

St. John's

Episcopal Church

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November 8, 2021

Dear People of St. John's,

From my very first encounter with St. John's, it was clear that being "given to hospitality" is not just words carved over the doors of the sanctuary, but a way of life. What an honor it is to be writing to you now, as your rector, and someone who not only walks under those words on a regular basis, but also is charged with ensuring that being "given to hospitality" continues as a way of life in this community.

You were given to hospitality when this congregation chose to take on the Second Century project to make this sacred and useful space accessible and available to all.

You have been given to hospitality throughout the pandemic as you have pivoted to online worship, gotten creative about ways to connect, cared for one another, and been moved to acts of compassion and justice in the world around us.

And we are given to hospitality as we listen to where the Holy Spirit is leading us next. This is happening as we revitalize our ministry teams, as we worship and are in community with one another, and as we re-imagine what it means to be a church in this next season.

Part of being given to hospitality is being given to generosity. You, St. John's, are a generous and loyal community. As we continue to step forward in our life of hospitality, your generosity is crucial in ensuring our shared ministry together.

Over the past three years our financial picture has changed: we took on the mortgage for the Second Century project in addition to our general operating expenses. This, in combination with the pandemic and a rector transition, has left us with an operating budget deficit in 2020 and 2021 and a continued gap in funds as we approach 2022. Thanks to your consistent giving and to a generous bequest, we have been able to make up our projected 2021 deficit and invest in some crucial capital improvements to the sanctuary. Faced with a continued operating budget gap in 2022, we are depending on additional revenue sources—including congregational giving in order to provide for the work of the church.

I believe in the ministry of St. John's and how we are called to God's work of mercy, justice, and hope. I invite us all to prayerfully consider how we can contribute to the ministry of St. John's in the coming year: first, by engaging in an area of ministry that you care about; and secondly, by pledging and giving generously. Please take a few minutes to fill out the pledge card enclosed in this letter or make your pledge online at: stjohnsnorthampton.org/stewardship or bring your pledge card to Stewardship Sunday on December 5th.

The future is bright, St. John's, and I, like you, am excited to see how God will work through us, together. I hope you will want to be a part of it.

Grace and Peace,



The Rev. Anna Woofenden, *Rector*