

Part XI

Managing Our Money – Stewardship

(This is part of an ongoing series of articles about the church's finances by Dual Macintyre, Treasurer)

Stewardship, Every Member Canvas, pledging, donations, collections and fund raising are words that bring the shivers to most of us, because it means we are going to talk about **MONEY**. We are uncomfortable talking about the **M** word because it reminds us of the secular, worldly part of our church, rather than the spiritual side. We know that buildings need to be maintained, that utility costs are rising and that we need a staff for the church to function, but most of us prefer not to dwell on those subjects. Instead, we want to come to church for the spiritual refreshment we receive through the liturgy, the sermons, the music, our friends or a combination of all these. But deep down, we all know that **M** is needed to keep our church alive and well.

St. Paul's, like many churches, conducts an annual drive where we ask people to pledge **M** to support the secular operation of the church. This is called the Every Member Canvas, or EMC for short, and we have just embarked on this year's campaign to provide funds for 2010. Although this year's campaign will have many aspects familiar to us from the past, there will be two important differences.

First, we want to deemphasize the concept of a one-time, time-limited effort to raise the funds we need. Instead, we want our parishioners, both year-round and summer, to accept responsibility to support our church and its ministries throughout the year. The shift may be subtle, but the impact will be profound. We are not going to chase the last pledge or place emphasis on the statistics. What you gave last year, what the average pledge is, the % increase from last year, or any of the other devices used to compare one drive, or one year, with another are not as important as asking people to recognize - and reflect on - what this church means to them and to the island. Nantucket may be a playground for the rich, but it has underlying economic, social and spiritual needs that can only be addressed, in part, by our church and its ministries.

Second, we hope to bring a sea change to our thinking about stewardship. We ask that each person think about God's grace in their lives. This is a delicate and intensely personal area and vastly different for each individual. Some are just beginning their spiritual journey; others have begun, then drifted away and come back; while others are far along. Most journeys begin with a question - what are you grateful for? As we examine our lives and those of our loved-ones and friends, we recognize that God's grace has touched us in many ways. Someone has recovered from a serious illness. We were supported in a time of dreadful need. A long-cherished dream has been realized. We have been comforted during a time of great loss. The list goes on and on.

As you receive the mailings and think about our ministries for next year, reflect on the list of things you are grateful for. As you contemplate your pledge or gift for this church, for this island, for you what is enough?