

November 13, 2020

Dear St. Andrew's Family,

Father Kevin has asked me to share some very exciting news with you and start the conversation for our annual stewardship campaign, which we hope to focus on during the month of November. First, I would like to share a little story with you, before asking you to dig deep and share your time, talents, and treasures with us.

Earlier this summer, Joan Shaw, our treasurer, was contacted by Bank of America. At that time, she was told that a previous parishioner, Margaret Dumas-Sylvester had bequeathed a sum of money to St. Andrew's; this is not atypical, we have had many parishioners leave us money in the past. However, this amount is a first for us. After several months of back and forth communications, emails, phone calls and other correspondences, I am pleased to finally be able to share with you that we were the beneficiaries of approximately 1.2 million dollars.

I'll let that sink in for a second.

Needless to say, Father Kevin and the vestry have been overjoyed to receive such a generous gift, especially during this very difficult year.

I want to reflect on how God works in mysterious way, for a moment. Due to Covid, we as a community have suffered great losses: individually and as a community. We have seen our neighbors and friends at Stepping Stones have to close their doors to the families they serve and by extension we realize that we have lost approximately \$14,000 of income each year. Due to social distancing and the fact that our services were virtual, our weekly collection plate has been down also by thousands of dollars. It should come as no surprise but we will not be holding our biggest fundraiser of the year (our annual Christmas fair or cookie sales) due to Covid and we can expect whatever money we had hoped to make will not be available for our bottom line this year. And, we have incurred new expenses such as health insurance for Father Kevin after the loss of his husband Eric this past year; a line item that was not originally considered but was unanimously voted and approved by the vestry to help Father Kevin moving forward.

Despite all of these challenges in our community, God has found a way to reassure us and provide for us during this time of uncertainty and challenges. I look to all of you who have suffered in some way during the past seven months. Perhaps you, like myself, were unemployed for a portion of the time or are currently unemployed due to Covid. Perhaps, you have struggled to connect because of fear or anxiety. Perhaps you have lost some of the faith and positivity that can only be found when attending an in-person

service here at St. Andrews. I know there have been times in my own life that I have found it hard to find the silver lining in the grey clouds.

But then I think of the generosity of someone like Ms. Sylvester. She serves as a reminder that stewardship is real. She has provided us a gift that will help sustain St. Andrew's Church in perpetuity. The Wardens, Treasurer, Vestry, and Father Kevin have voted to have this money put into a trust as opposed to putting it towards the DIT (Diocese Invest Trust). This private trust, set up by the help of Senior Warden Brian Joyce, will allow this money to grow interest every year, and we will draw off the interest as a way to off-set our financial deficits. Conservatively, we hope to draw approximately \$40,000 each year in perpetuity without drawing off of the balance of this gift.

Some of you may be thinking, "Hallelujah, the church has money, so they won't need my help this year." But please, understand these two things as you consider pledging your hard-earned money this coming year.

First, the gift is to sustain the future of St. Andrew's church, to have money available through interest-only to help balance our budget each year. The \$40,000 that we hope to draw off of interest, this year, will not cover the losses of Stepping Stones, our weekly giving, The Christmas Fair, or the added cost of health insurance for Father Kevin. The fund will be more impactful as we work to figure out ways to generate more income in healthier years post-Covid. So think of it as a "Future Fund."

Second, *we* are the "Present Fund." It is our role to help maintain the here and now of St. Andrews. My family and I plan to give the same, if not more, to St. Andrew's this year despite the loss of job and income that I have seen. I say this as a pledge to the church, not as a way to cause guilt to anyone here. Perhaps you are not in a position to do the same; I think that is understandable and there is no judgment if that is the case. What I have begun to ask you to reflect on, and Sarah Hogan will continue to ask next week, is for you to consider giving whatever you are comfortable with during these difficult times. Only you will know the answer to that question.

It must sound a little bizarre to consider that I have just announced that we have a surplus of money and we are asking for more. The reality is, we are responsibly setting that money aside to ensure St. Andrew's is not one of the parishes that you drive by 10, 20, 30 years from now and see a dilapidated building with an overgrown lawn and cobwebs all over the entrance: a place that has been forgotten or abandoned, like so many other churches throughout the country. That money will allow us to maintain a longer goal of sustainability. Your gifts *this year* are so critical to right the ship for all the challenges we will continue to face due to Covid.

The first miracle of Jesus is “Feeding the 5,000.” God, by way of Ms. Sylvester’s stewardship, has provided us a similar real-life, here-and-now miracle. It is our job to recognize it, appreciate it, be inspired by it, and use it to make sure we continue to grow.

Thank you and God Bless.

Kyle Egan
Junior Warden