

"Of thine own have we given thee..."

—1 Chronicles 29:14b

WHEN I WAS A CHILD I ATTENDED Immaculate Conception Church directly across the street. Every Sunday I would go there with my mother and I recall the ushers had these strange velvet-lined wicker baskets on long poles that would pass by— seemingly out of nowhere— while the priests were preparing the altar for communion. All I knew was that you had to act fast to get your money in the basket before it whizzed by on the way out again. I loved dropping my coins in. I think this might have been my favorite part of church. I was certain there must be something good about putting money in that basket since it was so much fun to do.

Years later, I began to attend the Episcopal Church. At my first parish, they had brass platters. Sadly, no wicker wands. By now I was putting paper money in the plate when it passed by. I attended church for most of an entire year before I heard the word "Stewardship", and I had no idea what it meant when I did. I actually had no idea where the money that was being collected was going. I had never given much thought to giving.

I had never considered the act of giving as part of a spiritual practice. In more recent years I have had the privilege of working for the most faithful and generous priest I have ever met.

From
the
Rector

Jerry Keucher has been giving 10% of his income, off the top, back to the church for almost 30 years. There is absolutely no sense of obligation in Jerry's giving. He simply sees that all he has is a gift from God and his tithe to the church is an act of gratitude, faith and hope for the continuance of God's good work in the world. When he first told me about this, I confess I was quite surprised.

I have now been giving a percentage of my income as a "first fruits" thank offering for many years. I make this commitment — a percentage, not a dollar amount — every year. I have never regretted changing my pattern of giving. It has strengthened my relationship with God and allowed me to live with a surprising sense of abundance. The Church of St. Barnabas receives 10% of my income as my thanks to God for all that I have and in the hope that more may experience a relationship with God through the continuing work of this church.

I wonder if you might this year consider changing your pattern of giving by making your gift to the church a percentage of your income, not a dollar amount? Even if you don't increase the dollars you give, consider making your gifts to the church a percentage of your income. Pick a percentage: 2%, 3%...5%, 10%. Any percentage will do. I start by sug-

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FROM THE RECTOR
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gesting 2% because it is considered “intentional giving” at that point. Many people are surprised to discover that they already spend over 1% of their income at Starbucks (do the math on a tall skinny latte every day for 365 days). Consider giving off the top and pay it first before anything else as a “first fruits” offering. Try it. You can always change back to a different way of doing things. But I think you will find, as I have, that your faith will be strengthened and your sense of abundance increased by this way of giving.

I know that you love this place and find holiness in the worship here. I am certain that families enjoy the fruits of a terrific Sunday School staff and curriculum. I hope that people find their faith uplifted and also challenged by hearing the

Word of God preached. The fine quality of our music program is something to treasure. Anyone seeking a relationship with God and neighbor can find it here. This is enormously important to the spiritual health of individuals, the

PRAYER FOR STEWARDSHIP AND GIVING

God of assurance and surprise, you call your people to venture deeper in faith: Guide us in this time of growth. Quicken our ears as we hear your voice. Inspire us to be a place and a people of greater love. Save us from easy aspirations. Unite us and work through us to accomplish your work of redemption in the world. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

community, and the world. St. Barnabas is worthy of your investment.

Your vestry and wardens and I will be going on retreat together this

month to begin talking about our future. To that end, we have already all made our financial commitments for 2010. Soon you will receive your pledge cards and a letter from this year’s stewardship chairperson, Rich LeBuhn. In that letter you will learn that we plan to collect all pledges by December 13th. In fact, we will be asking you to bring your pledge cards to that service so that we may honor the commitment we are making together. We’d ideally like to eliminate the follow-up phone calls. We hope that we will even be able to begin our budget process right after that. If we can all make our commitments between now and December 13th, our planning for the future can begin. And it is a future for which I have lots of hope and enthusiasm.

In Peace,
—Nora †

From The Music Department

Opportunity to Sing

The Canterbury Choir is at work on music for **Reflections on Christ’s Nativity** to be presented on Sunday, December 13, 2009 at 5:00 PM and on music for **Christmas Eve**. If you would like to sing for these two occasions (or just one), please speak to me about rehearsal times on Thursday nights.

This invitation extends to both women and men, but ladies are particularly welcome. (I know such a statement for ladies sounds like a “come-on” for a sleazy single’s bar, but I don’t mean it that way.) Our men’s section is particularly strong, and it would be nice to achieve a better balance with more women. Reducing the size of the men’s section is not the answer! Don’t let them beat you here, ladies! †

—Donald Butt

BULLETINS

Donations of 2010 Calendars for Seamen's Church Institute

The Collection Box is in the Lounge for your donations of **surplus 2010 calendars, new greeting cards and blank note pads**. (Many of us are deluged with these items sent as fund appeals and are more than we can use.) As you have heard from past years, these items are most welcome and are distributed by our priests working in this ministry. As the Rev. Megan Sanders told us, most of the merchant seamen cannot leave their ships in port, can't shop in the U.S. and these donations are greatly needed. Although the Chet Hoopers have moved to Massachusetts, this good project will continue!

— *Carolyn Stifel*



Pledge status letters for the **Capital Campaign** are going out. If you have any questions, please call **Cynthia Ferguson. (631-7188)**.



Bill Stifel has been the overseer of the Memorial Garden, including reservations and record keeping, since its

inception. Beginning November 1st, **Chris Mitchell** will take over the position.



Former parishioner, **The Rev. Kate Bryant**, who is "Assistant to the Rector for Adult Ministries" of St. James Episcopal Church in Leesburg, VA, let us know that her brother **Jimmy** was named "Volunteer Fire-chief of the Year" for the whole country. We're extremely proud of both of them!



The Book Group will meet on **Wednesday, December 2nd** at 7:30 in the Lounge. We will discuss *Love in the Time of the Cholera*, by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. A lively discussion is guaranteed. All are welcome!



Blake Anderson, now a freshman at SUNY Oswego, will be formally presented with the rank of **Eagle Scout**, Scouting's highest award, at his Eagle Court of Honor on **Saturday, November 28th**. The ceremony will take place at St. Barnabas. †

THE ALTAR GUILD

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHO SETS UP OR CLEARS THE ALTAR, CAREFULLY TENDS TO THE ALTAR LINENS OR make the brass so shiny? We are a group of women who work in a quiet way to serve the church and God with our handiwork. We are scheduled to either set up the altar or clear it only about every 6 to 8 weeks, always

with a more experienced partner. We meet only a few times a year for about 45 minutes before church, have brass polishing a few times a year (if you work out of the home full time of course you can't come)! We have a wonderful Christmas party (dessert) coming up on **Wed., December 2** at 7 pm. It is a very easy way to serve if you don't have a lot of time and need flexibility since we cover for each other all the time. Won't you consider joining? We'd love to welcome you! Please call either **Douglass Reitter 428-2701** or **Sandy Miller 478-8860**. †



Left: Altar Guild member Joan Lobdell who hand-washes and irons the linens, sews some loose threads on the veil that covers the Communion wine.

InCommon

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MISSION STATEMENT: The Church of St. Barnabas, Irvington is a Christian community, grounded in the Episcopal tradition, which celebrates the love of Christ through regular worship, fellowship and music. Our goals are to grow in faith, both within ourselves as individuals and by welcoming others from a variety of backgrounds and stages of life, and to reach out and share God's abundant gifts with others.

Kids' Outreach appreciated

In mid-October, The Kids' Outreach project sent care packages of Halloween goodies to this year's crop of college students from St. Barnabas. This little taste of home made the day of one student, who sent the following email note to St. B's mailbox for Linda Pierpont and all the kids who helped put the boxes together:

Dear Linda,
I wanted to send a message of thanks for the package of treats and cards and Halloween decorations you and the outreach team sent up to me. It was an unexpected surprise today! I hope you all have a happy Halloween!

Thanks,
Blake Anderson