

Good morning! It's wonderful to be back in church again. I look forward to when we can all gather together.

When Sarah asked me if I'd speak about Stewardship, I immediately thought of our official church motto: "Centered in God, Focused on Others."

I've been coming to St. Andrew's for about 12 years. Like Courtney mentioned last week, I was in search of a spiritual home, not because I was moving, but because I was in crisis. It took three visits and I was hooked. Three very special women drew me in. Reverend Beth, with her inspirational sermons, Jody Wood, who smiled broadly and with such joy as I watched her in the choir, and Edie Ridley, who relentlessly encouraged me to fill out the little orange card. I'm sure she's looking down on us. These are three very special people.

Since then I've been on the Vestry for six of the last seven years. I've been an active and enthusiastic volunteer for many of our amazing outreach ministries, such as Rosie's Day, Rehoboth House, and Friendship Home. I'd like to say a few words about each of these. For those of you on virtual church who currently aren't already members of St. Andrew's, we do some wonderful things in the community that touch so many people.

We've been hosting Rosie's Day for over 40 years now where 40 or so women from the shelter in Boston get a bus ride to St. Andrew's. We serve them breakfast and take them to the beach where we play in the sand and have sandwiches. Then we come back to church for a cookout and boutique, where the ladies can choose items of clothing that were donated. It is truly one of my favorite days of the whole year.

Rehoboth House is a shelter in Norwell where 15 families are in transitional housing. Every spring, along with Altrusa, we hold a shower in the Parish Hall. In the summer we host a picnic, and at Christmas, we provide them with 15 new blankets and jugs of laundry detergent.

Friendship Home is a respite facility for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Twice a year we host a "Paint and Pot Luck Night" where 15 individuals come and paint with us and enjoy conversation while enjoying a great pot luck buffet. Once again, two of my most favorite days of the year.

Because of Covid, we've had to forgo so many of these wonderful events and others.

Over the past couple of years, I've been serving as a Eucharistic Minister, making pastoral care visits to parish members who are unable to attend church. Because of Covid, the visits had to be replaced with phone calls, emails, and greeting cards. This is such an important ministry and I suspect there may be parishioners out there who might want to participate, when it is safe, either by requesting pastoral visits or joining the Pastoral Care committee -- something to think about.

Covid has affected us all in a variety of different ways. For me, the isolation of the first few months when I wasn't seeing my kids and grandkids was the worst. It did, however, make me, and I'm sure many of us, reflect on what's most important in life. It's not about the trips, the shopping, the dinners out. That's all fun, but superfluous. We are learning to live a more simple life. Covid has changed perspective for so many people. What's most important to me? Family, health, faith, and hope.

I give Sarah a lot of credit for overseeing Stewardship for the second year in a row. It's not easy asking people for money. I had the job in 2014 and found it uncomfortable. But here we are again.

All of the ministries that I mentioned require funding. There have been basically no plate collections this year. Some parishioners have not been able to meet their 2020 pledges because of financial hardships.

There is a light at the end of the Covid tunnel, however. With the prospect of a vaccine becoming available in 2021, we hope to go back to our various ministries full speed, once it is safe to do so.

Meanwhile, we're looking at ways to improvise. Maybe a virtual "Paint Night" with Friendship home, maybe iPads for folks who are shut in and not able to receive visitors, maybe gift cards for the Rehoboth House families. All of these require the faithful generosity of the St. Andrew's family. When things return to normal, we will have so much to do.

When discerning about your pledge, please consider what is most important in your life. Remember that it is in giving that we receive God's graces, and the incredible satisfaction of knowing that your pledge is going to something so very important.

St. Andrew's is my church family. I had another crisis in my life almost four years ago when my husband died of cancer. My friends from church and the great Father Claude Smith stepped up and were with me every single step of the way. That's what we do at St. Andrew's. We step up for each other. We have each other's backs. We laugh together, and man can we BAKE!

The theme of this year's Stewardship campaign is called "Faith-Filled Generosity." I ask you to listen to this very special prayer, which happens to be my favorite:

The Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, where there is hatred let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

*Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy;
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

Amen

It is in giving that we receive.

Some of the things that I will be giving thanks for on Thursday are this church, Father Kevin, and my St. Andrew's family.

We parishioners of St. Andrew's consider ourselves truly blessed. If there are folks watching virtually who are interested in joining us, please do!

Remember we are Centered in God, Focused on others, and our hearts are open.

Thank you!

Happy Thanksgiving!

Stay safe!