

October 2, 2023

Friends in Christ,

I wish that I could take you along with me on a typical week at St. Mark's. From my vantage point, I have the great privilege of seeing into almost every corner of this special church. Just last week, I was able to hear the choir rehearse while the altar guild prepared a home communion kit for a woman wrestling with a difficult diagnosis. I watched our high school youth eat pizza and play games while later that same night, our young adult and campus group had their first gathering of the fall (also pizza!). I saw online pictures of the women's book club and overheard comments on the latest provocative adult education series. I read emails from wardens and vestry members working diligently to make sure the i's are dotted and t's are crossed on our contracts for building the new parish hall. Somehow, our parish is increasing its ministry this year, even while immersed in construction and severely limited spaces. God continues to richly bless this community of faithful seekers, and it's my honor to watch your ministries unfold.

And, of course, underneath all of these stories of amazing and God-centered connections are the practical concerns that every parish has to address. As we laid out in our all-parish meeting last May, we are working hard to close a structural deficit that has been with us for many years. To keep up with our forecasted goal, we will need to raise \$332,000 this year for our 2024 operating expenses. If we would like to retire our deficit in one fell swoop, we would need to stretch and raise \$358,500 for 2024. So, you might think of our goal in two paths: one path gets us where we need to go a bit more slowly and one more quickly, but regardless we get where we need to be.

This year, we are running our annual stewardship campaign a little differently than we have the last several years. This is, largely, due to our continued focus on our capital campaign and new parish hall building project. We want to keep the energy and excitement of our new parish hall going until it's completed. So, our campaign will be focused and simple. In fact, we're calling it the Simple Campaign.

We did this because we would like to streamline the process of giving. The majority of return givers give electronically, and it's our hope that taking some time to pray and consider your gift for 2024 will be a simple but important task. If you are new to participating in an annual campaign at St. Mark's, we want to make it as easy as possible for you to add your pledge to the life and ministry of this special parish in 2024. For the newer folks, a pledge is a promise to make a financial commitment to St. Mark's for 2024, sort of like you see in public radio or public television pledge drives. We use this information to help us plan our 2024 budget. Of course, circumstances do change, if you find that you need to either increase or decrease your pledge in 2024, it's as simple as contacting the office.

This year, our pledge form is electronic. You can find it at <https://forms.gle/z225FcvK9c5tXaZy6>. There's also a QR code on a sheet in this envelope that you can scan to access the pledge form. If you need any assistance completing this form or need to make your pledge over the phone instead, kindly contact Sara at 414-962-0500.

Thank you for your support of St. Mark's ministries and our Simple Campaign.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian Burch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ian" and the last name "Burch" clearly legible.

Fr. Ian Burch
Rector