

# PARISH OF ST. PAUL STEWARDSHIP 2007

## INVITATION

*You're invited to give back to God from the abundance God has given you.*

The abundance given by God comes to us directly through St. Paul's in many tangible ways. For parents, St. Paul's offers a place to bring children where they can learn Bible stories, hymns, religious concepts, and the value of being a member of a faith community. Children have the opportunity not only to study in Christian formation classes, but to participate in the service as acolytes, ushers, speakers and performers. The Youth Group joins teenagers from different parishes and offers them the opportunity for fun, and also for service, which many find to be a profound experience.

For adults, the gifts of fellowship we receive from St. Paul's are invaluable. As a small parish, everyone has to pitch in together to make things work. This leads to a strong, powerful sense of fellowship and community - something many feel to be sadly lacking in the outside world. When parishioners are in trouble, they are often amazed and deeply touched by the outpouring of support from members of the Parish.

There is always a niche where you can contribute...by being Lector or LEM,

joining a committee, participating in Altar Guild, Church School, or recycling activities, property maintenance, hosting Coffee Hour, outreach in our own towns, or going to Belize to build a church or school.

St. Paul's warm, welcoming community is special. People who attend other churches do not find this to be a universal experience. The gifts we receive of fellowship and community are gifts that can never be repaid. But we are invited to support the vibrant life of St. Paul's by contributing however we can, through time, talent and treasure.

*You're invited to give from your time, treasure, and talent to the Parish of St Paul.*

This is an exciting time at the parish. We have just agreed to have Carol remain with us for the next three years. We are planning ways to share outreach, social fellowship, mission trips, parties, forums, carol sings, and occasional services with St. John's, Newtonville. We have an ongoing, active Christian Formation program for children, youth, and adults. We have a new office administrator with skills which will allow us to communicate better and be more organized. We had a wonderful parish worship service and picnic at the Cove in the fall. We had services outside in the beautiful garden during the warmth of spring and summer. We have a highly talented organist and choir which enrich our worship services.

We have our community forums, and our new spirituality committee which is leading us in enriching our prayer life. We have a great outreach program to others in our community, the state, the nation, and the world. We will finally be planning and constructing the handicapped bathroom and kitchenette.

Most of all, we have a love of God and Christ, and each other. We know that St. Paul's is a wonderfully strengthening community which needs each of us to participate so that we can fulfill our mission to each other, the community and God. So we ask you at this time to pledge your time, talent, and treasure to the parish for the year 2007. As a part of the stewardship campaign this year, we are also asking each member to pledge during 2007 to bring someone who is not currently a member to a service and encourage them to join us. We must grow if we are to flourish.

*You're invited to say to someone else: "You're invited to join us at the Parish of St. Paul!"*

With the small size of our congregation, we sit at a critical juncture in the parish's life. It is a matter of increasing urgency that we need more people to maintain the running of the church. The abundance of positive things mentioned here, that we all look forward to, require generous pledging: of time and money, and a commitment to growing our congregation. The continued arrival of new people, both

to lead and participate, is our only long-term safeguard. The recent trend in our number of pledging units is as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Pledges</u>	<u>Average Sunday Attendance</u>
2002	56	63
2003	50	60
2004	46	55
2005	43	49
2006	41	

We can reverse this trend by pledging to bring one friend or family member to a service at St. Paul's in the coming year. Some people are curious and would welcome the invitation - and maybe they'll like what they find. As Episcopalians and New Englanders, it can be hard for us to ask people to come to church with us, but for St. Paul's to grow, our challenge is to overcome our resistance to evangelizing and bring new people into our worship community.

## OPEN AND WELCOMING

At St. Paul's there is a spiritual place for everyone, from the doubters to the devout, as these comments from Parishioners show:

"As a questioning Christian, I came to St. Paul's with a "chip" on my shoulder.

What did I believe? What would I be forced to believe and do? Well, eight years later, I have come a little closer to what it means to live in a Christian community. Although I am still not sure what I always believe, I know that I believe in the love that members of the community of St Paul's share with each other. We come together weekly or more often and we care for one another. We might not do that if we were all just living in the area, but somehow St. Paul's is the common Christian community that we share. With that comes the laughter of coffee hour or Epiphany parties, the tears and sorrow of pained hearts as we support those of us on difficult journeys and the search for what God's love means for each of us. I am happy to be on this journey with all of you."

"When this Boston College theology professor made the journey to the Anglican Communion fifteen years ago one of the wisest words of advice an Episcopal colleague of mine gave me was, "look for where worship is true." I took that to mean look for a community of prayer which spoke to both the heart and the head (where you didn't have to check your brain at the door); a place where the values preached in the liturgy were being lived out in the coffee hour and in any of the small and great acts of service, social justice and personal caring; and most importantly where the radical welcome of Jesus to the fellowship of the Table meant that no one was excluded. I found that in the Episcopal diocese of Massachusetts

and when my partner and I and our son moved to Newton, I found it in the Parish of St. Paul's. It has brought me to joy in many ways; not least the opportunity to continue to be involved with young children week after week in our church school, and the chance to work with intelligent, committed adults around programming that serves the spiritual needs of the entire Newton community. Finally, St. Paul's has been a church home that has supported my family in so many ways – not least being the worshipping community of truth that celebrated our civil marriage with Eucharist and blessing two years ago."

"Years ago, St. Paul's meant a place to bring my children for spiritual education and exposure to new ideas and a diverse group of people. As they grew and found their own directions, I consciously renewed my commitment to this community because of the support, friendship, values, and laughter I find here. Where else can you go to get tears of joy, laughter, poignancy, smiles, hugs, and handshakes all in the space of an hour?"

"Do you want a spiritual and temporal home? "Home" - that's what I have found at St. Paul's. A place to seek spiritual growth. And a place to find love and support during difficulties. And also a place to re-joice - little kids hitting the T-ball during a kids/adult softball game, golden hawkweed dancing on a sunny incline during a late fall walk, admiring

first-time acolytes (weren't they just in preschool?). Where would I (and my husband) be without this 'home?'"

### **GIVING TO ST. PAUL'S**

Based on recent history, your pledges account for 61% of parish income which in turn funds salaries and programs, maintains our property and supports the work outside the parish. In 2006, our average pledge per family at St. Paul's was \$2,439. Significantly, fully 40% of our pledge income came from just four families.

We are all able to share our wealth and time in different ways and amounts. Vestry encourages parishioners to consider stewardship in terms of proportional giving, meaning each parishioner, regardless of means, commits as deeply in the stewardship life of the parish as other parishioners giving the same percentage of their income.

We ask all parishioners to devote time in careful consideration of what level of support they can offer St. Paul's in 2007. To assist you in this discernment process, a proportional giving chart can be found on the back side of the enclosed pledge card. Please return the card to a member of Vestry on or before our planned in-gathering on Sunday, December 3, 2006.

Thank you.

### **A MESSAGE FROM CAROL:**

Dear Members of St. Paul's Church:

I thank you for your support of our continued ministry together. On Sunday, October 22, forty-six members of the parish voted to engage in a 3-year period of discernment, through an intentional collaborative relationship with St. John's in Newtonville. The diocese requires that a "priest-in-charge" lead you in this process until you determine the future of the parish, and what kind of permanent clergy leadership you need and can afford. Your vote to call me as the "Priest-in-charge" during this period provides you with stability and consistency in pastoral care, education, and worship. Now you have a vision, although limited to the next three years, of how you will function as a parish. Now you have a plan, which requires your committed financial support. St. Paul's is a wonderful parish and God is clearly calling each and every one of you to open your hearts to a new way of carrying out God's mission in Newton and surrounding towns. As a wise person once said, "Crisis is turning point, an opportunity for growth". St. Paul's is at a critical turning point in its history, one that the parish has visited other times in its past. Your financial support is needed. I thank you for inviting me to lead you in the journey ahead.

Faithfully yours in Christ, Carol