

## Deacon's Corner

Last week, I participated in a small group discussion. One of the questions that we explored together was this: **Have you ever received a gift that you were unable to repay?** It's a thought-provoking question and each of us came up with a different answer. One of our members said that 'life itself' was something that he could not repay. Another suggested the earth and all its resources. At first I struggled to come up with a response and then it occurred to me that my participation in the United Parish is such a gift. Where do I go to quiet myself after a busy week at work? Where do I go for respite when I feel overwhelmed by what is going on in the world? Where do I go to express gratitude for health or for all that I have been given? Where do I go for opportunities to serve others, where I always seem to get more than I am able to give?

Our congregation is an amazing gift which I know that I can never repay. I'm thankful for so much of what we have here together as a community of faith and how it enriches my life. We share, celebrate, mourn, learn, explore, grow, support and encourage each other. It's a congregation where we all pull together. Just look at the transformation of the nursery school, church offices, meeting rooms and upper vestry that took place over the summer. It was completed almost entirely by members of our congregation. Last month when the Turkey Supper committee asked for volunteers to bake pies, roast turkeys and make stuffing for our annual Turkey Supper, responses started coming in just minutes after the first email request. The goal was met in no time. Recently the Gifts and Services committee asked for volunteers to help out at the Blackstone Valley Emergency Shelter. More than a dozen registrations have already been submitted. Our members generously give their time, money and energy continually, whether it be in support of holiday baskets, the food pantry, the Community Supper or meals to help during illness, recovery or other hardship. This is a community where people care for one another, celebrate differences and offer hospitality and outreach to members of our larger community.

I also appreciate the gift of exploring the largest questions in life with Pastor Lourey and members of the various small groups in which I have participated. I'm fascinated with the history of our faith tradition, how it has shaped our culture and where it might be heading into the future. Our small groups offer a place where we can explore our spiritual lives, share our journeys and learn about ourselves and each other in a safe place. I know that I have a healthier outlook as a result of participating in these discussion groups. I always leave them with a sense of peace and optimism.

The United Parish of Upton is a truly gift that I can never repay.

Brian Le Suer