

# ***Keeping the Light On***

by Linda J. Hewitt

I had never given a portion of my income to Christ and His Church before I started coming to St. Paul's five years ago. When I was a child, my family did not attend church regularly and so I didn't learn by example. When I made the decision to be chrismated, I had to sit down and puzzle out my parish pledge card. After thinking and praying about it, I chose an amount and turned the card in. I wondered if I would be able to fulfill it.

Well, I did fulfill my pledge that year and have increased it in following years. I have found that the more involved I have become in St. Paul's parish life, the more money I want to give. Let me explain.

The first year at St. Paul's after my Chrismation was definitely the toughest. I would avoid Coffee Hour because I didn't know very many people and felt left out. It wasn't until I decided to go on the trip to Greece and Rome in 2005 which was planned by Father Steve that I began to get to know people. The beauty of that trip was that I made friends as diverse as Martha Murry (my roommate), Mel & Nanette Bowman, and Alan & Sheilagh Means. Now when I go to Coffee Hour, I have lots of people to talk to. I decided to get involved in more areas. I was elected to Parish Council in 2006 and went on two missionary trips to Tanzania in 2007 and 2008. I am never lonely when I go to Coffee Hour now. But, you may ask, what has this to do with being a pledging steward?

Once again, the more involved I am in the Church's life, the more I want to help it expand and grow. I enjoy helping out with the Church Tours during the Greek Festival so that I can share some of my experiences with newcomers. I'm happy to bring dessert to potluck dinners with the Orthodox/Catholic Book Club. After a Missions Committee meeting, I'll wash dishes in the kitchen to make sure everything is left neat and tidy. After listening to Nick Preketes talk about the landscaping during Parish Council meetings, I find myself checking out the sprinkler heads as I walk into Church for Divine Liturgy. I'll even pick up trash in the parking lot. I want to take care of my Church home and family.

Besides giving of my time and talents, I also need to give St. Paul's my treasure. Washing dishes and bringing dessert is one thing, but the Church also needs my hard-earned cash to get the grass mowed, fix the copier machine, and keep the lights on. It enables us to pay for the services of a wonderful assistant priest like Father Stephen Karcher, which in turn gives Father Steve the time to visit my father in the hospital when he was recovering from surgery. Tithing puts flowers on the altar, a smile on the face of someone who can't get to

church but receives a visit from Mr. Dean, paper in the copier to print out hundreds of copies of *The Good News*, and reading material in the hands of newcomers at the Orthodox Christianity 101 class. I am only a small drop of water in the rushing stream that is the St. Paul's community, but I am proud of what I can offer and hope to do better in future.

So, my contributions, both tangible and intangible, help to keep the lights on but more importantly, help to keep the Light on here at St. Paul's. I have sometimes joked that if I were to volunteer for anything else, I would have to pitch a tent on the stretch of grass between the Education Center and the parking lot to save time driving back and forth from my home in Placentia. Then I look at how hard others here work, such as Dean Conzaman, and Marina & George Kookootsedes, and I realize that I have much to improve upon. St. Paul's is a beacon in these dark financial times to so many people who are hurting or in need. Supporting this parish with everything I have to offer is not only a duty but a pleasure. It has given my life new purpose and direction. Not to mention more people to talk to at Coffee Hour!



*Linda Hewitt is a member of the Parish Council, the Missions Committee, and has made two mission trips to Tanzania*