

# *A Theology for Giving*

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Matthew 6:21*

## ***Why give?***

The Episcopal Network for Stewardship reminds us that “stewardship is not a program, it is not about raising money, and it is not here today and gone tomorrow. Stewardship is a journey. It is about life—about a way of life.”

Put simply, giving is our response to what we have received. We are created in God’s image, as we read in the Book of Genesis, and God gives. God gives us life and love, forgiveness and mercy. Now for our part: what will we promise to give in return? Will we walk humbly with our God? Reach out to the lonely, the troubled and the needy of this world? Will we worship and praise the God who loves us so? Let our answers be YES. Let us give back to God a portion of the blessings we have received.

## ***Is giving money to the Cathedral the same as giving to God?***

The clear legacy of both the Old and New Testaments is that God works in the midst of the community, first Israel and then the Church – the New Israel. Today, there are many worthy charities doing good work. They deserve your financial support. Many of our members do not limit giving to their local congregation. However, for nearly 2000 years, this is what we know to be true: making a decision to give back to God through the ministry of the Church is an essential way for us to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world.

## ***Aren’t gifts of time and talent sufficient?***

The ministry of the Cathedral could not survive without the countless hours of donated time and the generous sharing of talents and gifts by so many of our members. For instance: some volunteer Sunday morning for our “Church Street Eats” feeding program; others faithfully prepare the altar and flowers for weekly worship; some host coffee hour and others teach our children the essentials of the faith in church school. The gifts of time and talent are invaluable to our common life and should not go unappreciated, but by themselves are not sufficient for fulfilling our total ministry.

## ***Why should I pledge?***

Each year the Stewardship Committee asks our membership to make a financial offering in the form of a pledge. Only when the signed pledge cards are received and totaled can the Cathedral’s leadership adequately plan for the upcoming year. In most years, only about 18% of the Cathedral’s total operating budget was funded by the pledges of our members. Without a more broad-based financial commitment through pledging, we would not be able to offer the kind of pastoral care, spiritual formation, support of worthy outreach ministries and the quality of worship that we have all come to know and appreciate.

## ***Doesn’t the Diocese help fund the Cathedral’s ministries?***

No. Those new to the Episcopal Church may be surprised to learn that, in most cases, funding flows from the local congregation to the Diocese. Even though the Cathedral is the “Bishop’s church”, each year the Cathedral contributes 12.5% of our operating income to the work and ministry of the Diocese. The Diocese in turn sends money to the National Episcopal Church in support of our larger national and international mission.

***Should married persons and couples make separate pledges as individuals or one pledge as a couple?***

There is no hard and fast rule. Most couples sign one pledge card. Some people feel strongly about making their own individual pledge.

***At what age is a person expected to begin pledging?***

Each young person who has been confirmed is invited to make his or her own pledge, as well as those adults over the age of 18 living in the family home. Children under 16 may make a pledge if they like, but the pledge will not be tracked like the pledges of adults. We want to encourage the use of giving envelopes for children and teens instead of pledging.

***What if I decide not to pledge and put cash into the offertory plate instead?***

All monies given to the church are offered to the glory of God. However, the total yearly amount received from collection plate loose offerings accounts for only a small amount of what is needed to fund our ministry. While being tempted in the wilderness, Jesus said, "One does not live by bread alone." Nor can this congregation survive as we know it through collection plate offerings alone.

***Is it true each household that pledges gets a quarterly bill?***

Not exactly. When a pledge is made, a number is assigned to the giver. The pledge envelopes distributed the first of the year have the giver's number printed in the corner. Whether you put the envelope into the collection plate or mail it to the church office, the bookkeeper is able to credit you for what you contributed. That is one reason why it is beneficial to use the pledge envelopes rather than putting loose cash into the collection plates. Quarterly statements, not bills, are mailed out to remind members of their progress in paying their pledge. Since the Cathedral has expenses throughout the calendar year, it is important that members stay current with their giving. The year-end statement mailed to each giving household is an essential document for those who claim their gifts as a tax deduction. It pays to use the pledge envelopes!

***If I pay my pledge to the Cathedral by check, should I still use the pledge envelopes?***

Yes, putting a check in your pledge envelope saves valuable time and work for our counting volunteers and our bookkeeper. If you don't use the envelopes, at the very least we ask that you write your envelope number in the memo section.

***Suppose my personal financial picture varies from month to month or year to year?***

One of the most frequent reasons people offer for not making a pledge is that they are uncertain about their overall financial picture in the year ahead. In today's economy, your personal financial picture may change from monthly or yearly. If you make a pledge for the upcoming year and your income drops dramatically, you may decrease your pledge by writing to the bookkeeper at the Cathedral. On the other hand, should you experience a raise or bonus or added dividend during the year, we hope you will consider increasing your pledge.

***What if I was not able to pay my pledge in full in years past?***

Each year the slate is wiped clean. If circumstances prevented you from fulfilling past pledges, do not allow that experience to discourage pledging for the upcoming year. Simply throw away the old pledge envelopes and begin the new year with the envelopes issued to you in January.

***How much is enough?***

In truth, we can never give back to God as much as we have been given. Each one of us needs to ask the question “how much is enough?” and answer it for oneself. Some of our members have been tithing – giving 10% of their income – for years, and they speak with great passion and joy for what the discipline has meant in their lives. You are invited to make your pledge to the Cathedral a proportional gift – a percentage of your household income. If pledging is new for you, you may want to start small. Begin by giving 2% or 3% of your household income and try to increase each year until you reach 10%.

### ***Stewardship Scriptures***

Scriptural texts that are particularly fruitful in studying Christian stewardship

#### **Genesis 28:18-22**

Jacob promises the Lord one tenth of all he had been given

#### **Deuteronomy 14:22-29**

The law of the tithe (tithe so that you learn to put God first in your life)

#### **Deuteronomy 15:4-11**

Give freely and unselfishly and God will bless you

#### **Malachi 3:7-12**

Don't rob God; Put God to the test

#### **Matthew 6:19-21**

Store up riches in heaven

#### **Matthew 20:1-16**

The workers in the vineyard

#### **Mark 12:41-44**

The widow's mite

#### **Luke 6:32-38**

The measure by which you give is the measure by which you will be given

#### **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**

Give weekly in proportion to your earnings

#### **2 Corinthians 9:6-12**

God loves a cheerful giver

#### **Ephesians 4:11-16**

God's gifts to the church

#### **1 Peter 4:9-11**

Be good managers of God's gifts