



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

September 30, 2007

Pentecost 18
Stewardship

As strange as it may seem we at St. John's are in our busiest wedding time of the year. 2 weddings are out of town and last week Judi and I went to Barbourville where I officiated at one of those weddings. We stayed on Friday night after the rehearsal. The wedding was not till 3:30 so we meandered around Cumberland Gap on Saturday morning. On our way into Corbin we saw a place called Antiques and Accents that sold all kinds of concrete statuary so we stopped and looked. Among all of this religious and secular statuary was the crucifix that now lays in the memorial garden. We couldn't speak because we thought it was so incredibly beautiful. I immediately thought of it being somewhere at St. John's and, if not at St. John's, then somewhere where people could see it.

Judi and I tried to find a way to get it into my Nissan Sentra but that was hopeless.

So on Thursday Ned Meekins and I went to get it. It is made of concrete and unfortunately when the fork lift truck lifted the crucifix, the arm and ankle of Jesus got a little damaged.

So when we laid him in the garden we wrapped his arm and leg in a trash bag bandage to keep it dry. He will be repaired tomorrow.

What has been so amazing to me is the response I've had from different people in the last few days because of Jesus laying in our garden.

For some it has scared them to death as they walked by or came through the gate and initially saw a body laying there.

For some it has been one of wondering where he came from and where he is going.

Some do not like him and some have said it is one of the most beautiful things they have ever seen.

Some have been deeply moved and some want him moved.

Whatever is going to happen will happen this week. A decision will be made if he stays or not. And either way it will be OK.

I tell you this because in the next couple of weeks you will be asked to make a decision about your stewardship to St. John's for 2008.

And you know our stewardship is not just about St. John's, it is a reflection of our discipleship to Christ.

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Established in 1847

210 North Main Street Versailles, KY 40383 859.873.3481 info@stjohnsky.com www.stjohnsky.com



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One reaction to our crucifix was that someone was taken aback because it was like he was there.

When you think about it, that is the purpose of St. John's. It is to assure people that Christ is with them in their lives no matter what. He is here. He is with you.

We cannot fulfill that purpose if those committed to discipleship are not willing to share their time their talents and their treasure.

When it comes to money we are not giving to a budget. A budget is simply made out of what St. John's is given.

We are not giving to find ourselves in the top ten list of givers. What people give and the amounts that are given is never published here because what each gives is given in love for the good of the community.

We are not giving because we are asked to give. We are giving as a response to the love that Christ has shown to us and the many blessings of our lives that God has bestowed upon us.

Stewardship is not about St. John's saying give us your money. This is about being confronted by Jesus and asking Jesus; what would you have me do?

Last year we encouraged our community of faith to consider tithing and I shared with you that Judi and I, despite having 2 children married this year and a son contemplating school, decided to tithe for the first time in our lives. It has been a wonderful experience for us. I am not saying tithing stopped the bills or cut down on any expenses, but it did focus our hearts on the many Blessings that God has given us. And you know everything has worked out.

Last year I heard similar stories from some of you who sat down and took stock of how much you bring in and how much you give away.

If we were to really ask what would Jesus have me do, he would say tithe.
10%.

Now sometimes when this is said it gets the similar reactions that Jesus laying in the garden has gotten.

The initial thought scares you to death.

You wonder where that request came from and where it is going.

Some don't like it at all and some say it was the most beautiful thing they have ever done.

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Some have been deeply moved and some want the request removed.

Yet whatever is going to happen is going to happen in the next few weeks as you receive in the mail your time and talent sheets and a pledge card for 2008.

It does not take a rocket scientist to see how much St. John's has grown into a healthy spiritual community.

We are not perfect but we will continue to be intentional to make the love of

How well we do that and how much we can do that always depends on our stewardship.

When Jesus, who is laying in the garden, was damaged while loading him onto Ned's trailer, the lady at the store asked me if I still wanted him because he was broken. I thought for a moment and I said that I did not think Jesus would leave us if we were broken.

It is our past stewardship that has allowed St. John's to become a healthy spiritual place that now welcomes those who are wounded and broken to a place of healing and wholeness.

It welcomes those who are spiritually weary to a place of rest and refreshment.

It welcomes those who are seeking a safe place to ask questions.

It welcomes those who are afraid to a place of security.

It welcomes those in need of forgiveness and offers an absolute forgiveness.

It welcomes all people in all conditions as children of God.

It welcomes.

Our tithing is a reflection of our discipleship and spirituality will continue to grow St. John's into the welcoming place that God has intended it to be. A place where the face of Christ and the body of Christ is not just seen laying in a garden, but in everything that we do.

Your tithing will allow St. John's, in the words of the army commercial, be all that it can be. And I believe, with our tithing, we can be even more.

Amen

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