



St. Peter's – United in Mission

Nov. 2, 2021

Dear St. Peter's Community,

The last year—the last couple of years—have been difficult. The difficulty has been all the more painful because, as sometimes happens, many of the difficulties tore us apart rather than knitting us together.

Differences are to be expected, and one of the great strengths of the Episcopal Church is that we find unity in diversity, making room for a variety of perspectives, theologies, and practices. The variety in God's creation is part of what makes it so delightful. **But we can let our differences distract us from what we have in common: our rootedness in Jesus, the words of our baptismal covenant, and our mission to spread God's love far and wide.**

Our theme for this year's pledge campaign is "**United in Mission.**" While we are very different individuals, we share a common mission. St. Peter's enables us to live out that mission by providing regular worship and sacraments, offering a variety of opportunities for Christian formation, cultivated Christian fellowship, and reaching out in love to the surrounding community.

While working towards discerning, clarifying, and distilling the mission of St. Peter's, themes have emerged: words like communion, relationship, openness, generosity, faithfulness, hospitality, tradition—and of course, food! Over the next four weeks, we'll explore some of these themes together in sermons and reflections:

- **Sunday, Nov. 7: The Mission of Communion**
- **Sunday, Nov. 14: The Mission of Faithfulness**
- **Sunday, Nov. 21: The Mission of Hospitality**
- **Sunday, Nov. 28: The Mission of Relationship**

I encourage you to also reflect on what these themes mean for you, and how the mission(s) of St. Peter's tug at your heart. If St. Peter's was no longer part of your life, what would be lost? If St. Peter's was removed from Plant City, what would be lost? Finally, as we look to the future, consider where we could go and what we could do together, united in mission. **If we worked together to be a place of communion, faithfulness, hospitality, and relationship, what could we accomplish?** And how are you invested in that future?

Financial stewardship and the discipline of pledging and giving financially—and otherwise—to the church is part of our investment in the church's mission. When we consider that mission in the world, we want to support it, and we do so out of gratitude for the gifts that God has given us. We support the mission with our time by volunteering and being present in worship and formation; we support the mission with our talents by offering our gifts and skills to better the church and the world; and we support the mission with our treasure by investing in the work and future of the church. This happens in planned giving, bequests, and gifts to the endowment; it happens in gifts to capital campaigns; and it happens in annual giving pledged to the church.

Pledges are especially important for the mission and work of the church because they assist us in creating and following a prudent budget, and they are important in our own spiritual lives because they are a trusting investment in a future we can't yet see. Pledges offer a commitment that non-pledge gifts dropped into the offering plate or mailed to the office can't provide (though of course those gifts are also appreciated and useful for the mission of the church). Pledges are not something to be afraid of: life happens, and there are times when you might be unable to pay a pledge—that's okay. Pledges are also not just for those who give large amounts to the church; they're for every size of gift!

As you are asked over the next month to consider how the mission of St. Peter's and the larger church has the potential to unite us, I encourage you to also reflect on your investment in that mission, and how you will choose to make that investment. I'll be holding your discernment—and my own—in prayer.

Together in Mission,
Alissa Anderson+