

Hello. I'm Jerome Fung, and I'm member of the Stewardship Committee and the Vestry here at St. John's Episcopal Church in Ithaca.

Someone recently shared an anonymous quote with me: "Cutting the budget, scraping by, making last-minute appeals – we're used to all that. Now, if someone were to drop a million bucks on our church, that would be a real problem."

Indeed, what *would* we do as a parish to build up God's Kingdom if we our resources were unlimited? If we could not only expand the scope of the things we're already doing, but also start new things and find new ways to be church? I certainly have some thoughts, but I'd like to invite *you* to reflect on what your hopes and dreams for our parish might be.

I recognize, of course, that our resources are not unlimited, and that many people are experiencing challenging financial times. But yet – our God is a God not of scarcity, but of abundance. We recently heard, in our Sunday Gospel, Matthew's account of Jesus's miracle of feeding 5000 people with five loaves and two fishes. This story reminds us that with God's help, we can turn scarcity into abundance.

I think it striking, however, that the version of this story in Ch. 6 of John's gospel features an additional character: a child who offers his loaves and fishes, even though Andrew says of his meager meal, "But what are they among so many people?" This reminds us that it is God who generates abundance by acting through what *we* can offer – our time, talent, treasure, and prayers – no matter how seemingly insignificant they may be.

So what dreams might you have for us as a parish? And how might you help us turn those dreams into reality? Thank you for prayerfully reflecting on these questions, and God bless you.