

The Sower

Dear St. Thomas,

There is a prayer in the Book of Common Prayer that I have come to cherish. It is the Collect for Guidance:

"Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being… may we remember that we are ever walking in your sight."

I think those words are a lovely starting point for talking about stewardship.

Before stewardship is about what we offer, it is about noticing where we already are. We are breathing and ever-living in the presence of God. We are standing on holy ground. The life we have been given, the people we love, our vocations, and the places we belong are all held within the generosity of God.

I think of Moses standing before the burning bush and hearing God say,

"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

I think of Jacob awakening from his dream and saying,

"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."

Stewardship begins there: waking up to the presence and generosity of God.

At St. Thomas, we gather Sunday after Sunday for Holy Eucharist. We hear God's Word. We confess. We make peace with one another. We receive Holy Food and Drink. And then we are beckoned into the world as the Body of Christ, as the Church.

The word *Eucharist* means thanksgiving. Our worship inspires us to champion a way of life: we give because we have first been given to.

This year, I want us to think especially about the image of the sower. You may have heard me talk about Vincent van Gogh's *The Sower*, one of my favorite paintings. There's a small and treasured rendition of it hanging in my office at the church. The sower walks through the field scattering seed, trusting that something will grow.

For me, the beautiful thing about the image is that the sower is not the creator of the seed, nor is the sower the giver of the harvest. The seed, the soil, the rain, the sun, the growth, and the harvest ultimately come from God." We simply get to enjoy joining in.

There is much to be thankful for in the life of St. Thomas. The number of people attending worship has blossomed, with roughly 220 to 230 of us gathering across our Sunday morning services on many recent Sundays. We have celebrated baptisms and confirmations, welcomed new faces, deepened friendships around shared meals and

retreats, and continued nurturing children and young people in the faith. Week by week, we are learning what it means to belong to one another in Christ. (over)

I am especially grateful to share the news that Father Brian has chosen to continue his ministry among us as our Associate Rector. We have been blessed by his preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and presence, and I am delighted that he will remain among us as we continue the work God has given us to do. His two-year curacy will conclude on July 31, and we look forward to celebrating that milestone with him this summer as he begins this new chapter of ministry at St. Thomas in August.

There is more ahead of us, too. We want to create more opportunities to explore the beauty and wisdom of our Christian tradition and deepen our life together in the faith. We want to care well for the campus entrusted to us, improving our grounds and buildings while thoughtfully considering how our church might better serve our worship and ministry. We are strengthening our partnerships with the St. Thomas Early Learning Center and Camp Allen, exploring new possibilities for serving our neighbors through relationships with BCS Together, and finding ways to help every person who walks through our doors discover a place to belong and a way to participate.

These are all ways of sowing seeds of faith, hope, and love in the lives of our children, our neighbors, and one another.

This is the life we are called to support together. Our stewardship goal for the coming year is **$780,000.** This goal will help uphold the ministry already flourishing among us while giving us room to continue growing in worship, ministry, hospitality, and service.

Whether you are raising children, living on your own, newly retired, widowed, an empty nester, a young adult, or somewhere else entirely in the journey of life, you have a place in the life and ministry of St. Thomas. Your presence matters. Your prayers matter. Your gifts matter. Your financial commitment matters.

We do not all give the same amount. We do not all have the same circumstances. But we can all practice generosity.

The sower does not control the harvest. The sower simply receives the seed, enters the field, and participates in the work. The growth belongs to God.

I invite you to pray about your pledge for the coming year. Give thanks for the ways St. Thomas has been a place of belonging and blessing in your life. Consider how you might continue to participate through your time, your presence, your gifts, and your financial commitment.

And remember where we begin:

“In Him we live and move and have our being.”

We are already standing on holy ground.

We belong. We give thanks. We give.

And we trust the God who gives the growth.

With gratitude and joy,

Father Korey+
Your Rector