



O GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD,
FOR GOD IS GOOD,
FOR GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE
ENDURES FOREVER.

—PSALM 136

OUR MISSION

As followers of Jesus Christ, we seek to be an inclusive, grace-filled community engaging the world with open minds, willing hands, and generous hearts.

OUR VISION

We long for deeper faith, vibrant hope, and boundless love for everyone, every day, everywhere.

The Stewardship Committee of St. Philip is offering this guide of 28 daily devotionals from October 18 to November 14. Each devotional contains a Scripture passage, a reflection, an invitation, and a prayer. Our hope is that God will use this time in studying God's word to prepare our hearts to make a financial pledge to St. Philip for the 2021 year.

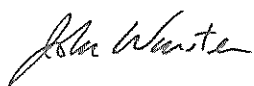
Dear Friends,

Among the things I've especially missed in these months when we haven't physically gathered for worship is talking with the children on the chancel steps. Our conversations always conclude with a prayer. I frame that prayer as a prayer of thanksgiving, always beginning with "Dear God, thank you for this day." My great hope is that the children reciting that phrase through the years will come to make it their own and will learn to thank God for the gift of each day. Even when the day is hard, it is still a day to be thankful for; it is still a day in which God provides for us.

Surely 2020 has been filled with hard days – challenging, unsettling, uncertain. Still, there is much to be thankful for in the community of St. Philip. United in the Body of Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit, we have found a variety of ways to continue our ministries of worship, nurture, and service. From daily online services to parking lot mission rallies, from all sorts of Zoom gatherings to accelerated grants from our Central Mission Endowment Fund, we are seeking to respond in faith, hope, and love to the opportunities God has set before us.

This stewardship devotional booklet was written by church members as a means for us to reflect with thanksgiving on the ongoing work of God at St. Philip. Our theme is drawn from Psalm 136, a steady and joyful chorus of thanksgiving for all that God has done. "O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good, for God's steadfast love endures forever." As we consider our life together in 2021, we look with hope to the future God is preparing for our church. While there is much we don't know about next year, we do know that God will be with us with steadfast love and boundless grace. And we know that we will have much to be thankful for.

With thanksgiving,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John Wente". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

IF NOT US, LORD, THEN WHO?

Genesis 1:29 – 31

God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Reflection—God was pleased with creation and gave us dominion over the entire Earth. Would it please God to see us, who are made in God's image and to whom God gave dominion, damaging and destroying this "very good" Earth?

Invitation—*Peacemaking and Social Justice Committee*

It can be tempting during these months of limited mobility and physical isolation to feel sorry for ourselves and even useless. A powerful antidote for these feelings is to take a walk in God's creation and to marvel at its beauty and intricacy. We are surrounded by global climate change that is putting this beautiful creation in jeopardy. Can there be a better time than now to join the movement to stop this degradation and leave this planet a better place for future generations? The options for getting engaged are abundant.

Prayer—Thank you, Lord, that the St. Philip family has committed itself to be an Earth Care Congregation and to find many different ways to defend your creation. Sustain us, God, for this is a long journey, but one you call us as your people to make. Amen.

WAS THAT FOR ME?

1 Samuel 3:2-9

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Reflection: The Lord calls Samuel. Samuel hears the Lord, but he mistakes the call as coming from Eli. The Lord must call Samuel three times before it is clear that it is the Lord, and not Eli, who is calling Samuel. So what is Eli's advice to Samuel? Eli advises Samuel to listen. It is good advice to all of us.

Invitation—*Communication and Technology Committee*

God calls us so many times and in so many ways. We invite you to take three minutes to listen deeply for God today.

Prayer: Holy God, help us listen. Amen.

October 20

ALMIGHTY, ALL-POWERFUL GOD

1 Chronicles 29:10-13

Then David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly; David said: "Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name."

Reflection: Pray David's prayer aloud and reflect on what it means to give "the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty" to God.

Invitation—*Stewardship Committee*

We believe that Christian stewardship is our response to God's grace and gift of redeeming love through Jesus Christ, a measure of our gratitude. Joyous giving is a sign of freedom from dependence on our own resources and a celebration of our dependence on God's grace. While every believer's response is personal, it is grounded in belief in Jesus Christ and guided by biblical teaching. We invite you to use this devotional as a way to discover your gifts to God for 2021.

Prayer: O God, Creator of the universe, I thank you for the gift of life and for the sacrifice of your Son, Jesus. May your Holy Spirit be my guide in living this life in fulfillment of your purpose for me. Amen.

October 21

GOD, THE CREATOR OF ALL THAT IS

Psalm 24:1-2

*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
for God has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.*

Reflection: How does *sharing* God's creation with the rest of the world, rather than *owning* it, change the way we take care of the Earth?

Invitation—*Peacemaking and Social Justice Committee*

In gratitude to God for our fourth year as an Earth Care Congregation, in 2021 the Earth Care team will lead the congregation in the following activities: implementing the earth-friendly food service policy passed in 2020, monitoring and reporting about our new solar farm on the education building, and continuing our work toward becoming a carbon-neutral congregation. We invite you to make a personal commitment to caring for the Earth, or to join the St. Philip Earth Care team.

Prayer: O God, thank you for the Earth that feeds and sustains us with its fruit and splendid beauty. Help us to live in harmony with all life. Help us discover the best ways to be the stewards of your creation—at home, at St. Philip, in our communities, and in the world. Amen.

October 22

LET US WORSHIP GOD

Psalm 42: 4-5

*These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.*

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise the Lord,
my help and my God.*

Reflection: Recall a time when participating in public worship helped you overcome suffering.

Invitation—Worship & Music Committee

It takes a throng to make worship come to life at St. Philip. Worship unfolds through the efforts of liturgists reading Scripture and praying; office staff and volunteers proofing, printing, and folding bulletins; greeters welcoming; ushers collecting offering; elders serving communion; audiovisual volunteers livestreaming; and musicians, pastors, and worshippers all lifting voices in praise of Almighty God! Give thanks for every member of St. Philip who has led worship in 2020 and in the past. Ask how you can be a worship leader in 2021. Remember that our leaders also suffer, so let us lift them up every day.

Prayer: O God, thank you for our worship leaders. Thank you for the power of worship and music to sustain us throughout our lives. Amen.

October 23

A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING

Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;

come into God's presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is she that made us, and we are hers;

we are her people, and the sheep of her pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;

her steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations.

Reflection: Thanksgiving! This is our theme for this season of response to God's gifts. *Thanksgiving!* We are God's children living in a time not experienced in our memories. We hear much about what is sad and less of what gives us joy as a body of Christ: we have joy in our indefatigable pastoral staff offering inspired and innovative worship, joy in live worship each day, joy in angel hugs (have you felt them?), joy in reaching out to members by social media, joy in drive-thru mission events, Zoom meetings (wearing a nice shirt and mismatched pants, because who will see?) and pets joining us for online worship. We are thankful for checking in on other church worship services, scones and latte during worship, and sore ears from long (long!) phone calls. You get the message, right? We are blessed!

Invitation—*Property Committee*

In the midst of our many joys and blessings, we still miss our church house, our sanctuary, our place of worship. We long for the time when we return. Let us give thanks for our dedicated facilities staff who take care of our campus while we are away.

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for your presence with us in every time and every place. Thank you for inspiring us to find endless new ways to be your good news. Amen.

RECKLESS LOVE

Psalm 139: 7-10

Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there;

if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning

*and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.*

Reflection: God is omnipresent. God is everywhere we go and is always with us. God's *love* is also omnipresent and reaches us wherever we are. These words must have been the inspiration for Cory Asbury as he wrote the song *Reckless Love*: "*Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God...I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it; still, you give yourself away.*"

Invitation—*Mission Committee*

How does God's "reckless love" affect how we value ourselves and others? Might that love diminish our need to accumulate "things" and motivate us to be better stewards of all that we have . . . all that God has given us? How does it inspire us and our church to extend the same love and grace to other people? The Mission Committee invites you to extend God's reckless love by serving breakfast at Lord of the Streets, sewing quilts for children with the St. Philip Stitchers, or donating items for Seafarers Ministry Christmas Boxes.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for your overwhelming, omnipresent love. There is no place I can go and nothing I can do that will separate me from you. Thank you for loving me with your "reckless love." Amen.

October 25

PUT GOD TO THE TEST

Malachi 3:10-12

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

Reflection: What would change at your house if you brought more food to God's house and received overflowing blessings?

Invitation—*Stewardship Committee*

Percentage giving is an act of faith that helps us keep our priorities straight. It reminds us that we don't own anything in this life. God is in control, and we're only managers of what God has given us. Consider tithing (10%) this year. If the goal of tithing seems too daunting, consider prayerfully planning to tithe in the future.

Prayer: God, stay close and guide me as I seek your will for my gifts to you. Amen.

October 26

FAITH OF A CHILD

Matthew 18:2-4

Jesus called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Reflection: What does it mean to have faith like a child? Consider the traits of a child: innocence, trust, a willingness to rely on others, curiosity, eagerness to learn, honesty, boldness. How could these lead you into fuller discipleship?

Invitation—*Education Committee*

God welcomes us all as God's children, and we have an invitation every day to come to God as children: humble, inquisitive, and trusting. We invite you to ask bold questions of God this year, and to use the resources of St. Philip to seek the Lord's answers with unabashed curiosity.

Prayer: Loving Father, we give you thanks for the lessons of children. Open our minds to learn your truths, teach our hands to do your work, and fill our hearts to share your love. Amen.

October 27

DOING GOD'S WORK

Matthew 25:37-40

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Reflection: Through the wisdom of Central and St. Philip Presbyterian Church leaders, the Central Mission Endowment Fund (CMEF) was created when the churches united a decade ago. Each year the endowment interest supports organizations doing God's work locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. This year CMEF dispersed \$300,000 in support of 23 organizations and provided emergency funds to several local organizations impacted severely by the pandemic.

Invitation—*Central Mission Endowment Council*

The passage in Matthew suggests a few ways in which we can help our siblings. What other ways are there? Which will you pledge to do?

Prayer: Lord, you have blessed us beyond all expectations. Please show us how we can use these blessings to serve our neighbor. Amen.

October 28

THE UNDERSTANDING AND ANSWERS OF JESUS

Luke 2:41-47

Now every year Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Reflection: Many of us have had the experience of speaking with a youth who expressed knowledge far more profound than we anticipated. We think we know the universe of what the youth could possibly say. The insight that “they’re smarter than we think they are” can arrive embarrassingly late. It is not difficult to imagine the amazement of the teachers in the temple listening to a 12-year-old Jesus. It is not difficult to imagine the amazement of the teachers in the temple listening to a 12-year-old Jesus, for we also benefit from the knowledge of God within 7th graders in our congregation.

Invitation—*Education Committee*

Different generations can have different education and experiences. This is why we pair Confirmation students with adult mentors. We believe that youth grow the faith of adults as much as adults shape the faith of youth. We invite you to receive the understanding of the good news from a person of a different generation, and share your faith with them, too.

Prayer: Holy God, open our hearts to accept the message of the good news from people different from us. Amen.

October 29

BRINGING GOOD NEWS

Luke 9:1-6

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." They departed and went through the villages, bringing good news and curing diseases everywhere.

Reflection: In this passage Jesus sends his disciples on a sort of internship. He must have wanted to know how they were going to perform without him. But before the disciples start, Jesus has some instructions for them: "Don't bother to pack. You will be provided with what you need on your way. And don't get into arguments." For interns, the disciples seem to have done well. They brought his message and cured diseases "everywhere."

Invitation—*Education Committee*

Jesus sends us out on an internship every day. We invite you to take advantage of the many educational opportunities available at St. Philip provided for you on your internship, whether that might lead you to try the Wednesday Bible Study, the antiracism study group, the SPA class, Primetimers events, or a Presbyterian Women's Circle.

Prayer: Holy God, as you send us out every day to do your will, we pray for what we need. Amen.

October 30

TEACH ME TO PRAY

Luke 11:1-4

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial."

Reflection: Recall an occasion when someone taught you to pray or you taught someone to pray. Were you an adult or a child? What made the experience memorable? What do you do when prayer is difficult for you?

Invitation—*Welcoming and Membership Committee*

Call a member of St. Philip who you know is struggling or rejoicing and offer to pray with them. Say the Lord's Prayer together after your time of sharing.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for Jesus and the prayers he taught us. Thank you for all the people who have taught me to pray and prayed with me and for me. Amen.

October 31

GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S PROVISION

Luke 22:19-20

Then Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Reflection: Consider for a moment, metaphors in your life for "cup" and "bread," times when you have been nourished, and who nourished you. Who fed you? Someone you did not know? A friend? A family member? The Holy Spirit? Remember that time when you felt a release from stress, eased by a kind word or smile. Maybe you spoke a word or gave a smile, maybe you received it. We all receive from each other. Let's all commit to give more, starting today. Give a small kindness in word or deed, give yourself, to everyone you meet. When we are nourished and when we nourish others, we give thanks to God from whom all things come.

Invitation—*Property Committee*

We invite you to especially remember our beautiful sanctuary and campus and all the ways we have been nourished through our time together in classrooms, in worship, in fellowship, in mission. Give thanks to God for the blessing of wonderful space to be together!

Prayer: Holy One, thank you for our St. Philip family. You have filled us up. Amen.

November 1

EACH OF US

Acts 2:1-8

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?"

Reflection: According to Google, the Bible has been translated into over 3,000 languages. While that seems like an enormous number, it is only about half of the more than 6,000 languages that exist. Contrast this percentage, 50%, with the 100% of the crowd at Pentecost who heard and understood the message of God's love for them.

Invitation—Communication and Technology Committee

We are especially blessed during these challenging times to have the technology that permits St. Philip to broadcast a service every day beginning at 11:00 a.m. We invite you to listen to these services and to consider inviting a friend to listen also.

Prayer: Holy God, help us to understand how to reach out to more people so that 100% of us can hear and understand your love for us. Amen.

November 2

OPEN YOUR MINDS

Romans 12:2-3

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Reflection: Are there areas in your life where you might be conforming to the world because doing so is easier than going against the status quo? Paul calls us to renew our minds in order to discern what it is God would have us do here on Earth. How might God use you to transform the world through actions both large and small?

Invitation—Finance Committee

The love of God touches all of us every day. As we move through the liturgical calendar and approach the joy of Advent, use this opportunity to reflect on the wonder of God's gifts freely given to you and how you will steward those gifts to the glory of God.

Prayer: God, thank you for this and every day. Thank you for making us in your image and putting us into this wonderful glorious world. Help us to do your will on Earth. Grant us moments of peace so we may ponder the words of Jesus and realize ways in which we can put those teachings into action. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

November 3

GOD HAS GIVEN US DIFFERENT GIFTS

Romans 12: 4-8

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophesy in proportion to faith: ministry in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Reflection: Think about the many and varied gifts that you see all around that have enriched your life. What gifts are you contributing to enrich our common life at St. Philip?

Invitation—Personnel Committee

We are so blessed to have our St. Philip staff share their talents and gifts each and every day. They put us and our church ahead of themselves and work tirelessly to support and care for us. As the Personnel Committee supports the staff through its work. We ask you to do so with your time, talents, and contributions.

Prayer: Holy One, help me to find new ways to use my gifts to glorify your name and to enrich the community of faith at St. Philip. Amen.

November 4

THE LOVE DEBT

Romans 13:8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Reflection: What can it mean to "owe no one anything, except to love one another," when our siblings are being mistreated on our southern borders? What does it mean to say, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor," when our trans siblings are being murdered? What does "Love your neighbor as yourself" mean in this Black Lives Matter moment of our culture? How can we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" and be the active love of God in the world by our deeds?

Invitation—*Peacemaking and Social Justice Committee*

Reflect on some of the key news events this week: Are there people or communities in need? Are there others who can be thankful? Are there reports of progress or setbacks to bring to God? Can we pray in sorrow or in hope for events that make us feel overwhelmed? Can we hear the Earth's voice in any of these stories that we need to bring in prayer?

Prayer: God-with-us, hear our fears and needs. Hold our hands as you walk beside us. Advise, encourage, and guide us. Amen.

November 5

BLESSING OF DIVERSITY

1 Corinthians 12: 4-7

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Reflection: Is it sometimes difficult to celebrate and thank God that there are differences among us? Paul reminds us that we have the same Lord who gave us a variety of gifts for the common good.

Invitation—Personnel Committee

Thank goodness for differences. It is those differences that allow our staff to help and care for each of us. John, Keatan, Omar, and Kallie share spiritual growth and insights. Randall and Matthew share the joy of music. Lorrie keeps everything running so that we can be a part of a vibrant family. Wilbert and Dimas maintain our “home.” Micah makes sure communications are timely and inspiring. Denise takes care of the financial organization. Janet and Denise show genuine care for our children in the nursery. Make a positive difference for St. Philip and our staff by sharing your contribution and commitment.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, thank you for the ways that our diversity may be used for the common good. May we use our differences to strengthen our common life at St. Philip and our witness and service to others. Amen.

November 6

THE CHEERFUL GIVER

2 Corinthians 9: 7-9

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, "God scatters abroad, God gives to the poor; God's righteousness endures forever."

Reflection: Think about how you feel when you are able to help others in some way. Does serving others inspire you to do more service? God advises us to *decide* in our heart to give. How would *deciding* to give differ from giving out of guilt or compulsion? Does giving make you cheerful?

Invitation—*Mission Committee*

Proverbs tells us, "*Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will be watered.*" When we bring the blessings of love and abundance to others in need, we, ourselves, are blessed. In what ways God has watered you and your loved ones? St. Philip would welcome your help in doing God's work in the world. Consider helping with Kids Against Hunger, or Living Waters for the World, or CCSC, or another St. Philip mission. God loves cheerful givers.

Prayer: Dear God, you are the giver of all good gifts. You gave your only Son. Help me discover the joy of giving and make me a cheerful giver. Amen.

November 7

WE WELCOME

Galatians 3:25-28

But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Reflection: Christ alone welcomes people into the community of faith. What can we do to identify and eliminate barriers we place on Christ's welcome in our individual and collective hearts?

Invitation—*Welcoming and Membership Committee*

Think of ways you have been made to feel welcomed at St. Philip and at other churches. Consider passing on that gift to others by being a Sunday worship "Welcomer" at our church.

Prayer: Dear God, give us the faith of Christ as we walk the path of welcome together. Help us remember that we are all one in Christ Jesus so that your love and acceptance can flow freely to all we encounter. Amen.

November 8

REJOICE – GOD IS NEAR

Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Reflection: Paul offers the church at Philippi advice for healthy hearts and minds. Does the meaning change when “your” refers to the church as a whole or when “your” is a member of the church? Is one dependent on the other? What does it mean to be a “gentle church”?

Invitation—Fellowship Committee

We are grateful for the comfort of God’s peace in our lives. John, Keatan, Omar, and Kallie bring us wise words on a daily basis to help us keep this message in sight. Randall and Matthew lift our spirits and fill us with the joy of music. Be the gentle friend who reaches out to aid a neighbor or a stranger. Show them the mercy of God’s love. Allow them to join you as you experience St. Philip so that they may discover the joy of growing in faith.

Prayer: Light of light, be with me as I navigate today’s world. Help me be a voice of calm, encouraging others to find the peace of Christ. Thank you for St. Philip. Help her to be a rejoicing, gentle, worry-free, prayerful church to all who know her. Amen.

November 9

WISDOM, GOD'S GIFT THROUGH THE LOVE OF LEARNING

Colossians 1:9-10

For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to God, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

Reflection: How do we gain wisdom? When we reflect on God's Word and learn from it, our knowledge is increased and we grow in wisdom and love through the experience of education. This gives us knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and understanding. We are also enabled to discover our gifts, to determine how the church provides opportunities to put our faith into action, and to be a part of God's work. This enables us to nurture a community or society that is just and fair, and enriches our lives beyond measure.

Invitation—Education Committee

The word "wisdom" appears 206 times in the Bible, "knowledge" 85 times, and "learn" 62 times. How can we apply what we learn to our world? At St. Philip, the Church and Society adult Sunday School class looks at how church and society interact with one another. We learn about our faith response, we gain knowledge through our study, and we grow in wisdom. We invite you to be part of this learning experience, and we pray for God's guidance as we study our world and God's will.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the gift of learning. Thank you for teachers with knowledge to pass on to us. The Great Commission instructs us to teach disciples. We pray for the wisdom to bring your Word to the people at St. Philip and in our communities. We ask your blessing on all teachers and learners. May we all grow in spiritual wisdom through your guidance and love. Amen.

November 10

SING TO THE LORD

Colossians 3:15-17

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Reflection: : Give thanks for the Chancel Choir, Bell Canto Handbell Choir, Children's Choir, Organ Intern, staff singers, and special guests from the Houston music community. Rejoice in the youth and college students who offer their skills in worship playing flute, marimba, piano, and trumpet. Celebrate Randall and Matthew who lead and inspire our vibrant music ministry. Support St. Philip's music by attending concerts and inviting others to join you. How numerous are the ways we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God!

Invitation—Worship and Music Committee

Whenever you feel gratitude, sing or listen to a hymn or spiritual song. Thanks to Randall, we all can access all music at St. Philip through our SoundCloud page, accessible from the Music Page of our website. <https://soundcloud.com/stphiliphouston/tracks>.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for giving us music to praise and thank you. Thank you for musicians at St. Philip and everywhere. Amen.

November 11

PEACE

2 Thessalonians 3:16

*Now may the Lord of peace give you peace at all times in all ways.
The Lord be with all of you.*

Reflection: Engaging with our own internal conflicts, building healthy relationships with each other, participating in interfaith dialogue, grappling with issues of justice in our communities, and re-imagining international relations are crucially interconnected steps on the path of peacemaking. We are the church, together. We are peacemakers, together. We are the builders of God's household of peace. And when, *together*, we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

Invitation—*Peacemaking and Social Justice Committee*

Practice God's peace at all times, and in all ways.

Prayer: Gracious God, keep us from being ordinary. Sharpen our vision through the eyes of Christ. Amen.

November 12

BE IN COMMUNITY

Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for the One who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together.

Reflection: Who are your partners in provoking each other to love and good deeds? In what context do you meet? Compare your ability to “provoke one another” when you meet together in person and when you meet by phone or online.

Invitation—*Fellowship Committee*

As a congregation, St. Philippians are missing each other’s company during the pandemic. Reach out beyond your household—maybe even beyond your close friend group—and tell a friend from St. Philip that you miss them. Open your hearts to each other and gently provoke one another. Be ready to facilitate community as the seasons turn and we can again meet together. Consider new ways you might facilitate community even now, during this time of isolation. Give thanks for our family of faith and support our life together through faithful stewardship.

Prayer: Holy Friend, thank you for my friends and neighbors inside and outside of St. Philip who provoke and inspire me to be more loving and giving. Let me be an inspiration to them as well. Give me the courage to reach out to a St. Philip friend I haven’t seen or talked to recently. Help us find joy in serving you together. Amen.

November 13

LOVE

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins.

Reflection: This passage in 1 Peter is beautiful in its simplicity. We may not always be the person we want and aspire to be. We may fall short time and time again. However, by the sheer act of deeply and sincerely loving one another we are practicing the teachings of Christ. In what ways can you demonstrate loving others?

Invitation—*Finance Committee*

The love of God is so all encompassing that God gave us the Son, and with that gift, Jesus, by his life, death, and resurrection, covered all of our sins. As you meditate on this passage include in your thoughts how your gifts of time, talent, and resources are used to further God's work in the world.

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to love one other. Help us find practical ways to demonstrate love to our neighbors throughout the world. Teach us how to love others in ways that truly make a difference in their lives and ours. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

November 14

EVERYTHING WE HAVE COMES FROM GOD

2 Chronicles 29:14

But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

Reflection: All things come from God - *all good gifts!* Our very lives are a gift of God. God asks us to be a generous people as God is generous with us.

Invitation—Stewardship Committee

Consider how God has cared for you through these challenging months. Ask for God's guidance and direction in making your pledge to support St. Philip in 2021. Respond out of gratitude for God's blessings and give out of a response to God...out of gratitude.

Prayer: Holy, loving, and generous God, thank you for your strong presence in my life. Thank you for our wonderful church and staff. Open my eyes and heart to those you put before me who need attention and love, and show me where I am needed to serve. Give me a grateful, generous heart for all your blessings to me. Amen.

	2021 Challenge Budget	2020 Annual Budget
Revenue		
Pledges	\$1,295,000	\$1,116,000
Less reserve non-collection (5%)	(64,750)	(55,800)
Prepaid pledges	0	0
Prior year pledges	0	0
Non-pledge members	350,000	350,000
Plate	6,000	10,000
Interest	50	50
Income from:		
Endowment	99,000	98,274
Staff housing fund	9,500	14,059
Mission fund	6,500	6,378
Red fund	17,000	16,738
CPC endowment	14,500	14,307
Wischmeyer mission	1,500	1,473
Cost recovery from building use	14,400	75,000
Cost recovery - Mission Center	36,000	36,060
Interface Samaritan closing	0	16,000
Other	(200)	(379)
Total Revenue	1,784,500	1,698,160
Expense		
Personnel	939,000	900,000
Welcoming & Worship	2,500	2,500
Property	332,000	325,000
Property—Mission Center	36,000	36,060
Administration	143,000	128,000
Worship & Music	55,000	55,000
Education	10,000	10,000
Youth	1,000	1,000
Mission (2018 @ 10% pledges)	125,000	111,600
Mission—PNC	20,000	20,000
Fellowship	16,000	14,000
Peacemaking and Social Justice	2,000	2,000
Presbyterian Women	2,000	2,000
Communications	10,000	10,000
Technology	1,000	1,000
Reserve for replacement	90,000	80,000
Total Expense	1,784,500	1,698,160
REVENUE OVER (UNDER) EXPENSE	0	0

SIGNIFICANT PROPOSED CHANGES TO 2021 BUDGET

Personnel

The Committee plans a small increase to staff salaries, with a related increase in benefits, for both ordained and non-ordained staff. A \$5,000 addition will be made to the Ordained Staff Sabbatical Fund.

Property

The Committee requests an increase to include rent on solar panels and an increase in the savings transfer to the Reserve for Replacement Fund to maintain the balances required per our Reserve Study. The Mission Center is on a cost sharing plan with the Presbytery of New Covenant and should be a net zero revenue and cost.

Mission

The Committee has requested 10% of pledged funds, as in previous years.

Administration (formerly Stewardship)

The Committee is budgeting for an increase in insurance and possibly an increase in the cost of leased office machines.

Ada Fuller
Treasurer

2021 PROPOSED BUDGET: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do I need to submit a pledge card?

Our pledges allow the Session to estimate revenue and plan the church's spending on operations for the coming year. The budget presented in this package is the *proposed* operating budget for next year that the committee chairs and the Treasurer have submitted to the Session for approval and presentation to the congregation. The Session will approve the *final* 2021 operating budget after all pledges have been received from the stewardship campaign.

Are there are other forms of mission support beyond the amount in the operating budget?

We extend additional support to our mission partners through grants from our Central Mission Endowment Fund and our monthly communion offerings. In 2021, we expect CMEF grants to be over \$300,000 and communion offerings to total over \$25,000. Mission projects, like Kids Against Hunger meal packing, quilts from the St. Philip Stitches, and produce from our community garden, also further our outreach.

How do I make a pledge to the church?

- Bring your completed pledge card to the Celebration Drive-thru at the church on Saturday, November 14 between 10 a.m. and 12 noon.
- Mail it to the church office anytime.
- Make an online pledge via [MyStPhilip](#) on the church website.

If I still have some unanswered questions after reading this who do I call?

If you still have a question, please contact one of the Stewardship chairpersons listed below. If necessary your question will be routed to the appropriate staff person or committee chair. We want to be sure that your question is heard, and answered promptly, accurately, and fully.

Grace and peace,
2020 Stewardship Committee

Judye Hartman (832-563-7244) & Judith Hiott (832-277-8676)
—co-chairpersons

**Beth Atkinson, Linda Bevill, Chuck Johnson,
Jane Lee, and Bill Stubbs**

MISSION PARTNERS

Amazing Place
Austin College
Austin Seminary
The Beacon
Bethesda Clinic (Mexico)
Bridges to Life
CCSC
Centro Educativo (Mexico)
Faith in Practice
Hope and Healing Center
Houston Hope of the Nations
Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston
Kids Against Hunger
Kids Meals
Living Waters for the World
Lord of the Streets
Loving Houston
Medical Benevolence Foundation
Mo-Ranch
Montreat Conference Center
NewSpring
Pan American School
Plant It Forward
Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services
Project CURE
Schreiner University
Seafarers Ministry (Presbytery of New Covenant)
SEARCH Homeless Services
United Campus Ministries
Women's Home of Houston



SAVE THE DATE

Celebration Drive-thru

November 14

10:00 a.m. until 12 noon

- Drop off your pledge card.
- Pick up a meal to take home.