



September 14, 2022

Dear Parish Family:

Invitations are a mixed bag. Who's doing the inviting, who else is being invited, the what and the where – all of these dramatically affect our reception. This is a stewardship letter, by nature invitatory. As I've thought about this letter, I've naturally thought about Jesus, who shows us that God is in his very nature relational and invitational.

Some of Jesus' invitations are readily received: *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Matthew 11:28). And some less so: *Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me"* (Matthew 19:21).

The invitations of Jesus, regardless of the ease of their reception, are always to life. They come from one who sees beyond our sight, who said, meant, and fulfilled the words: *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly* (John 10:10).

Stewardship is an invitation to Jesus and to life. Please know that this is not shame, praise, or judgment of how you're doing. In ourselves alone, none of us are doing well enough. Our way into God's kingdom is through reception, not production: reception of the work of Jesus' cross and resurrection and their gifts of mercy, restoration, justification, and life. All we give to the equation is need. Stewardship is an opportunity to have a response of thanksgiving, if even in a tentative way.

As a fellow pilgrim I understand and share this struggle personally. It's hard to navigate the stewardship of the gifts given to us, and trust can feel precarious. And yet there is opportunity to experience the freedom of the prayer of St. Francis: "For it is in giving that one receives."

Our pledges comprise 90 percent of our budget, supporting all of the ministries within our walls and beyond. Every year we are dependent upon God's provision through our congregation's generosity and partnership in the gospel. Stewardship Sunday and Make-Up Sunday are October 9 and 16.

Please join me in prayerfully reflecting and responding to this invitation. For 150 years God's faithfulness has been revealed in this place. I am confident of this: God who began a good work in this place will continue it, because he will continue his good work in each of us, just as he promised. I thank God for you.

The Lord be with you,

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

The Very Rev. R. Craig Smalley
Dean and Rector