

November 2008

Dear Friend,

As we begin our annual giving campaign, I write to share some thoughts on this time in our life together...

**Gratitude: n. the quality of being thankful.**

*"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you..." Romans 1:8*

Having now served as rector of St. David's for five years, I have immense and ever-growing gratitude to God for this place and I give thanks to God for each of you! It is with a spirit of gratitude that I write regarding our annual giving campaign. True stewardship comes only through gratitude and thankfulness. I invite you to join with me in gratitude.

**Hope: v. to believe, desire or trust.**

*"And you will have confidence, because there is hope; you will be protected and take your rest in safety." Job 11:18*

One of the great privileges of my office is to visit weekly with some of the matriarchs of the Rector's Bible Study, which has met for 50 years. These faithful women have seen, lived and thrived through many times of challenge in the world and at St. David's. They know well that, although our nation and world face numerous challenges, past and present, God is with us. As the old Gospel song sings, "He didn't bring us this far to leave us." St. David's has been serving in Austin for over 150 years, and we will continue to serve and serve faithfully. Together we decide how we serve.

**Respond: v. to make a return by some action as if in answer.**

*"Through Christ let us offer to God a sacrifice of praise...and not neglect to do good and share what we have for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." Hebrews 13:5-6*

All that we have and all that we are comes from God. We perhaps should not speak of giving so much as returning to God from that which has been entrusted to our care. God does not use guilt or obligation, and neither do we. All are asked to join in the work of the Christ by returning to God in grateful response.

**How: n. a question as to the way or manner in which something is done.**

*Thomas said to Jesus, "...how can we know the way?" John 14:5*

Thomas queried Jesus in confusion. Often we get confused as to how we are to be faithful to Jesus. We are asked, as members of the body of Christ, to make a pledge in support of Christ's work through His Church. How do we do that? How can we know?

In challenging times it is especially important to pray reflectively, asking the Giver to help us in our decision about pledging. Some may be led to make a pledge for the first time, others to return less to God this year; and still others to return more. As for me and my family, our prayers have led us return more to God and raise our pledge because, in these uncertain times, there are others whose needs are greater than ours. Your pledge is about faithfulness and your relationship with God. Together, as we are faithful, we will continue to grow in the work of Christ through St. David's.

**Please do not fill out your pledge card!** At least, not until you have taken counsel with your God. We are not always sure how to ask God about such a thing so I offer you a tool which I often use when faced with a faith decision.

- 1) Decide what you want to ask God. It might be a general question such as, "How should I respond to this year's annual giving campaign?" or something more specific, "How much should I pledge?"
- 2) Write that question where you will see it often, for example: on the back of a business card which you will carry in your pocket; with a dry erase marker on your bathroom or car mirror; on a post-it at your desk or on your monitor, or even (if you are feeling really bold) as your screen saver on your computer.
- 3) After sitting with the question for 2 or 3 days, take a time to sit quietly and see what surfaces. Certainly, if you live in a household with another person, this should be a time of joint discernment.
- 4) Then, as they say, "Just do it." Fill out your card and joyfully return it to God through St. David's.

Your pledge form and a return envelope are enclosed. In addition to recording your pledge, I invite you to make use of the space on the form to share your thoughts, comments and prayer requests. **Please return your completed pledge by November 30<sup>th</sup>** so that your vestry may prepare a budget for our mission and ministry in the coming year.

Lastly, I return to where I began, gratitude and thankfulness. This year, now nearly past, has been one of great vitality, growth and excitement at St. David's. I look forward to what the future holds for us knowing that in times of challenge we are needed more than ever to be that "light on the hill" in Austin and in the world.

Gratefully,



The Reverend David Boyd

Rector