

November 20, 2022

### **Planning Your Giving**

One of the more exciting challenges we face in the year ahead, is that our increased membership, attendance, involvement, and vulnerably brings a corresponding desire for more pastoral ministry, discipleship, home visiting, prayer, mission, and opportunities to serve. We'd love to meet those needs as well as dealing with the effects of inflation.

Letting us know what you plan to give is the most helpful thing you can do. We cannot care for the employees of the church or the operation of it, let alone plan to do more, without knowing what you hope to give. There are many ways to update your giving information: website, app, response card, or by emailing Niki, but if we don't hear from you by the New Year, we'll count on your giving at least remaining the same.

### **The Theology of Giving**

As we've seen from the book of Joel, a crisis (locusts & invasion for them—COVID & inflation for us) is a great time to experience renewal. When the world lets us down, it's easier to reassess our priorities, and reorder our lives according to the will of God.

A few years ago, our Vestry undertook a study of every major biblical teaching on giving and we placed a version of what they learned on our website. They concluded that consistently God has asked for at least 10% of what we have to spend and regarded any major deviations from this norm as a really dangerous sign of spiritual unhealth.

I love this entire church like I love my own family. To be very open with you, the thing that causes me the most distress is the thought that some of us are failing to experience the renewal of God because we have made our finances the place where we say no to God. If left unresolved, this could even become a matter of eternal life. I am both devastated about that prospect, and afraid that if I fail to address it, I might be answerable to Christ for negligently avoiding an uncomfortable truth. Few of us would treat our own family with that lack of care, and I must offer you the same kind of love.

You might not have been raised to give, and if so, it's not your fault, but you can put those ways behind you and change. This year, if you do one thing for your faith, and those of the generations to come, please pray, think, and talk about your Christian giving carefully, and then act upon anything you hear from the word, Holy Spirit, your pastors, leaders, and brothers and sisters in Christ.

### **Buildings & Grounds**

Finally, this is a good time to let you know that next year we'll share a vision to renovate the Sanctuary and Parish Hall, improving accessibility, temperature control, lighting, sound, and technology in two key spaces, both of which are long overdue for some work.

They're not enormous projects; maybe only about as much as we spend in a typical year. But as we'll be raising funds, the Vestry thought you'd like to know now as you plan your giving for 2023, so that you do not feel they've asked for a lot, and then asked for even more.

There will not be an aggressive campaign with lengthy talks and endless calls. That's not our style. We'll have a family meeting, show you a beautiful and really practical vision and then simply get on with it.

We've wrestled with the timing, especially given the economy, but we've concluded that now is a prime opportunity for a financial and spiritual review. Perhaps you can resolve today to give biblically, and make some moves towards it over several years by increasing your giving to the church for 2023 and committing to an additional temporary increase through our building campaign, once you see what it's all about.

Malachi 3 says:

*“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need”.*

In Malachi they had a crisis, not surprisingly, locusts were involved. Having withheld their tithes, God withheld His blessing because he loved them. And so, like the people in Joel, after a rough patch, they returned to Him and found abundant renewal. That's my hope for our whole church family in 2023.

Love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alex', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rev'd Alex  
*Rector*