

St. Luke's Episcopal Church

**An inviting, supporting community, reflecting
God's love and care for all God's creation.**

November 2015

Stewardship is the intentional, responsible, systematic and proportionate giving of time, abilities, and possessions based on the conviction that these things are a trust from God, to be used for the benefit of humankind in grateful acknowledgement of Christ's redeeming love (National Council of Churches).

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

"How Much Is Enough?"

Last month I wrote about being intentional in giving and the importance of pledging to our own relationship to God and the church. Today I write about the other three important words in the definition of stewardship: responsible, systematic and proportionate.

On November 8 the Gospel told the familiar story of the widow's mite. Fr. David's sermon reflected on responsibility in the parable. Was the widow responsible in giving away all that she had? Was the rich man responsible, or just showing off? Should he have given much more from his abundance?

So, how do we determine how much is enough? What is a responsible gift for each of us to give? In twenty-five years of active work in teaching stewardship, I have read at least fifty books on the subject and have met several stewardship mentors, but none of these have given me a definite answer. But, this reading and interaction with mentors has convinced me of the truth in the scriptures: "For all things come of you and of your own have we given thee" (*1 Chronicles 29:14*); and, "Do not say to yourself, 'My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is God who gives you power to get wealth, so that God may confirm the covenant sworn to your ancestors, as God is doing today" (*Deuteronomy 8:17-18*).

Keep these and other verses in your mind as you pray and plan your gifts for 2016. I can only say that determining the responsible amount involves where you in your journey of life:

- Your income and assets in relationship to your current needs for living.
- Your relationship with God and the church.
- Your special needs for the future: children's college, replacement of home or car, retirement, etc.
- Your relationship with and understanding of the needs of the communities who will receive your gifts.
- Your desires for those things you don't need for living but bring you happiness and comfort.

Carefully consider the juxtaposition of all of these things. Actually calculate the proportion or percentage of your income or assets your intentional gifts are, and decide how much is enough to give back to God.

Dick

Addendum:

We mailed Pledge Cards by Monday, November 16. Please consider your 2016 intentions as soon as you can, and return the signed card by placing it in the offering basins before December 4, or mail it to the office, or email the information to slectreasurer@suddenlinkmail.com .

If you have reviewed the monthly Vestry financial reports and Balance Sheets, you have seen that the 2015 balances have remained low and for several months we had to postpone payment of our share to the Diocese. We have recently withdrawn \$10,000 from our endowment savings to allow us to continue paying bills and hope to catch up the payments to the Diocese by year end. This has not been a good year for investments and it is likely that growth of the savings will be less than our withdrawals this year. Please be generous to St. Luke's as you plan your intentional gifts (pledges) for 2016.

For those that don't know and are concerned about privacy, these pledges and your donations are seen by only a limited number of persons at St. Luke's. Pledges are opened by the Treasurer or Assistant treasurer and recorded in our computer database.

These persons have access to reports of individual pledges and donations in order to prepare summary reports for the Vestry. Some individual data may be given to the Rector at his request. Individual donations are counted, recorded, and deposited by four counters on a rotating basis, donation data is entered by the secretary (recorder appointed by the Vestry). The Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer may substitute for the counter or recorder. Counting records are filed for auditing.

Quarterly reports are emailed or printed and sent to individual donors by the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer. End of year reports are printed and mailed to all and may be used for tax deduction purposes.

A note on this! Some donors like to make future year payments of pledges to help balance their tax deductions. This is permissible and we record the payment against the future pledge. However, IRS regulations require that we report the donation in the year we receive it. Please do not donate a check with a back date after December 31. All donations will be counted on New Year's Eve and deposited when the bank opens. Anything received after that will be for the new year.