



Grounded in Faith Growing in Service

August 19, 2026

Dear Church,

You make a huge difference. You don't even know, and that's why I want to tell you about how your faith and service brings life to our community. I'm not relying on AI or some template to write this—I used *em dashes before they were associated with AI* and it was painstakingly hand pruned down from the 5-page draft because I love you, and what I'm saying comes from my heart.

Our annual pledge drive is just around the corner. I've already made my pledge as part of preparing for my sabbatical. There is a lot to look forward to as we plan for 2027, and I'm excited to tell you why you should join me in renewing your annual support or why you should consider making a pledge for the first time.

You'll often hear people call this fall pledge drive our "stewardship season." Stewardship means we give thanks for what God has given, reflect on how to use what God has given, and then we prayerfully respond with our own commitment through faith. Stewardship is our response to what God has given; faith is our response to what God is doing.

Our goal for 2027 is \$410,000. That sounds like a lot, but it is actually lower than the total amount we've needed the last several years. This budget goal includes all the tools we rely on to sustain the needs of our congregation in the coming year. If you want to know more, the Vestry has reviewed a draft 2027 budget and would be happy to go over it with you.

Our goal for 2027 is lower than what we've needed to raise the past few years because until this past summer we were not only funding our ministry (operating

budget) but also paying off our building loan (capital budget), so we've had two pledges to juggle. But with the mortgage paid off, we only need to make *one pledge*.

If you give in 2027 to this one pledge as much as you did in 2025 or 2026 with your combined pledges, your congregation will have the resources it needs to thrive like a well watered tree. And if you've never made a pledge before, it's okay to start small—just start somewhere, knowing that it's the heart that gives that matters more than the gift itself (Luke 21:1-4).

Enclosed in this letter is a gift for you, a reminder. It bears the image of this year's stewardship theme—a growing tree—and the exhortation, "Remember the difference you make."

Something changes when we give. Church somehow becomes less transactional and more personal. It's less something to shop around for and more something you partner in creating. When someone in the parking lot of the county jail meets your Episcopal priest at just the right time, it's not just because of the priest's faithfulness, it's because of *yours*. When meals are served at the Upper Room on the third Sunday each month, it's because you helped us build a place where people could hear the call to go. When new participants sign up for EfM to begin a four-year process of deep spiritual development; when the sorrowful receive joy, when the poor are raised up, when the bread and wine are given, it's not just someone *else's* faithfulness, it's also *yours*. It's *your* water that's nourishing the tree, your faithfulness that is keeping us grounded and growing.

And this tree has been growing. This letter would be twice as long if I listed all the ways we've been growing. Let me buy you coffee sometime and I'll tell you in person. But this tree has been growing because you help keep us grounded in faith and growing in service.

So dear friends, when that pledge card comes in the mail, you know what to do. . .
Remember the difference you make.

Faithfully,



The Rev. Tom Gartin
Rector, Faith Episcopal Church