November Message from Rev. Jenn

November is the last month in the church year and also the time of year when we talk about Stewardship. By now you have probably received the letter from Senior Warden Tusi asking for your support. It is a time to take stock of where we are, what lies ahead for us, and how we want to steward our community for the next year and beyond.

Holy Nativity continues to be in transition and as your Interim Priest I am focused on helping the community take time to reflect, talk about what we have done, and consider where we are now. We will pray about what we envision for the future; we will dream together and consider how we can live into those visions in faith and practice.

I celebrated my five year anniversary with HNC on October 1 and have seen HNC taking on Stewardship in different ways. I've been an Episcopalian for 24 years and have experienced this season in different churches in different places. One thing is always true: It's not comfortable to talk about money, especially in church.

And while it's not comfortable, if we are going to meet as a community with a building and a staff, worship together and host programs, money is needed and talking about it is necessary. That is why during Stewardship Season I ask you to prayerfully consider what you can give. As I mentioned in my sermon on Sunday, I've been thinking about what it would look like to ask for a "giving estimate" rather than a pledge. The word pledge can feel like an obligation, while a giving estimate feels less like paying a bill and more like estimating how much we can offer from the gifts we've been given.

We are living in uncertain times and the cost of putting food on the table and gas in the car is overwhelming to many. So, please pray about what feels good for you or your family to estimate as your giving for 2027.

I'd like to share with you one method that our family has used for many years as a giving estimate. About 25 years ago we committed to giving a small percentage of our shared income to the church (note: a tithe is 10%, but in all honesty that is really difficult for many people, especially when food and housing is now 50% of a family's budget). The percentage we committed to is one we knew we could maintain and honor faithfully year after year. This means that we give the same percentage of our income to our church home every year. After estimating what we think our upcoming year's income will be we calculate the amount we want to give. If income goes up, the amount goes up. If income goes down, the amount goes down. What is important to us is the commitment that we give a percentage and do our best to honor it.

Why do we do this? Well, in practical terms, it allows us to increase our support of a place we believe is doing good work as our income increases. And conversely, at times when income goes down, the proportional giving means we give from what we have. We are still giving the same proportion as before from what God has provided for us to live. This way of estimating a gift
doesn't require anything other than some simple math to calculate expected income and percentage, and a desire to give thanks to God for what we have.

In theological terms, this kind of giving allows us to thank God in a tangible way for everything God continues to provide for us. Every year when we have to do the math, and actually have to write down the income, we are grateful for the meaningful work we do that supports our human needs. Giving a percentage of that is how we express our gratitude for all we have.

So while it is uncomfortable to talk about money, I wanted to share this with you so you have an example to consider. Pray about what model or method feels right for your family and let us know by completing the card or going to the online giving estimate form. Having a sense of what gifts will be received helps our vestry plan HNC's budget for the next year to support programs and projects. There are many things to look forward to in 2027, and I can't wait to pray and dream about them with you.