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Have you ever heard of the *Observer's Paradox*? Well we are living that paradox in our very own church right now.

As scientists in the 19th and 20th centuries were developing the study of quantum physics, they began to uncover an unexpected phenomenon: sometimes the act of observing subatomic particles changes those particles. Social scientists--such as William Labov--likewise discovered that merely observing people or events in action can change them. Labov called this phenomenon the *Observer's Paradox*\*. Whether we're talking about physics or psychology--the universe full of atoms or the inside of the human mind--the way we observe our world can actually change it!

The *Observer's Paradox* is a wonderful analogy of the power we have to shape our church simply in how we choose to see it. As our very own bishop, the Rt. Rev. Andy Doyle\*\*, points out, if we walk into a church and observe a dying, struggling church, it will indeed be a dying, struggling church. If we view our church as full of life, it will breathe with life abundant. If we look at our church and see a place that is welcoming to our neighbors, loving toward those in need, and life-giving and inspiring for our friends and families--you guessed it--it will shape our church in that image! We have an amazing power at our disposal to co-create our church, with God, into the community we have it in our hearts to be.

As we prepare to gather for this year's St. Stephen's Annual Meeting and for all that 2018 will hold for us, let us do so with a sense of excitement and wonder--for God is on our side, love and passion are in our hearts, and together we will shape the future of our church and the future of our world.

Yours in Christ,

Steven

\* Labov, William (1972). *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

\*\* Doyle, C. Andrew (2015). *Church: A Generous Community Amplified for the Future*. Alexandria, VA: Virginia Theological Seminary.