

## **2016 Stewardship Sermon – Saint Paul’s Church**

*(We all take turns reading as indicated)*

Reflections – Phase 1

1. Fee: The beautiful sound of the church bells ringing on a Sunday morning.
2. Dave: Sermons of hope, peace, and love.
3. Luke: The confirmation class experience.
4. Logan: Annual Easter Egg hunts (even though I am too old 😊)

Reflections – Phase 2

1. Fee: A place of solace when you are hurting.
2. Dave: Fellowship with like-minded Christians.
3. Luke: Annual mission trips to Nicaragua.
4. Logan: The sausage at the pancake supper.

Reflections – Phase 3

1. Fee: Inquisitive, delightful, Sunday school children.
2. Dave: Christmas celebration, with the kids pageant, and the glow of the Holy Spirit “reaching” all members as we pass the candles from pew to pew
3. Luke: Pancake Supper – Bacon, Bacon, and more Bacon.
4. Logan: The city of Ceasara Sunday School project.

Reflections – Phase 4

1. Fee: a warm and welcoming place during the holiday stroll
2. Dave: 275 Random acts of kindness drive.
3. Luke: the opportunity to teach Sunday school
4. Logan: special visits with Mr. Wahchausen (sp? \_ WWII vet)

Reflections – Phase 5

1. Fee: participating on the Wilkinson and Finance committees
2. Dave: serving on the vestry
3. Luke: the evening soccer games in Nicaragua
4. Logan: making friends in different parts of the world

**(FEE reads)**

These are the memories that EMBODY our family’s personal relationship with Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church. Memories that were only made possible by the faithful giving and support from past and present members.

Each of our perspectives a little different.....each one a REFLECTION of our own unique and individual selves.....Different, but yet the same.....Sewn together by a common thread that St Paul’s is a place we LOVE..where we come to WORSHIP, where we come to LEARN and GROW, spiritually.

INDIVIDUALLY, we are our own persons with our own unique spiritual gifts and desire to be more Christ-like.

COLLECTIVELY, we are a family connected by our strong bond of FAITH...we are one BODY connected by the INDIVIDUAL PARTS...

(DAVE reads)

Our family (**we all individually say our names**) (Dave, Fee, Luke, and Logan) is but one small part when pieced together with some of the other smaller and larger units, we represent the PRESENT MEMBERSHIP OF ST. PAUL'S.

As we have come to know many of you over the past 18 years, it has become pretty clear that you all have unique spiritual gifts that further make up the body that is St Paul's and that each of us represent Jesus Christ as we live, work, and play amongst the larger community of Wallingford.

In its 275 years of operation, I can't even imagine how many different families have worshiped and shared fellowship, in the body of Christ, within these walls, going back beyond the birth of our great nation. As we look around the church, I see long time members and some new members, but also notice some missing members

**FEE reads:**

When I think about our personal relationship with this church, the way we interact with each other and how all of us TOGETHER represent the St. Paul's community, I can't help but draw the comparison to the apostle Paul's description of the early church in his letter to the Corinthians. He described the church and their unity with Christ as ONE BODY with MANY parts--.....each of the parts playing very specific roles but ALSO working together for the greater objective of keeping the whole BODY functioning and working properly.

Isn't that what we have here at St. Paul's?

Parts that are visible and in the forefront. The ones that we can easily see and hear on a Sunday morning.

like the joyful music and beautiful voices that make up the choir OR the work of the Sunday school staff who creatively teach our children OR the clergy, ushers and readers that make our Sunday services possible...

Then there are the parts that ARE NOT AS VISIBLE --- parts that are BEHIND THE SCENES but nonetheless ESSENTIAL TO A WELL FUNCTIONING BODY.

-the FAITHFUL GIVING and FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF EACH AND EVERY member of St. Paul's as well as the time and talent that is given

- committees that oversee the finances and business operations of the church

- Vivian's famous casserole train and groups of prayer that are there to lift up those in need.

VISIBLE AND NOT SO VISIBLE PARTS that make for a VIBRANT body and parish community.

But, there is also ANOTHER SILENT SEGMENT, that we might want to consider...I'm pretty sure that each of us knows someone who is part of this great community that for some reason or other is no longer able to attend....maybe they are going through a

rough time in their life or they are ill or even just feel that they are too busy OR perhaps the friend out there longing for a spiritual home. (slight pause) Even though silent, this part of the church could have a tremendous impact on the St. Paul's body....and could be the stepping stone that helps us make the transition from PRESENT to FUTURE.

**(DAVE READS)**

As we reflect on the importance of the annual stewardship campaign, my thoughts are on a Sermon I heard years ago on the radio it is the "Silent Sermon. I am sure most of you have heard it, but it really hits home the point of the importance of the church community.....

*"A minister was concerned about the absence of a man who had normally attended services. After a few weeks, he decided to visit him. When the pastor arrived at the man's home, he found him all alone, sitting in front of a fireplace. The minister pulled up a chair and sat next to him. But after his initial greeting he said nothing more.*

*The two sat in silence for a few minutes while the minister stared at the flames in the fireplace. Then he took the tongs and carefully picked up one burning ember from the flames and placed it on the hearth. He sat back in his chair, still silent. His host watched in quiet reflection as the ember flickered and faded. Before long it was cold and dead.*

*The minister glanced at his watch and said he had to leave, but first he picked up the cold ember and placed it back in the fire. Immediately it began to glow again with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.*

*As the minister rose to leave, his host stood with him and shook his hand. Then, with a smile on his face, the man said, "Thanks for the sermon, pastor. I'll see you in church on Sunday."*

I really like how this analogy exemplifies that we each individually need the church and the church needs each one of us. I would like to acknowledge each member, or should I say "embers", for your past and present support, with your time and financial commitment. As we look towards the future, we celebrate the current unity of the existing "embers", as well as welcome the new and returning "embers", all of which further strengthens St Paul, for the next 275 years and beyond. This enables the collective body of the church to continue to represent the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to the community, the country, and the world.

In conclusion, we ALL play an important role in keeping the church a vital part of our community, for our present day, but also are RESPONSIBLE for the future successes of St Paul's by maintaining a solid foundation to build on. Thank You for your support in this year's "Embership Drive"

The Adams.