
A 2021 Stewardship Re-Gathering!

Yes, we are late! This Times article is an appeal for parishioners and friends of the Cathedral Parish of St. Philip to make our financial pledge for the year 2021. We have been sensitive, and slow, and careful. Maybe we've waited too long to distribute our appeal for financial pledges for the 2021 year. I hope not! We need you!

We have certainly not been behind in ministering comfort to God's people this past year. Two particular phrases can describe our ministry. Back in December of 2020, we heard the Lord say to Isaiah, "Comfort, comfort, my people." In my December annual report to the parish, I noted how those words described our ministry during the pandemic 2020 year. In midst of isolation and grief, we try to provide comfort.

In addition, however, the words, "First, no judgement," became my guidance for the pandemic. In conversations, in reactions, in decisions, I urged us (and myself) not to judge, not to be critical, of people struggling through their situations. For centuries, the Church has unfortunately been perceived as a place that judges people, that binds people, instead of a place of grace, that releases people in the Spirit.

In this Cathedral Parish, we have tried to be that occasion for grace in each others' lives. Thanks so much for joining us in grace, for joining us in comfort this past year. I will not want the pandemic to result in the Church going backwards, being perceived again as lawgiver and judge! God needs us to be a place of grace; and the world needs that grace, too.

In the midst of a tough, grinding, and agonizing year, I have been proud to be part of a patient and persevering community of faith: YOU! Last summer, when cities were being divided, many of you gave over and beyond your pledge, and helped us raise \$130,000 that would retire \$1.3 million of medical debt of neighbors in the Peoplestown area of Atlanta.

Unable to gather in as full a way as possible, you have nevertheless supported and encouraged all sorts of other ways to serve: from the Farmers Market to the Preschool, from the Thrift Store to the Counseling Center to the Bookstore to the Antiques Show, from bible studies to youth gatherings, from online chorister meetings to pastoral support groups.

Remember the freezing outside services on the labyrinth over Christmas? The wind and rain were so strong that they blew our tent back over into 2020! Nevertheless, many of you were there, gathered in boots and blue jeans! We forged on into the year 2021! You have gathered around fires in the labyrinth and in the cloister garden, in cars around the parking lot for Shrove Tuesday; you have gathered around computer and tablet screens in your own homes!

Recently, Easter arrived gloriously! Many of us were outside, and inside, together for the first time in a year. Youth confirmation classes have been gathering outdoors on Sunday mornings, assembled in circles all over the campus. They have looked like random batches of Spring flowers to me every Sunday!

Yes, we have been blessed with generous space and resources over this past year. Those resources have helped us to gather in grace, in some new ways. Now, thankfully, we are beginning to re-gather, safely and joyfully, in person. It's not all at once, but it is happening; we are re-gathering! As I preached on Easter: the Resurrection is not completely here, yet; but it is happening!

And we need your 2021 financial pledge to make that re-gathering all the stronger. We need your financial generosity to make our Resurrection body complete. It is time to make our financial commitment to God's presence at the Cathedral of St. Philip for the 2021 year. God is re-gathering us, as a place of grace, a community of hope and love, a church that serves the world, the resurrected Body of Christ.

I plan to increase my own financial pledge to the Cathedral for 2021 (yes, I too make an annual pledge to the

Cathedral each year! It is my ongoing community of faith). Please do join me, with as much generosity as God gives you.

We are not late! But we do need your strong commitment, and your pledge of joyful generosity, now. The body of Christ who is the Cathedral Parish of St. Philip will not be complete without you.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip