

I was going to just start talking about time and talents, but I remembered that our theme for stewardship is Tell out my Soul, so I need to tell you, my story. How did I come to St. John's, why did I stay, and why am I so invested.

I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church; my husband in the Presbyterian Church. We began looking for a church that we could both embrace. While working on a Marriage Encounter team, we met Sherry Daniels – who designed many of our vestments and banners and helped Judy Charmatz design our windows. She invited us to St. John's – and we lived just down the street. Our children were 8 & 10 and both loved music. Our daughter immediately wanted to sing in the choir – we had choristers at the time – and both kids joined. My husband said, “well I have to take the kids to choir practice, so I may as well join the choir, too.” They all remained in the choir throughout school until graduation. They sang alongside Jessi, Emily and Gaire Distler. With my family in the choir, I was sitting alone in the pew, so I thought that I should do something. I started as a Lector, became a Eucharistic Minister – and the rest, as they say was history. We were invested – but more than that – we were embraced. Our family was now part of the St. John's family.

Last week John Fleming shared with us what it meant to him to have this church family during the most painful time of his life, the loss of his wife Judi last year. It brought up all kinds of feelings for me. The death of my husband was also the most painful time in my life, and I could not have survived without the people and clergy of St. John's. You all embraced me and held me up until I was able to stand on my own. The Rev. Tanya Beck was my rock. I remember saying to her that I don't know what people do if they don't have faith and don't have a church family.

We – you and I - do have a church family – one that is loving and supportive. Each of us needs to be part of that support. We do that through our time, talent and treasure. I want to talk to you about your time and talent. You have a half-sheet in the bulletin with the ministries of St. John's. If there is a ministry that was left off the list, I apologize. There are so many that I had trouble fitting them on a page.

There is not a ministry on this list that would not welcome you with open arms. If you see one that interests you, I'm happy to hook you up with the right person. I usually talk a lot about the Worship ministries, those you see before you. Worship is the heart of St. John's. It brings us together and prepares us to share our love with each other and the world.

But today I want to talk about two specific ministries. The first one falls under Outreach. Pack a Sack is one of our outreach ministries to Belcher Elementary. It may be the most important. It provides food for the weekend for 40 children, who otherwise would go without. This is especially important with the current crisis with SNAP benefits. The children are identified by the school counselor or social worker as being food insecure. Shopping at Sam's Club and packing is done every other week. Caroline Barnett has chaired Pack a Sack for 9 years. She has a couple of volunteers who assist with the shopping and packing. The bags are delivered to the school every week by members of Hope Presbyterian, so they are ready to go home with the children on Friday. Because of her current responsibilities, Caroline has shared that this will be her last year chairing Pack a Sack. We are looking for someone – or someones - to follow in her footsteps. There are still 6 months left in the school year, so she will have plenty of time to train an apprentice or two. Not to be dramatic, but the reality is that if we don't have someone to take on this vital ministry, we won't be able to continue it.

The second ministry that I would like to highlight is Vestry. Would the Vestry members please stand up? First of all, you will notice that we are all women. Men, we need you and your voices! Second, each of us is a regular person – just like you. Most of us are introverts. We don't have any special talents. Each of us loves St. John's and each of us made the decision to say YES. The Vestry is the elected governing body of the church. We are responsible for the property and finances, and for supporting the church's mission by word and deed. Each Vestry member is a liaison to a ministry area. Currently we meet once per month on a Sunday after church. Maybe you come from a place where Vestry meetings were confrontational. Not this group. We get along great. We all like each

other. We are on the same page. I can't remember a vote that wasn't unanimous. We love this place and want only what's best for St. John's.

Please take this list home. Put it in your purse or your pocket. I don't want to see them in the trash. Pray over it and see where God is calling you to serve. In your stewardship envelope, you will find a separate sheet that asks you how you will be involved. Take that step.

Many of you have heard me say this before, but I can still hear Rev Glad McCurtain's voice saying that God doesn't call the equipped. He equips those whom he calls. To what ministry is He calling you?

Marlene Eichelberger