



September 13, 2021

Dear Parish Family:

Some years ago, Bernard Levin wrote:

Countries like ours are full of people who have all the material comforts they desire, together with such non-material blessings as a happy family, and yet lead lives of quiet and, at times, noisy desperation, understanding nothing but the fact that there is a hole inside them. And, however much food and drink they pour into it, however many motorcars and television sets they stuff it with, however many well-balanced children and loyal friends they parade around the edges of it, it aches.

Do these words have any resonance with you? Can you name the aches and voids in your own life? In some form or another, do you use accomplishment, acquisition, or consumption to fill them? I confess close familiarity with these and know I am not alone.

Be encouraged, for as Christians, we know the antidote. We have aches and voids — yes. We also have hope, knowing to whom we should turn. Even better, by God's grace, we turn to him because we are turned by him to this very hope. We hear this with crystal clarity in our stewardship verse this year: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.* (Ephesians 2:8)

Stewardship, particularly the giving of our money, is an invitation to freedom: to shift the center of our security from ourselves to God. The gift of salvation is also the gift to live in the freedom of God's provision. As dramatic as it is to say, it's not dependent upon us! Jesus has won the day.

As we begin our season of stewardship, you are invited to partner in the ministry of the Advent, in the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel is the gift of God, given for us the people of God. It is God incarnate, Jesus, who descends and pursues to win and save us, who humbles himself to become obedient to death, even death on a cross. Jesus' passion, blood, cross, and resurrection heals and fills, frees and saves, directs and secures.

In the coming weeks, we will be asked to consider our pledge for the Advent's ministry in 2022, hearing from fellow Adventers as we move towards Stewardship Sunday on October 10. Will you join me and prayerfully reflect on how you may be stirred to love and care for others and the church?

I am grateful to partner with you, as conduits of the Living Word for a weary world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig".

The Rev. Canon R. Craig Smalley
Interim Dean and Rector