

October 2, 2009

Dear Friends in Christ,

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!” [Psalm 118:24]. No matter how we feel when we get up in the morning, this psalm verse is on our lips as Christians anticipating what God will be doing in our lives in the hours of the day ahead. Every morning is a fresh start – for us and for those whom we engage in our waking hours.

We have called St. Mark’s programs of stewardship over the past several years “year-round stewardship” programs because no day finishes without our having the opportunity to observe how God is shaping and guiding our ways through the challenges as well as the surprising joys and wonders of living. Our thankful response isn’t to pay God for these times of spiritual “rejoicing,” but rather to offer something of ourselves to others, frequently through the Church but also through other means, to demonstrate where our values lie as Christians and Episcopalians. We don’t have to live for anyone else if we choose. We can be isolated individualists “doing our own thing.” But the sense of belonging to God’s larger creation of people in harmony with the natural world is lost when we regard those around us as well as our environment as things to be used (or used up) for our personal benefit only. By contrast, “...the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” [2 Corinthians 9:6].

God created the earth and all its inhabitants to live in harmony and interrelatedness with one another, in a global family of mutual support. Today’s economic challenge throughout the world is one sign that many have forgotten God’s purpose in creation and, in fear, resolve to look out for themselves in this time of unequal distribution of the earth’s resources.

St. Mark’s as a Christian community, however, has shown itself to act beyond fear to a faithful trust of God’s invitation to walk with Christ in a continuing witness of shared resources through the ministries of our congregation and individually through other organizations. On **October 18th** – Stewardship Celebration Sunday – we will see a “silver screen” review of the love and determination of our parish family that has continued to respond to God’s call to share our offerings and gifts of time and talents with others.

May our response to God’s invitation to “year-round stewardship” for this coming year 2010 reveal to each of us again God’s continued faithfulness to US as we serve Christ as stewards and caretakers of God’s gifts of time, talent, and treasure. On **November 1st** we will celebrate “All Saints’ Sunday” and our connection with the many Christians who have gone before us on this “Commitment Sunday.” May our commitment cards returned to God’s Altar on that day reflect our trust and excitement in all the mornings that lie ahead in 2010, when we awake and say, for others as well as for ourselves, “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

Faithfully,
Steve +