

# Holy Comforter Episcopal Church Newsletter

*Stewardship edition....*

*October 2019*

## Percent Giving

*Paul Eby, Virginia Tippen & Stephanie Townes have represented Holy Comforter in a diocesan program called "Stewardship Cohorts". Since this past Spring, by invitation, Holy Comforter has joined other parishes in our diocese to learn about and discuss best practices regarding the Episcopal Church's stewardship methods and understanding. And with great care and (hopefully) subtlety a number of these ideas have been implemented into Holy Comforter's current stewardship drive. One such practice comes straight from the stirred heart of Mr. Paul Eby who felt compelled to write and share the following as a result of his experience in the Cohort.*

Our brains often need to catch up with a new idea or re-adjust to something we have wrestled with in the past. Sometimes when we encounter something initially, it seems daunting. When it comes to giving money to the church, how can I give intentionally and joyfully. How can I grow to a tithe? Percent giving may be the stair-steps needed to grow into a tithe joyfully.

Let's do a little math. If I make \$50,000 a year, then a tithe is \$5000. If I make a \$100,000 a year, then a tithe is \$10,000. Ok, enough math. And don't get lost in, is it my gross or net salary, you decide (honestly I don't think it matters. What matters is joyful giving). But how can I grow into something that seems so daunting? Start by giving 2% of your salary, or 3% of your salary, or whatever you can joyfully give. Then each year, see if you can add another 1%. Perhaps one year you don't think you can increase your percent giving, then don't. In that case, it may take two years to add another 1%, that is ok, but keep stepping out in faith and see what happens. Often you can increase and you find, "Hey, I didn't even miss that money". This is often how God's economy works. All of a sudden, I am joyful about the giving. Now, I'm not saying you aren't joyful about your giving currently, but if we never step out in faith with our giving, we can never experience some of God's beautiful and mysterious ways of creating abundance.

Time for an analogy. I have run two marathons (Ellen has run three). That is 26.2 miles in one session of basically nonstop running. We never could have just gone out and done that. We had to train our brain to get used to that idea. At first the brain says, I can't run 26.2 miles (and your brain is right). So you run a 5k fun-run (3.1 miles) and it, ironically, is pretty fun, so you run another and then another. Your brain grows with each 5K, so then you say to yourself, "Maybe I'll try a 10k (6.2 miles)." And your brain grows yet again. What seemed daunting now seems achievable. Then you try a half marathon (13.1 miles). And your brain grows yet again. The 26.2 miles that you thought was out of reach, to the point of being ridiculous, now is something you want to do next. Your brain has grown into accepting this idea through stair-steps. Finishing a marathon is a joyful moment, though the path to completing one is not necessarily joyful every step of the way.

To experience joy, does not mean you are always happy and it does not mean there aren't struggles on the journey, but working towards something that provides joy, does set right with the soul and mind. Perhaps percent giving is the way to open our brain to something that seems daunting. With each step we take, the success of it provides joy. And a tithe can go from looking like something unreachable to something we joyfully do, accomplishing it with and for our Heavenly Father who provides our needs so richly.

Paul Eby

## Letter from Travis

Please remember that our Commitment Sunday draws near, October 20<sup>th</sup>, where we will solidify our commitments on the Chart and our financial pledges for 2020. This Church Family is so faithful in its giving and its responsibilities to ministry and because of this faithfulness there is a palpable joy and warmth that permeates our relationships and worship together.

Time and time again visitors and new-members describe their experience in some form or fashion. One recent visitor said, "...this was the most reverent and comforting church experience I can remember having in my lifetime". Every church wants this to be true of itself yet to hear it said of Holy Comforter was almost overwhelming in the moment. It was no surprise to me. And I am sure my smile was a little too big (for this I have already confessed).

Joyful giving leads to joyful commitment which leads to joyful experiences with other joyful disciples which leads to beautiful worship which leads to meaningful evangelism which are marks of thriving churches. Great things begin with you.

Once again, we are given the amazing gift of a \$30,000 matching grant; for each new pledge (a pledging individual or family) or each current pledging family which increases their pledge (hence Paul Eby's letter) a wonderful giver in our Church Family will match the accumulated total up to \$30,000! And we have met our goal four years in a row! We can do it again. And as always, the Smith family will gladly be among those who increase their pledge.

We ask you to prayerfully consider your pledge by October 20<sup>th</sup> for budgeting purposes. If it is possible for your family please help the Vestry plan for next year!

And as you consider, please understand you are not giving just so the parish can meet its budget; for this is not the true measure of thriving stewardship. We give out of fidelity to the God who lavishes His great love and abundance upon you. We give because it is our nature and natural response to His love. And because of your giving nature real substantial ministry is accomplished in this wonderful parish. Because of your generosity this parish no longer worries about survival, rather these days we spend our energies on forging new ways and deeper (and varied) means of connecting and growing as a natural expression of our Eucharistic lives. This is how much your pledge matters!

Sincerely,  
Travis

## **Holy Comforter's grounds are looking amazing....and expanding!**

By the grace of God the Episcopal Diocese of Texas' Mission Amp Team and the Strategic Mission Grant Board have seen fit to gift Holy Comforter with a generous grant to purchase surrounding land around the church in order to create more parking! This will mean almost double our parking for Sundays and far more room for the Peach Street Farmers Market to grow and expand on Saturdays. This, of course, also means that we have room to dream even bigger than we already are. I want to thank Ellen Eby and Blake Peltier for their crucial help in accomplishing this huge feat!

As well, you may have noticed how beautiful the current parking lot looks and how full and vibrant our prayer garden looks. This is all due to a wonderful group of volunteers and others who graciously gave of their time a couple weeks ago. This wonderful garden brigade was ably lead by Ron Briscoe and Robert Munro, Regina Bieri & Donna Reed. Because of them and their servant's hearts our campus looks like it should!

## **Bishop Fisher's Visit**

Holy Comforter rolled out the red carpet, as we like to do, for Bishop Fisher and for all our sacred Newcomers who decided to join our faithful community. It is always exciting to welcome a Bishop back to his or her parish, but the noticeable joy is in large part to the decisions made to be baptized, confirmed, received and re-affirmed! All told the Bishop welcomed 38 (thirty-eight) folks into our midst! All we can do is marvel at the blessings of God. He was most pleased by our hospitality and the joy he found permeating the halls and hearts of this wonderful church.

In particular I am so honored by the courage of all confirmands (each one who stood in front of the congregation to be confirmed, received and re-affirmed) and those who were baptized- each were brave decisions carrying heavenly significance. I'm proud of you all.

And I am most grateful to Regina Bieri, Wayne Woodard and Ross McCoy (and all those who were kind enough to follow their lead) for making our feast day a true feast to remember. The efforts of so many made the day a beautiful success – a stunning display of delighted stewardship and pure enjoyment.

## **All Saint's Day and All Saint's Sunday**

This year **November 1<sup>st</sup>** (All Saint's Day) falls on a Friday. And if the weather is pleasant and cooperates we hope to have our solemn Service of Light outside under the oak trees (if not, we will enjoy the service in the Nave). This service is dedicated to *those in our lives whom we love and continue to remember, no matter when their journey ended in this life*; more commonly called All Soul's Day. Details to follow as the sacred day draws near.

**Sunday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>** is when we will celebrate All Saint's Sunday where Fr. Preston and I will dedicate the Eucharistic Prayers of both services to *those who have died this past year*.

Beginning this Sunday, you will find inserts in your bulletins which you can fill out should you so desire. We ask that when you are finished filling the inserts out please turn them into the offering plates or the office no later than October 29<sup>th</sup>. It will be our honor to dedicate the names and memories of your loved ones on that day.

## **Community Thanksgiving Service**

On the evening of November 24<sup>th</sup> we will continue our tradition of worshipping with like-minded liturgical Believers in greater Angleton. It is a chance to sit with others in our lovely city whom we rarely get to worship beside (St. John Lutheran Church, Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church, First United Methodist Church and First Presbyterian Church just to name a few). It is a worthy experience, indeed.

This year's service will be hosted at First Presbyterian Church. Our role this year is to bring an appropriate side or dessert to the church before we worship together.

## **Special project of historical significance**

As we grow into what God would have us be as a church, one thing we mustn't do is forget from where God has already led. With all the wonderful new stories and paths culminating under our peaked-roof, we honor both old and new stories by integrating them and grounding them into the already beautiful and rich story of Holy Comforter Episcopal Church. Furthermore, we gauge where we are going (how the Spirit is carving our future) in many ways by knowing from where we've been. It should therefore be our proud responsibility to champion our parish's unique history.

What will this look like? Great question! Glad you asked. We hope to make the halls of Holy Comforter; beginning with the Narthex and then into the hallway and culminating in the Parish Hall, a living history to serve as a warm comfort for so many who lived it and a gentle guide for those who have just entered the ongoing Holy Comforter gospel (no, this is not overstated).

My humble request is that you consider donating any picture relating to Holy Comforter's history you may have in your personal trove (to be permanently safeguarded or to take a quality replica of a picture you have). Not that everything will be used but it will be appreciated. The result hopefully being that our walls through the church will serve as a living memorial to God's meaningful work in this lovely community.

**Dates to consider:** (dates and time are subject to change)

December 24<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Eve Services (7 pm and 11 pm)

December 25<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Day service (10:30 am)

January 5<sup>th</sup> - Epiphany Sunday featuring the Children's Epiphany Pageant (10:30 am)

January 6<sup>th</sup> – Contemplative Epiphany Service 6 pm with  
Burning of the Greens to follow at 7 pm

January 24<sup>th</sup> – Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at 6 pm

January 26<sup>th</sup> – All Parish Meeting after the combined service (9:30 am service) with our annual meeting to immediately follow.

For Wednesday evening Bible Studies in the season of Epiphany (January 8<sup>th</sup> through February 19<sup>th</sup>) we will walk through Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University. Details to follow as the class draws near. For certain, anyone is welcome to join the class.



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