

STEWARDSHIP!

Yes, I said it – stewardship.

Episcopalians don't like to talk about money. Whether it's because they don't want to admit what they do or don't have or because they're embarrassed about it, I don't know. That fact is, we need to talk about this.

The stewardship campaign goal this year was set with a big objective – a full-time Rector. We engaged Fr. Abshire to help us prepare to make a call with honesty and clarity. Over the past 4 months, there have been many opportunities for people to get involved. To participate in the preparation. It's almost been like our own congregational Advent as we prepare ourselves for the coming of a new spiritual guide (pardon the sacrilege, Father). You all were sent surveys, invited to small group conversations about Christianity and the state of the main-stream church, and called to Community Conversations to discuss our past and the future. The survey responses indicated this parish wanted to invest in itself and its future. We want a full-time priest. We want to take care of – TO BE GOOD STEWARDS OF – the gifts we share due to the work of those who came before us.

You all should have received a call from a member of the Generosity Committee or the Vestry over the past week. We were calling to check in with you, to be sure you had received your campaign packet, and to see if you had any questions about what has been happening and what is to come next. To those of you who answered the phone or returned the call – thank you!

Some callers were asked what will happen if we don't reach our campaign goal? Do we even really need a full-time priest or is a part-time priest good enough? I can only speak for myself, but I think the answer is a resounding Yes! Not only do we need a full-time priest, but we deserve the stability, guidance and care for our people which comes with that role. What this really comes down to for me is when will we be prepared to step out in faith and give

SACRIFICIALLY of our time, talent and treasure? By the way, yes I know “treasure” means money, but our stewardship responsibility is more than that. This parish needs YOU to help maintain this beautiful building and grounds. This congregation needs YOU to get involved with Christian education and formation. Those of us isolated by COVID need YOU to help find a solution to our technical challenges – and heaven knows there have been plenty! In keeping with our Gospel reading for today, we need your TALENTS and your talents, whether we have a priest or not.

Fr. Abshire has been telling us since the beginning of August, that he is here to facilitate our work, not to do it for us. This process is long and frustrating, but I have hope that we – all of us together – can do what needs to be done. And what needs to be done next is to write a Parish Profile. It sounds simple, but it will take a handful of willing people to gather the thoughts and hopes and wishes for our future from all of us and to form that into an honest and accurate picture of ***who we are now*** and ***what we are called to be in the presence of Jesus Christ***. And when we have determined that, we will look to what we have stewarded and returned to the Master through this campaign to find if we have been trustworthy in a few things and can therefore be entrusted with many things. Say it with me – “All things come of Thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given Thee.”

Next Sunday, November 22nd, is Commitment Sunday. All the pledge cards received and all those brought to church that morning will be brought to the altar to be blessed for God’s use. As you consider – or perhaps reconsider – your pledge to St. Laurence’s future, remember we are each given according to our ability and are charged with stewarding those gifts until they are called to be returned. I pray we all will hear the Master say, “well done.”

Brenda Malottke