



## SAINT MARY'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ABINGDON

One Saint Mary's Church Road, Abingdon, Maryland 21009-1565  
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Dear St. Mary's Parishioners,

For years we have talked about pledges, the importance of them and how they help the Vestry set the budget. Asking for your pledge cards can feel awkward at best, and like begging at worst. This is why I wanted to frame this year's stewardship letter through the lens of Mission. Our mission as a church, our mission in Harford County, our mission as part of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland and our mission as part of the global Anglican Communion.

**The Catechism in our Book of Common Prayer tells us that the mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other.** And even though it seems like a big job, it is our task at St. Mary's. The Vestry and I believe the best way to live into this mission is by creating a church both on the inside and outside, that can create opportunities for people to connect with God.

**So, what are we doing to pursue our mission?  
In prayer and worship, we proclaim the Gospel and encourage justice, peace and love. In the past year we have made progress both inside and outside.**

Inside: A new music program has rejuvenated the choir loft and congregational singing. Our new Choir Director has set the tone, supported by the larger choir and our part-time organist, and this new ministry has breathed new spirit into our worship service. Our Formation Team continues to keep us creatively growing into who God is calling us to be. The Fellowship Team launched the Table Fellowship service last year, a meal idea that we hope to build on. Our Finance and Facilities Team has worked hard towards a financial audit and maintaining our campus. The Creation Care Team completed a major planting along Route 924 and established three no-mow zones near the Rectory. All this is being managed by our Vestry team structure along with our Wardens, myself, Amy, our Parish Administrator, and Jan, our Sexton.

Outside: Our outreach projects like the coat drive for Old Post Road Elementary School and hosting the Harford County Reading Camp are making community impacts. One unexpected impact is with our Little Free Pantry, where we continually see community members putting things into our pantry. Our AA



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groups make donations to the pantry as well. Our generosity is making a larger impact as we have continued to support ministry across the Anglican Communion with financial aid going to both Gaza and to Sri Lanka. I believe we should be proud of who we are and who we are becoming, because I believe this is just the beginning of what God is doing here to restore people to God and to each other.

This growth and energy come from new people with new ideas that keep showing up and joining our church and the energy that comes from our Vestry teams as the team structure model moves from idea to implementation. This new leadership structure draws from those teams with a shared vision and priorities. And the other major part is you!

I ask you to consider what your pledge, your portion, your share of this mission is? What portion of this mission can you support through your pledge to St. Mary's? What share in the amazing work we are doing here in this church do you want to be responsible for?

As we figure out our household budgets, many of us feel a pinch like we haven't for a long time. We never want anyone to sacrifice food, medicine, bills or leisure. If you can't pledge this year, we understand. If you are someone or a household who is currently pledging, we can never truly thank you enough for your support. If you are feeling comfortable and have seen increases in your household income, prayerfully consider increasing your pledge. No matter what amount you give, whether it is in the form of a pledge, throwing a few dollars in the plate or by your time and talent; every gift will be celebrated as an offering of thanksgiving.

With Gratitude,

*The Reverend Paul Andrew Bennett*