



## Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church

### The 2023 Stewardship Campaign: Building Connection, Relationship, and Community

Dear ones,

I don't know about you, but I feel like the world has been shrinking these past few years. Covid sent us all indoors before the street lights came on, and in our isolation, we lost some of our drive, our ability to reach out and connect. Our political and social discourse has become so polarized and difficult that it's hard to know with whom you can share your real thoughts and opinions, so we stick to folks we already know, whose values and positions we know align with our own. Those conversations have become so difficult that many of us have shied away from family and friends, eschewing opportunities to sit at the table together for fear that an argument or full-on fight might ensue. Public space became risky during the pandemic, we wore masks or avoided places like restaurants, concerts, theater; even the grocery store. Even now, three years after the onset of Covid, we are siloed, estranged, alienated from one another. From this place of isolation, it's hard to know how to reach out again, to re-establish the bonds of affection that once marked our lives: bonds that make it possible for us to work together towards that sense of community, belonging, home for which our souls long. We have lost so much. Where do we begin? I want to suggest that we begin right here, at home.

A quick scan of the Friday eNews for the last few weeks reveals a common thread; the recognition of our need, our longing for community, and an intentional focus on providing it. From the renewed attention on Coffee Hour, gathering in the Parish Hall after church; to artist receptions, and events to celebrate people who have made a significant mark on our community; to the resurrection of Foyers Groups as a way to deepen and nurture relationships in small groups gathered around a meal; and the launch of this year's Church School program with six teachers and ten students in the classroom on the first day. With all these efforts and occasions, we are working to add opportunities to Build Connection, Relationship, and Community here at St. Andrew's. Those connections, relationships, and community don't stop at the big red doors of the church.

We carry the gifts that we receive at St. Andrew's out into the world around us. Having found a sense of connection, relationship, and community together, we leave each Sunday with an increased capacity to forge those ties in other areas of our life.

Having been shaped by the scriptural narrative that we hold in common with so many across the world; having broken those scriptures open in worship, prayer, and the sermon; we are equipped with the tools, the interpretive framework, a lens through which to view the world that gives context and meaning to our experience and to the news we hear; to the events swirling around us every day.

Nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, and upheld by the community we forge together, we are strengthened to live out our baptismal vows; seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves; and striving for justice and peace for all people, respecting the dignity of every human being.

Through our common life at St. Andrew's we are able to build connection, relationship, and community with one another, with the world around us, and with people whom the Gospel calls us to uphold. We are able to build connection, relationship, and a community that makes a difference, that creates change for the better, that can help bring God's vision and dream for all creation to fruition here and now!

Every year at this time we ask one another to take some time reflecting on what the life work and ministry of St. Andrew's means to each of us. How have the connection, relationships, and community we have found here reflected God's love and grace into our lives? How has this community reflected those same gifts into the world around us? How have we, as we gather here, been fed and nourished? How have we been strengthened, empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry those gifts into a broken and hurting world, offering them to others so that they too might flourish in the life which God intends for each of us? And finally, how will we respond to all that God has given us, all that God has made possible in our lives? How will we support the life work and ministry of our community in the year ahead?

Please, take some time over the next several weeks to consider your response to all that God has given you; to the gifts you have received in this community; and to the work that we have done, are doing, and will do, as the Body of Christ here at 1833 Regent Street.

We will be collecting our pledges of financial support to the life, work, and ministry of St. Andrew's, blessing them on the Altar on All Saints Sunday, November 6. Please return your pledge card by placing it in the offering plate, by mailing it to the church, or by filling out the online pledge card on the Give page of our website so that we can include it as we celebrate the ways that we are ***Building Connection, Relationship, and Community*** to do God's work in the world.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Andy', followed by a small plus sign.

Andy