



St. Paul's Episcopal Church

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Dear Members of St. Paul's,

Just as a mighty oak tree stands tall and strong, so too does our congregation thrive, deeply rooted in faith, love, and unity. Two years ago, the Vestry assessed the financial outlook in the fog of the pandemic, with tremendous uncertainty regarding the future. The Vestry approved a three-year budget plan that included operating losses for 2022, 2023 and 2024 with the goal of returning to break even in 2025.



We are on track to be at or favorable to the budget in 2023. However, to cover the cost of inflation and maintain the program growth, we will need to improve total contributions by approximately 10% in this upcoming stewardship campaign. That's a significant increase. To accomplish this, we will need, not only additional participation from our new families, but I am urging those who are already pledging to evaluate your pledge amount relative to prior years. Two-thirds of all pledges made are equal to the pledge that was made in the prior year. However, we anticipate that benefit costs are projected to increase 9%, and general inflation and merit increases will likely increase 4% to 7%.

St Paul's has grown over the last two years. We are now the largest parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh and have seen our average Sunday attendance grow from 266 in 2022 to well over 300 in 2023. We have seen the numbers of pledging households grow from 279 to 304 over the last year as well. That is an amazing testament to the vitality of the congregation and the effective leadership at St Paul's as we recover from the pandemic. While that growth is impressive, we are still slightly below the pre-pandemic averages.

The directed capital campaign that we had this summer was incredibly successful and those designated gifts will help the church address a very specific set of safety and property issues for an aging church building. Those funds will not be used for general church operations.

While there is so much positivity and growth at St Paul's, it is extremely important to recognize that our operating budget has been negatively impacted since the pandemic began. Operating a growing church requires additional resources, and so I am asking you to prayerfully consider your commitment to St. Paul's as we approach this season of giving.

On the weekend of October 14-15, we will be kicking off our Annual Giving and Stewardship Campaign; soon after, you will receive a packet with giving materials. As you consider your financial support, reflect on God's provision and abundant blessings on our St Paul's family. As deep roots provide stability to a tree, your generosity, and our shared commitment of financial support will provide us with strength to support the mission of St. Paul's.

With gratitude,

David Sharbaugh, Treasurer