

# St. Mary's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church

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October 2, 2023

Dear friends in Christ,

Welcome to stewardship season! Our theme for this year is *The Joy of Abundance: God Multiplies Our Gifts*. We, your Vestry and Rector, are so grateful for the abundance we experience in this joyful, welcoming, curious, and generous parish. Welcome isn't just a word at St. Mary's, but it is our way of being. All are welcome to worship, to serve and be served, to explore, to dream, to belong. St. Mary's is a place where, whether you've been around for decades or just a few weeks, you can feel at home.

And just like at home, we need everyone to pitch in to keep this community vibrant and growing. Whether you're more comfortable in a business meeting or theological discussion, we need your participation as we continue to discover what God is calling us to do and be. Whether you prefer to work out front or behind the scenes, we need your hands and voices to make worship possible. Whether giving time or money is easier for you, we need your gifts to keep serving those in need in our community and beyond. Whether you identify more as a singer or musician or music lover, we need you for all the joyful noise we can make together. There is a place for you here, whoever you are and whatever your gifts.

**There is a place for you here because those who have come before us have generously given of their time and money to build and nurture St. Mary's ministries and campus. How will we honor their legacy and build on it?**

**This year, we are asking you to make two financial commitments – an annual pledge for our 2024 operating budget, and a one-time gift for the Labyrinth Garden to create a front yard that is as welcoming as our people.**

Our operating budget for 2023 is just over \$400,000, and it should be about the same in 2024. You will find a top-level 2023 budget attached, so you can see where the money goes. Like most churches, we spend most of our money on clergy, staff, buildings, and support for our diocese. This is the nucleus that enables the abundance of activity around the parish – worship, our many outreach ministries, education, fellowship, and providing space for community organizations and activities.

The Labyrinth Garden will create new opportunities for worship, ministry, education, fellowship, and community and we are so excited to see how it all unfolds. A concept drawing and project description are attached. Our core team has spent many, many hours dreaming, planning, and researching and applying for several grants for this wonderful project, because its projected \$160,000 price tag is bigger than our congregation can fund alone. We have over \$30,000 on hand already, thanks to generous donors, past and present. Our goal is to raise at least \$50,000 from the congregation.

We hope you are as excited as we are about St. Mary's future, and that you will join us in giving for both the Labyrinth Garden and the 2024 operating budget. Every single gift, no matter the size, is precious, because it is a sacrament – an outward sign of God's abundant grace in our lives. May God bless and multiply our offerings to spread good news in this world.

Faithfully,

  
Pastor Kristine

  
Mickey Welsh, Senior Warden  
on behalf of St. Mary's Vestry