



**The Episcopal Church of
Saint Thomas the Apostle in Morgantown
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Dear Friends,

The Christian call to faithful Stewardship is an invitation to dialog and prayer. Faithful Stewardship calls us to pray in thanksgiving to God who is the source of every blessing which we receive. We are reminded that we do not truly own anything. Everything which we possess is actually something which God has placed in our hands to use for building up God's kingdom here on earth. And yet, we do have responsibilities—for ourselves, for our families and those whom we love, for the many charities which we feel called to assist—and above all, for those who are in need. And so, we struggle to find ways to answer each of these calls.

For those of us who have chosen to belong to and to be part of an Episcopal Christian Community, there is a call to support our Parish, and through it to assist the work of the Diocese of Bethlehem, and the work of the Episcopal Church in the nine Provinces throughout the world in which we live and serve. Our Vestry each year prayerfully discerns the call of God to work to meet the needs of our own faith community, of the wider communities near us in Berks, Chester, and Lancaster counties—and of the needs in our region, in our state, and in the world.

With the decision to call a full-time Priest-in-Charge, we have committed ourselves to building bridges wherever possible, to explore new ways of working to empower and transform our community—and to rebuilding the Beloved Community of Saint Thomas the Apostle. This will require dedicated service, involvement at every level, and generosity in ministry, in sharing our gifts and talents, and yes—in sacrificial giving. Thus, at every level, personally, and collectively, we are called to prayer. What does God invite us to do as a community, and what does God invite me to do personally?

The core of our planning, each year, centers around the pledge which our parish members, Vestry, Wardens and Clergy make. It is first and foremost a commitment which they make to God to use the abundance with which they have been blessed to enable the mission, ministry, and service of the Parish to be possible. It is also a process through which we collectively discern, dream, and plan for how we will answer God's call this coming calendar year. It is a moment for us to think big. We may plan for a budget which is aspirational rather than seemingly possible at the present moment. In doing so we trust that God will reveal to us, as the year progresses, what is most needed, and where the resources may be found to meet those needs. And we do have the confidence that all which we need is available to us. We believe in a God and a community of abundance—not one of scarcity.

After prayer—each of us must make a decision as to how we will choose to respond to God's call, and what actual amount we will prayerfully and gratefully choose to pledge. On the First Sunday of Advent—at the beginning of the new liturgical year of grace, we will be invited to bring our pledge cards to the Church, and at the conclusion of the Eucharist, to place those cards on a table in front of the altar. This will symbolize our offering to God, and our commitment to support the parish. Then, in silence, we will leave.

In speaking of almsgiving, and tithing, Saint Paul had this to say in the Second Letter to the Church at Corinth: "The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work."

The Beloved Community of Saint Thomas the Apostle has proven faithful to the example of exceptionally generous giving through a most challenging period of life without a Priest, through the ravages of the Coronavirus, and through great confusion and uncertainty. Because we know that we have been able to count on you in difficult and challenging times, we pray that we may continue to count on you at a moment of transition as we begin to move towards a new model of outreach, service, and love.

Thank you for your love, support, and service over many, many years. And thank you for your continued support during this new year of grace.

May God continue to bless you for your amazing generosity and support,

The Stewardship Committee

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