



St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church

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I will make a new covenant with my people...Hebrews 8:8

Dear Friends,

As we have learned from childhood, our salvation is a gift outright...bought by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We did not earn it. And we certainly can't buy it.

So if we are saved in Christ gratis, why do we have to dig into our paychecks and nest eggs to pay for a church? Tough times call for tough questions...and straight answers.

We give to the church because we are the church. The origin of the word comes from the Greek for: *those who God has called together*. The church is not the real estate or the ministries, the liturgy or even our charities. The church is you and me, all of us together. And all the rest are only vehicles to manifest the fact of who we are: *those who God has called together*.

The operative word here is *together*. We are not called to lives of solitary prayer in monastic cells or hermits' caves. We are called together to witness Christ's love, right here in Bay Shore. That is our part of the deal - our commitment to the new covenant. In scores of formulations sacred scripture commands us to come together to praise God and serve our neighbor. This is not a philosophical abstraction but the daily, practical imperative of Christian life. And that is the reason there is a St. Peter's - our parish family of sisters and brothers in Christ.

For the past three years we have summarized the spirit of St. Peter's as *Renewing, Rejoicing and Welcoming*. As C.S. Lewis puts it: *Joy is the serious business of heaven*. As the attached progress report tells the story, we are taking joy seriously and energetically. Parish leadership is committed to dynamically renewing our covenant, to *rejoicing in the Lord always*. That is the goal of our ministries, our outreach, our worship, our sanctuary, our school - all the resources and all the administration that makes it possible. The joy is free, but all the rest costs a lot of money.

So once again I ask that you study the pledge guide attached. And please consider the advice of C.S. Lewis from "The Joyful Christian": *I'm afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do, and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.*

In humble gratitude for all your past sacrificial giving and trusting in the generosity of your kind heart to once again answer our Stewardship Appeal, I am...

Yours in Christ's love,



The Reverend David F. Sellery
Rector