach project. Collection baskets are located in the vestibule by the Baptistry and in Bristol Hall. The books collected will be delivered the first week in June.

May Birthdays

1 st	Irving Lunsford
2 nd	Louise Fothergill
2 nd	Mary Stewart Ruhnke
3 rd	Lauren Wynne
4 th	Jason Chandler
4 th	Susan Smith McKain
4 th	Anne Shaffer Randall
5 th	Martin Johnson
7 th	Matthew Parrish
8 th	Skip Parks
8 th	Pat Smith
9 th	Riley Chandler
12 th	Cole Cannon
14 th	Blake Nelson
17 th	Mickey Little
18 th	Elisabeth Greenwood
20 th	Pat Aldrich
22 nd	Nan Jones
30 th	Addison Guthrie

May Anniversaries

14 th	Bob and Louise Fothergill
21 st	Steve and Deneé Tuck
27 th	Gary and Anne Rowlett