

# **The Parish Pulse**

## Grace-St. Paul's Episcopal Church

*November 2011*

### ***Being Grace-St. Paul's***



### **The Parable of the Crude Little Life-Saving Station**

*Based on the writing of Dr. Theodore O. Wedel*

On a dangerous sea coast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and, with no thought for themselves, went out day and night tirelessly searching for the lost.

Some of those who were saved and various others in the surrounding area wanted to become associated with the station and gave of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought, and new crews trained. The little life-saving station grew.

Some of the members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more

comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building.

Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully because they used it as a sort of club. Fewer members were interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. The life-saving motif still prevailed in the club's decorations, and there was a liturgical life-boat in the room where the club's initiations were held. The club changed its name to something they liked much better, and it never occurred to them that the new name might not help since it caused many simply to pass by and look for help elsewhere.

About this time a large ship wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick. The beautiful new club was in chaos. So people immediately had a shower-house built outside the club where victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside.

Finally, at the next meeting, there was a split among the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club; saving the lives of others got in the way of their social events. Some members insisted upon life-saving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life-saving station. So they did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and yet another life-saving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that sea coast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. **Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.**

*Dr. Theodore O. Wedel was a former canon of the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, DC. Ordained as an Episcopal priest in 1931, he served for a time as president of the Episcopal Church. He penned the basis for this parable in 1953.*

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## **“Between the Services”: Sundays at 9 a.m.**

For leaders, members, and newcomers to all continue on the journey of faith, the space to think and talk about Scripture, life, faith, hope, and doubt in a guided forum is central and it is one of the main ways that new people become connected to us instead of just passing through as “church shoppers.” Whether you are an 8:00er or a 10:00er, the whole Grace-St. Paul’s community is coming together at 9 each Sunday for discussion, fun, and deepened community. Children and youth start in the church with our Musical Director, Cynthia Westbrook, then have Church School in their classrooms. Adults meet in Craft Hall. We will have coffee and tea available and grab a cup, and join the circle.

*Upcoming:*

**Nov 27:** (Thanksgiving weekend, Advent 1, and wreath-making and no forum hour)

**Advent series: Dec 4, 11, and 18:** “Emmanuel and How is God With Us?” The Gospel is the Good News that God is with us and or, in Hebrew, “Emmanuel.” But what does good news feel like? How has this looked and or not and in your own life? How do you share it and with whom?

**Dec 25 and Jan 1:** no forum hour

## **“Missio: Engage!”: God’s New Work In and Around Grace-St. Paul’s**

What is the new work of God in our lives? How do we tell the stories of our own struggles and joys with faith? How does this connect us to each other and to the world?

Your Missio Team of Paula Alekson, Charin Cetkowski, Jack Dalton, Rachel Holland, Patrice Lavanture, and Scott Singleton is revved up and launching into our work together and with the national church. Step by step, we will turn Grace-St. Paul’s inside out to open to new ways of seeing its surrounding communities, to let go of ways of thinking that were self-serving and no longer serving the true needs around us, and to find afresh God’s new work. The Missio program intentionally seeks to develop leadership throughout the parish, and to then develop “successor” leadership so that we avoid burnout and unbalanced leadership in the parish. More info can be found on the national church site, at <http://plantingcentral.typepad.com/bench/2011/05/someone-just-wrote-and-asked-me-why-this-missioengage-project-is-such-high-priority-to-me.html>.

**But mainly, come to the 9 a.m. Missio sessions, usually the third Sunday of the month, for the best conversation going, and check out the Missio board in the narthex for cool art and cool ideas!**

## **Catch the fire and spread the Spirit!**



## What if we reached... 100%?

As of November 15: Grace-St. Paul's has 45 pledges for \$84,393, toward our 2012 goal of \$120,000. **Thank you** to those who have given an Estimate for 2012; but this still means **only about 29%** of the parish has done so.

Grace-St. Paul's has come through a year of addressing radical property deterioration left unaddressed in years past - and fortunately, we had the savings to do it. We are still in a time of growth and rebuilding, but we must still use from the **endowment** to:

- **pay our staff**, including a full-time rector
- and to care for the most **basic property needs**.

Let's rebuild our annual budget to avoid using the endowment any further - and then replenish what we borrowed from our endowment to rebuild our savings. We can do it, together.

Please - won't you consider raising your Estimate of Giving for 2012 by just 2-3%? Or if you have never given an estimate and aren't sure what it means, don't hesitate to ask for more information about how you can bring your financial commitment to your faith community - just let the rector know you have a question. Look for Stewardship pamphlets in the display in the narthex - and please return your card to the bag there by Stewardship Sunday, November 20.

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*"At its best, giving is an act of worship." -  
Cornelius J. Dyck (1740-92), colonel under the  
command of Gen. George Washington*

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## **Don't Pledge Like a Ferret**

*by the Rev. Tim Schenck*

Some of you know that we recently adopted two ferrets. However, please know that we're not not turning into eccentric "ferret people." I've told my parishioners that if they ever see me walking Mimi and Caspar on leashes down Main Street, they're welcome to form a new Rector Search Committee.

I was especially concerned after watching a PBS documentary on ferrets and their owners titled "Ferrets: The Pursuit of Excellence." It followed several ferret enthusiasts preparing to show their

ferrets at the annual Buckeye Bash - the largest ferret show in the country. If I had seen this two days before adopting our new pets rather than two days after the fact, we might have guinea pigs or turtles or whatever. Although the boys were relentless in their pursuit of ferrets and ferrets alone (thanks again to our friend Jen - watch your back) so I don't think it would have turned out any other way.

Now I admit that they are very cute and playful. And I love the fact that they sleep for about 20 hours a day. But there's a fine line between being devoted to your pets and being, um, insane. Particularly memorable was the ferret lady who writes and sings songs about her ferrets. Again, if I ever start composing St. Francis Day hymns about ferrets, kindly have me taken away by a pair of burly acolytes dressed in white albs. It would be for the best.

Most clergy have financial stewardship on their minds this time of year. I'm no exception which is why yesterday I offered you, dear reader, "A Dozen Ways to Avoid Stewardship." But I've also been thinking about stewardship in light of my new status as crazy ferret owner. One of the characteristics of ferrets is that they exhibit some hoarding behavior. They like to stash things away whether it's food or socks or keys. The good news is that they tend to ferret things away to the same location every time. So if you can't find your remote control, it's likely to be found in the same place where they've stashed your left slipper.

Now, I don't have such practical problems at this point because it's not as if we let them run amok in the rectory. They live in a giant mansion of a cage in our family room that is actually larger than married student housing at most seminaries. Sure we let them out into a caged play pen and let the boys interact with them in there but they won't ever have free reign as do some of the ferrets in the documentary.

But as I've thought about our relationship to money in this context, one thing has become clear - it's hard to be in a fruitful relationship with God when we act like hoarders. Money is ultimately a gift to be shared rather than a resource to be hoarded. Which is why I find myself telling people not to approach stewardship like a ferret. A right relationship with God involves a generosity of spirit which can never be fully realized by literally

or metaphorically hiding all your money under the mattress.

So that's the message this year - don't pledge like a ferret. And if you find yourself overflowing with generosity, feel free to send a check to the Rector's Ferret Fund. Mimi and Caspar thank you.

*The Rev. Tim Schenck is rector of St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, Hingham Massachusetts. This article originally appeared on his blog, Clergy Family Confidential.*

***“Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten; Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.” -BCP***

Every Sunday will now be TASK barrel Sunday. TASK needs our help and we are answering the call! *When is the last time you went hungry? There is a place where people wake up hungry in the morning and go to bed hungry at night. These people are our neighbors. The place they live is called Trenton. TASK provides more than 3,000 free meals per week to people in need in the Trenton area.* Please remember TASK during your weekly grocery shopping with a very simple theme, One-a-week! Pick up one item during your shopping trip to put in the TASK barrel. Needed non-refrigerated items include: Fruit singles, pudding singles, Chef Boy R' Dee microwave cans, spaghetti sauce, salad dressing, juice boxes, peanut butter, jelly, canned fruit, non-perishable foods, macaroni, canned beef or turkey gravy, or canned veggies. Personal hygiene items also needed: shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, disposable razors, and bars of Soap (*Irish Spring, Zest, Coast and Lever 2000* are patron favorites). NO glass jars, please!



## **GSP's Delegates for Next Steps in the Search for a New Bishop**

Our bishop, George Councell, has announced that he will retire in two years, at the end of 2013. The full text of his announcement can be found on the diocesan website.

The first steps in the search for a new bishop are already under way. Bp. Councell has appointed this Sunday **Sunday, Nov. 13**, as when each parish shall have a forum to **elect six lay delegates** to attend a special Convocation meeting on Sunday December 11, where the delegates from each convocation will elect one clergy and one lay person to serve on the diocese's Episcopal Election Committee.

Grace-St. Paul's is blessed to have had six nominations, each with excellent background in church governance: **Paula Alekson, Hilary Cox, Suzannah Cox, Amy Davis, Patrice Lavanture, and Gladys Longmuir**. Thanks to our delegates for representing Grace-St. Paul's in the first step of the election of a new bishop.

## ***Upcoming Feast Days:***

**Thanksgiving Eucharist, Wednesday, November 23, 7 p.m.**

A brief service with the Episcopal Thanksgiving Scripture readings and prayers, Eucharist, and hymns.

**Christmas Eve, Saturday, December 24 5 p.m.** Holy Eucharist; Children's Pageant for the Reading of the Christmas Story; Homily; and Music  
**11 p.m.** Holy Eucharist, Homily, and Festive Music

**Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25 One service, 10 a.m.** Holy Eucharist, with Hymns

**New Year's Day, Sunday, January 1 One service at GSP, 8 a.m., Spoken Eucharist 11:00 a.m.** Festive Service of Christmas Lessons and Carols, **Princeton University Chapel**



## Praying Our People: Update on the Prayer Chain

We are all a very vital part of Grace-St. Paul's prayer community. Your Prayer Chain tries to accurately maintain the list you see printed in each Sunday's bulletin, praying daily for these as well as for others whose names do not appear, and we can use your help. As you pray over the names on our list on Sunday, please take special note of any names which you know should be removed. Likewise, if you have any names you've personally asked to have on the list, please update that individual's status; your help will be greatly appreciated by the Prayer Chain. Please contact Barb Nichols at 609-731-0290 or [bnichols@hamilton.k12.nj.us](mailto:bnichols@hamilton.k12.nj.us) with any updates. She will see that all the Prayer Chain members are informed. Thank you for your help and for being the full circle of prayer around all those who need it.



## Coffee on Sunday Morning Easier Than Ever!

The coffee and tea we sip with the true warmth of conversation during the 9 a.m. Forum or after the 10 a.m. service is easier than ever - but *more hands are needed to help set up and clean up* the drinks. If you enjoy that cup o'joe, then please share the responsibility by taking a Sunday to set up and clean up. Sign-up sheet and instructions are in Craft Hall. Thank you.



## Christmas Memorials Due by December 11

Please have all Christmas Memorial Envelopes in by Sunday December 11, with the check made out to the Grace-St. Paul's Altar Guild. Thank you to all who will help ödeck the hallsö for a gorgeous Christmas church!

## Advent-Wreath Making – November 27

Please join us on Nov 27 to make a wreath you can use in your home during the Advent season. All the supplies you will need will be available starting at 9:00am, and will also be available after the 10:00 service, along with some prayers you can pick up to use with your wreath. A small donation to cover the cost of your supplies would be appreciated but is not required. If anyone would like to donate a few greens to give us more variety talk to Amy Davis.

# Our Budget Story

## *A strategy for growth*

As reported in all parish publications and announcements, Grace-St. Paul's has a 2011 budget deficit, even after cutting many needed essentials. Yet we're also at a wonderful and creative threshold, with weekly giving rising, attendance markedly up, the new 9:00 hour for people of all ages, and the Missio Project, we're poised to reach into the community in new and revitalized ways.

How can we deal with the deficit and **go beyond "deficit thinking"** to fund the areas of parish life that are necessary for growth? Cutting out programs and staff is one approach; but there is virtually no funding for programs now, the staff is already minimal and not fully funded, and there is no funding for the much-needed maintenance of the GSP property. **Cutting more out of the budget at this point would leave a crippled parish, clearly headed into decline.**

So, what's another approach? Our leadership and vestry have decided that now's not the time to cut out the very things that would lead the congregation to new growth. Instead, they have created a budget strategy through June 2013 to provide the crucial foundations for a healthy, functioning parish:

- new funding for **property** maintenance
- proper support for the existing **staff**
- and beginning to fund the **programs** for newcomers and longtime members.

The strategy? Where we fall short in stewardship, **we will draw from the endowment** of our savings to support those basic needs. But we already had to draw down the endowment principle to fund the necessary repair on the rectory. **So please – the farther we go with stewardship, the less we'll have to use from our endowment savings.**

But along with that short-term plan, leadership is planning to replenish those endowment funds. Partnering with the Episcopal Church Foundation (<http://www.episcopalfoundation.org/>), the office of the national Episcopal Church that specializes in capital campaigns and supporting vestry and lay leadership, we will move through three phases of the campaign to involve the whole congregation. The three phases are:

- 1) communication, discussion, and discernment of mission
- 2) a feasibility study that comprises parishioner feedback in both written and interview formats
- 3) the solicitation phase, when we come together with whatever we can offer, no matter how large or small, to give back to the endowment the gifts that those benefactors gave to us.

Your parish leadership will keep you updated on both the short-term and long-term strategies, and information will be provided in all publications, announcements, and at the 9:00 Forum Hour.

Your rector and leadership have worked hard to make information available.  
**But it's up to YOU to read, listen, and engage in healthy discussion.**

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### **"Solo Cup Brigade"**

GSP has teamed up with TerraCycle to recycle plastic cups that would otherwise end up in landfills. Bring in any brand or size # 6 cup or plastic cup packaging & GSP will earn \$0.02 per item. Place the items in the container in Craft Hall labeled "Solo Cup Brigade." For questions, see Charin Cetkowski.



## **Girls' Friendly Society Juniors 2010/2011**

The 2010/2011 season for the GFS Juniors was a fantastic one. Every other Friday evening from September to June, the GFS girls gather in Craft Hall for an evening of sharing, crafts, and companionship. Our meetings begin with a prayer and a chance for the girls to share special acknowledgements, activities and tidbits going on in their lives. Most meetings focus on a craft or activity.

The activities vary, it may be learning a new craft such as crocheting granny squares in the hope of creating lap blankets for veterans or nursing homes, while others are dedicated to fundraising, community service, or helping those in need. In October, GFS joined with the Church School for a Fall Family Fun Night. Pumpkin painting, donut eating contests, and of course, sweet treats were on the agenda for the night. At Christmas we participated in "Adopt-a-Family" through the Hamilton Township Health Department. We were given a wish list and our girls and their families came together to provide a needy family a very Merry Christmas. Of course, the Epiphany celebration is one of the hallmarks of GFS. As we celebrate the arrival of the 3 Kings, everyone is careful to look for "penalties" baked in the famous cake. No matter the penalty, the whole congregation thoroughly enjoys the festivities. Many of the girls joined the Church School to produce "Bags of Love" for distribution at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen. In addition, our girls collected, filled and wrap over 60 shoe boxes filled with personal hygiene products to be distributed to needy families through the Hamilton Township Health Department. What an

assembly line that was!

Many of you loved the bracelets, earrings, candy and centerpieces that the girls created and sold. As a result of our fundraising, we were able to send the GFS world project \$500.00!

Two of our biggest events are the fall and spring roast beef dinners. The girls create the centerpieces and set the tables for both the fall and spring dinners then come back the day of the dinner to help by waitressing, working in the kitchen, distributing desserts (yum) or manning our craft table or church school bake sale table. In addition to our regular meetings, the girls participate in a variety of "just for fun" activities throughout the year. These include ice skating at Mercer County Park in the winter and miniature golf or bowling in the spring. To kick off the Christmas season the girls gather at the Quaker Bridge mall for a picture with Santa, followed by an evening of Christmas shopping for their Pollyanna gifts and Adopt-a-Family members. Aunt Jill then opens her home for our annual Christmas party where the girls exchange gifts and sing carols for the neighbors and share in the joy of season. Truly an evening filled with fun, chatter, giggling and festivities. Our year culminates with the year-end picnic. Whether it a three-legged race, water balloons or hula-hoops it doesn't matter who wins or loses, it's all about enjoying the company.

Don't think that's it for the summer ó the girls have the opportunity to attend Holiday House in Cape May for a week -- usually the hottest week of the summer! The entire Diocese of New Jersey participates and this year the entire house was filled! The days are long, filled with lessons, fun, service projects, fun, swimming, fun, making friends, and more fun.

This past year our girls ranged in age from 5 to 21 and our attendance grew to almost 25 girls! Whether the girls are learning to crochet, decorating cupcakes, or learning the difference between a teaspoon and tablespoon while baking brownies for coffee hour, the friendship and camaraderie these young ladies share is always heartwarming. It is evident that they enjoy being with each and are learning the meaning of

