



Grace Episcopal Church

1815 Hall Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
www.gracechurchgr.org

October 1, 2021

Dear Friends,

As we enter the season of Fall we also welcome our month-long *Season of Stewardship* this Sunday. At its core, stewardship is discipleship. As Father Alan explained last year, *The Season of Stewardship* is built on four fundamental principles:

1. A faith-based life is lived in response to God's love and presence in our lives
2. Intentionally setting and working towards tangible goals fosters greater spiritual growth
3. Our spiritual goals and growth edges are particular to who we are individually and our current context.
4. Our pledge is a commitment we make to God. Grace (and other entities doing God's work) are the places to which we entrust our pledged financial and personal gifts to God.

Again this year, the pledge form invites you to consider seven different areas in which to set goals/pledges. Some of them might be new areas for you to consider, and we have included a list of possible goals/pledges you might make. The list is not exhaustive but designed to be an aid in starting your discernment.

Stewardship is primarily this larger comprehensive confluence of our professed faith and tangible actions. Within it, however, is a specific and critical link between our individual pledges (financial, time, skills, and experiences) and what Grace is able to do as a parish.

Your Vestry remains focused, hopeful, and proactive in charting the course for numerical, financial, and ministerial growth. In late 2020 we launched three ministries that will provide the building blocks to enable us to live out our mission "...to be a community that invites and supports everyone to live out the teachings, love and actions of Jesus Christ". The Rector's Search Committee recently updated our parish profile and upgraded the rector position to full time. This change from the original ¾ time posting was enabled by a grant from the Episcopal Diocese of Western Michigan and building rental income over and above original budget targets. The posting is currently live and the Committee hopes to interview candidates before the end of this year. Church Growth and Evangelism, using the tools of "Invite, Welcome, Connect," has learned how to help our community invite and welcome new members to help further our congregational growth. The Community Engagement ministry has spent the year exploring opportunities for us to support our community and witness God's healing love and presence in the world while being cognizant of our capacity limits and skills and interests. The vestry continues to exercise due diligence in meeting our budget and reducing reliance on our endowment fund. This year, in addition to your annual pledge, we asked for a special offering to cover unanticipated and urgent building repairs. You responded

beyond our expectations and we are grateful. While we develop our budget to cover contingency expenses, the age of our building makes it difficult to precisely project what will need to be done year to year to maintain and protect our beautiful facility.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians writes, “To each has been given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Cor 12:7) You are invited to take this month to prayerfully reflect on what God is doing in your life: What gifts and resources has God given you to steward? How is the Spirit moving in your life right now? How can you best use the gifts of the Spirit you have been given for the common good of Grace Church and the Grand Rapids community?

Specifically, we invite you to join us in the following steps during this *Season of Stewardship*:

1. Read all of the enclosed documents
2. Talk with your spouse/partner, trusted parishioners, Christian friends, mentors, and/or either of us.
3. Pray and listen for the challenge that God is putting before you to stretch and grow.
4. Complete a pledge form (one per person)
5. Bring your written pledge to church during the distribution of Communion following the livestreamed service on Commitment Sunday (Oct 24), and place it on the altar as a sign of the commitment you are making to God (or if you are unable to attend, mail it to the office ahead of time and we will place it on the altar for you.)

We are grateful for your generous support in the past. We hope that this process and *Season of Stewardship* will be spiritually rewarding to you now and throughout the coming year. Please also be in touch with us if you have any questions, comments, or feedback about how the Vestry and our larger Grace family can support you as we continue to move through this time of pandemic and transition.

Faithfully yours and on behalf of the vestry of Grace Episcopal Church,

Martha Porter

Bernie Sweetland

Sr. Warden

Jr. Warden