



All Saints' Episcopal Church

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Dear Congregation,

A blessed Advent to you! As we prepare to gather with loved ones, trim our trees, and share good wishes and glad tidings with our friends and neighbors, our hearts yearn for Christmas joy.

And how do we find that joy? Regardless of circumstances, I believe gratitude is a consistent and holy path to joy. I mean gratitude as a way of living, not as consequence of hoped for outcomes. Whatever our circumstances, we can have gratitude for our *being*, and we can be thankful that God is God and we are never alone. And even when we don't "feel it", we can live it. We live in gratitude when we pattern our lives after Jesus Christ. We practice gratitude when we worship and pray, and when we love our enemies, neighbors, family, and friends. We practice gratitude when we give sacrificially. For at the heart of every true gift is love and thankfulness. We give because we love, and our gift is a sign and token of our love. Our gift strengthens our bond, and carries with it our intention, and our material sacrifice. This is true in our relationships, and it is also true in our community.

Every day of my ministry, your love in action fills me with hope. I am moved by your willingness to give generously to All Saints'. Such generosity reflects your commitment to and care for our beloved community. And there is transformative power in this generosity. As we sow the seeds of gratitude: seeds like our worship of God, our gifts towards the work of God, and our care for our neighbors and our loved ones, we reap a harvest of hope. The more we live in gratitude, the less our spiritual well-being is pinned on particular outcomes. As we grow in gratitude, and our relationship with Christ deepens, we find that this most essential relationship sustains and fulfills us, come what may.

In addition to the spiritual benefit of generosity, our gifts and offerings are also deeply practical. The ministries of this church- both within and outside of our walls- are completely financially dependent on our gifts. Each year, we raise the money for that year's ministry. Now more than ever, we will need to reach out to our neighbors, to extend the hand of hope and fellowship, and to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to a world that so desperately needs joy, hope, and love.

Over my six years of ministry at All Saints', and in prayer and listening with you, four areas of interest consistently emerge as desires and gifts of this parish: worship, outreach, education, and prayer. At annual meetings, vestry meetings and retreats, committee meetings, and through personal conversations, these hopes are consistently repeated and passionately discussed. Reflecting on those themes, I propose three goals for the next three years. These goals reflect the hard work of discernment our community has done, the ideas that have deeply resonated with

many in the congregation. They provide, I hope, a starting place for a strategic plan toward continued growth and vitality.

Lifelong Christian Formation

- Development of a Young Adult Ministry
- Continued investment in our Youth Ministry
- Establishing a Children's Ministry
- Comprehensive Adult Education throughout the year

Ministry to the World

- Deepen our relationships with local outreach partners
- Establish a global missional relationship of prayer, companionship, and peer learning.
- Become a resource for families, singles, and couples seeking spiritual and practical nurture in their daily life.

Engaged Connection and Communication

- Strengthen our online presence using social media and our website, as well as other platforms
- Provide comprehensive resources for study, prayer, and connection on our website and via traditional communication
- Give greater exposure to the resources of our parish, including our music program, services, sermons, and reflections.
- Engage in clear and accessible communication within our parish, through traditional mail and in-person announcements, member directory, bulletins, email, and website.

The wonderful news: This work is already underway. Our outreach committee is hard at work to find ways for us to connect with local, national, and international partners. Our communications task force continues to develop our online ministry, having laid an excellent foundation for the work ahead. Our Adult Education, Bible Study, and Bagels and Books participants are eager to explore new ways of learning. Those are just a few of the many healthy ministries led and supported by our church's members. Your wonderful vestry, and outstanding wardens, Jeff Altabef and Michael Cavanaugh, exemplify dedication, love, and giftedness—the hallmarks of our congregation.

Essential to the work ahead is the dedication and skill of our staff and clergy team. All Saints' professional team is committed to supporting our congregation while strengthening and expanding our existing ministries. I give thanks for each of our team's members: for Deacon Ann, an exemplar of Christian compassion, whose preaching, pastoral care, and spiritual guidance are a light for our community; for Don, whose quiet dedication to the love and care of our buildings, and deep faithfulness to the work of God are a daily blessing; for Kinny, whose thoughtful and inspired leadership of our choir, and gifted musicianship as our organist help lift us to God as we worship each Sunday; and for Sara, whose administrative skill, careful planning and spiritual centeredness are an anchor to our church's operations and communications. I am honored to work with them and know they are up to any challenge we face.

Most of all I give thanks for you, the community with whom God has blessed me to walk, pray, serve, and learn. Your humor, dedication, curiosity, loyalty, and passion inspire me daily. I love you and I am thankful for the community we are, with God's help, building together.

We ask that you return your enclosed commitment card on or before our Ingathering Sunday: Sunday, December 18. Please join us on the 18th for a celebration of our congregation's continued commitment to All Saints', and stay as we green (decorate) the church for Christmas!

Please join the Stewardship Committee for a Gratitude Brunch, January 8, 11:30 a.m. We will celebrate the beginning of a new year of ministry, giving thanks for the generosity of this community, and for the many gifts of God. We will also seek your input and feedback on the proposed goals, trusting that together we will do great things for God.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)

Love and gratitude,

Mother Yejide