



"Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord! Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice; tender to me the promise of his word; in God my Savior shall my heart rejoice."
(Hymn 437 v.1 from the Hymnal 1982)

Dear St. Stephen's Beloved,

It's almost that time of year in which we turn our focus toward the financial stewardship of our beloved church, St. Stephen's. Beginning Sunday, October 5th, and continuing throughout the month of October you are invited to make a pledge for the following year out of gratitude for God's continual provision in your individual and communal life here at St. Stephen's. Our Season of Stewardship will conclude with our traditional celebration of Gratitude Sunday on November 2nd, full of fellowship and good food.

As Christians we are story tellers. We have an ancient narrative, one that describes the beginning of time and the relationship between God and God's Creation. We see this story grow through the prophetic tradition until our story recounts the life and gifts of the Son of God. But the story doesn't end with the Resurrection just as it did not end with the Cross, it continues on in each of us today as we encounter and are transformed by the Good News.

Luke's Gospel is bookended by the animated story-telling of two women named Mary. Early in the Gospel, Mary the mother of Jesus, tells us of her encounter with the Divine who informs her that she will bear a child who will change the world. She proclaims her joy: "Tell out my soul! The Greatness of the Lord!" At the end of the Gospel, another Mary, Mary Magdalene, visits the tomb to discover it empty and receives instructions from the Risen Christ to go tell the others. She carries this Good News with jubilation to the Disciples.

What is your Good News; the idea, dream, challenge placed in your heart by God, that needs to be shared? What is the ministry to which you are called which will change the world, sharing your talents, gifts, and love with your neighbors?

Our season of stewardship this year focuses on these stories – the ones inside you, the ones you are still writing, the ones we tell about those who have gone before us. We are all a part of this ongoing narrative – the ongoing Creation. As you pray about how you will share your gifts with the church this year, think about how God is calling you to tell out your soul, to spread the Good News far and wide. Hear the stories that are shared throughout this season that relate the creative spark in us with the ways in which we are called to serve God and love our neighbor.

I invite you and your families to prayerfully consider the blessings of gratitude that you encounter here at St. Stephen's through the various and life giving stories found in this place. And then I pray that you commit a portion of your resources through a pledge to the church for 2026. In the weeks to come you will receive another mailing from the church with more information, including a pledge card for 2026. May you continue to be filled with God's love, as you and your own particular story continue to be a blessing to this great community of St. Stephen's. Tell out my soul! The Greatness of the Lord!

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin LJ Schubert', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Rev. Kevin LJ Schubert
St. Stephen's, Rector