

November 2020

Dear Parish Family & Friends:

This second year of our *Hope Grows Here* stewardship campaign has been a test of, and testament to, our faith in each other, in our church here at St. Matthew's, and in our relationship with our God. In previous communications, we have shared the belief that church is so much more than the bricks & mortar building. In these times, never has any statement been truer.

We continued to respond to these challenging times as evidenced by the following:

- Adapting to new ways to worship together and to connect with God and one another through the wonders of technology, until we were able to reopen our door consistent with state, local & diocesan requirements. For those who are still uncomfortable or unable to attend in-person worship or activities, online/virtual worship and meetings continue to be an option. Now that we have realized the benefits of these virtual options, we are upgrading our technology in the nave and in Belmont Hall. These upgrades will enable us to offer high-quality online worship for the foreseeable future and will expand our reach to new online visitors;
- Confirming 16 young people of our parish with two bishops in one day on October 17th, and continuing to offer Kairos (Sunday school) for our youth. Kairos teachers have gone above and beyond to meet safely in-person when able, and to take on special projects such as sprucing up the church grounds and allowing for the children to participate in a food drive and visit to the HV Mobile Food Pantry;
- Continuing to offering virtual Christian Formation programming and groups such as Bible Study every Tuesday morning, book club meetings, and sessions on relevant topics in environmental justice and anti-racism;
- Rich music programming, to include videos from our adult and youth choirs, the continuation of bell choir, guest musicians, the addition of cantors as a means of enhancing 10am in-person worship, piano at the 8am service;
- St. Matthew's Pre School is currently open and serving 25 students;
- Reaching out to our neighbors in need by raising more than \$2,700 for Homefront, supporting the Hopewell Valley Mobile Food Pantry, continuing our efforts with Arm-in-Arm, collecting 20 bags of food and toiletries for Urban Promise Trenton;
- Continuing scholarships to St. Matthew's Preschool, to El Hogar and to Mar-Keith Jackson in his education at Rider University with a \$5,000 scholarship for his second year; and
- Participating in our annual TASK Thanksgiving outreach effort by our Kairos Youth with help from our parish family.

These efforts reveal that God's Holy Spirit of *HOPE* is *GROWing HERE* at St. Matthew's. In Year 2 of our Stewardship Campaign, we were pleased to continue with guest preachers from our parish family who also serve as leaders in our community. We've heard from Brogann Sanderson Bowden, Joe Lawver and will hear from Debbie Linthorst on 11/22. We also heard from the Rev. Bruce Montgomery who urged us to: "Chose this day whom you will serve."

These are truly challenging times for our parish community, and what you give is a deeply personal matter. While we recognize that some of our parish families may not be able to support St. Matthew's as you have in the past, we ask those of you who can to consider an increase in your pledge for the coming year.

We are grateful for consistent 2020 pledge payments through October, which move us closer to our 2020 pledged total of \$290,000. In order to achieve our *Hope Grows Here* goals of fiscal stability, engaged outreach, diocesan Marks of Mission/Fair Share obligation, to grow our ministries and tend to our significant property maintenance in 2021, we have set a goal of \$300,000 in pledge income this year.

As highlighted above, the people of St. Matthew's aim to serve through outreach. These outreach efforts, as well as parish "in-reach" such as youth programming, are supported from the proceeds of our Rummage Sales and Christmas Bazaar, which we are unable to host this year. In order to offset these losses, we are asking that you prayerfully consider an additional \$214 contribution to either your 2020 pledge or along with your 2021 pledge, as noted on the enclosed pledge card.

The enclosed pledge card may be returned to John Eckel, Recording Clerk, by: email at n60aj@yahoo.com, mailing to the church office at 300 S. Main St. Pennington, NJ 08534 or, if you attend in-person services, by placing the pledge card in the offering plate or lock box, located in the Narthex.

For convenience and ease of processing, we encourage you to contribute by the auto-pay option via your bank account (usually called "bill pay") or through our online giving option "Give Plus" (on our website click on **Giving** and then **Make a Donation**). Alternatively, you may mail your check to the church or, if attending in-person services, you may place it in the offering plate.

Please know that we are deeply grateful for your support of St. Matthew's. Wishing you and yours a safe and happy Thanksgiving holiday.

With Gratitude,

Jim McGuire, Stewardship Chair
Bruce Weise, Finance Chair
John Eckel, Recording Secretary

Debbie Linthorst & Scott Watterson,
Wardens
The Rev. Ophelia Laughlin,
Priest-in-Charge

