

Oct. 11, 2013  
Karen Flynn  
Senior Warden  
Church of St John in the Wilderness  
Copake Falls, NY

Dear members and friends of St. John in the Wilderness,

What a wonderful year of activity and growth we have experienced at St. John in the Wilderness. Sitting in church every Sunday I am pleased to see a growing and active Sunday school, new faces in the congregation, summer visitors and old friends. Throughout the over 160 years of our existence, we have continually received many blessings as we grow in faith and serve our community. Together we have formed an active and involved community of people who have worked and played together and accomplished great things. As a parish we have raised money for those in need in our own community through support of such initiatives as the backpack fund, churches assisting neighbors (CAN), Christmas friends and holiday meal programs. We have reached outside of our country to support Episcopal relief organizations and provide for others through initiatives supported by our ECW. This year we are also proud to have brought a major building project to fruition through the generosity of parishioners and community members. Our bell tower has been restored to its former glory!

It is the time of year when the vestry and the finance committee need to begin planning for next year's budget. During this time, we actively seek pledges from each of you to establish the income we will have to work with in 2014. The treasurer and the finance committee carefully look at each anticipated expense attempting to decide whether that expense will likely increase or decrease. We also review our investment portfolio and the interest being paid because we have routinely needed to use this interest to meet expenses.

The vestry takes this responsibility of using pledged money seriously. We are charged with using all the income belonging to the church wisely. In response to those members who have asked, we will also allow those who pledge to decide how their contribution will be distributed among the parish, diocese, and national church by signifying this on their pledge card.

Last year, our annual budget was approximately \$85,000. Of that, \$59,000 was pledged by 44 pledging families. The remainder of the budget required taking \$9,000 from the interest in investment accounts, raising at least \$8,000 through special events such as our annual Country Fair and Auction, and hoping that plate offering and special gifts will keep us "in the black." As you can see by doing the math, we are keeping our proverbial "heads above water." We have very

little extra to plan for the inevitable needs of older buildings, the rising costs of heating and insurance and the decreasing return on our investments. Annual events such as our Country Fair and Auction have required modifications due to the aging of our congregation and decreasing availability of man power.

This year, the vestry and stewardship committee plan a more active campaign to increase annual giving. You will hear some short presentations in church on Sunday to help keep our Stewardship campaign more visible. Members of the vestry and stewardship committee are available to answer your questions and hear your concerns. The vestry has set a goal of increasing our pledges by 10%. I know it seems lofty, but looking at the numbers that would mean an increase of about \$6000. That money would give the vestry some leeway to more easily balance our budget. I am as uncomfortable as the next person to ask for more money. My joke has always been that my mother had to sell my girl scout cookies. The reality is, that to keep St. John in the Wilderness an active and growing church community, we all need to reach a little further into our hearts to examine whether we have the capacity to give just a little more.

We each have different motivations and capacities for giving. Please consider pledging if you have not previously done so. If you already pledge, please carefully and prayerfully consider if you can afford more. Every pledge is gratefully received and every dollar is carefully spent. Our church has ministered faithfully for more than 160 years, not because members have given out of duty, obligation or guilt. Our church remains strong and vibrant because generations of members have counted themselves as blessed to support the mission and vision of St. John in the Wilderness with generosity. Thank-you for your past parish financial support and the prayerful consideration that I hope you will give to your 2014 pledge.

Sincerely yours,

Karen Flynn