

*WELCOMING IN CHRIST*  
**Monthly Devotional Reflections**  
**Anticipating the St. Paul's Anniversary Campaign**

SEPTEMBER 2018

**Season after Pentecost** with the expanding mission and influence of the church  
St. Paul's marking sixty years of worship and service, welcoming all and seeking to engage each one

**TEXTS:**

**Mark 9:30-37** *They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him. Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."*

**Psalm 19:14** *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*

**REFLECTIONS:** Our world loves superlatives. We are influenced by the competitive spirits of sports, business, advertising, and politics. We want to possess the finest material goods, we expect our team to be in first place, and we hope to be known, honored, and remembered as the greatest. It is about ambition and pride. We want to be the greatest! Even the original disciples, those closest to Jesus, get into arguments on the subject. But when he asks them about it they are silent. Jesus sits down and reminds his followers that the kingdom of God has different priorities. "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Notice "all" is used twice for emphasis. He takes a child into his arms. Children are dependent—still growing and developing; thoughtful, needy, inquisitive, innocent, creative, loving. Jesus teaches: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me and so welcomes God."

St. Paul's Episcopal Church is celebrating sixty years as a faith community "*Welcoming in Christ*." During each month of 2018 we have remembered with joy and thanksgiving all who have helped the church to thrive: all the parishioners and priests, founders and builders, children, youth, families, seniors, all the teachers, administrators, leaders of outreach, music and worship, growing with Cary and our larger world and sharing the love of Christ. We have sought to be faithful disciples together. And we have intended that our words and thoughts, along with our activities and the stewardship of our facilities, be acceptable to God on whom we rely for support and success.

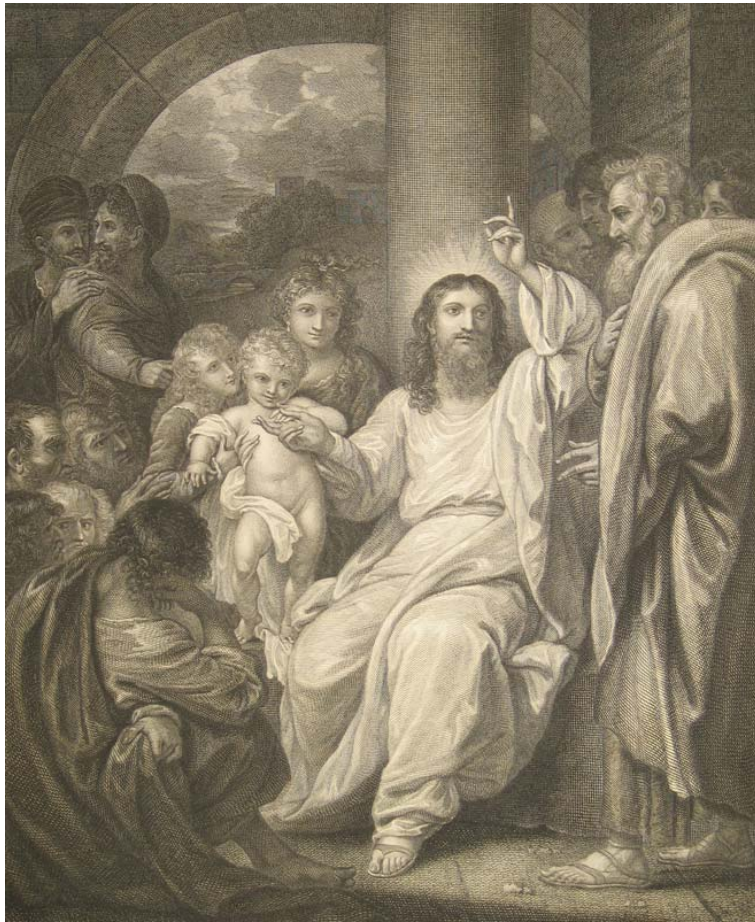
Now we look forward. "*Welcoming in Christ!*" All are invited to make a thoughtful spiritual and financial commitment toward \$3.2 million for repairing, restoring, and expanding our facilities, enabling more excellent worship, learning, hospitality, and outreach. A dedicated group of church leaders has worked

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during the past twelve months to establish compelling and essential priorities and financial goals seeking important resources beyond the annual operating budget. We anticipate full and generous participation with pledges received September 16 to October 14 and payable over three years. All of this in celebration of our parish and in gratitude for God's blessings.

**PRAYERS:** *O God of unsearchable mystery and light, through suffering and rejection, your weakness is greater than our strength, your foolishness brings all our cleverness to naught, your gentleness confounds the power we would claim. You call first to be last and last to be first, servant to be leader and ruler to be underling of all. Pour into our hearts the wisdom of your Word and Spirit, that we may know your purpose and live to your glory. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

**ART:** The *Macklin Bible* is an enormous physical specimen of book art, comprising seven volumes two feet in height and over 130 pounds in weight. It is the apogee of the art of British copper-plate



engraving, involving both painters and engravers. These renowned artists often selected scripture texts that featured women, who were the nurturers of religious education for the family in late 18th century England. Benjamin West (1738-1820) and John Hall (1739-1797) were the artists. West was born in Pennsylvania, the 10<sup>th</sup> child of a Quaker inn-keeper and a self-taught artist who founded the Royal Academy of Arts in England. John Hall was a distinguished English engraver whose portrait was done by the American artist Gilbert Stuart, who also immortalized George Washington. *How many people have gathered to hear Jesus teaching? Who are they? Are all listening? Why might it be important that the engraving is monochromatic and not sharp? How does this picture help the words of Jesus—on surprising priorities for greatness—to be heard and heeded?*

*The Macklin Bible 1795—Of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven from the collection of Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville, TN*

**ACTION:** The 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of St. Paul's Church is a time of reflection and anticipation. It is an opportunity for conversation and commitment. How have you been welcomed and served, inspired and challenged? How has your life been enriched by this community of faith? What might God expect and enable you to give? How will your prayers, your generous participation, and your encouragement of others make a difference—for our community, for the parish, for your family and for you?

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