

September 27, 2023

Dear friends in Christ,

Soon you will receive your packet about our annual pledge drive, which will lay out the financial needs of our St. Mary's community for the coming year, and invite you to make a pledge of financial support for our ministry. The practicalities of our needs are important, but today I want to write you about an equally - if not more - important way to look at pledging: as an avenue of spiritual growth and connection. This is an approach to pledging that I learned about years ago, and it is one that has transformed my life.



When I give as a spiritual practice, I first begin with gratitude. I think about all of the gifts that God has given me: family and friends who make my heart glad; the beauty of the natural world that surrounds us, especially here in Oregon; meaningful and satisfying work; faith that nourishes my soul; and even difficulties and challenges that force me to grow. I ask myself, "How I can respond in gratitude to all that God has given?" Over the course of the year, as I pay my pledge, I am reminded of those things that I was grateful for and I add new ones. Over

time, I have found that it has made me a more grateful person than I used to be.

Second, as I am making my pledge, I think about what I can comfortably give in the coming year based on anticipated income, then I go a bit further. Why do I push myself a little bit each year? Because when I have chosen to take a leap of faith with a pledge that pushes against the boundaries of my comfort, I have seen my trust in God grow. Over the year as I fulfill my pledge, I remain in regular conversation with God about what I have and what I need; and every time, I find that God truly gives me enough. I have even discovered excess where I previously saw scarcity. Pledging in this way is a hope-filled gesture. I have also learned to trust that if I cannot ultimately fulfill the entire pledge, St. Mary's will be fine. Every year some people fulfill their full pledge, some exceed their pledge, and some do not achieve it; and every year, it works out and I learn again to trust that God is going to give us what we need.



Third, pledging as a spiritual practice draws me into love: love of God and love of my neighbor. As our Presiding Bishop likes to say, “If it’s not about love, it’s not about God,” and pledging as a spiritual practice is all about love. Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Notice the order of words: the treasure is placed first and our hearts follow. I find my heart going to God and my neighbor as I pay my pledge, supporting ministries of worship and compassion. Over the years, as I have given more, my love for God, the church, its ministry, and its people have grown.

I encourage you to make this pledge drive an opportunity not only to support St. Mary’s, but to grow in gratitude, faith, and love by adopting pledging as a spiritual practice.

Blessings and Peace in Christ,

Bingham Powell+  
Rector, St. Mary’s

