

Stewardship Presentation (Carole Vandersteeg)

My spiritual journey is related to humble beginnings. Although I have been active in church since I was 7 years old, my parents were not very involved in church. I was on my own as far as my religious upbringing but fortunately there was a local church within walking distance from our home. Raised in a large family, I learned what it was like to live very frugally; how to budget and how to live in a family with 7 children and a single wage earner. The only extra money I had was what I earned, starting at the age of 9; pulling weeds, picking strawberries, helping the local farmers clean their produce. I have worked for 60 years since, certainly in better jobs and with better working conditions I might add!

Fortunately I was blessed with a mathematical mind, a compassionate heart and a lot of determination. School was easy for me. Eventually I was able to put myself through college, including a bachelor's and master's degree. I have had a wonderful, successful working life and would consider myself financially comfortable as I quickly approach my 7th decade of life.

Early on, I learned the value of money; for material things, for status, and for comfort. I shared a portion of my earnings with different churches but I was always very conservative in my giving; often rationalizing that the time I committed to church choir would count as my giving. What I didn't realize until a few years ago, is the spiritual reward that comes from letting go, loosening those purse strings and giving more financially to programs and people that serve God. It has only been in the past 3 years, after a trip to Santa Fe, New Mexico, that I experienced a spiritual reawakening. In Luke 12:34 Jesus said "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." I have learned that we each have one of two choices: either to become emotionally attached to our money or to become emotionally attached to the God who provided our money; provided ALL that I have and even gave us His son Jesus Christ. It was time for me to change my way of thinking to more closely align with spiritual values.

I began asking, "What is God asking me to give?" and "How does God want me to use my talents?" and "How can our funds help support people and programs outside of my immediate sphere?" and "How can I volunteer more time to His church?" I discovered that it feels very good to give, in all of those areas; time, talent and treasure! Significantly, I am learning the value of financial giving and

that it truly is “more blessed to give than receive.” Giving is part of my growing spiritual relationship with God.

I now focus upon an attitude of gratitude rather than self-preservation. I concentrate upon faith rather than fear. I am very thankful of the gifts God has given to me and I have learned that Christian Stewardship challenges us to become faithful managers of all that God has given each of us. By using His gifts, we can experience a transformation spiritually while sharing our financial gifts and God-given talents with others.

Like I said, I have grown spiritually these past three years, to the point that I want to give generously...

...of not only my time

...not only my talents

...but also my treasures so that, in some way, I can touch lives in a Christian way.

The last point I would like to make is that we are all disciples of Jesus Christ. By generously supporting the ministries of Trinity Presbyterian Church, we are supporting Christian outreach. As I said before, we celebrate your generous and faithful financial giving, over \$428,000 in 2019. This was at a time that, for the first three months of 2019, we had guest pastors and waning church attendance figures; Rev. Sue Marie Baskette didn't begin serving here until April 1st. Since then, we have added 26 new members, our choir has grown to almost 50 members, our Park Avenue Theatre has now expanded its outreach to the Elks Theatre, our church has expanded programs (like MOPS) and Session attended to long overdue building and grounds issues. We have re-committed to our relationship with our Grand Canyon Presbytery, who were so supportive as we did our pastor search and who continue to support all the area Presbyterian churches with workshops, consultation and ministerial support. We built upon that relationship as we invited to host a quarterly gathering here at our church for the first time in almost 20 years. All of this exciting activity happens but also requires larger financial support to keep it growing and going, to continue this positive transformation that we have been experiencing over the past couple years. So I leave you with this question: “What percent of your 2020 earnings is God calling you to give, as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a member or friend of Trinity Presbyterian Church?”

Paul, reminded us in 2 Corinthians 9-12 NIV (New International Version) as he spoke to the Corinthian believers, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor (when he gave up his rights as God and became human,) so that you through his poverty might become rich (because we received salvation and eternal life.) And here is my judgment about what is best for you in this matter. Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means.

We remind each of you that the 2020 per capita amount (a one-time annual fee per member to support the Grand Canyon Presbytery) is \$37.35. Our 2020 projected budget assumes each of you are planning to cover your share of that commitment. If you have not yet filled out a pledge card, please take one today. If you have filled out one and wish to add to your pledge, please take another and write "Add \$_____ to current pledge." You may drop off your pledge card at the church office or place it into an offering plate, in the next couple weeks. Feb. 2nd will be designated as Stewardship Sunday, with a goal of having our pledge cards in by then.

Thank-you and may God Bless You.