



Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others as more significant than yourselves. Do not look out merely for your own interest but look out for the interests of others.

Philippians 2:3-4

September 11, 2020

Dear Parish Family,

I tossed and turned one night a few weeks ago, as we all do from time to time. My heart and spirit were disturbed more than my mind as I felt for dear parishioners who were struggling. Mental, physical, spiritual, financial, and relational challenges abound among us and our community. Having heard of malaria and hunger concerns among our mission partners in the Congo that same day, I also was hurting for our brothers and sisters around the world.

We face both a spiritual and physical pandemic. Our tonic, remedy, balm, and panacea are the grace and love of God and the holy ways of His Kingdom. *All Saints Church* is zealously and crucially laying itself down by the sacrifices and services of our people to bring Jesus' Gospel gifts to everyone we can reach, both inside and beyond our walls. Remembering this during that sleepless night brought images of how many lives have been touched during this mandated shutdown. Only then was I able to pray myself to sleep, in the peace of God that passes all understanding.

Let us evermore pour our hearts and resources into God's work at *All Saints* right now. The amazing spiritual and physical returns we are seeing prove our giving to be the best and most eternal investment we can make. Counterintuitively, this shutdown experience is a time for us to each *increase* our church giving as never before. Somehow the Holy Spirit is multiplying the fruit of our gifts beyond human abilities. God is palpably smiling upon us and blessing us for our hearts for Him and those who are in spiritual, relational, or material need. It is a joy and rush give to such a bountiful and divine phenomenon as that!

Someone once inspiringly wrote that the local church is the hope of the world. That is perfectly true only because the Church is the Body of Christ itself – the Holy Spirit empowered reality of Jesus Himself. More precisely, JESUS is the hope of the world. The Church at its best is an expression of Jesus and His Kingdom, on Earth as it is in Heaven. The church is the Lord’s privileged purveyor of His Gospel and love. We hold in faith and trust the answer to many of the prayers and cries of those who are struggling, oppressed, and hurt. And the answer is a Person, the One who brings a promise and actual blessings to everyone who comes to Him. As the Christmas hymn testifies, *the hope and fears of all the years are met in Him tonight!*

This note of encouragement is written on the very day that Patty and I step over the threshold into our 10th year of love and ministry with you all. During this near decade of time, we have witnessed how God has blessed *All Saints* to be a blessing in His Name. Seeing that inspired us to commit a little more than 10% of our income when we arrived, increasing it each year since. We have done this with the same joy and anticipation as a child bringing a special gift to a birthday party, excited to see the guest of honor open it!

Give with joy. Give in abundance. Give extravagantly. Give with a heart for those whose lives will be changed by your gift. Most of all, give to the Lord because of the love and gratitude you hold for Him in your heart!

In Jesus’ love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed+" with a plus sign.