

Why should I give to the church especially after I'm dead? That is a question you might hear. Well, here at Christ Church in Towanda we have come up with two reasons to become members of the Saint Matthew Society. First, we are not really giving to 'the church' per se, we are giving to God from our love and devotion; we are giving so that Jesus' ministry will be continued. Secondly, if we do not give we might not have a church building to continue our worship in the future and if others had not given there may not have been a church standing now! Praise God for our forefathers and foremothers! We have been given many blessings from them including our lives, faith, parish family and yes, even our church building plus the freedom to worship as we choose.

As a parish and vestry we had decided around ten years ago to slowly but surely, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to refurbish our building from top to bottom. We felt a responsibility both to our past and future generations. Everyone in the parish has helped in this effort. We pulled together with God's help and supported each other emotionally, physically, spiritually and monetarily. Most importantly we prayed and prayed and prayed and then we prayed a little more! God was gracious.

As we worked on our church building the planned gifts/bequests came rolling in. Occasionally, the gifts came after we had decided to go ahead with 'the project'. That was daunting but we kept putting one foot in front of another, always with prayer, allowing God to lead the way and working together. Actually while writing this article we received another gift. Thank You Jesus! In the past ten years we have roofed, chemically cleaned and pointed the building, repaired the flashing and the belfry, painted and renovated the interior, and restored our largest stained-glass window, the prettiest in the diocese. (yes, I'm prejudiced but it's true) Our window was donated in loving memory of Ulysses Mercur, a former Chief Justice of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The window was made in England by Cox and Sons. It was shipped to the church when construction was completed in 1889. We have accomplished many more repairs during the past several years. Praise God!

Our church was in seriously hazardous condition but with God's help and the generosity of many parishioners, past and present, the building is now in good repair. In fact, after some projects had been started/accomplished several parishioners began to give towards many others. One parishioner had asked me "Do I have to wait until I die to give some money to our church?" My response was...absolutely not!!!

Christ Church is blessed by God and her generous and faithful parishioners. We could have NEVER done all of these repairs without God's help or the planned gifts. Several have been in excess of over \$100,000; the first was given by Frances Hall. From all of the gifts given, the good results are that, we have been enabled to continue in worshipping God, sharing Jesus' word, and caring for others by our outreach in His name. That is what we are to be about. We are blessed to do this. You will be blessed in many ways and so will your church when members of your parish join the St. Matthew Society by giving a planned gift.