


Dear St. Mark's Family,

As relatively new members of this wonderful flock, our family has come to appreciate St. Mark's long tradition of serving the community. We feel truly blessed to be part of this faithful work. Whenever physical, spiritual, or financial needs arise, St. Mark's responds with willing hearts and loving action. That is stewardship—and it is one of the reasons I'm proud to tell others that we attend St. Mark's and all the great things happening in our church.

In his stewardship message, Father Stephen shared a list of the incredible experiences that have shaped our church's past—the good times and the difficult ones. Whether I am at Grillin' and Chillin', visiting with others after Wednesday evening services, or participating in a workday, when things wind down and conversation begins, I am always eager to hear stories about St. Mark's history. The stories shared by those who experienced them firsthand are among my favorite ways to learn about our church and church family.

Sharing stories of our past keeps important memories alive. This is much like the stories our Israelite brothers and sisters carried with them on their journey to the Promised Land. As a member of the St. Mark's family today, I now have the privilege of participating in activities that may become cherished stories for future generations. By offering our time, talents, prayers, and resources, we place our gifts in God's hands and serve as He leads us.

Being good stewards and using our gifts to serve others is a vital part of living a Christian life. Our unique abilities allow us to participate in God's work and share His love in practical ways. When our gifts are placed in God's hands, someone receives a hot meal, another person receives clothing, and others may receive a weekly gift of food, kindness, and encouragement when they cross our paths. God is still in the business of taking our gifts and turning them into miracles.

Here are just two small acts of service at St. Mark's that are making a meaningful difference in the daily lives of some of the most vulnerable members of our community:

- Recycled grocery bags are carefully cut and woven by hand into mats large enough to be used as a sleeping place and to keep warm and dry. With donations from many, one of our faithful parishioners works on this year-round.

- When we learned that students at Pass Road Elementary School were at risk of going home hungry on the weekends, St. Mark's responded by filling their backpacks with food. Because of your faithful commitment to these children, the collection bins at the front of the church are filled each week. It is a joy to help meet this critical need. Our simple gifts of snacks, small meals, and drinks help ease the children's food insecurity.

Even gifts that seem small make a meaningful difference in someone's life when we place them in God's hands and extend our loving outreach.

Throughout this letter, I have spoken about stewardship through the gifts of time, talent, prayer, and financial support. As you prayerfully consider your stewardship goals for 2027, remember that there is room at the table for everyone and every gift. Scripture reminds us in 2 Timothy 3:17 that God equips us for every good work, preparing us to serve faithfully in whatever ways He calls us.

This year, we will celebrate Loyalty Sunday on November 8 in the Parish Hall. Please join us for breakfast following the 8:00 a.m. service, or for a potluck lunch following the 10:00 a.m. service.

In Christ,

Mark Banks

**Senior Warden, St. Mark's Episcopal Church**
**Gulfport, Mississippi**

**Prayer for Stewardship**

Loving God, I come to you in thanksgiving, knowing that all I am and all that I have is a gift from you. In faith and love, help me to do your will. Give me the wisdom and insight to understand your will for me and the fervor to fulfill my good intentions. I offer my gifts of time, talent and wealth to you as a true act of faith, to reflect my love for you and my neighbor. Help me to reach out to others as you have reached out to me, in Jesus' name. **Amen.**