

Saint Mary's Episcopal Church

9425 Third Avenue

Stone Harbor, New Jersey 08247

Rev. Allison Burns-LaGreca
Rector

Parish Office Phone: 609-368-5922
Parish Fax Number: 967-1616

November 1, 2021

Dear members and friends of St. Mary's,

Stewardship is based on the biblical philosophy that, as followers of Christ, we are doing an unselfish act of discipleship and growing in our spiritual development. As part of your stewardship, we pray you are moved to pledge with gratitude for all of God's blessings you receive, knowing you are helping to fulfill the mission of St. Mary's for the coming year.

The idea of pledging may be new to some of you so we have included a FAQ sheet with this letter with answers to questions you may have. For those of you who have pledged in the past, as you reflect on the blessings you have received, perhaps you would consider acknowledging them by taking a step up in your giving this year.

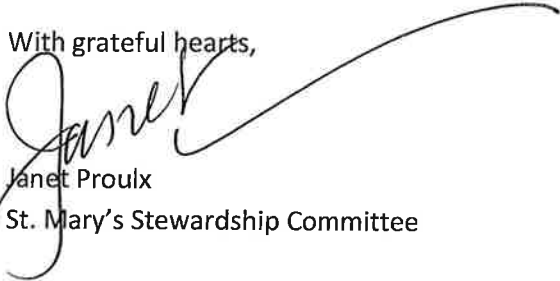
St. Mary's has not only survived the difficulties presented to us over the past several years, but we have remained a church family and together we are moving forward with positive momentum under the leadership of Mother Allison, a committed Vestry and with all of you. That is quite clearly a wonderful blessing from God and one for which I am incredibly grateful. As I said before, there is real joy to be experienced at St. Mary's and we are spreading that joy every time we gather together . . . every time we open our doors and invite people in.

We thank you for your generosity in previous years and ask for your continued support by completing the enclosed pledge commitment and either mailing it to the office or dropping it in the collection plate no later than November 21st.

You've heard directly how some of our parishioners feel about being part of St. Mary's and their personal commitment to supporting our mission by pledging and volunteering their time and talents. They represent the definition of stewardship, as do many of you. If you would like to share your testimonial with all of us, please let me know. We would love to hear from you.

Your pledge is a part of stewardship that is an act of love and caring for St. Mary's and our church family, as well as being a good disciple of Jesus Christ. Once again we ask that you please prayerfully discern the blessings you have received and how you choose to proportionately, generously and sacrificially pledge your gifts in thanksgiving to St. Mary's and our mission.

With grateful hearts,



Janet Proulx

St. Mary's Stewardship Committee

2022 STEWARDSHIP FAQs

What is pledging? Pledging is a covenant made to contribute a certain amount of money to St. Mary's over the period of a year. We are asking parishioners to let us know what they will be able to contribute to St. Mary's during 2022 so we can plan our mission and ministry for the coming year. It's necessary to know what St. Mary's will receive in pledges so we can prepare a budget for 2022. Pledges can be given weekly, monthly or quarterly throughout the year or in a one-time lump sum. All pledges large and small are valued as a commitment in faith to our church community.

What if I put money in the offering plate – doesn't that take the place of a pledge? Putting money in the offering plate is a wonderful spiritual discipline, but it doesn't take the place of a pledge. Simply put, it's not possible for the Vestry to plan a budget or operate our church given the fluctuating and uncertain nature of plate offerings. By making a pledge, you are giving the Vestry the necessary tools to sustain church operations and support our ministries over the year.

What if I can't meet my pledge? Things can happen over a year that may change your circumstances. You can contact our Rector, Mother Allison, to let her know you need to revise your pledge and whether or not you desire pastoral care and support. We value you no matter how much you give and God honors your faithfulness.

Who at St. Mary's will know what I have pledged? The Church Treasurer and the Administrator (Julie Taylor) will know your individual pledge amount. Mother Allison and the Vestry will know only the total dollar amount of all the pledges received.

Is pledge money used to support The Branches? Due to the overwhelming response from local churches, organizations and individuals, The Branches has received enough support that has alleviated St Mary's financial responsibility at the present time.

How are financial decisions made at St. Mary's? Financial decisions are made by the Vestry of St. Mary's with input from the Finance Committee. The Vestry is the "board of directors" of the church. Members are elected to three-year terms. Officers include the Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Treasurer and Clerk.

Does St. Mary's receive any financial support from the Diocese of New Jersey?

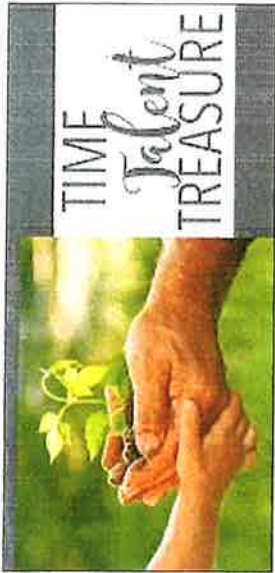
St. Mary's helps to support the Diocese through an assessment that is based on our operating expenses. The Diocese provides pastoral support to priests, support for young people, educational programs and outreach. The Diocese has made money available to St. Mary's through an interest-bearing loan and that information is included in our Annual Report.

How does St. Mary's meet its expenses? St. Mary's budget includes salaries and benefits for a full-time Rector and our administrator, along with other lay staff. It also includes expenses for Church property and grounds, operating expenses such as utilities, mission and outreach. Pledges meet a portion of our budget and the remainder comes from the Church investment account as needed. Please look over our Annual Report if you want to know where the money comes from and how it is spent. It is important to remember that the salaries of our clergy and staff are part of our mission of providing the sacraments of the church, pastoral care, education, and music ministry.

Who needs to pledge? We ask all members to pledge. Giving on a regular basis over the year provides needed support.

Is Stewardship just about money? We value the gifts of time and talent that all of our members give. We value each person who walks in our doors as a precious gift.

Are my donations tax deductible? Yes. Per IRS regulations, contributions for each year must be received or postmarked by December 31 of that year in order to receive credit for that year's tax purposes.



Living a Life of Stewardship

The Episcopal Church sees stewardship as more than simply contributing money to the church; it's also about contributing time and talents and volunteering for ministry and mission. It's about reaching out to build relationships from a perspective of abundance instead of scarcity.

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/>

St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Stone Harbor Stewardship 2022

In support of St. Mary's Ministries, I/we pledge to contribute: \$ _____ for 2022.

Weekly / Monthly / Quarterly / Annually

By: Automatic Bank Transfer / Credit/Debit Card / Offering Plate / Check

Have you considered including St. Mary's in your will/estate plans? Check here if you would like more information.

Can you volunteer your time and talent? Yes / No Ministry / Interest _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Signature(s) _____

We thank you for your prayerful consideration. Please remember your Ministry Commitment may be altered to reflect a change in financial circumstances.

Please complete and bring or mail this commitment form as soon as possible, or no later than Sunday, November 21st. All pledge information is confidential.



St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Stone Harbor

Your Pledge is your Ministry Commitment

Keep this part for your records.

My 2022 financial commitment to St. Mary's is

\$ _____

I plan to contribute my time and talents towards _____