

Building on the Momentum (By Heather Osler – Nov. 17, 2013)

Almost 60 years ago, I climbed the stairs to the pulpit in my home parish and delivered a sermon. Go figure. At fifteen years of age, I was the president of the AYPAs (Anglican Young Peoples Association). The topic was a well known phrase

“This above all to thine own self be true and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man”.

It was a worthy topic and I suspect it was my belief at the time that it was a quote from the bible – especially with the words “thine” and “thou” and “canst”.

Well....Any Shakespearian buff in the congregation will recognize it as a quote from Polonius to his son Laertes in the play Hamlet. So much for my early Christian education.

The theme of our Stewardship Campaign for 2014 is “Build on the Momentum” and I want to take a minute to review our position a couple of years ago and how we got to where we are today.

Almost two years ago, you as a parish were asked to approve a deficit operating budget. You were also aware that we were carrying what we refer to as a revolving 50 thousand dollar debt on our balance sheet. I say revolving because every time we chipped away at the debt, we were confronted with unexpected expenses. It was also obvious after doing the analysis that our givings were not increasing at the rate of inflation, so our operating budget was also in the red. Not a healthy situation and I think we all felt it.

When we asked you to approve that budget in February of 2012, we also undertook to address the 50 thousand dollar debt. Over the course of the last two years we have seen that debt cut by more than half at the end of 2012 and we anticipate we will reach our goal or be very close to it at the end of the 2013 year.

And the success of that campaign rests squarely with you, our faithful stewards at St. Simon's. We are truly grateful for your generosity and I think we are a happier and healthier parish as a result.

Not long ago someone said to me "stewardship is all about the money". To be fair, the end result is the money, but the money does not materialize if our spiritual house is not in order. So it's about so much more than money. This is our spiritual home, our place of worship, a temporary sanctuary for some, and always a place for fellowship.

And that's where our theme kicks in:

BUILD ON THE MOMENTUM

The dictionary defines Momentum in various ways:

- The strength or force that allows something to grow stronger or faster as time passes
- I like this definition: vigour, liveliness, get-up and go; OOMPH!
- And one more definition: The strength or force that something has when it's moving.

For example, a heavy truck moving fast has a large momentum—it takes a large and prolonged force to get the truck up to this speed, and it takes a large and prolonged force to bring it to a

stop afterwards. If the truck were lighter, or moving more slowly, then it would have less momentum

As Lynda Tendijowski said in her last presentation to you, we must build on the momentum that has slowly and steadily gained strength in our parish over the last few years. We've seen it in many parts of our parish life:

- The strength of our faith
- The strength of our commitment
- The forces we have in the parish that continue to grow such as
 - Outreach
 - Music
 - Christian education
 - Our Sunday school
 - Our fundraising events
 - A growing parish
 - And a multitude of opportunities for fellowship and fun

I want to share with you some of Bishop Michael Bird's comments during a recent Regional Budget meeting of the Diocese held here at St. Simon's. Speaking on behalf of the church and the diocese he asked the following question:

How do we take the resources we have, the people, the passion and the love and commitment that we have for the vision we have discerned, the time and talent and the treasure that is at our disposal, and how do we take all of that and make the very best use of what God has given us? How do we use our resources in creative and innovative ways to sustain and expand and grow our ministry?

These questions apply to all of us.

As we approach 2014, the momentum must surely continue and grow if we are to keep our house in a healthy state.

We ask that each of you give prayerful thought to the pledge you make for 2014, recognizing that inflation affects our church costs exactly the same way it does in our homes. If you are able, please consider meeting the 10% challenge – that is a 10% increase over last year's givings. (For example, if you are pledging 5 dollars a week today the new gift would be 5:50 cents, or 11 dollars on a 10 dollar a week pledge)

This will complement some in our parish who are on fixed incomes and simply are not able to raise their contribution to the church. Whatever the amount, all contributions are gratefully received.

Jack Smye shared a lovely story about a widow whose income was barely adequate to feed and clothe her six children, yet every week she faithfully placed four dollars on the collection plate. The rector, knowing how little she had, decided to go to her home and assure her that she could use the money instead for her family's benefit. The widow took the rector to task replying "you are trying to take away the last thing that gives me dignity and meaning". She had learned the key to giving.

Thank you for your generosity. We are family here at St. Simon's and with your help we can keep the momentum building.