

The Epistle of St. Paul's, Bristol Parish

Petersburg, Virginia

September 2011

Dear St. Paul's Friends,

This past week began with an earthquake on Tuesday and ended with a hurricane on Saturday. Did anybody hear the voice of God in the sound and the fury? Perhaps when we are shaken out of our regular routines, we are more likely to listen for God's voice, but nonetheless I suspect that God is talking to us all the time. While the earth is literally moving under our feet, while the rain is pouring down in torrents, and while the wind is screaming through the trees, we are probably talking and praying to God and doing the best we can to cope. But when the ground stops wobbling and the sun comes out again, we are more than ready to hear a comforting word from God, "Be still and know that I am God." *Psalms 46:10*

The Vestry has been giving a lot of thought and prayer to the many challenges that face St. Paul's. We have conducted budget reviews and made necessary cuts and adjustments. We have considered special programs and initiatives. We have contemplated God's will for St. Paul's on several Vestry retreats. And we have all spent time in prayer both talking and listening. Our latest understanding is that St. Paul's is facing not a financial crisis, not a leadership vacuum, nor a lack of effort, but a spiritual problem. St. Paul's Episcopal Church and all of its leaders and members are in need of spiritual revival. I do not mean to say that we need to put up a tent and invite sweaty evangelists to crank up the energy. But we do need to become focused on the things that are of real importance to our spiritual lives: Jesus, the Gospel good news that he brings, and the living of a truly Christian life. We cannot become bogged down with small distractions as main concerns. We cannot let our witness to the power and majesty of God become diluted and vague with marginal issues. Episcopalians are well-known for their deep love of esoteric liturgical nuances, but we need to be Episcopalians who are very clear with one another about the love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit (while worshipping "decently and in order!"). In other words, we have to get back to basics and know the truth of God's word for our own lives as well as those of others.

In order for us to undergo this re-focusing of our priorities as a faith community according to the basic tenets of our beliefs, the Vestry is calling upon a small group of dedicated members of St. Paul's to engage in a 12-week course entitled, "Grow My Church!" The work of this small group will be conducted on Wednesday afternoons this fall and everyone is welcome to join in the continuing discussions that will take place during Wednesday Night Dinners. To quote from the introduction to the course, "The Grow My Church! Course is designed to stimulate introspection and growth in congregations by translating the sage advice of leading congregational development experts with an easy-to-use format for evaluating your church and take steps to making it a more welcoming place." The membership of this small focus group will be announced shortly. Please pray for them as they will be helping us all to become spiritually renewed.

Peace, Rick

Highlights of Fall Events

Sunday, September 11th – Kick-Off Sunday

Sunday Morning Breakfast resumes at 9:00 a.m.

Children's Chapel begins at 9:45 a.m.

John Rooney's Stained Glass Window photos on display

Saturday, September 17th – Parish Work Day

Yard Work & Small Jobs: 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Wednesday, September 28th – Evensong

Celebrating St. Michael & All Angels at 7 p.m.

Sunday, October 9th -St. Francis Day

Blessing of the Animals at 10:30 a.m.

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### ***September 11th is Kick-Off Sunday!***

Everyone at St. Paul's is being encouraged to come to church on Sunday, September 11th and bring a friend or two. We will all enjoy a wonderful hot breakfast prepared by Joe Aldrich as the Sunday Morning Breakfast Program resumes. A new addition to the Sunday Morning Program will feature a Children's Chapel held on the chancel steps in the sanctuary at 9:45 a.m. The children will have the opportunity to learn a new song each month to sing at the 10:30 a.m. service. They will be given the chance to pray for their family and friends. A short skit will also be acted out that will be based on the day's Bible lesson. At the 10:30 a.m. service, patriotic songs will be sung and special prayers will be offered for the victims of the 9/11 attacks, their families, and all those who helped in the emergency relief efforts. After the 10:30 a.m. service, refreshments will be served in Bristol Hall where John A. Rooney's beautiful photographs of the St. Paul's stained glass windows will be on display. Please come, bring your friends, and join us for this terrific Kick-Off Sunday at St. Paul's on Sunday, September 11th.

### ***Two Fall Evensongs Announced***

The St. Paul's Choir and its Organist/Choir Director, Charles K. Lindsey, Jr., announce the addition of two Choral Evensongs to the fall program. The first Evensong will be sung on Wednesday, September 28th at 7:00 p.m. and will celebrate St. Michael & All Angels. The second Evensong will be sung on Wednesday, November 2nd at 7:00 p.m. and will celebrate All Souls Day. These two musical offerings have been made possible by the wonderful financial support of the Whittle Music Fund generated by the Summer Concert Series in July. We are grateful to all those who came during the summer as we will be benefiting from their generosity this fall. Come for Wednesday Night dinner at 6:00 p.m. and stay afterwards for Evensong!

### ***OCW Group to Begin in October***

The "Old Coots & Wanna-be's" group (OCW) will hold its first lunch meeting in the back room of King's Barbecue at 12 Noon on the first Tuesday of October. We are hoping to provide an opportunity for the men of St. Paul's to gather together for some enlightening conversation and good fellowship. This will be a monthly meeting without any pre-set agenda. The OCW membership will determine the nature of its future meetings whether or not it remains without an agenda, invites outside speakers in to address the group, or desires to discuss a particular topic. Those older male members of St. Paul's who remember fondly the days of the St. Andrew's Men's Club will feel very much at home at a meeting of the OCW. Please feel free to invite other members of St. Paul's, your friends, and business acquaintances. We are looking forward to seeing you all at King's Barbecue on a regular basis. *"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" ~Psalm 133:1*

## *Fall Lecture Series Planned*

With the wonderful help of Vestry member Deneé Tuck, St. Paul's is very happy to announce its First Annual Fall Lecture Series running every Wednesday night in October at 7:00 p.m. immediately following Wednesday Night Dinner at 6:00 p.m. The first of the four lectures on October 5th will be given in commemoration of the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War and will feature Catherine Wright, Collections Manager for the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, presenting *Oddities and Curiosities* in a one hour program on the unique objects acquired by the museum over the years. Sometimes they appear bizarre; other times they look quite ordinary, but have extraordinary stories associated with them. The second lecture on October 12th will feature Sam Craighead and his program *Infernal Machines* explaining how mines and torpedoes were the most successful weapons that the Confederates used against the Union Navy. The third lecture on October 19th will feature Kelly Hancock, Manager of Education and Programs for the MOC, presenting her 75 minute program *First Ladies of the Civil War* exploring the lives of Varina Davis and Mary Todd Lincoln not only as First Ladies but also as wives, mothers, and widows. The fourth and final lecture on October 26th will again feature Sam Craighead and his program *Why Rhett wasn't with Scarlet when Atlanta was burning*. This 45 minute program discusses the blockade runners during the Civil War and how it was a business that required a captain's presence whenever possible. A voluntary donation supporting the Whittle Music Fund will be collected at the door.

### *Holy Humor*

There is the story of a pastor who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."

### *Thank You Notes*

Dear Friends,

All of us at Boys' Home are grateful for your thoughtful gift of \$150 to our Back-to-School sponsorship program. Your support is vital to our mission of providing a Christian environment in which young men can find a new direction in their lives.

Again, thank you for your support and encouragement. Our campus is beautiful during the summer months and we invite you to stop by the Boys' Home campus for a visit when you have the opportunity.

Yours in child care,

*Donnie E. Wheatley*, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your generous donation of \$1300.00 for scholarships for these poor children at Centro Buen Pastor, in San Pedro de Macaris, Dominican Republic. Your gift will give these children an opportunity for a better life through education. May God bless all of you.

Faithfully,

*Sister Hilary Mary*

### *September Anniversaries*

6<sup>th</sup> Jim & Linda Wynne  
21<sup>st</sup> Robert & Adelaide Butler  
25<sup>th</sup> Skippy & Gracelyn Parks

### *September Birthdays*

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Ernest Miles        | 17 <sup>th</sup> Allyson Guthrie     |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Andrea McCarney     | 21 <sup>st</sup> Ginny Long          |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> Drew Nelson         | 22 <sup>nd</sup> Dot Mabry           |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> Christian Greenwood | 24 <sup>th</sup> John Van Landingham |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> Scott Guthrie      | 25 <sup>th</sup> Anne Rowlett        |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> Grace Coover       | 28 <sup>th</sup> Jessie Vargo        |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> Karen Guthrie      |                                      |