

SAINT JOHN'S CHURCH



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The Little Church
With a Big Heart

November 15, 2011

Dear Fellow Parishioners:

As we prepare to give thanks for our blessings on Thanksgiving, we are also called upon to consider how we can support St. John's and give thanks to God for this church, its congregation and the good works it strives to do in the world. Serving on the vestry in charge of outreach has opened my eyes to the many needs that we serve locally and overseas. I (John Horan) was always one to donate to the Red Cross when there was an international disaster, but donating to help our sister parish in Guatemala after the recent earthquake is more meaningful to me because I am doing it with fellow members of St. John's. Father Mike has prodded us to go to Chester and meet the people working and serving at the St. Mary's Food Cupboard, so that outreach is about more than writing checks. As I have been doing stewardship, I see the many examples of parishioners who make donations above and beyond their pledge because they see a need and they want to help. It's inspired me to do the same.

All of this helps define stewardship. It is about what we, as a congregation, can do to make the world we live in a better place. It is a collective effort that is built on the generosity of individuals. Ideally, we see this process as a bond that gives our lives more meaning and helps us understand God's will. So we are asking you to think about your pledge this year in terms of building and defining that mission for St. John's. We have made a good start on this process, talking and listening to people about our mission. We promise to keep this dialog alive in 2012 and beyond.

We understand that everyone's financial circumstances are different and appreciate that not everyone can give more. But I believe that many families can do more for St. John's and the programs it offers them and their loved ones. Here is, we believe, a simple question that all of you should ask yourselves when deciding what to pledge for 2012:

Does the amount I pledge make a difference to me?

If your family has a good income and you are giving the amount that you spend on coffee at the office each week, you are not giving an amount that is meaningful to you. If you are giving an amount that might pay for a nice family vacation, then you clearly are doing something meaningful. Our challenge to you is not to forego a family vacation but to look into your heart and honestly decide what constitutes a meaningful commitment to your church and your faith. I believe that will help us as a congregation

become more generous and help us do God's work in the world.

In our conversations with other parishioners, the strongest themes about the meaning of St. John's have been the fellowship that we feel coming together and our desire to help make the world a better place through outreach. The fact that we now have two pastors has, we think you'll agree, made a big difference on both fronts. Father John and Father Mike are able to do more on Sunday than run in and out of services. Father Mike's contacts are opening up many new dimensions to outreach. We are deepening our relationship with St. Mary's at a critical time in its existence, developing family-friendly opportunities with Ronald McDonald House and maintaining our commitment to Guatemala in a time of great need.

It is important to realize, however, that Father Mike has come to us courtesy of the diocese for three years, in part because of other work it has asked Father John to lead. At some point, we will need to decide whether we can support all the benefits that we are now enjoying. The next few years will be important to answering that question. If we are generous now, these programs will flourish. More will join us for the fellowship and outreach that we offer, and we will be in a position to make a transition to a larger, more generous and more meaningful congregation. But we need to take advantage of this opportunity.

So we ask you in closing to reflect on a pledge that would be meaningful to you. If you are pledging coffee money, perhaps you should be thinking about \$100 a month. If you honestly are stretched financially, then an increase of \$5 per week is meaningful. The test is not the amount *per se* but whether the amount makes a difference to you. Already the response to stewardship from the vestry has been very strong because we see the very real opportunity to make St. John's a place that both honors its traditions while embracing new challenges. We hope that you will share that belief and give generously. Please bring your pledge with you to church for placing on the altar with all of our pledges, or mail it to us.

Very truly yours,



John Horan
Stewardship Co-Chair



Nicolle Fullmer
Stewardship Co-Chair