



## EPISCOPAL PARISH OF ST. PAUL 2018 ANNUAL GIVING



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Dear Beloved Community,

This year is the 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our beloved parish! And it is an incredibly exciting time in the life of our community. In the last year, we have reached a few of our deepest and longest held goals regarding the use of our space in service to our mission of love and interfaith collaboration. We are actually revisioning what it means to be church in the twenty-first century. I am so delighted and proud to be among this faithful, courageous and inspiring community. **The Parish of St. Paul has become a beacon of living our faith with integrity to the wider church and the wider community.**

It is no secret that the mainline church, especially in New England, has been in relative decline for almost half a century. Across the board, average Sunday attendance (the traditional measure of church health and vitality since the dawn of the Episcopal church) is down, as are sustaining pledges that have made the traditional church ministries not just possible, but the paradigm that defines almost every Episcopal church. St. Paul's has been thusly blessed for 135 years.

But “the” church is going to need to revision its mission and structure if it is going to be a viable institution going forward. And although these two measures of church vitality – Sunday attendance and pledging – seem to be on the decline, the church itself is not (in my humble opinion!). **Paradoxically, the decline in traditional metrics may signal an exciting opportunity to re-imagine the community of the faithful in ways that are increasingly and expansively true to the teachings, example and calling of disciples.**

The Parish of St. Paul is pushing this new boundary with all that we have and all that we are. Like many of our sister parishes, our average Sunday attendance (ASA) may be waning a bit, but our average weekly engagement (AWE) is on fire! **We are on the cutting edge of reimagining our church. We are engaging the world, building interfaith relationships and doing our best to grow into a full-fledged sanctuary** for each other, the family in our midst, and the partners in our sanctuary collaborative.

Sanctuary is no longer what we do, it is what we are. And isn't sanctuary what church is intended to be? We are embracing sanctuary not just as a ministry. Not even a mission. It may well be a new paradigm for church altogether. Not sanctuary as a refuge for undocumented people, but sanctuary as the way of being a part of the Good News in this difficult world. A way of offering rest and rejuvenation to everyone who needs it. Every one of us needs a sanctuary at one time or another. **And so sanctuary is the unique healing power of the church.**

And as a physical sanctuary for the family in our midst, we are literally offering our body for the life of the world. Our space, in its entirety, is filled with faithful souls every day and every night. Every inch of our gorgeous building is answering God's call to us. Continually. We are no longer just engaging on Sunday morning or during a weekly AA meeting. Now there are people of faith in our midst 24/7, from a variety of communities of religious and non-religious persuasions. We are a hotbed of personal transformation. We have seven Jewish communities and many Christians from other Episcopal churches and various denominations who now call our space part of their home. Whose members sleep in our choir room, and converse in our parish hall, and break bread in our kitchen, and make holy friends whom they would never otherwise know.

In the last year, we have been recognized and lifted in several wider communities for providing sanctuary for an undocumented family. Episcopal City Mission awarded us the M. Thomas Shaw Award for Social Justice in June (and \$1,000). The Newton tab featured our sanctuary in a front page article in July. In September, we were invited to present our sanctuary and collaborative at the Diocesan Ministry Network Day. And we just received over \$5,000 in grant money from our deanery for our sanctuary work. Our public visibility is rising steadily.

We are modeling a different way of being church in this world. We are modeling the building of the Kingdom (the family of God) in a new way. A way that is non-partisan. A way that is non-denominational. A way that honors the very essence of the biblical instruction to welcome the stranger, love the neighbor and be not afraid to do it! You have good reason to be proud of and inspired by our community.

In this season of stewardship, we hope that you will contribute what you can to the work that God has gathered us to do together. It is work that needs to be done for the life of the world. **And the world is watching.** Let us continue to forge a way for our church in the changing world ahead.

One additional note: Please know that our sanctuary work is 100% supported by our sanctuary Collaborative which has raised over \$30,000 in gifts and grants over the last 18 months to pay for every cost associated with this work, including the increased utilities and supplies, certain maintenance expenses that are directly related to sanctuary, and several general upgrades to our property. **Financially, our sanctuary has been much more of a blessing than it has been a burden!**

## ***Like the early church, we give what we can, we get what we need!***

**Pledging has a practical and direct connection to our parish budgeting process.** In the Episcopal polity, each parish is self-supporting. And so, our budget is to a large degree, predicated on our pledging. Without a firm idea of what people plan to give (pledges are the largest single component of our income), it is very difficult for our Vestry – charged with managing the financial resources – to make decisions about what we can afford. So please prayerfully consider making a pledge to support our beloved community in the most generous amount that you can afford.

**And, because financial support is just one component of our stewardship, please prayerfully consider contributing to any one of a number of ministries that make the Parish of St. Paul the vibrant, progressive, beloved community of faith that we are.**

### ***A Few Parish Financial Statistics***

- In 2018, our parish budget is roughly ~\$250,000.
- In 2018, we had 47 pledges totaling roughly \$145,000. *The rest comes from various donations, rental & investment income, and a planned 4% draw on our endowment.*
- In 2018, annual pledges ranged from \$52 to \$10,000. *Everyone can contribute something.*

### ***Where Does the Money Go?***

**Our pledging dollars make every nook and cranny of our ministry possible. Every dime that we spend - give or take a few small grants - comes from us.** Our annual budget pays for our buildings and grounds, our utilities, our office and administration, our rector, our youth ministers and programming, our music programming, and all of the ministries made possible by the health and subsistence of this beloved community.

**And every dime that the diocese spends - give or take a few grants - also comes from us,** and our fellow pledging parishioners throughout the diocese. We support our diocese through the payment of our annual diocesan assessment which is roughly 15% of every dollar that we spend in our operating budget, minus outreach. When the parish grows, the budget grows. And when the budget grows, so does the assessment. In 2008 our diocesan assessment was \$8,000. In 2018 it is \$23,160. Onward!

### *How do I begin to think about my pledge?*

**Pledging is a spiritual practice**; the first step is to think about your gratitude for this community and all that you are able to contribute in and through it. What does this beloved community add to God's world? And because we are a community, think not just about how this community serves you directly, but how it serves all of its parishioners, its neighbors and the wider world. **We rely on pledges rather than dues for a reason. We are not a community that welcomes only those who can afford to be here. Rather, we are a community who knows that if each gives generously, all will be welcomed unconditionally.**

**This year is our 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary. If you are already pledging to St. Paul's and can increase your pledge by at least \$135, we hope you will consider doing so! If every pledging family increases by \$135, we will increase our income by over \$5,000! If you are new to our beloved community, we hope you will consider making an introductory pledge that suits your family budget. The most important thing is to have full participation! Everyone can give something....and everything will be thoroughly appreciated!**

### *How can I pay my pledge?*

There are a variety of ways to pay your pledge. You can pay it all in a lump sum whenever the funds are available! You can ask for envelopes and pay a bit every week or month. You can set up an automatic monthly bill-pay at your bank so that a check in your designated amount is automatically sent every month. You can gift your pledge in stock. You can pay with a credit card. Or, you can pay your pledge in cash and coins! For more information or other ideas, please talk with our wonderful Treasurer, Susan Boyer.

**So, if you value this community and this diocese  
and our deep, expansive and inspiring Episcopal tradition!  
If you are energized and lifted by our community worship!  
If you are inspired by our music and the voices in our midst!**

**If you are comforted by the good care and prayers of our beloved community!**

**If you cherish the friendships of the hearts in our pews!**

**If you want your children to know a place where they can always go for strength and solace!**

**If you believe that we are nothing if not a sanctuary!**

**If you value the way we are helping to reimagine the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century!**

**If you value the work and ministry of your fellow parishioners and your clergy!**

**Then please put your pledge where your heart is!**