



# SHINING OUR LIGHT

Dear Member of St Mary's Family,

I would like to begin my annual Stewardship letter by expressing my heartfelt thanks to all of you who responded so generously to my appeal last year. Together we made a significant increase in the pledge income and therefore a corresponding significant reduction in the amount that we needed to withdraw from our endowment funds.

This year our Stewardship theme is "Shining our Light", a theme taken from the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. This theme speaks to us on many levels. Individually, each of us is called to make sure we are letting God's light shine through our work, our friendships, our service and our giving. We are called to be light bearers. It is a powerful calling.

As a faith community, St Mary's must shine the light of Christ through our worship, welcoming, pastoral care and ministry to the wider community. How we use our time, talents, and treasure determines how brightly we are shining our light.

At St Mary's, I'm often blown away by the various ways members of our church keep their light shining brightly. Some of us make sure the snacks at the coffee hour are delicious and abundant. Others participate in our worship either by singing in the choir or assisting in the service. Still others prepare the worship space with flowers or altar vestments. Many of us also represent the church in our participation of various community service programs around Newport County.

This year's annual Stewardship campaign will begin on the weekend of October 19/20 and will culminate with our annual Harvest Weekend on November 16/17. During that time we will have handouts in the weekly bulletin for you to read and think about, we will have speakers each week who will give a brief reflection on stewardship, and we will end with an all parish spaghetti dinner on the evening of November 16. On Sunday November 17 we will gather together to revitalize our beautiful buildings and grounds and prepare them for the coming winter months.

I encourage everyone to [click here](#) to register for our Harvest Weekend Dinner so that we can ensure that we have enough food and drinks for everyone. We will also be having sign-up sheets in the back of the church.

Last year I wrote that it was a challenging time to be a member of St Mary's Church and that to help resolve a growing budget deficit our treasurer had indicated that we need to increase our income from pledges by something in the neighborhood of 50%. Our goal was to close a \$130,000 gap over two years. I am pleased to be able to report that we made significant progress on this goal. We are closing the gap due to your generosity. We have a projected shortfall of approximately \$45,000 in next years budget, which could be offset by an increase in pledge income of approximately 15%.

There are two things that I know in relation to this. First, I know that a number of the members of our parish may not be able to increase their pledge by this amount. Second, I know that this level of increase will only allow us to balance the budget and will not give us any room to grow. Therefore I am committing to increase my pledge by 25% for the coming year and I invite other members of the church to join me in this. Together we can eliminate the projected deficit and provide funding to help grow our church to even greater things.

One final thing that I would like to mention is the topic of pledge envelopes. There will be a check box on the pledge card this year to indicate whether or not you want pledge envelopes. However, please think carefully about whether or not you actually need them. If you normally have your bank or other financial institution mail a check to the church, you do not need envelopes. A number of people have gotten into the habit of simply placing a check in the collection plate and these people do not really need envelopes either. The people that really need pledge envelopes are the people that typically place a cash donation in the envelope and people that are concerned about the privacy of their donations. The reason that I mention all of this is that we want to make sure that we order sufficient pledge envelopes for everyone that would like them but at the same time we don't want to order an excess because then we would be wasting money. As the person who comes to you each year asking you to make a financial commitment, I am hesitant to waste even a few dollars if I can avoid it.

Yours in Christ,

David Brierley  
Stewardship Chair