

From the Clergy Assistant

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Over these past weeks I have had some wonderful initial conversations with some of the young people in the parish. What bright and talented individuals we have. A few of these conversations have been with some of the eighth grade members of the Confirmation program. Since the Confirmation program involves a deepening in the understanding and *practice* of what it means to live as more mature Christians, the confirmands are required to participate in at least one area of ministry such as Acolyting or Choir or Outreach.

The expectation of our children and youth to participate in an area of ministry is a vital—and often fun—part of their formation as Christians. In a number of the conversations I had with our young people, their service at St. Paul’s Shelter or St. Paul’s After-School Tutoring Program came up. One confirmand mentioned that she had served a meal at St. Paul’s with a previous Church School class. She had greatly enjoyed the experience and was looking forward to volunteering at the shelter again this year, perhaps inviting other friends to join her in the “fun”. That is one of the gifts that can be found in volunteering: stepping out of our comfort zones and discovering something new and **fun**. Serving in new ministries can provide one with wonderful opportunities to meet new people or gain new insights into different situations—or new insights into one’s self. It was in seeing my own young children serve as acolytes, that I finally gathered up the confidence to serve as an acolyte myself years ago—my first experience on the altar...

Serving in various ministries, particularly Outreach ministries such as those at St. Paul’s, provides more than fun, however. It can provide us with a means to live out the vows of our Baptismal Covenant, particularly to “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ,” to “seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself,” and to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being” (*BCP*, p. 305). We are given a different perspective; given the opportunity to connect with people who might seem to live very different lives from our own; and yet we all can relate to the highs and lows of family relationships, of work—or of baseball. A few years ago when I served dinner with a group of children at St. Paul’s, the Little League season had recently started and the young baseball players had quite the conversation with some of the shelter’s guests. And, apparently, at any time of the year it only takes one sweatshirt with a sports team logo or “destination location” to start an entire conversation...

Serving in various ministries allows us the opportunity to engage with others, even with parts of ourselves, in ways we might not have available to us in the regular routines of our daily lives. Formation does not end when one is confirmed; it is through the often seemingly small decisions we make in how we participate in worship, prayer, study, service, and fellowship that we are continually formed as individuals and as a community.

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