



St. Luke's Episcopal Church

22 South 6th Street
Lebanon, PA 17042



Stewardship 2023

September 2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

If recent challenges have taught us anything, it is certainly that the mission of God cannot be stopped by any force, natural or man-made. The terror of war in Ukraine demonstrates that the human spirit is often made stronger through adversity. COVID-19 inspired innovative technologies in fighting disease and showed us that we can adapt to ever changing and uncertain circumstances.

Early in the pandemic, Bishop Nichols and I discussed just how our parishes might fare in the face of an extended shut down. His insight was keen: those parishes that have been struggling going in, may not do well, while those parishes that had a keen sense of mission would emerge well. "St. Luke's," he told me, "is one of those parishes. I have every confidence that you and your people will not only survive but even thrive."

Of course, such things are never certain. However, evidence proved him right. Over the last two years, St. Luke's adapted its ministries to meet its challenges. We used virtual resources to share times of prayer and worship. We prayed for the sick and the dead. We shared resources to feed the hungry and shelter the homeless. We kept our youngsters moving forward in their Christian formation and admitted new members through confirmation and reception in on line classes.

All of this was possible because of your constant commitment and dedication to the mission and ministry of St. Luke's.

It is now time for us to fit ourselves for the work that lay ahead in fulfilling God's mission in our community.

In *The S Word*, Archbishop Douglas Hambidge wrote that stewardship and fundraising are different. Stewardship has nothing to do with budgets or deficits. It has to do with our relationship with God. Even if our parish has a healthy bank balance, we still have precisely the same spiritual need to give of ourselves. It is the way of Jesus.

That is what Bishop Nichols knew about St. Luke's. He saw a strong and healthy congregation that strove toward sustainable, mission driven stewardship. The key to sustainable health is continual service to our community. It remains critical that we become increasingly engaged with the wider community and with each other. The apostle Peter tells us, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10). Peter speaks of relationships – relationships that allow us to engage with others in ways that help define and demonstrate God's unconditional love for all.

***A new stewardship season is upon us.
I hope that we will use this time to become truly
"Fit for Mission."***

Your continuing generosity is the only way that St. Luke's will fulfill its mission in this place, in this time. Shortly, you will receive a pledge card for 2023. Over the next few weeks, I ask that you pray carefully and consider just how you can contribute to this effort and return your commitment as a vote of confidence in St. Luke's and a statement of faith in the work of God in our midst. The challenges remain great, but so does the power of God in our lives.

With you and for you, I am

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. David A. Zwifka
Rector