

*So let the love of Jesus come and set thy soul ablaze
to give and give, and give again, what God hath given thee
-Hymn #9, 1982 Hymnal*



October 12, 2021

Dear Members and Friends of St. Mark's:

By now you should have received the letter introducing our **Responding to God's Cosmic Generosity** 2022 giving effort. We hope you plan to participate with us on Sunday October 24th for our Celebration Sunday event. As Deacon David reminded us in our stewardship video this past week, "God's cosmic generosity never ends so I hope that what we can do is to think about ways to expand our own generosity just a little bit more."

Today we provide some tools for your prayerful consideration as you think through the gifts God has given you. We invite you to consider how you can grow in your walk with God in relationship to your finances. Despite, or even perhaps because of, the pandemic, we at St. Mark's are still **Responding to God's Cosmic Generosity** in our lives.

Biblical instruction about giving covers deep and varied territory. Scripture calls each of us into intentional, regular, and percentage-based giving in response to all that God has given us. The Old Testament describes the annual ingathering of ten percent of the fruits of the harvest as something holy and set apart (Lev. 27:30). In 2 Corinthians, St. Paul writes "Each one must give as they have decided in their heart, not under guilt or obligation, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Scripture calls us to prayerfully consider all we have been given, and then to "decide in our hearts" what the Spirit is calling us to give. Through the discipline and habit of giving, we can grow in faith and learn to trust in the Lord to be our strength and our security. This means that we must make a decision. Like all parts of our spiritual lives, an intentional practice of financial giving can be joyful and life-giving.

Please look at the enclosed chart as you pray about your intentional, regular, and percentage-based giving for 2022. Members of St. Mark's Stewardship Team and your clergy are walking through this process alongside you. We believe the commitment to regular giving by each of us will sustain us as a church family and deepen our relationship with Christ. Importantly, this effort can also strengthen our trust in God. Think of your giving for 2021—and consider, are you able to grow by one step in 2022? Remember all our individual gifts combine to do God's work in this place.

The witness of Scripture does establish the goal-based tithing of 10%. We focus on the fact that tithing is a clear standard and an invitation to give back a portion of what you have received. The goal is not meant as a reason for shame or guilt; instead, we challenge ourselves and St. Mark's to consider the mention of tithing as an invitation to proportional giving of any measure—as opposed to selection of an arbitrary, round-dollar figure. This year, in the midst of continued uncertainty, we are called to continue to celebrate our blessings as we **Respond to God's Cosmic Generosity** in our lives.

Next week, you will receive another letter with a Cosmic Generosity Pledge Card. We invite you to estimate how much you are called to give in 2022, and then commit to intentionally and regularly making that percentage-based gift with joy. We at St. Mark's want to walk in partnership together as we seek a deepening of our communal spiritual faith. Thank you for your prayerful response to the Cosmic Generosity Celebration Sunday effort.

We look forward to worshipping with you at the Celebration Sunday event October 24th, when the whole congregation is invited to make a financial commitment together as an act of Worship and Thanksgiving.

In God's Generous Love,



Lucy Sinkular
Senior Warden



Christopher McLaren
Rector, St. Mark's