



8 November 2011

Dear St. Peter's Family,

It is with great pleasure that we announce that St. Peter's has received a grant of \$44,832 to enable our rector, Fr. Koshy Mathews, to participate in the 2011 National Clergy Renewal Program funded by the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. We are one of 158 congregations across the country that will support their ministers in the program, which allows pastors to step back from their busy lives and renew their spirits for the benefit of their ongoing ministries.

Now in its 12<sup>th</sup> year, the program invites Christian congregations and ministers to consider and plan a period of intentional reflection and renewal. It provides a time for ministers to take a break from their daily obligations and gain the fresh perspective and renewed energy that a carefully considered "sabbath time" of travel, study, rest and prayer can provide.

Each congregation is eligible to apply for a grant of up to \$50,000. Up to \$15,000 of that amount can be used to fulfill pastoral duties during the minister's absence and for expenses related to the congregation's own renewal. The 158 grants this year totaled \$6.8 million. We feel especially blessed to have been selected from a pool of 1,500 applicants, and the application process was a committed team effort led by Retta Sparano.

The timing of the sabbatical has been prayerfully considered. January 2012 will mark Fr. Koshy's sixth anniversary at St. Peter's. He and Susan will be with us through Advent and Christmas and then will leave for India early in the New Year. The sabbatical itinerary also has been carefully planned to incorporate a variety of experiences that lead to reflection and renewal. The program begins with an extended visit to Fr. Koshy's original home of Kerala, India, which will allow him to return to his roots and retrace the path that led him to his call to ministry. From there he will visit several holy and pilgrimage sites and spend time learning meditation at a Hindu ashram. This time will be one of retreating and reflecting for him. He will end the sabbatical studying at a Christian seminary in Bangalore to experience how Christianity is flourishing in that Hindu-dominated society. He will return to our parish inspired from his experiences just in time for Holy Week 2012 and the joyous Easter celebration.

While Fr. Koshy is away, the parish will be in the most capable and familiar hands of our own Fr. David Hyatt and Deacon Joe Dietz. They will have the additional help of the Rev. Kenneth Bullock. Currently our Sabbatical Advisory Group, led by Fr. Hyatt, is communicating with the renowned Alban Institute to set up an initiative during the sabbatical period to investigate ways St. Peter's can further counter the national trend of lower attendance and smaller congregations among main line Protestant churches.

We at St. Peter's look forward to seasons of renewal for both Fr. Koshy and for the parish. In the coming weeks, look for information about the celebratory *bon voyage* luncheon on December 11<sup>th</sup>. Thank you all for your continuing support!

Sincerely,

*Gary Russell*, Senior Warden

*The Rev. Dr. Koshy Mathews, Rector*

121 CHURCH STREET, PHOENIXVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA 19460-3487

Phone 610.933.2195

Fax 610.933.6565