



October 3, 2022

Dear Members and Friends of St. Mark's:

A few years ago we never would have imagined planning for 2023 with Covid-19 still in the picture! The pandemic brought many changes to our lives, and we know it exacted a real toll for many. Strangely, the virus has also been a blessing in that it forced us to learn new skills and brought many new members into the community of St. Mark's. The Stewardship Ministry of St. Mark's has chosen the theme: ***Rising to the Challenge, Reconnecting with Joy and Reaching out With Love*** to shape our conversation around stewardship and giving this year.

How do you see St. Mark's **Rising to the Challenge** of our communal life? How does St. Mark's support you as you Rise to the Challenges in your own life? We are certain that God's grace accompanies each of us as we walk the spiritual path together. Through the incredible generosity of God we have received all that sustains us. We are grateful as we experience life together and witness God drawing us into deeper relationships with one another and with the Creator of all that exists.

Because St. Mark's members come from many backgrounds and traditions, we may not share the same language or expectations around stewardship. Many faith communities promote "stewardship" in the fall around their annual effort to fund the work of the church. At St. Mark's, we understand that Christian Stewardship is much larger than money. Stewardship is a practice that encompasses our whole lives. We continue to explore how Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe. Stewardship is both a commitment and a practice. Our stewardship is lived-out in many ways and works. At St. Mark's, we join together to combine our efforts, resources and talents. Through this steady and faithful sharing, we are **Rising to the Challenge in our service to God.**

God is always calling us to grow in our understanding and to develop practices that will sustain us in our life of faith. Thinking through the possibilities for how we each give of ourselves and our resources is an essential practice for our Church Community. These resources are much greater than ***our money alone!***

This fall we will continue the process of spiritual growth and will ask deep questions about the biblical understanding of Christian stewardship. Certainly, the budget is important, but we urge everyone to think not so much of what is needed by the Church, but what each one is able and called to give. Few meet the stated biblical standards of the

10% tithe, but what if everyone were to **Rise to the Challenge** of giving at a proportional level and purposed to gradually increase the percentage over time? Giving is not an all or nothing proposition! We could find, that the generosity of the growing St. Mark's community, exceeds the capacity and missions represented in our old budgets and can actually sustain greater dreams and service to God's people in the coming year. **Together we are Making Something Beautiful for God in this Neighborhood**, and we want everyone to take part in that creative process.

Sunday, October 30th we will host St. Mark's Stewardship Celebration Sunday: A Pledge and Pancake Extravaganza! On Celebration Sunday, all who call St. Mark's their spiritual home will be invited to join the whole community in making a financial commitment to the work of God at St. Mark's.

We are excited about this season and look forward to seeing how, as the people of St. Mark's, we will **Rise to the Challenge** of using our blessings to give back to the work of God in the world.

Blessings,



Lucy Sinkular
Senior Warden



The Rev. Christopher McLaren
Rector