

His Gifts, **by GRACE**

— *Stewardship 2022* —

People of Ascension,

Our Church family has been physically separated, yet spiritually most of us worked to stay connected. The collective giving of our parishioners' time, talents, and treasure during this pandemic is clear evidence of this. It has been amazing to, yet again, see the commitment our Parish has to each other and God in times of adversity. Strong, sustained giving says volumes about the commitment and excitement we feel as we anticipate the coming era in the life of Ascension.

The Stewardship Committee has grappled with the right message to not only keep this momentum going, but to communicate the true meaning of stewardship. We have learned that some misunderstand stewardship as relating only to the annual pledge campaign, while others see it only in terms of giving money as opposed to gifts of time and talents. In rethinking “stewardship” we learned that the Episcopal Church teaches that it is “using the gifts God has given us, to do the work God is calling us to do.”

The following quote from one of the greatest spiritual thinkers of our era drives home a recurring theme the Stewardship Committee has discussed:

Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service, you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His already.

— C.S. Lewis —

Accurately understood, stewardship is about giving back to do God's work a measure of ALL with which, by His grace, He has so abundantly blessed us. “All” includes gifts of time, talents and effort, as well as money. Realistically, a parish cannot survive and thrive without any of these.

The leaders of Ascension have a duty to plan for the Parish's future, both programmatically and financially, by being good stewards of our resources, assets, and pledged income. Frankly, our doors do not open, nor do worship or programming happen on their own. Our Committee's mission is to emphasize that all we have are “His Gifts, By Grace.” We seek pledges from the Parish that will fund a budget to accomplish the work God has called us to do together.

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

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The enclosed insert provides a summary of the Parish's revenue and expenses. In addition to continuing to fund our ongoing programs, the Vestry and Finance Committee have resolved to take extra steps to reduce our Parish's debt. Were there but a single goal for the stewardship campaign, the Committee's hope would be that the number of pledge cards returned would surpass that of past years. Why? While the Parish is grateful for non-pledged gifts, we cannot adopt a fiscally sound budget without knowing what revenue to expect.

In addition, a strong increase in pledge cards returned will signal to our new Rector that the parishioners of Ascension are committed. How and what we give is a reflection of where our heart is. As we prepare to begin a new chapter in the life of Ascension, how do we want to demonstrate where our heart is?

Throughout the coming weeks, you will hear from fellow parishioners about what stewardship means to them. As you fill out your pledge card (whether physically or online), we encourage you to think about what stewardship means to you, and the impact your pledge will have on Ascension, the Kingdom, and yourself. We encourage you to be a good steward of what God has blessed you with. Although we must fund our budget, the amount you give is personal and not as important as the act of committing to God's work by completing a pledge card and sending it in.

Enclosed is a pledge card and envelope for your use. You can submit your pledge card in person or by mail or online (www.knoxvilleascension.org/stewardship). Also, we will have the opportunity to collectively drop our pledge cards in the Stewardship Ingathering Box at the **November 14, 2021** Sunday morning services.

In thanksgiving,

Brent Alexander

Jennifer Borth

John Law

Sarah Stair

Martha Weeks

Andy Oakes

Andrew Hale, *Co-Chair*

Tom Hale, *Co-Chair*

Rev. Bo Townsend, *Interim Rector*

Church of the Ascension Stewardship Committee, 2022