

SAINT BARNABAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Dear Friends in Christ,

There are certain church traditions so ancient that no one remembers exactly when they began: standing for the Gospel, passing the peace, and receiving a stewardship letter every autumn reminding you that next year will cost more than this year. Unfortunately, only two of those are liturgical traditions.

So yes, this is a stewardship letter. I am going to ask you to make a financial pledge to St. Barnabas for 2027. But before I do, I want to tell you why I think this matters.
I have now been with you for almost a year. When I arrived last Advent, St. Barnabas was already in transition. You were beginning the search for your next rector and facing important questions about leadership, finances, ministry, and growth. My task as Interim Rector has been to help you attend honestly to those questions while continuing to be the Church. And you have.

We have worshiped together Sunday after Sunday. Children and young people have taken increasingly visible places in our common life. We have studied Scripture, theology, worship, and some rather strange books the early Church decided not to put in the Bible. We have prayed, sung, buried people we love, welcomed newcomers, served our neighbors, and gathered around this altar again and again.

At the same time, we have begun asking harder questions about the future. What kind of parish does St. Barnabas want to be five years from now? What kind of rector do you hope to call? What will it take to welcome new people, form children and adults in faith, care for one another, maintain this place, and carry the love of Christ beyond our walls? Those questions eventually lead to a subject Jesus talked about quite a lot: money. This is inconvenient for clergy and parishioners alike. Most of us would prefer that Jesus had confined himself to lilies, sheep, and the occasional loaf of bread. But he did not.

Jesus understood that what we do with our resources says something about what we love, what we trust, and what we hope for. That is why I do not think of a pledge simply as paying next year's church bills. A pledge is not a payment for the church we have already received. It is an act of hope toward the church we are becoming.

Previous generations of Christians at St. Barnabas gave generously enough that we inherited not only this building but significant financial resources. We should be deeply grateful for that. Those reserves give St. Barnabas opportunities many congregations do not have. But the generosity of previous generations cannot permanently substitute for the generosity of the congregation worshiping here now.

Our Vestry has set an ambitious pledge goal of $250,000 for 2027 because the future you have said you desire is ambitious. You hope to call a full-time rector. You want vibrant worship and music, stronger ministry with children and families, meaningful outreach and formation, and a parish that grows rather

than merely manages decline. All of that requires resources. It also requires something deeper: a congregation willing to say, **We believe there is a future here worth investing in.** That is the invitation I am making to you.

If you already pledge to St. Barnabas, I ask you to prayerfully consider whether you can increase your pledge for 2027. For some households, that increase may be substantial; for others, circumstances may make an increase impossible. Faithful stewardship does not look identical in every household.
If you give regularly but have never made a pledge, I invite you to make one this year. A pledge helps the Vestry plan responsibly because it tells us what resources we can reasonably expect.

And if you wonder whether your pledge is large enough to matter, it is. The ministry of this parish has never depended on one person doing everything. It is sustained by many people offering what they can and discovering that, together, those gifts become something much larger. In the coming year, St. Barnabas will welcome its next rector and enter a new chapter of its life. I will not be your rector for that chapter. That is precisely why I can say this with such confidence: **this future belongs to you.**

I believe there is much here worth building upon. I see genuine faith, love for one another, people willing to work, and possibilities not yet realized.
So when you receive your pledge card, I ask you not simply to ask, "What does the church need from me?" Ask something larger:
What do I hope St. Barnabas will become—and what part can I play in making that possible?

Thank you for your generosity, your faithfulness, and for allowing me to walk with you during this remarkable season in the life of St. Barnabas. May God give us courage to imagine what is possible, and generosity to help bring it into being.

Yours faithfully,
The Rev. Dr. John G. Rumple
Interim Rector