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Dear People of Gloria Dei,

In my first preaching class at seminary, I had to pick a Bible verse summarizing my call to be a preacher. The verse I chose was 2 Corinthians 12:9, in which God says, *"My grace is sufficient for your, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* The idea that God's grace and power are found in our weakness resonates deeply with me, not least because my calling to ordained ministry came in response to the loss of a career that I had spent years dreaming of and working to achieve. Again and again, I have seen God show up in my experiences of weakness or loss or failure.

That said, it is still not fun to experience weakness, or to face challenges that seem too big to overcome. In those moments it is hard to trust, no matter what verses we quote or how often we have seen God provide in the past. I was reminded of this reality at the October Finance Committee meeting, when we put together the first draft of our 2027 budget. We had to grapple with how much costs are increasing, especially energy and wages (our Diocese sets guidelines for cost-of-living increases based on rising prices). Moreover, the volatility of markets means that our investment income is not likely to keep up with those costs. Taking these factors into account, our first budget draft has a deficit of just over $70,000.

To be honest, I came away from that meeting feeling overwhelmed, and I went into our October Vestry meeting expecting a tense discussion about what difficult cuts we would make to reduce that deficit. Instead, the Vestry's consensus was that an austerity budget is likely to do more harm than good. While we will, of course, work to eliminate unnecessary expenses, the Vestry felt that we should focus our efforts on increasing income rather than making dramatic cuts to an already minimal budget. In effect, we decided to trust that God's grace and power show up in our moments of weakness.

Since that Vestry meeting, I have also been repeatedly reminded of how often the grace and power of God have been on display over the past few years:

- Some of our biggest property needs have been met through incredible grants: an organ renovation is complete, the stormwater project is almost done, and major progress is being made on implementing the grant to replace the church roof.
- In 2025, your generosity turned an expected deficit of $31,000 into a surplus of $11,000.
- When two young people in our congregation asked for support to do a service trip in North Dakota, working with the Lakota people on Standing Rock Reservation, we provided everything they needed within hours of the request.
- In response to the needs of St. Gabe's Episcopal Church, we took on a second regular meal ministry, on top of our monthly lunch packing for Prevention Point.
- We've partnered with POWER Interfaith to advocate for a society that better reflects God's justice and care for those on the margins.
- In the past month alone, we received over $30,000 in unexpected donations.
- Amid everything else, we continue to welcome the surrounding community into our space, demonstrating God's generous and expansive love.

I am grateful that our congregation is willing to look for God's grace and power despite the challenges that we face. I am grateful for your continual generosity with your time and resources. And, I trust that you will join in praying that God will provide for our needs – and in being creative about how we generate new income and welcome new members.

To that end, will you please make a financial pledge to sustain the ministry of Gloria Dei in 2027? The enclosed Stewardship pamphlet was designed as a resource for your prayers and discernment – and it includes a commitment card that you can return to the church on (or before) November 22, when we will also share a communal meal after the service. If you have any questions, or would like to learn more about the budget process, please feel free to reach out to me or to members of the Vestry.

We do face significant challenges, but the good news is that God seems to delight in working through this community, as we see so clearly when we pause to remember God's past faithfulness. Therefore, I am confident that there are more incredible stories of grace and power ahead of us.

With many blessings and much gratitude,



Rev. Chris Micklewright
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