



Dear Fellow Parishioners,

When I was growing up, our family was always shielded from any financial concerns by my dad who managed the burden of keeping us housed, fed and comfortable. He did, however, instill in us the concept of saving a portion of our meager allowance, for which we each had to complete certain chores.

Most of us learn early on in life, as we move out on our own, the true value of managing our money and saving for the future. While I realize it is difficult to talk about money when it comes to Church life, we must, at least annually, if we all are to be responsible stewards of God's mission and the church which has been entrusted to us.

Fr. Wes and the Vestry have worked hard at streamlining the 2022 budget by reducing the staff and cutting back in almost every area of church spending. We are all acutely aware that the pandemic and the many changes in our church administration, has reduced our parish attendance and has had an adverse impact on our revenues. This coupled with the sharp rise in costs of supplies and services has exacerbated the situation. This is not unique to our parish. A recent article in the Business Section of the St. Lucie Tribune confirms that churches across the country are suffering similar difficulties with some smaller churches forced to close. However, it is not all bad news.

St. Augustine is currently stable, but we cannot continually sit back and rely on the endowment funds to subsidize our operating budget as we have in the past. When the search committee distributed the parish questionnaire in 2020, some of the important goals of the parish were to attract new members and to resurrect the youth and children's programs. These are indeed important goals if we are to maintain a vibrant, sustainable parish. That said, it will require advanced financial planning to develop the needed programs to staff and accomplish those goals.

We are all aware that Stewardship is not just about money, but about giving of ourselves, our time and talents as well. We are all called to give in many ways and each of us is responsible to discover and use the special gifts God has entrusted to us. Using these gifts to benefit others and fulfill God's mission brings much joy into our lives, and everyone can contribute in some small way, regardless of age or financial situation.

It is my hope that we will all reflect on this prayerfully, so that this year's Stewardship campaign might be marked by a generous and joyful spirit of giving back to God what is, after all, rightly God's. May God bless us all with that grace.

Tony Tulumello, Senior Warden