

OFFERTORY

The hinge between the Word of God and Holy Communion

Dear Friends,

After we hear God's word proclaimed the Lord's Supper is being prepared for us on the altar. The Prayer Book simply states, "*Representatives of the congregation bring the people's offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts*". The giving of these gifts, something that God has given us and that we now give back to God to be blessed for the purposes of God's work in the world.

The central insight of the reform of the church in the 16th century was that God's love of us precedes everything we do, for this love is a gift of the very one who made us. God does not love us more because we can give more or less than our neighbor. God's grace is a free gift that doesn't depend on anything we do or don't do; however, this doesn't mean that we're called to be purely passive recipients, sheer consumers, of God's grace.

We offer our gifts of money, bread and wine as tokens, as representatives, as symbols of who we ourselves are. Our money embodies the work we have done with the time and talents God has given us. The bread and wine remind us that we, too, are made of dust and yet through the power of God's creative Spirit have been given a special place for service in God's creation. Through the offering of these symbolic gifts we offer ourselves to be filled with God's Holy Spirit to be God's people as we offer ourselves to be Christ's Body in the world. We pledge ourselves once again to be good stewards of everything that God has given us. Which brings us to the **Commissioning of our Vestry this upcoming Sunday, February 10, at all three services.**

Your new vestry will make public promises to you, with all that they are and with all that they have. They are 'an offering' in the flesh of God's grace and love among us. Please thank them, each one, and their families, spouses and children. For they will be dedicating time to the stewardship of St. John's Episcopal Church with a posture of humility and sacrificial love on your behalf. The vestry's 'offerings' are first fruits of a willingness to give back to God what has been entrusted to them, loving and caring for this dear parish and her people.

Though I've been with you for a short time its clear that you are a home for healing, a respite for the yearning, a school for the deepening of holy encounters, a space for soul searching, outstretched hands that dare to embrace the sacred mystery of Christ's body. Just one of the ways in which you grow as a follower of Christ is to **offer yourself** in service. You may not be ready for service on Vestry; yet you may be ready to 'be of service' in a myriad of other ways. The following is our **HOLY HELP WANTED** list of ways you could support the spread of the gospel, to participate in the love of Jesus and your church community:

- Volunteer for our 11:00 Choir—participation in singing our Anglican hymns is an experience of "praying twice"; as a member of the choir you'll be singing them more than twice—surely a place reserved for you in the heavenly choir.
- What are your musical gifts? Brass for Easter and Christmas? Violin, cello and bass? French horn or oboe? A gentle flute? Piano? I KNOW you are out there.
- Gardening, getting your hands dirty amidst the holy grounds of St. John's?
- Childcare? Cooking for events? Ushering? Teaching? Imagining? Reading appointed lessons or intercessory prayer at the side altar during services or home visitations where you offer the gift of presence and prayer? Serving during communion? Verger? Acolyte? Usher and greeter?
- Something not listed here and something we never imagined.
- All ages are welcome!

Pray about how you, your gifts can help shape the ministry of St. John's and the community. Let your gift of time deepen your relationship with God and one another. Let's talk about it. Come see one of our staff, a vestry member, Eric and/or me. We can't wait to share this walk in love with you.

In God's hands, Nancy+