



Christ & St. Luke's

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Stewardship testimony by Sidney A. (Sid) Neighbours, Nov 9, 2025

Good Morning....

My name is Sid Neighbours, and I'm here to share a story of how I got to Christ and St. Luke's and why I believe giving is important.

In the words of the great philosopher, Sophia Petrillo, "PICTURE IT . . . April 7, 2024".....I had just turned 60 years old, and I had 2 new and totally unique experiences. When I woke up on that sunny Sunday morning, I was able to decide if I was going to church or not. And, depending on the answer to that question, I could decide where I was going to church. Let me explain....

I grew up in a Christian home, and the question of "if" never came up. We went to church every Sunday, at the same church where my mother grew up. She was the church organist, so that may have played somewhat in that decision. She has been the organist at that church for 75 years, starting in 1950, when she was 13. And leaving off that she was 13 when she started was a mistake you didn't make twice. We always sat on the front row, allowing her to come sit with us during the sermon, as well as close proximity to a door in the event my dad had to take me out of church because I could not sit still. Still can't.

When I was 6, I took piano lessons, but hated to practice, so that only lasted one year. As time went on, my family realized how well I could read music from just that one year, as well as realizing I could play by ear. So after finding a new and incredible piano teacher, I began playing in church when I was 14 years old (my mother has me by one year). Even as an older teen and young adult, those questions about church came with an automatic answer - I needed to be on the piano bench. When I was 31, I left that church to take the position as Director of Music and Organist/Pianist at a United Church of Christ, and stayed there until March 31, 2024 = 29 years total. March 31 of 2024 was Easter Sunday.

So back to April 7, 2024.....I made the decision to get up, primp, and go to church. I knew that it would be hard to get back into the church routine if I didn't continue it from the start. I had in my mind a whole list of churches to visit. So on the 7th, I attended the church of one of my best friends. He had invited me knowing what was coming with the 29 year church. It was a nice church, the people were most gracious, but it wasn't for me. Second on the list was Christ & St. Luke's, and that's where my list ended up stopping - I had found my home. I loved the

worship and the music and the beautiful church, and the outstanding sermons.....just everything. And, I got to sit near the back!!!!!! I quickly established a seat where I've sat every Sunday since. I realized this was where God meant for me to be. Coffee with both Fathers Noah and Jared to introduce myself, as well as to ask LOTS of questions, happened in the next few weeks, from the processional to the various items used in worship, to what the robes meant, and on and on.....I still have questions that arise, and Fr. Jared will tell you I don't hesitate to ask, particularly over a cup of coffee at Stella's.

One thing I thought was that I could just blend in the crowd, pass the peace to those around me, and go home. Well, that lasted a hot minute. I realized that I wanted to be involved. And in September of 2024, I walked past the Flower Guild table and mentioned that I worked in a flower shop in my high school and college days. You can see where this story is going. Thus began wonderful relationships that I treasure. I enjoy arranging flowers for our services. I feel like I used my talents as a musician for God's glory for 46 years, and now I've switched over to using my floral talents.

I love this church and I know God put me here, and that he made sure CSL was near the top of my "list." I am thankful for Frs. Noah, Jared, and Vince, and Kevin and the incredible musicians, instrumental and vocal, that share such beautiful music with us every Sunday. And I've seen a level of concern, love, and compassion that is second to none. I've experienced that personally through a couple of surgeries (getting old is great "fun"), other health issues, the death of my beloved dog, and concern for my family, especially my parents, who we are blessed to still have with us at 91 and 88. But I saw the highest level of love and compassion when my dear friend Jerry was ill and passed away in January. At one point, during the time Jerry was in the hospital, Hugh asked me to call Fr. Noah. Noah stopped what he was doing and walked to the hospital. I also learned that Fr. Noah answers his texts and phone calls in the subways of Montreal. The level of love I saw and felt during that time was so heartwarming that it doubled or tripled my heartfelt belief that this was where God wanted me to be.

A side note - if you ever see me walking from the church to the hospital, please call AAA - my car will have broken down.

I love this church, and it has quickly become one of the biggest blessings in my life, and for this I am eternally grateful.

Now to the stewardship part.....

I have a unique perspective on church stewardship and finances. My dad was the treasurer of our church for 27 years, from the early 70s to the late 90s. When I was old enough, especially when I was taking "bookkeeping" in high school, then majoring in business at ODU, I began doing the bookwork involved - back in the day when it was done in a big notebook with pages with lots of lines and columns, an adding machine, and a typewriter. And a legal pad and sharp pencil. So I saw up close and personal just what it takes to operate a church (plus it was instilled in me that I

was not ever to tell any names that I saw while doing this work, a request in which I complied 100%, I probably would have met Jesus up close & personal if I hadn't complied) People often say that a church is not a business . . . to which I say, if you knew the things I know, you'd understand why it is a business.

Let me explain.....

It's God's business, and we are to be good stewards of what we have received. Matthew 25:14-30, the parable of the talents, teaches that people are given gifts by God and expected to use them to serve others and glorify him. And just like that little church in Zuni, Virginia, our beloved church needs us all to be good stewards with our finances and our time to keep the church running. The church operates with our help - only with a few more zeroes on the end of the numbers than it was back then in Zuni.

From an early age, my parents instilled in my sister and me the importance of "to whom much is given, much is expected." And they practiced what they preached, even today as my dad, at age 91, is the director of their church's food pantry, and my mother still plays the organ, she just has to be helped up onto the bench now. Again, and just like the church of my youth, Christ & St. Luke's depends on the stewardship of our members, and I am grateful that I am able to be a good steward.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in my "slight southern accent," and for everything that you have done to welcome, love, and accept me into the fold.

Thanks be to God.....