

Parishioners' Personal Stewardship Statements

Linda Day

I became an Episcopalian when my husband and I moved to Great Barrington and heard the beautiful bells of St. James' Church. Fast forward more than forty years, and I give thanks to the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for sustaining me in my professional career and in my personal life which included burying my husband, his parents and my own parents. Without the gift of friendship and the strength and love God bestowed on me, my life could have been filled with self pity instead of abundance. Praise be to God!

Now I worship here at St. Paul's Church and I love the 8:00 am service. Yes, the service is Rite 1 and without music...except at Christmas and Easter. But the service is inspirational... spiritual. A worshiper can feel the presence of the Trinity and rejoice. This service means so much to me, and I feel the presence of Jesus so strongly during the Eucharist, that a large segment of my stewardship giving goes to assuring it will continue.

But, there is more. I do not necessarily socialize with congregational members outside of church worship and activities. Yet, there is a very strong sense of Christian bonding. This congregation forms a family of worshippers and believers. We really do care for one another. And, if I need help, this Christian congregation will step in and provide it. Isn't that a secure, wonderful feeling? I love St. Paul's family. So my stewardship helps assure that the family will continue to thrive.

But, there is more. I am literally facing the battle of my life. Most of you know I have metastatic breast cancer to the bone. My bones are riddled with this incurable cancer from my ribs to vertebrae to hips. Although incurable, this cancer can be managed. I pray that God will move modern medicine to cure me...to make an exception. Then I pray that He will at least let me outlive my aged beagle Cassie. Then I pray that whatever happens, the Holy Trinity will be by my side. (So far, the treatments are working extremely well and I am pain free. All tests show me to be in the normal range. Hurray! Thanks be to God!) However, the important thing is, I am a Christian. I believe in Jesus Christ. Why should I fear death when I believe in the Resurrection? At communion we speak of the body and blood of Christ...a New Covenant.

So, my stewardship giving is for the 8:00 am service, the Christian family of St. Paul's, and most of all in thanks and praise for our salvation through Jesus Christ.

What does YOUR stewardship embrace?

– Linda

Rob Maloney

Honestly, I had never given church giving it much thought, it was just something that we always did when we went to church. We, as a family, do make a conscious effort to consider how we can contribute to the world to make it a better place, but I had never thought much about finances and the church. A couple of years ago, we began to make a conscious effort to increase what we gave to the church because it has been such an important part of our lives since we returned to the area.

When we moved back, and started coming to St. Paul's, we were quickly welcomed as part of the church family. In addition to St. Paul's being such a welcoming environment for both newcomers and visitors to the area alike, we are constantly reminded of the positive impact it has on our community, both local and global, from the prayer shawls and Children's Center to the missionary trip to Haiti.

On a more personal note, we have been fortunate enough to become part of the regular crew at the Lee Food Pantry. I look forward to going each month, because I truly enjoy the company of the group. It is an important thing for our family and especially our kids, to be a part of, and it makes me feel good. If it weren't for St. Paul's and the friends we have made here, I am not sure we would be a part of such an important activity in our community.

St. Paul's has become a very important part of our lives. It is the place we consider our spiritual home. It is important to us as a family contribute to a place that we consider a spiritual home for us and our children. It is a place where we can go and feel welcome, feel at peace, worship with people of like mind, and be a part of something that not only benefits us greatly but the whole community.

We feel it is important for us to use the gifts we receive to support our spiritual home as well as pay the bills for our physical home. Although I have never pledged in the past, I have meant to, but just never got around to sending in the card. This year, however, I have already filled out the card, and will drop it in the collection plate.

– Rob

Pam Drumm

I go to St. Paul's – every Sunday at 8:00 a.m.

I believe that it is only right to give

My time. My talent. My treasure.

Years ago I heard a stewardship sermon that made a huge impression on me – given – not by a Priest but by a guy in the parish who just happened to be a professional fund raiser. The two things that have stuck are:

1) Don't give what is left over at the end of the month. Give what you will: First

So I do – I actually make sure the first check I write each month is to the church.

2) You pay to go to the movies... Isn't church at least as important?

Well, yes it is – so I pledge to St. Paul's because I come once a week

Because I worship God here once a week

I am glad there is a church here

I am glad there is a priest

I am glad for the opportunity and for what the church is to the community and the world.

I *can* and *want* to be part of that. I do that by giving.

– Pam

Bill Vogt

Fr. Tom was explicit so I will be too, and I have a confession to make.

I don't tithe.

I never have.

I might not tithe in the future.

Oh, I know the many scripture passages about money and possessions: "The love of money is the root of all evil." "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." "Sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." And that most terrifying one: "It will be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Like many of you, I'm sure, I support a number of worthy humanitarian causes and organizations important to our civic culture. They do good work, and I'm glad to help them.

But this church does good work too. Most of you are familiar with the activities of this parish in our community and in the wider world. I don't tithe but I will sign a pledge card for next year. Each year I try to increase my pledge, at least a little. I think it's important to do so. I know the church does good works, and it's good to support the church.

But I give because it's good *for me*.

– *Bill*

Lila Berle

Three weeks ago I was asked if I would speak about "why do I give to the church?" At first I declined as I am getting older and there is always a need to let younger folks declare themselves and participate. After week one, I listened to Bill Vogt speak, was moved to change my mind. I have spent two weeks thinking about the question – a great exercise that I recommend to each of you.

It became clear to me that I give to St. Paul's and my spiritual life because of a deep sense of joy and thankfulness in my life! Every day I experience joy and thankfulness and love in my world.

I grew up knowing that my great-grandmother gave to the Episcopal church at the Washington D.C. Cathedral and St. Bartholomew's in NYC. My grandmother also did so. My mother was the person who took me to Trinity Church in Lenox as a child, one of my regular favorite childhood memories. I liked being with her and I loved the mystery of it all.

When Peter and I married in 1960 at Trinity, we immediately became members of St. Paul's, fifty-three years ago. It was a very important part of our relationship to each other during all those years and to our work in the bigger world.

We had become part of the “heavenly host” of St. Paul’s. My memories are filled with wonderful people that surround us still today here. The Altar in memory of David Klein, the plaque in honor of Tad Evans, Molly Rockwell and her father whose window commemorates over 50 years of his being on the vestry, Martha Muir who so devoted to this place and tried to keep us on the narrow correct path, Bertha Skevington who wore a turban on her head that the Holy Ghost lived in according to one of my children, and the saints are so plentiful among us today. We are blessed.

I remember being so thankful to God for each of my children’s births, and now for them and their 14 children, most of whom have been baptized here and many confirmed here.

Daily I am thankful for so many blessings in my life. As I thought and focused on the question I was reminded that recently a relative called my daughter Mary and told her to tell me to stop giving away so much. It’s not our business to tell each other what to do and I have exercised my choice even more so – spurred on in fact.

This week we sheared over 400 sheep on the farm. Over 2,000 pounds of wool harvested with shearers and sorters who have come annually for years, they stay at my house and we have a reunion of fellowship and food after hard work for several evenings. The chief shearer is very tall, 66 years old and works beauty into the gentle handling and folding of his body around each animal who is held close and safe as it gives up its coat. He and I every year talk of the Pope as he is a serious Catholic. We celebrated the new Pope’s new energy and voice. Within 24 hours of his visit, he mailed me two magazine “Commonweal” and “America”, a Jesuit publication. It is more than OK to talk about God in this group of Baptist, atheist, lapsed church goers – a gift for all of us.

Later in the week I went to a celebration of Berkshire south Community Center where four Chambers of Commerce gathered to support the Center. There was great love in the place – and at a silent auction I did my “duty” and won the latest CD by Arlo Guthrie. It included a pamphlet about Arlo’s Center and Foundation at the historical old Trinity Church/Alice’s Restaurant. It has over its door:

One God – many forms
One River – many streams
One People – many faces
One Mother – many children

God is everywhere I look and am.

What wonderful blessings!

It comes to me full circle to our weekly celebrations of Communion. It connects us to Jesus, but even more to each other – over 2,000 years! I can experience the “heavenly host” as have centuries of people, as people around the world do weekly or oftener. It is a big table!

And so I pledge – not because I have to but because I am thankful and joyful and a part of such a big communion that is eternal, bigger than any single one of us.

– *Lila*