

# DISCERNING

*God's Call*

# RENEWING

*Our Mission*



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## DISCERNING GOD'S CALL - RENEWING OUR MISSION

by The Rev. Oliver M. Butler, Interim Rector

In this Sunday's Gospel reading, Luke 18:9-14, Jesus tells a story of two people who come to the temple to pray—one a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee lists all the good things he has done, confident that he has earned God's favor. In contrast, the tax collector beats his chest and says, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Jesus reminds us that it was the humble man who went home justified before God.

This message is particularly relevant during this season of stewardship. Because giving—no matter the amount or form it takes—is never something to be proud about; it is always a response to what God has already done for us. Gratitude, not pride, is the root of generosity.

If you look back at the Stewardship reflections shared this year, a beautiful pattern emerges. Each person's story begins not with their own efforts but with God's movement—a call, an invitation, a moment of clarity. Some found their calling through grief and healing, others through teaching, hospitality, or outreach. Each discovered that stewardship is not about earning God's favor, but about responding to and participating in God's love.

We give because we have been blessed. We serve because we have been loved.



## Question for Reflection

How do I understand God to be calling me to serve and share with Ascension this year?



The truth is that discernment and call always happen within the real world of commitments and responsibilities. I always tell people that we are never really “ready” to get married. We are never fully “prepared” to be parents. But, faithfully – together with God’s help – we enter into those adventures, and only when we do are those life-giving, beautiful new worlds possible. The first disciples literally dropped their nets to follow Jesus’ call to follow him. Most of us are navigating mortgages, tuition, and the daily costs of living. It is within this context that God calls us to be faithful stewards of what’s been entrusted to us—including the care of our families. But the same God who calls us to provide for those under our own roof also invites us to see this parish as another kind of family—a household of faith that worships, prays, serves, and imagines together.

As a church, we already know what and who God calls us to be: an outpost of hope in the middle of Dallas, TX, living out the call to follow Christ personally and corporately. “And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives...” (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 101). Therefore, we should always be asking: *What is God calling us to do next?*

Our pledges are not just numbers on a page; they represent the stories, prayers, and trust of a community that believes God is still at work here—still renewing, still calling. Every gift, every act of service, joins with others to form the living witness of the Church of the Ascension in Dallas.

And as we look ahead, we remember: **God is not done with us! The best is yet to come!** The same Spirit that inspired those who built this church—their courage, their imagination, their *holy restlessness* to see the Gospel take root and grow taller and wider in this place—still compels us today! That restlessness is a gift: it keeps us listening for God’s voice, dreaming new dreams, and trusting that the future belongs to the One who renews all things.

So as you pray about your own giving this year, I invite you to adopt a posture not of pride or pressure, but of openness. Ask: “God, what are You calling me to do through the blessings You’ve given me?”

And then, trust that the same God who calls will also provide—enough for your household, enough for this parish, and enough grace to carry the Church of the Ascension onward to further offer a hand up, a hand out, and a Jesus-following community to a world that is starved for life, hope, and restoration.



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