

THE EPISCOPAL PARISH OF  
*S***AINT PAUL**

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As the gardener tends to the garden, so must we each nurture our own lives and that of our St. Paul's community. What are we doing with the bounty entrusted to us by God? Now, together in effort, spirit and purpose, may we cultivate our communal garden.

## 2010 Pledging & Stewardship

Stewardship is a way of life, an expression of our discipleship with God and Christ. In recognizing that God is the origin of all life, the giver of everything we have and everything that we are, it is incumbent on us to express our own gratitude through service to God and others through sharing our own diverse resources.

As members of the Parish of St. Paul, each of us has been given many of the tools needed to tend our gardens. In stewardship season, we reflect on what we have been given and how we have lived the principles that guide our faith. If we have lived in Christ and in the Spirit, then we will bear fruit - abundant fruit – so as stewards we yield a rich harvest.

### **2 Corinthians 9:6-8; 12:**

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.



Each year as we prepare the budget for the coming year, we take stock of the progress we have made and the new challenges that will push us to thrive as a parish. We can and should be truly proud of some spectacular progress made over the past year. Our total number of pledging families increased from 39 to 53 (a 36% increase). Average pledge size increased from just under \$2,300 to close to \$2,700 (a 17% increase). We have provided for additional hours for our Youth Director to enable her to work with middle school kids and teenagers as well as the church school group. We have also added regular Friday night Compline services, Sunday evening Youth Services for our confirmation class and other youth music offerings. We made significant improvements to our downstairs children spaces (including the addition of a nursery), installed new kitchen appliances, upgraded heating to Gretchen's office and installed a new fence around our outdoor play space.



But our work together is never done, nor should it be. As our community grows, we must shape and prune this hardy plant to meet not just our dreams and goals but God's imperative to live our lives among, with and for all people, our fellow travelers on God's divine journey. In the coming year we intend to strive diligently to expand our mission and outreach and our children and youth offerings. Together with other Newton Episcopal churches, we will be active participants in a new Newton food pantry. We will also seek to fund some long-needed upgrades to our physical plant stressing improved accessibility, environmental integrity and maximum efficiency. Please contribute generously of your own talents and resources in whatever way you are able to help us achieve these worthy goals.

## Q&A's about Pledging at St. Paul's

✿ *Why make a pledge?* In making a pledge, we make a promise. The parish and those we serve count on that promise. Resources pledged allow the Vestry to plan and implement the church's annual operating budget with confidence in our community's ability to meet its responsibilities and undertakings in the coming year. By giving of ourselves, we are united as part of the loving and sharing community of St. Paul's, of the world and of God.

✿ *How do I think about my pledge?* First consider your gratitude for St. Paul's in your life and in the world. Then consider what you spend every week or every month, and how much of that you can and want to share with your spiritual community. Multiply that amount by 12 or 52 to determine your annual pledge to St. Paul's. If you can write a check to cover your annual pledge today, you are probably not getting much spiritual bang for your buck. The measure we put into life is indeed the measure we get back. Like almost everything, the more we stretch, the better we feel! We are well served in remembering it is a spiritual practice to let our best effort be enough.

✿ *What about tithing?* Tithing (offering 10% of your income back to God) is a spiritual practice that in our tradition dates back to the Hebrew Bible. Your clergy tithes. If you are able and so inclined, you are certainly invited and encouraged to join in and give this joyful practice a try.

