

Through Christ, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God,
that is, the fruit of lips that confess the name of Jesus.
Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have,
for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

– Hebrews 13:15-16

Dear Ones,

I hope that you know that God has made you **good** and I hope you know that God has made you **for goodness** (if you don't believe me, just read Genesis 1:31). God's *goodness* is in you and God's desire is for you to share that *goodness*. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews says it this way, "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

God wants us to "do good" and to "share" what we have – and God calls us to make this offering of *goodness* in a *sacrificial* way. "Uh oh," you may be thinking, "that sounds painful!" We often think of "sacrifice" and "sacrificial" as meaning having to give up something or having to make do without, but "sacrifice" actually means for something to be made holy. If there is pain involved, we could imagine that it is the pain of being broken open more fully to the holy – being broken open more fully to God. Through living sacrificially, God is more present in us and God is reflected more fully through us. Through living sacrificially, we claim that God's goodness marks our primary identity and not the things that the world holds up as competing goods. Through living sacrificially, we offer praise and thanksgiving back to the God who is the ultimate giver of life and love and goodness and, in doing so, this offering spills forth into the world and allows God's goodness and love to be more fully known.

Can you imagine what it would feel like to strive to live such a life full of continual praise and gratitude offered to God? Do you know places in your life where you already glimpse such connection with God and God's goodness? How would you be willing to grow that connection to God's goodness in your life?

Thank you for all of the ways in which you offer and share God's goodness as it has been shared with you! Thank you for all of the ways you offer and share God's goodness with the world! Thank you for all of the ways that you offer and share God's goodness through sharing yourself with St. Bede's!

It is once again that time to prayerfully consider what we might offer back to God from what God has shared with us by contemplating and discerning a pledge of financial support to support God's mission and ministry as it is lived out here at St. Bede's. My prayer is that this process can be a spiritual practice for you – not just some onerous obligation. Consider inviting God more fully into your discernment about what you might be bring called to offer back to God. Pray that this process might be a process that opens you up more fully to God in your life and to how you name and experience God in the world around you.

Beyond the spiritual aspect of discerning your pledge to St. Bede's, please also know that we have real needs for setting a sustainable balanced budget for 2024. Our parish life is back to full speed and there is much ministry and mission to support in this place! In 2024, it is the hope of the Vestry that our budget will be a roadmap to support our mission by strengthening our commitment to reach out to the community – both in service and support and in welcoming-in and nurturing. We wish to continue to care for our facilities and grounds which provide space for so many wonderful programs and activities. We wish to care for our staff by appropriately compensating them for the work they do to support the ministry of St. Bede's. And we hope to continue and expand programs and ministries that enrich the lives of our members and draw others to join us in the good things that God is doing at St. Bede's.



We also face the realities of other institutions in that it costs more to operate than it used to. Utilities and other fixed costs have increased over the past several years and therefore it costs more merely to operate at the level we have previously operated, much less grow in ways that we may hope to grow as well.

The cheerful givers of St. Bede's made 2023 a record year for amount pledged in support for the parish. We received pledges of \$438,000 from 90 pledgers making our average pledge of around \$4,800 (or \$92 per week) also one of our highest as well. Thank you to all of you who have supported our financial, spiritual, and programmatic resiliency over the past few years!

Thank you so much for your faithful commitment to St. Bede's. In the days ahead, I hope you will consider faithfully growing your response to all that God has shared with you by making a pledge of financial support to St. Bede's for 2024.

Our pledge goal for 2024 is \$460,000. This is approximately 5% more than we received in pledges this year. We hope that we can stretch to achieve or surpass that goal so that we can continue and grow the ministries and opportunities that have blessed us for so long. We also hope to grow and imagine new ways of serving God and others as we live into the fullness of God's dreams for St. Bede's.

Once again, we are asking that you contemplate this pledge in terms of a weekly amount you would offer back to God thus allowing you to put this pledge in context with other weekly financial patterns in your life. Although the pledge is made in the form of a weekly amount, you may pay on any schedule (weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, or through a transfer of stocks or securities).

We hope to receive all of our pledge commitments by **Sunday, January 14** and rejoice gratefully for the amazing gifts that all of God's people will share to provide for the Gospel work to which we have been called together. You may return the enclosed pledge card on any Sunday between now and then. You may also return your card to St. Bede's by mail. **There is also an easy to use online pledge form that may be found through the "Pledge" link at the top of any page on our website: www.stbedes.org.**

Your pledge of financial support will ensure that St. Bede's can grow into its next season of mission and ministry stronger than ever before.

Thank you so much for prayerfully considering your financial commitment to the ministries and mission of St. Bede's. God is sharing God's goodness here amongst and through us. Thank you for all of the ways that you help magnify that work. Thank you for all of the ways you offer of yourself – your time, your gifts, yourselves, and your generous financial support of St. Bede's. Thank you for YOU and for all of the ways you offer to God – the giver of all good things!

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Chad', written in a cursive style.

Chad