

The Pastor's Report

Welcome home and welcome to it!

As ghosts and goblins give way to gourds and giblets, Stewardship time is upon us at the Church on the Park.

The first order of business is to offer a **heart-felt thanks to all of you** who have kept us “in business” this past year. Due to your commitment of time, energy, leadership and, yes, financial resources we have moved our church forward for yet another year. It is amazing and humbling to see what a (relatively) small group of people can accomplish toward the ends of bringing goodness, hope, and compassion to the world and our own lives.

And (SNAP!) just like that a *new year* is upon us and it is time once more for us to consider our financial support for our church in 2025. Stewardship letters have already been mailed out (and a pledge card may be found in this month's edition) and this coming Sunday, **November 3rd is Pledge Sunday** when we ask folks to return their pledge of support for the coming year (there are Pledge Boxes in the foyer and sanctuary, or they can be mailed to the church at 17 Park St. Canton, NY 13617).

While it is hard, and in many ways unnecessary, to reinvent the wheel when it comes to the idea and practice of stewardship, I will tell you the nature of the vehicle which rides upon those wheels (i.e., the church) has undergone **significant change** over the span of the past couple of years following the experience of COVID.

It should come as no surprise that many (if not most) churches are struggling with financial viability, membership, and relevance. Thankfully, our church does *not*

number among them. While the size and nature of our physical plant/buildings means we will never have too much, **we always seem to have enough**. This, I have come to realize, is not by accident.

After 32 years in the parish I have arrived at the conclusion that ministry (stewardship included) really comes down to one basic thing: **taking care of people**. Everything else follows from this, or not. While the caring part has not changed much over the course of the past two millennia, the past two years have brought *great* changes

in our understanding of just who, exactly, constitutes the people. Owing to the live-stream, our well-read and utilized newsletter, weekly emailing of the sermon, and the nature of our society, a great many more people may (joyously) lay claim to “belonging” to our church in whatever way each person chooses to understand it. This is simply the

changing nature of church, both as a concept and as an expression. What I believe makes our church unique, is our ability to embrace the grace of this change.

In essence, we have allowed our church to be “customized” for use and participation to the individual resulting in **a sum which is miraculously greater than our ever-diversifying parts**. It follows, then, that each person consider their own unique role is supporting the church in a way which corresponds to the care they receive, how they receive it, and their own distinctive (and/or quirky) sense of belonging to the Church on the Park. **I am absolutely certain that God has big plans for our church, and that each one of us will be part of such a plan unfolding even now.**

We belong to each other! - Rev. Mike

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. - Romans 12:4-5

The
Changing
Nature of
Church