



November 2, 2009

Dear Friends,

There has been an *abundance* of grace during these past five months as I have been so warmly welcomed at Epiphany. It has been a delight to hear many of your stories and to begin sharing my story with you. I was entirely sincere when I said, during our Celebration of Shared Ministries and my Installation that I have "already fallen in love with you." It's true...you have my heart.

It is an honor to break bread with you every Sunday morning as we celebrate Eucharist together. It is a gift to sit with you in the quiet prayer of Evensong. It has been a privilege to preside at services for your loved ones who have died... and a joy to celebrate baptisms with our newest young members. In all we celebrate, we share Christ's Light with one another.

I have not yet met everyone, I know, but those (17!) "Meet and Greets" were a great way to begin. During these months I have discovered the high value you place upon pastoral care. Many of you have already trusted me with your deepest heartaches, fears and questions during pastoral counseling. Thank you for that trust. Please know that my door is always open to you.

You have also shared with me your enthusiasm for what makes Epiphany so very special in your eyes... and in your hearts. Those passions are what we lift up during this season of Stewardship. Your pledges make it possible to maintain one-on-one relationships with your clergy. Your financial support enables the high-level of "programming" at Epiphany that nourishes our community, especially programming for our children and youth. Your support directly helps our parish children grow in faith through acolyte-ing, Vacation Bible Camp, Godly Play for young children and Sunday School for Middle Schoolers. Epiphany is well known for its energetic Junior and Senior Seekers programs. Planning is already underway for Confirmation, for the next Mission Trip and for outreach opportunities for all of our children. We are also planning a variety of fun intergenerational events and formation/education programs for adults. Your support makes all of this possible.

It is a blessing to have a professional staff at Epiphany to provide the pastoral care and to coordinate our programming. Austin oversees a huge program for our young people. Hailey provides compassionate pastoral care. Cort provides solid musical training for both our adults and our children. Sean graces us with his musical talents and Cliff keeps the office running while creating top rate bulletins, "Beacons" and announcements to keep this parish family in touch.

I am always careful to call Epiphany a "parish family" rather than a "family parish." What I love is that *all* of us have a place here... and all are truly welcome, no matter what 'season of life' we may be in. We are a community that welcomes and celebrates young and old, single, married, partnered or widowed and those who come with or without children. We all enjoy one another's company as we gather together for prayer, for play, for outreach and for all the ways we are growing in faith.

It is now the time of year when Epiphany asks for your financial support so that we may continue to share Christ's light with one another and with all of the people we touch. As you pray about your pledge, I hope you will ponder how much you value Epiphany. How would your life be different if Epiphany were not a part of your life? How have you personally been touched by members of this blessed parish family? How might your life—and the lives of those you love—be richer in the year ahead because of Epiphany?

Thank you for all of the ways that you participate in our parish life. Thank you for your generosity with your time and your talents and thank you for your financial support. Thank you for how you have already touched *my* life.

I am excited to see what God's dreams are for Epiphany in the years to come. Let us look towards the future with faith.

May Christ be our Light!

In Thanksgiving,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melanie+".

(The Rev.) Melanie S. Donahoe
Rector

November 2, 2009

Fellow Parishioners,

What does being a member of Church of Epiphany mean to you? If we were to compile and share our answers, it is likely there would be no two exactly the same. Our church experiences are completely unique. For some (like me) it is love of the beautiful liturgy, for others it is the youth programs, the sermon, the fellowship, the music, the pastoral care, or some combination of all of the above. However, there is one thing we must all share in common and that is financial responsibility for the well-being of our church.

The fall pledge campaign is the time of year parishioners are asked to pledge financial support for the maintenance and operation expenses of the church. Our operating budget is completely dependent upon pledge income and this year's pledge amount will determine the budget for 2010.

From a financial standpoint, 2009 has been a particularly difficult year. Last year's pledge campaign was negatively impacted by both the severe downturn in our economy and a great deal of uncertainty regarding the future of our church. At the time, we were without a Rector or an Associate Priest. As a result, pledge income fell well short of our goals and was down almost \$80,000 from 2008 levels. The Vestry put together an operating budget for 2009 that was cut to the bare minimum. It has been a real struggle to maintain our ministries and programs and we have had to draw down reserve accounts to do so. This is not an option for 2010.

During the course of our search for a new Rector and new Associate, there were numerous opportunities to share our hopes and dreams for Epiphany and to identify those programs we consider "essential" to our church experience. As a congregation, we place high value on a personal relationship with our Rector; we place high value on our children and youth ministries, our outreach and mission work; and we appreciate informative communication: newsletters, an enhanced worship bulletin, and a user friendly website. The big question before us is, "Can we afford this?"

I am convinced we can. But to do so, we will have to dig a little deeper and cast the net a little wider. For 2009 the parish committed to \$336,500 in pledge income. To maintain current staff and programs in 2010 we will have to increase total pledge income to at least \$425,000, an increase of 26%. This does not mean we are asking for a 26% pledge increase from every member. As is always the case, there will be a wide range of pledges. Not everyone will be able to increase their pledge. Some will be able to, some will have to cut, and hopefully we will receive some new pledges to help bring up the numbers. Sadly, if we fail to meet our pledge goal, the only place left to cut the budget is at the staff level. After a year of transitions, this is unimaginable.

Your pledge is your statement of support for the mission and shared ministries of Epiphany.

Every pledge, regardless of the amount, is deeply appreciated and held in complete confidence.

On Sunday November 15th we will celebrate the collection and blessing of our pledges. Between now and then, please give serious and prayerful thought to your pledge and to that special place you hold in your heart for Church of the Epiphany. *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* [Matthew 6:21]

Sincerely,



Liz Olson, Senior Warden

P.S. For additional information please visit the stewardship page of the church website. I am also available for conversation and questions regarding church finances. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance.