

Coco Corbett
Stewardship Moment
Sunday October 12, 2008

This year the stewardship task force selected ‘St. Pauls, a great place to grow’ as its theme, and so naturally when I sat down to write out ideas for this morning I asked myself “How has St. Pauls been a great place for me to grow?” Immediately I thought of my involvement with the Appalachia Service Project. About six years ago some adult members of the church introduced the idea of taking the youth on a Mission Trip, since those experiences had meant so much to them as young people. Sharon Phillips, being so committed to the youth of St. Pauls, jumped on the idea and a little more than five years ago I joined the first group of kids to head down to the Appalachian Mountains for a week to give emergency home repair to families in need. We had such a great time that we continued to go down to Appalachia in the following years, and the mission trip is now a yearly tradition at St. Pauls.

I went to Appalachia three times with St. Pauls and decided after high school that I wanted to do more, so I applied and became a staff member with the Appalachia Service Project, spending the entire summer serving the families of Appalachia. My experience of service there made me want to share ASP with my college community. I got a group of excited volunteers and signed us all up with ASP, but we were stumped when it came to figuring out how to finance the trip. Luckily, St. Pauls was there for me and my fellow volunteers. I applied for and received a grant from the Outreach and Benevolence Committee which helped us finance our service trip to Appalachia.

The work I’ve done with ASP helped me realize the commitment I have to serve others. Now I’ll admit that not-for-profit service work isn’t the best way to build a solid financial future. It’s almost like that ever approaching college graduation date is bringing my financial status into

clearer view, and the economic state of our country certainly doesn't make the future look any brighter. I have friends whose parents are losing their stable jobs, it's all over the news, and I'm sure each and every one of you has already been touched in some way by this crisis. So I'm not getting myself too excited about my future as part of America's work force.

Thinking about how my potential not-for-profit employers must be hurting during a time of recession when people are less likely to give, I was discussing the outlook of my financial future with my mother. And I realized, you know, St. Pauls is probably in a similar situation! It's very logical: If I don't know where I'm going to get the money to buy groceries, finding the money to pledge to my church probably isn't going to be high on my list of priorities. But that's why I spent the gas money to come all the way here from Kalamazoo this weekend: To stand up here and ask you to pledge to St. Pauls. I'm actually going to fill out my first ever pledge card right now, and I encourage you to join me. And this is why it's so important: This card, the promise I'm making with it, and the money I'll be giving doesn't just pay for the pretty candles on Christmas, the AC in the summer or the care for you toddlers on Sunday morning.

Without your pledges five years ago I might not have gotten the chance to go to Appalachia, I might not have decided to spend my summers serving those wonderful people who are in so much need, I wouldn't have been able to share those experiences with my college community, and I might not have figured out how much I care about the service of others. Those pledges made five years ago provided the life experiences that have shaped who I've grown into today, and I am so grateful for that. So I'm taking this card, identical to those in the pews in front of you, and pledging to St. Pauls for the very first time because without my pledge today the next generation might not get those same life changing opportunities that I had. And I'm asking you: as the offering plate comes around this Sunday and every Sunday, please use this time to

consider your journey and St. Pauls roll in your journey, its' roll in your community, your life and the lives of others, especially the youth of this church- whether you contribute to the plate, via ACH transfer, credit card or check by mail- this is our weekly chance to contemplate our contribution to help make St. Pauls a Great Place to Grow for the next generation.