



St. Mark's Episcopal Church

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November 2

Greetings and salutations, families of St. Mark's,

I can't believe another year has passed. It seems like I was just writing the stewardship letter for 2022 and here I am, writing for 2023! Since we have all tried to get back to our pre-COVID way of life, we all notice some new challenges. I know, for me, it seems when doors began to reopen with us not having to wear masks, we find ourselves busier now more than ever. Like we're trying to cram in those lost 2 years into the now. Does that make sense? My work life seems busier, my family life seems busier, like I'm at a constant state of alertness/busyness and must act to get that next project or presentation completed as soon as possible or even get to the store as quickly as I can so that I can get home put the groceries away, fix dinner, clean up, THEN maybe sit to relax. I've noticed that my down time, is barely that.

One of my prayers for this next year is that we all find inner peace and to give ourselves GRACE. That we find that extra needed bit of patience, compassion and understanding for not only others, but ourselves. I know I need all of those! I'm a work in progress and always will be. The days of comparing myself to others, beating myself up because I didn't manage to get the last "thing" done, second guessing myself, are, hopefully, coming to an end. My children grew up hearing me tell them that "God made you perfect just the way you are" and who are we to question that? Seriously. Instead of criticizing, let's pat ourselves on the back for those things we did get done. Maybe we begin a new routine, like taking some time first thing in the morning to read our bible or to meditate, maybe take a deep breath, then another one. To stay present and aware of what matters most to us.

No matter what, the Holy Spirit has been with each of us. We have so much to be grateful for and the following is just a few of the positive things we have enjoyed and been blessed with in 2022.

We continue to support one another, we continue to meet Sunday after Sunday in person or by zoom, we have our first Oktoberfest coming up where we can focus on fellowship and continuing to build our relationships. We have a wonderful Grounds Group, The Botetourt Music Academy, Seminarians, Bible Studies, Glebe Days, Lent Dinners and Speakers, as well as Eagle Rock Sundays and more. Our ministries are powered by this grace and the Holy Spirit, and your gifts of energy, time and money allows us to plan and grow these ministries.

I know that we may be looking at more change this coming year. The talk of a recession and inflation are all too real and very much a worry for many in our community. I spoke with a friend of mine who is the Director of RAM House and she tells me that they are now seeing people in need like never before. People who have been able to provide for themselves and even to make contributions to the needy are finding themselves part of that need. One constant in our lives is the Holy Spirit and His grace. Last year I shared what my grandmother always told me; "God never put anything on the face of this earth that He didn't help provide for. Not even the smallest bird." So

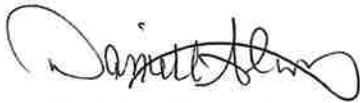
here I am, again, amid not knowing or understanding what's coming for 2023, asking you, my church family, my friends, to open your hearts and your generosity so that we may continue those so important ministries within OUR community.

I appreciate every one of you for your gifts, your time, your efforts, your love and generosity, your welcomeness to visitors of St. Mark's, your kind hearts, and your love for our community.

“Take from among you an offering to the Lord; everyone who has the impulse in his heart, let him give his offering to the Lord; gold and silver and brass.” Exodus 35:5

“Give honor to the Lord with your wealth, and with the first-fruits of all your increase: So your store-houses will be full of grain, and your vessels overflowing with new wine.” Proverbs 3:9-10

With love and prayers for this next year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danielle Alexander', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Danielle Alexander
Senior Warden