

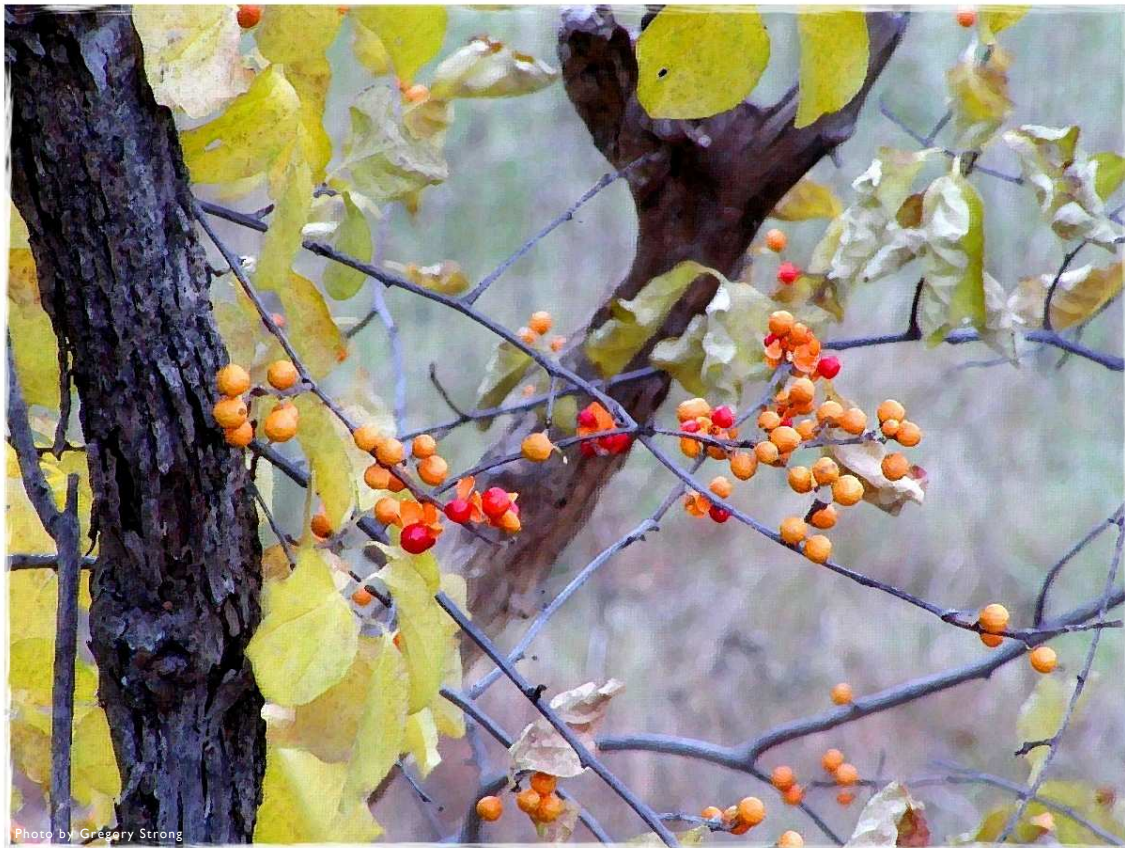


Saint
Matthew's
Episcopal Church

Newsletter

November 2007

201 East Frederick Drive • Sterling VA 20164



Most gracious God, by whose knowledge the depths are broken
up and the clouds drop down the dew: We yield thee hearty
thanks and praise for the return of seedtime and harvest, for the
increase of the ground and the gathering in of its fruits...

The Book of Common Prayer ~ From the Collect "For the Harvest"

FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends,

Recently I heard the good news that a parishioner had made a \$20,000 gift towards the repaving of the parking lot and the purchase of the Argonne house (the house right next to the church). It is the largest single gift given to Saint Matthew's of which I am aware, and in and of itself takes us a full quarter of the way towards our goal. I praise God for the generosity of this parishioner and their support of Saint Matthew's mission and ministry, which it represents.

But I equally praise God for the generosity of the parishioners who give far less than that. I have been greatly blessed by even single digit gifts over the years because I've known the depth of sacrifice they represent.

And the truth is, gifts big and small are needed for a church to accomplish the work God has given her to do. In one of the churches in which I served a parishioner made an initial gift of \$100,000 to our building fund. We would not have been able to build the buildings we did without that gift. But neither would we have been able to build the buildings we did without all the other much smaller gifts that together added up to a far greater sum (this was in a relatively poor area of Florida where the median income is about 1/3 of what it is here in Northern Virginia).

Generosity, whether it is 25¢ given by a kid in Sunday School or \$2,000 put in the offering plate by an adult, is always a beautiful thing. It is always precious in God's sight. And it always plays an important role in accomplishing God's plans and purposes for the world.

That is part of the reason I love to give. In fact, in recent years as I have come to appreciate more both how much I have and how great the need is in the world around us, I truly have come to enjoy giving more than spending, purchasing, or buying. It's also part of the reason why I don't hesitate to encourage others to give generously, to push the boundaries on what they can give rather than what they can acquire, to give beyond their means rather than live beyond them. God will provide. At least, he always has for me.

Joyfully yours,
Fr. Rob+

FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN
Vicki Nelson

Sometimes, I think I'm really naïve. I believe I'm fairly well educated and well read. But, when it comes to knowing and understanding what goes on in the mind of other human beings, I can be very surprised.

I thought, for example, that everyone knew the Golden Rule. If you ask my kids about the Golden Rule, they will likely roll their eyes and tell you the thousands of times we discussed the Golden Rule at our dinner table. I've been thinking about the Golden Rule recently for several reasons. One is that I am thinking of employing it in conjunction with the other materials I am using for the middle school WATCH program. Another is that I am reminded of it during Rob's "Beauty and the Beast" sermon series.

When I actually started tossing the notion into conversations with folks of all ages, I was very surprised to learn that many young folks and some not so young were not familiar with the Golden Rule. In fact, many of the young folks had never even heard of it. I was further surprised to learn that there is controversy about the Golden Rule.

The Golden Rule is simply, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The controversy, I have learned, is that people may have a different notion of doing unto themselves, and therefore may have some strange, maybe even dangerous, notions of doing unto others.

The Golden Rule that I'm talking about is right out of Luke 6:31. This verse comes

from a set of Jesus' teachings recorded in Luke and often called the Sermon on the Plain (compare the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, chapters 5-7). It reads, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." Jesus is talking about mutual love and respect for the other person, not a desire to have something done for your own pleasure or to meet your own needs. He is expecting us to love the sinless and the loveless, not just those who love and respect us already. (Remember the last sermon in Rob's sermon series about "entitlement"?)

So, if you hear that I'm teaching a "strange theory" called the Golden Rule at WATCH, you'll know what I'm talking about.

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OUTREACH

Opportunities to “Reach Out”

Whether you’re looking to give of your time or your resources this holiday season, the Outreach Committee has several opportunities for you to “reach out” to those in need, including the following.

LINK Holiday Food Program. LINK is the interdenominational food pantry which assists Loudoun County families in need. The LINK Holiday Food Program serves approximately 700 families during November and December. Set-up for Thanksgiving food distribution will take place November 12-16 at Christ the Redeemer and Trinity Presbyterian churches. Food distribution will be November 17. Help will be needed during the week to unload and sort the food. On the 17th, volunteers will be needed to assist families with shopping and bagging. The pantry will set up for Christmas December 10-14, with the food distribution on December 15. Once again, plenty of volunteers will be needed. To volunteer your time, please contact Kenny Thayer at 703-437-1776 or kcthayer@verizon.net.

LINK Food Delivery. During November, Saint Matthew’s will be responsible for LINK food deliveries to families in the Herndon, Sterling, and Ashburn areas. If you can give one or two hours one night during the month to make deliveries, please sign up on the Outreach bulletin board in the parish hall. During your volunteer evening, you will receive an e-mail message to pick up food from the pantry, located on Dranesville Road, and take it to area families.

Love Boxes. The Saint Matthew’s 4th Annual Love Box Drive for the children at Mountain Mission School (MMS) in Grundy, Virginia, will get underway this November. A “love box” is a wrapped shoe box that contains the name, age, and gender of a child attending MMS. These boxes are distributed to parishioners during November to fill with hats, gloves, toys, cards, games, gum, and the like, for the designated child. The boxes are delivered to the school in early December so that at Christmas each child will have a box to open. Our goal this year is to collect 175 boxes. You may sign up for a child of a particular age and gender on the Outreach bulletin board in the parish hall.

Monthly LINK Donation

The fourth Sunday of each month will be LINK Donation Sunday at Saint Matthew’s. Watch the bulletin for specifics on the donation needs of the month. Please bring your donation with you on the designated Sunday, and help Saint Matthew’s reach out to our neighbors in need.

ESL

One of Saint Matthew’s ongoing Outreach commitments is our ESL program. Leanna Wilson, ESL teacher, contributed the following testimony on the importance of this effort.

After five years as Coordinator/Teacher for the English Classes for Adults (ESL), I am now the keyboarding/computer literacy teacher for ESL. I thank the Lord for Bradford Pratt, who has stepped up to the plate as the new coordinator of this vibrant ministry. Each year, God reminds me how important this ministry is. Besides sharing God’s love and learning English, students are given a chance to accept a gospel tract in their own language. Nations gather at Saint Matthew’s for the opportunity to become part of the communion of the redeemed. This year students have gathered from places such as Egypt, Hungary, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ger-

many, Peru, and Russia. Because the parishioners of Saint Matthew’s have provided ongoing support for the ESL program, the witness of the church continues to echo in the community.



STEWARDSHIP

As I hope you are aware by now, our stewardship campaign for 2008 is underway (it began on October 21). During a stewardship campaign, each of us is asked to prayerfully consider pledging to the local church to support the mission and ministries of that local church.

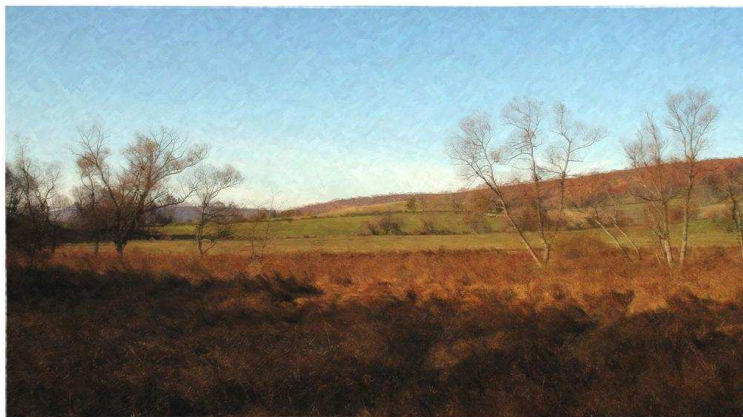
To those who have turned in a 2008 pledge to Saint Matthew's, *thank you!* To those who have not yet done so, I urge you to seek the Lord's guidance to help determine if you should pledge and how much to pledge. If you are unsure how to pledge, please find me. I will be happy to give you a pledge card and answer any questions you might have.

As I write this article (in early October), I do not have any data to share with you regarding the success of our stewardship campaign. I am sure that will be the subject of an upcoming newsletter article. But let me take a few minutes to give you some statistics from 2007. In 2007, the "basics" (staff, utilities, and facilities maintenance) will require 70% of our budget. This leaves 30% to fund outreach programs (ESL, Mountain Mission School, support of LINK, etc.), mission

trips (high school and adult trips, Mission Possible), worship service (music, altar supplies, etc.), community activities (doughnuts and coffee every Sunday, pizza and game nights, scholarships for events like fishing trips or trips to a baseball game, etc.), and spiritual formation (Sunday school and other course curriculum, VBS, youth group activities, WATCH, Lenten program and devotional, parish retreat scholarships, etc.). The vestry stewards the budget carefully and wisely which allows Saint Matthew's to do a lot with the money given to her. However, I know God is calling us to do more. One important item for 2008 is hiring a full time clergy assistant for Rob. This will require additional funds if we are to continue funding programs as we have in the past.

I close with the words of Winston Churchill, who said, "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give."

I wish you the best in your financial life with God,
Richard Leach, Finance Committee Chair



COMMUNITY

Parish Photo Directory

Many thanks are due to those who had their pictures taken in October. Have you seen people in church and wonder what their names are? Have you ever heard an announcement regarding a member and wished you could put a face with a name? Are you new to the church and wish you had something to help you put names with faces? Well, help is on the way! A new photo directory will be distributed in January! If you missed the sitting in October, the photographers will return Friday, December 21, and Saturday, December 22. See the Saint Matthew's website to schedule your appointment today!

Pizza Night & Bunco

Join us Saturday, November 10, for a rowdy night of Bunco! It's the new craze in dice games. No skill is required, and it is great fun for everyone from age 5 to 105! We'll start the evening at 6:30 p.m. with pizza and drinks. You are welcome to bring desserts, salads, or appetizers. Games begin at 7:00 p.m. with round one! We'll plan to end by 8:30 p.m. Feel free to bring an alternate board game if you prefer not to play Bunco. See you in the parish hall!



A LETTER FROM THE DIOCESE

September 28, 2007

*Ms. Vicki Nelson
St. Matthew's Church
201 E Frederick Street
Sterling, VA 20164*

Dear Ms. Nelson,

I want you to know of my gratitude for the generosity of the members of St. Matthew's Church in helping St. Patrick's Church in Long Beach, Mississippi, to rebuild.

I appreciate the recognition that this is part of our Diocesan effort to assist the Gulf Coast. Because of the generosity of churches like yours, we have raised more than four times what the Presiding Bishop asked us to raise for Katrina relief.

God bless and keep you.

*Faithfully yours,
Peter James Lee
(The Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia)*

November is probably my favorite month. Of most importance, it is the month of my birthday (the 16th for those wondering when to give me a gift!). November also has one of the most fantastic American holidays – Thanksgiving! How could a day get any better. It starts off with a parade; then comes Santa Claus through Herald Square to kick off the holiday season; finally we finish the day by guiltlessly stuffing our faces with succulent food surrounded by family and good conversation. Indeed it is a grand holiday! Through all of this, November reminds me how lucky I am and how much God has blessed me. From the presents to the friends and family to the most splendid food, November offers me, and hopefully each of us, a renewed sense of, well, thanksgiving.

There is a Buddhist meditation practice, which I think embraces this idea of thanksgiving in such a rich way. Buddhists give thanks to God for *everything*, from the most simple and usual things to the most important and essential. When you wake in the morning, give thanks for the first breath of air, then the wood of the floor boards, then the cotton of the slippers, and so on. In doing so, we may forget the earliness of the hour, or the cold of the floor, or the holes in the slippers. Truly, being so grateful may become a bit taxing. But imagine our renewed perspective if we approached our lives in such a way! “Praise God from whom *all* blessings flow!”

I must tell you how thankful I am for Saint Matthew’s. For the church community that has welcomed and supported me in this ministry through the past year; for the congregational choir that dutifully sings in such a prayer-

ful and meaningful way; for the musicians with their talent, dedication, and commitment to leading our congregation in song, prayer, and spirit: for all of this, I am so very, very grateful!

Should you still be searching for a reason to be grateful, I can assure you that the music that fills Saint Matthew’s this Christmas season will be one deserving of praise. The choir has been preparing for Advent and Christmas since October. We hope to feature hand bells and may even have some other surprises in store. It is certainly a joyous season, especially as everyone loves Christmas music. So I ask you, what better way to celebrate this holiday season than by being a part of the music making? As you ponder the many things that you are grateful for, perhaps you might also consider the ways in which you can give back. I encourage you to take part in the many opportunities our music ministry has to offer.

Yes, November is a grand month, and surely December will be, too. In the meantime, I leave you with Psalm 95: “Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the LORD is the great God, the great king above all gods.” Oh, and about those birthday gifts? No need, Saint Matthew’s continues to be the greatest gift I could receive.

Bill Podolski, Music Minister

Vestry Highlights

The meeting opened shortly after 7:00 p.m. with the Lord’s Prayer and a reading from Luke 16. ~ Following approval of previous meeting minutes, the vestry heard a report on the church’s finances as of August 31. Actual revenues (pledge and plate) and expenses year-to-date were relatively balanced (taking out the Mustard Seed grant, house purchase, and parking lot repair). Discussion among the vestry concerned the status of the building fund (to date, the fund had taken in about 50% of the \$80,000 target from the special offering), as well as expenses for musicians and compensation for Ann Ritonia’s previous work for the church. ~ Anticipating the Diocese of Virginia’s annual council in 2008, the vestry voted to appoint Allen Tuttle and Tom Leary as delegates, with Luanna Hansberger as alternate. ~ “The Way Forward” Task Force submitted its “Recommendation Report” for Saint Matthew’s with respect to current issues in the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion. (The task force consisted of Rob Merola, Charlie Biegel, and John Dickie.) In sum, as stated in the report, people can leave Saint Matthew’s and the Episcopal Church in response to the issues if they want, but the parish as a whole cannot leave the Diocese of Virginia and the Episcopal Church. If some were to leave Saint Matthew’s,

whoever did not leave would remain and would constitute Saint Matthew’s Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia. As the report further indicated, Saint Matthew’s would remain in the Episcopal Church regardless of the issues and regardless of any possible developments in the national church and in the Anglican Communion. As the vestry received the report at the meeting, no action was taken at this time with regard to it. ~ The vestry began work on the 2008 budget with submission of first drafts of expenses for ministry areas and church operations. By the next vestry meeting, the drafts will be collated into a first attempt at a comprehensive budget for 2008. The budget process will coordinate with the stewardship campaign being conducted this fall. ~ To assist in stewardship of the church’s building and grounds, the vestry considered relevant policies and procedures for the facilities. After review and discussion, the policies and procedures for building use continue under revision. ~ The vestry then heard short reports on recent and upcoming meetings of the Outreach Committee and Building Committee. ~ The meeting adjourned shortly before 9:00 p.m., with the next meeting scheduled for October 23, 7:00 p.m.