



CHRIST CHURCH, GEORGETOWN

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Dear Fellow Parishioners,

In his letter, Father Tim has written very eloquently about the importance of stewardship in our lives as Christians – contributing our time, talent, and treasure – on behalf of our shared community of faith at Christ Church, Georgetown. As Senior Warden, I would like to add my thoughts as to why financial stewardship is particularly critical to our parish at this time.

As you know, last year our parish ran an operating deficit, the first that I can remember. This year our Vestry and other financial leaders examined our finances, both income and expenses, in considerable depth. What we discovered is a structural imbalance between our overall annual income and what we must spend to maintain the worship, music, educational programs, and mission and outreach we all love as they are now and that are core to the life of our parish.

In addition, our parish must pay off bank debt (remaining balance owed of \$362,000) taken out to cover the cost of capital expenditures on the rectory made in 2014 and 2015, as well as a loan from our endowment (remaining balance of \$174,440) to cover the operating deficit in 2017. The debt service on these combined loans is \$156,000 and borne by our operating and capital budgets. While these loans are scheduled to be paid off in full in 3 1/2 years, in the interim they impose a significant burden on our finances.

The Vestry wants to be clear the Rector is in no way responsible for the decision to renovate the rectory nor the high cost of that renovation both of which occurred before he arrived.

Pledges to our parish are our largest source of income and represent more than 70% of the revenue used to cover our expenses. We recently learned from Diocesan statistics that in our peer group of the five largest Washington parishes, we are second to last in the size of the average pledge. A surprising truth.

It is true many parishioners pledge faithfully and increase their pledges annually, and our Rector and the Vestry are very grateful for this core and ongoing support from you. However, we found the number of families that pledge has dropped rather dramatically, from 492 just six years ago to 387 in 2018. Accordingly, as part of our stewardship canvass, we will be seeking to increase both the number and size of pledges to maintain the elements of our parish life we all cherish.

In addition to increasing pledges to the parish, the Rector and the Vestry, in partnership with our staff, are working hard to find ways to trim costs with the least impact on our parish life. This effort includes reviewing our procurement practices and seeking competitive bids for goods and services needed to run our parish at lower costs. We all want to be good stewards of our financial resources and manage parish resources responsibly and in ways that enable us to maintain the core worship, programs, and community outreach that are so important to us all.

Of course, certain costs are large and hard to cut back without doing damage to our worship and key programs. Large elements of our budget are salaries and benefits that we pay our clergy and other staff (\$1 million); the music program (an additional \$170,000); and our mission and outreach (about \$143,000 for our own ongoing mission support and about \$177,000 for our pledge to the Diocese). Cutting in these areas would be very painful and something the Vestry very much hopes to avoid.

With limitations on our cost-cutting ability and without taking more drastic measures, we need to increase our income and the bulk of that comes from parishioner pledges.

As we embark on the 2019 stewardship drive, I add my voice and the voices of all of us who serve on the Vestry to Father Tim's and ask each of you to prayerfully consider your financial support of Christ Church. For those of you who already are faithfully pledging, we ask you to continue that support, and if possible to increase your pledge by at least 10%. For those of you who have not pledged to Christ Church, we ask that you make a commitment to support all that we do together, both in our worship and in our broader parish life.

At Christ Church, we are all a part of a real community of faith that is a larger family for us all. When families face difficulties, they join together to solve them. As a parish family, let us deepen our commitment to Christian stewardship and Christ Church.

The Vestry believes in transparency within the parish about our finances, so if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Faithfully yours,

Ellen Fishwick Martin
Senior Warden