

'Tis is the season of Thanksgiving!

Please consider the many, many gifts of this beloved community
for which you give thanks
and make a pledge of whatever time, talent and treasure you can and want to
contribute toward the blossoming of those gifts.

Where ever **your** gifts and resources lie,
where ever **you** are blessed with abundance,
where ever **you** have room and inclination to share,
where ever **your** heart lies, as the Gospel of Luke promises,
there lies your treasure as well.

So please do offer the treasures that God has gifted to you:
your time, your skills and abilities, and your financial support,
as you are able, to the vibrant and growing
mission and ministry of our beloved community.

The Parish of St. Paul Newton Highlands, MA 2009 Stewardship Campaign

**How will you offer your own
time, talent and treasure
in the year to come?**

How deep is your gratitude?

The Gospel According to Luke 6:38 says:
Give, and it will be given to you.

*A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your
lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.*

A Letter From Our Priest in Charge

Dear Beloved Community

It is no coincidence that our stewardship campaign takes place in the season of Thanksgiving. For stewardship is all about our response to our gratitude. And gratitude is expressed by giving....actually, our deepest gratitude is expressed by sharing, and sharing is a spiritual practice. And so contrary to much popular belief, stewardship is not a financial responsibility, but rather a means to our most sacred selves. It is a way to live into God's hope and dream for each of us. For it is a practice that requires an investment, a relationship, a connection, which is not necessarily required in the act of giving – often divesting rather than investing our wealth. **Stewardship is the way we plug in, not the requirement to pay out. Stewardship is sacred sharing.**

And the Parish of St. Paul is a community that knows how to share...how to share the load.....how to share the bounty.....how to offer up God's gifts for God's purposes. The extraordinary stewardship offered by this community to each other over the last eighteen months has been an inspiring example of sacred sharing. And it is cause for abundant thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for the copious amount of time spent tending every facet and detail of this community's life. Thanksgiving for the abundant talent shared in sustaining every aspect of this community's presence – the pastoral care, adult formation, church school, worship, communications, outreach, financial management and oversight, property management and maintenance, and the list goes on and on. And thanksgiving for the financial resources that have provided for heat and light and clergy and mission and ministry and community.

Yes, this is a season for deep thanksgiving and gratitude. Thanks be to God and thanks be to each other for such unbridled generosity. And gratitude is best expressed by sharing. So please, think and pray and talk with each other about the depth of your gratitude for this faithful community and its many gifts. And then pledge as many of your gifts, as sacrificially, as you can. Share them with wild abandon, and trust that God and your community will likewise provide. Onward!

Peace,

Gretchen

That said, **our primary goal for the 2009 campaign is to increase the number of committed, pledging families in our community by 33.3%.** Certainly we want and need to raise more dollars than we raised last year. But these are tough economic times. And even more important than the actual total is the knowledge that every one of us is contributing something to each other; to know that we are in this together, each and every one of us. **This community does not need our money as much as we need to contribute to the community.** Our calling as Christians demands that we prayerfully and humbly pitch in for the collective good. Our contribution, of whatever amount is right for us, is our good faith commitment to our brothers and sisters. **So, our goal this year is to increase our number of pledging families from 39 to 52.**

And, **please encourage your kids to pledge.** Last year four of our younger members made annual pledges to the Parish of St. Paul. The notion of sacred sharing and sacrificial giving is a lesson that is never too early to teach. Ask your kids to think about what St. Paul's means in their life and if it they would be willing to pledge a part of their allowance every month to the health and wellbeing of their community. And again, the amount is less important than is the willingness to share the load.

Some FAQ's About Pledging at POSP

- In 2008, annual pledges ranged from \$100 to \$17,000. **Everyone can contribute something.**
- In 2008, the average pledge was \$2,282, significantly higher than the diocesan average. We are a generous parish!
- In 2008, more than 40% of our families pledged more than \$38 per week...\$2,000 per year.
- **How do I begin to think about my pledge?** First think about your gratitude for St. Paul's, in your life and in the world. Then, think about what you spend every week or every month, and how much of that amount you can and want to share with your community. Multiply that amount by 12 or 52 and that should be your annual pledge.
- **How low can I go?** If today you can write a check to cover your annual pledge, whatever the amount, you are probably not getting much spiritual bang for your buck. It is absolutely true that the measure we put in is indeed the measure we get back. Like almost everything in life, the more we stretch, the better we feel! Likewise, it is a spiritual practice to let our best effort be enough.
- **What about tithing?** Tithing, that is, offering 10% of your income back to God, is a spiritual practice that dates, in our tradition, back to the Hebrew Bible. Your clergy tithes. And, if you are able and so inclined, you are invited and encouraged to join in and give this joyful practice a try, if you have not already done so.

2009 Pledging & Stewardship Goals

Like any other household or organization, St. Paul's has financial obligations and challenges that must be met if we are to continue to thrive, and even survive. One of the great things about the structure of our Episcopal church is that every parish is an independent entity. That means we have the freedom to set our own agenda. It also means that **we are wholly self-sufficient**. Unlike the Roman Catholic structure, **our community must provide for all of our own needs**. Every dime required to turn on the lights, heat the building, copy the bulletins, change the candles, turn on the organ, support our clergy and staff, etc. comes directly from the members of our community.

And, we not only provide for our own needs, we pay roughly 10% of our annual parish collection to the Diocese of Massachusetts. All of the good work that our diocese does, at home and around the world, like assisting with the Gulf Coast Recovery, addressing the devastating issue of AIDS in Africa, pursuing programs and projects to alleviate poverty and suffering and oppression in Haiti, Honduras, El Salvador, Jerusalem, Tanzania, and elsewhere – all of these good works are funded in part by the monies that we raise in our annual stewardship campaign and send to the diocese in the form of our assessment.

As a point of reference, **our 2008 stewardship campaign raised \$89,000 in pledges from 39 families. That was a decrease of more than \$10,000 and 3 pledging families from the 2007 campaign**. This decrease in pledges coupled with an increase in expenses left us with a projected budget shortfall of \$17,000 for this year. But thanks to several godsend, not the least of which has been the generosity of our steadfast community as well as some significant gifts from some of our newer families, **we are on track to break even for the year. Thank you one and all!**

The final 2009 Operating Budget will be presented in detail at the Annual Meeting in January. But **our goal for the 2009 stewardship campaign is at least a 20% increase over last year's total**, and hopefully over and above that in order to provide for some of the blossoming programs and projects in which our community is grounded, such as an expanded offering for kids and youth, more adult education and formation, and decreasing our collective carbon footprint.

➤ A Few of our Hopes and Dreams:

- ➔ *Funding for a Kids and Youth Music Program:*
- One of the best ways to keep our young folks involved and interested in our community is through the offering of music. We are hoping to expand our offering through the youth choir and other youth projects – a production of Godspell in the spring, maybe a jazz band and/or choir, opportunities to contribute to our service music in the liturgy, etc. Such offerings will require additional resources such as a youth music director, sheet music, instruments, etc. If this initiative is important to you, please consider providing some additional time, talent, and/or treasure for the cause.

- ➔ *Reducing our Carbon Footprint:*
- One of the most important ways that we can be good stewards of God's good earth is to change the way we use and abuse its resources. Unfortunately that is not as easily done as it is hoped for. We may need to spend a bit of money in order to save a lot of money, not to mention the need to save this fragile planet, our island home. We will need to better insulate our church, better orchestrate our use of energy on every level of our parish life, be more thoughtful in our purchasing, be more conscious of our impact on the world in which we live. If this initiative is important to you, please help.

- ➔ *Upgrading our facilities and equipment:*
- Our facilities and equipment are in need of a variety of repairs and renovations if we are to provide a safe and comfortable home for our many ministries. In addition to projects such as painting the parish hall, repairing and replacing broken and/or energy inefficient windows, and other property projects, we are needing a new dishwasher to sanitize the non-disposable tableware that we use on a regular basis, we need new seating for our church school, an awning for our meditation garden, among other expenses that will enhance our parish programming and community life. See the pledge form for more details.

- ➔ *Increasing our Service Programs and Projects:*
- One of the ways our community lives out its Christian calling is through a variety of active community ministries which include mission trips to the Gulf Coast, financial assistance to Belize through the Plenty Project, a wide range of environmental awareness and action projects, assistance at the Salvation Army and other local social service agencies, Food Drives and hunger alleviation projects, among many, many others. Your gifts of time, talent and treasure make all the difference and all of the degree of difference in our ability to serve God's world.