



## taking the next step

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

*Whoever you are and wherever you find  
yourself on the journey of faith, you are  
welcome at St. Stephen's!*

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Dear St. Stephen's Family:

St. Stephen's is in the midst of our annual season of stewardship, when we are asked to prayerfully consider our financial commitment to the church in the year ahead. I am writing to share some of my thoughts as we prayerfully reflect and renew our pledges for the upcoming year. First and foremost, each and every one of you are an integral part of this great community in various ways, as you give your time and energy generously to St. Stephen's for the gifts that God has bestowed upon you. I give you my heartfelt thanks for your steadfast faith, commitment, and devotion. I want to put forth the challenge to give generously of your financial resources to the church as well. Doing so will afford you a significant opportunity to acknowledge all the blessings of God's Kingdom.

Personally, I believe in God, and I have come to know God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. In spite of my faults, I am grateful to God for who I am and for what I have been given. My life and all that sustains me is a gift from God and a reflection of God's love. St. Stephen's is definitely a gift from God for me and my family. This church is that reflection of love that strives to do God's mission in all aspects of our common life together; through our worship, outreach initiatives, Christian education, community building, prayers... the list could go on forever. In all these avenues, lives are changed in extraordinary ways allowing for the Kingdom of God to be seen, felt, and heard throughout the community.

Traditionally, the purpose of the annual pledge drive is to raise money for the upcoming year's budget. The vestry of St. Stephen's prepares the budget for the coming year by knowing the financial resources the church expects to receive. However, I wholeheartedly believe that stewardship, giving generously, and Christian financial health, is a spiritual practice; and the necessity of the budget should take a backseat to our call by God to be good stewards of God's Kingdom.

When I think about my own personal stewardship and all that God has entrusted to my care, the only word that seems to fit is "gratitude." The best kind of steward I know how to be is one who acts out of thanks to God. Stewardship then becomes an attitude of gratefulness, rather than solely an obligation or perfunctory task. For St. Stephen's to continue to build the Kingdom of God, it is imperative for each of her members to make a strong and deliberate decision to give back to God a portion of the gifts and blessings received.

Our world is in a trying time as we face the complications and hardships that are due to the pandemic. I am fully aware of the circumstances we find ourselves, and want to assure you that your church is striving to be an avenue of grace, understanding, and peace. As you discern your budget for next year, I encourage you to think deeply and prayerfully about St. Stephen's and the avenues of grace that continually flows from this place.

Lastly, I want to convey to you what a privilege it is for me and my family to be a part of this community. You have shown me what it means to be a child of God, you have given me a picture of the Kingdom of God that I can believe and participate in, and most importantly you have given me love and allowed me to have even more admiration and gratitude for God than I could have ever imagined. You are the Kingdom of God. May we continue to have the Kingdom opened for all as we commit and devote ourselves as grateful givers and stewards of St. Stephen's.

God Bless,

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