



Dear Friends in Christ,

Grace to you in Christ Jesus!

I've been thinking about our ministry over the past year. It's at about this time last year that we were talking about finally joining back together for "in person" worship. We'd been through a long year and a half of worshipping only online. Conversations began about how we missed being able to have face to face conversations. We long for relationships that sustain us and bring us joy. We jumped back in to in person worship with enthusiasm but there seemed to also be a feeling that something was a bit different. The world had changed therefore we realized that we needed to change.

Through it all, you have remained faithful to our mission to be "called and sent to share Christ's love."

- You embraced Gloria Dei's first intern. Then a couple weeks ago we were able to host jj's ordination.
- We remained faithful to Wednesday Bible Study on Zoom as we walked through the book of John.
- We welcomed over 100 people Christmas weekend.
- We added a new contemplative noon Lent service which was a wonderful experience.
- We provided hospitality and memorial services for families who had lost loved ones.

There are many other things we have been able to do due to your generous gifts of time, talent and treasure. One thing we did was vote on a new budget that was arranged to better reflect our ministry passions such as music, social media, social justice and inclusive ministries. When we voted on the budget, we were also saying that we were committed to making it happen. We have much for which to be thankful to God. This congregation has weathered the storms and we now look to the future.

In order to move forward, we need every single person who is part of this congregation to join in the mission. We are at a point where our financial giving is not enough to sustain even our fixed costs. We are now having to dip into reserves and we have nothing else we can cut from the ministry. Our general fund is \$12,000 in the negative. To be brutally honest, it's not good.

Here's a few things we can do immediately:

- Pray. Pray that generosity abounds.
- Worship. Whether it is in person or online, it is important that we center our lives on God.
- Make some choices. Take a hard look at your spending and see if there is something you don't need to spend money on and add that to your regular giving (a pizza, coffee, lunch, luxury, etc.). Then increase your gifts.
- Give online. You can give weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. Set up automated giving on gloriadeigarland.org and click on the "online giving" tab on the top right. This will ensure that you never miss giving your gifts.
- Give a large tax-deductible gift.
- Start somewhere. If you aren't giving at all, start with a \$1 a day. That's \$7/week or \$28-30 a month.
- Invite someone to church.

The Church Council will be meeting with Don Haven, church consultant from Abundant Congregations on Sept. 13th to generate some ideas on how we can create a healthier stewardship model. Meanwhile, we must get our general fund back in the black.

Together we can do this. I believe in us and I believe in a God that can do far more than we can imagine. Let's all lean into the mission together. Thank you for your generosity!

In Christ's service,

Pastor Tom Schwolert