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*real people.  
real life.  
real faith.*

November 5, 2021

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! It has been our pleasure getting to know you this year – especially your friendliness and your faithfulness. Your generous stewardship has sustained our congregation in the midst of 18 months of uncertainty. While many congregations struggled to make ends meet, our vibrant presence in the community continues to grow and reach out. We're on a roll! **But it can't end there.**

We believe that God is calling us next year to use our time and talents and treasure to grow in our mission and provide more opportunities to spread the Gospel and reach out into our community. This includes:

- **Expanding the youth program.** We want to provide a flourishing place for children and young adults to grow in their relationship with Jesus and one another, and accompany parents in faith formation.
- **Increasing our presence in the community.** We want to raise our profile through Christian service opportunities and engaging events. Everyone on the island should know who we are and what we're about.
- **Revitalizing congregational life and worship.** We want to offer a worship service that sets us apart from the other churches on the island -- one rooted in Lutheran tradition with contemporary relevance, with up-to-date technology and musical resources. We also want to broaden and deepen congregants' engagement in our church and to revitalize the involvement of those who stopped attending during the pandemic.
- **Investing in our property to support education.** We want to replace the flooring in our classrooms. This will better enable us to host another preschool, or even found our own.

To help make this possible, let us introduce you to our new stewardship campaign:

**Plant a Tree: Investing in a Growing Worship Family.**

The name of our campaign derives from an anecdote about Martin Luther: when asked what he would do if the world were to end tomorrow, he responded, “Plant an apple tree.” Of course, we’re not saying that the world is ending tomorrow. But the point remains that in times of uncertainty, we are called to continued faithfulness and stewardship.

Over the past two years, we have set aside a significant cash reserve for continued operations. We grew this balance by over \$50,000 because we slashed fixed costs during the Pandemic and participated in the Paycheck Protection Loan programs.

Contributions have remained steady during the Pandemic, for which we are *deeply* grateful. Present levels, however, are not adequate to support normal church operations with our expanded mission. We will need to use our cash reserve to sustain operations next year unless we can increase the magnitude and breadth of giving from present and reactivated members.

We are asking that you consider increasing your pledge for next year. If every contributor were to give an extra \$50 per month, we’d easily avoid the drawdown of cash reserves. That’s the price of one dinner out per week. Can you imagine what we could do (and how we could grow!) if those who felt called gave an extra \$100, \$200 per month?

As Lutherans, we know we are saved only by God’s grace, and that our level of giving won’t make God love us any more or less. But, as Martin Luther said, **“God doesn’t need your good works, but your neighbor does.”** We invite you to prayerfully consider making this investment in your St Thomas faith family this coming year.

Once you’ve decided on your stewardship plan for next year, please fill out and return to the Office by December 5 the enclosed pledge card and “time and talents” survey. You also have the option of pledging online at our website. We look forward, with your help, to a vibrant 2022 at our church.

In Christ,

Parish Chaplains, St Thomas Lutheran Church

