

September 15, 2008

Dear St. James' Parish Family,

We are about to enter a new autumn of increased activity in our parish life, and it's time again to consider how we will answer God's call to support our church.

We are truly blessed to have many assets and gifts: A caring, compassionate staff and clergy who help us share the Good News of God in Christ; our beautiful, historic church building and grounds; our beautiful Chapel in Deale, St. Mark's; an improved church hall including our new kitchen; an active and generous outreach ministry; a music program with many opportunities for both youth and adults, and an energized Christian Education program for all ages. These are but a few of our many blessings.

During the past year, extraordinary demands have been made on our resources, and the members of our parish have risen to the various financial challenges. The means to hire our new assistant rector, Amanda Knouse, were provided through a special appeal to which you responded enthusiastically. As we look into the future and plan our stewardship efforts, it is important to realize that we must continue to fund Amanda's salary and benefits as a normal, recurring budget item. Now that we have a clergy person whose major responsibility is Christian formation and other programs for our youth, we must provide the funds to enable those programs to succeed.

Thanks to your generosity and many hours of volunteer labor, our church facilities have undergone an enormous amount of costly upkeep and refurbishment. The need for continued historic preservation, general maintenance and future improvements of our buildings is an ongoing concern. With your prayers and continued financial support we remain completely confident in our ability to accomplish these responsibilities we owe our future generations.

As we enjoy the many blessings that God has bestowed on us, it is sometimes hard to remember that there are so many fellow members of God's family who are in need. During the past year, we have given critical financial aid to more than eighty families in the South County area. Although we were able to help many, we were unable to help many others who requested our assistance. As winter approaches and the economic outlook remains uncertain, we are hopeful that, with your support, we will continue to be able to offer assistance to our brothers and sisters in need within our Parish and community.

I already mentioned some of our blessings, gifts and assets, but the greatest and most important asset of all is you, the St. James' parishioner. Each of us through our talent, time, effort, devotion, and monetary support makes the ministries of our parish possible. Your generosity is greatly and humbly appreciated, especially the financial support of your church.

Your pledge is an affirmation of your relationship to God. It demonstrates your gratitude for all the blessings in your life, and your acknowledgement of the reality that all we have and all that we experience are God's gifts to us. Your support for the ministries of our Parish returns a portion of God's gracious gifts so that the work we are called to do can effectively be accomplished, and so that our individual relationships with God can nurture and grow.

"The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." - 2 Corinthians 9:6

Stewardship is not meant to be a burden, but rather a faith building exercise as we trust God's help in fulfilling our pledge. Please know your commitment is only a pledge, not a contract. If your ability to meet your commitment changes, you may adjust your giving level at any time.

Making a pledge is primarily a spiritual decision, and should only be reached after considerable prayer and personal reflection. I invite you to reflect and pray about your own personal journey of stewardship and your desire to "see God more clearly, love God more dearly, follow God more nearly, day by day" and respond with an open and generous heart.

" Stewardship is everything we do after we say we believe."

Respectfully yours,

Dwayne Crawford
Stewardship Committee