

CHRIS CRIGHTON STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE – AUGUST 30, 2020

I'd like to tell you about two times this church has changed my thinking.

The first was in 1979, when my father died. My parents had moved to the Cape in '68, and right away they made Holy Spirit their church. I was in college then, and from there went straight into the Army, so I wasn't around much at all, and didn't really know the church.

When my father was taken ill, I came home on emergency leave and he passed away a few weeks later. As we approached the funeral, I was filled with anxiety: would my mother be able to cope alone, with me too far away to help? Could she stay in their house, as she wanted to?

The warmth and support that welcomed us that day changed my mind. I knew Mom would be fine, supported by friends who would help her get through that trying time and continue to support her afterwards. I had realized that this church takes care of its own.

The second time has been this year. In February you elected me to the vestry and to the position of parish treasurer. I gained a new perspective on stewardship.

In the past, whenever it was time to pledge I'd always approached stewardship from the point of view of... well.... me! When it came to money, how much could I spare? I should be cautious; maybe there'd be an unexpected expense. I wouldn't want to inconvenience myself. The same held true for time and talent; I was very busy; I didn't have that much time to spare. I really didn't have any outstanding talent to offer; surely there was someone else who could do things better; why not leave it to them?

That philosophy isn't what this church is about at all.

I said before that we take care of our own; that doesn't just apply to our fellow parishioners, it applies to our community as well. And we live what we believe: this year we've donated close to \$50,000 to organizations like the Housing Assistance Corporation, the Lower Cape Outreach Council, and many others who work to help those in need in our community and beyond. And we're going to do more.

This parish has a tradition of working for affordable housing for the community. We were the driving force behind the creation of the Orleans town housing development that came to be known as Tonset Woods. Our rector wrote the grant application, and we contributed money toward the goal. There have been other initiatives since then.

This year the passing of Nat Goddard and Gilbert Merritt, both of whom were very supportive of Habitat for Humanity, refocused us on this part of our tradition, to which we had not been paying a lot of attention recently. Partly to honor Nat and Gilbert, but also to return to our mission, the vestry has resolved to sponsor a Habitat for Humanity house build in Orleans, committing \$50,000 from the church and whatever individuals would like to add on their own.

It is from the perspective of what the church can do in the world that I now look at stewardship. It's not about us cocooned in our comfort zones. It's about reaching, stretching, extending ourselves together, beyond what is comfortable to what is possible, so that our church can do the Lord's work in the world.

Very few could donate \$100,000 to good causes in one year. Together, **we can** do it... **we should** do it... and **we are** doing it. I am increasing my family's pledge by 15% for 2021, because I believe in what this church does, and I want it to do even more.

Remember the lawyer whose questions prompted Jesus to tell the parable of the good Samaritan? After Jesus had told the story, the lawyer asked him, "and who is my neighbor?" I pray that we all would answer as Jesus did. Thank you.