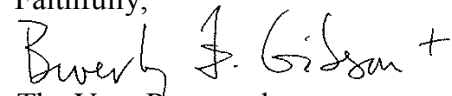


commitment this year, at whatever level you can begin. Our goal is to have all pledges in hand by All Saints' Sunday, November 1. This will allow us to plan our programs and budget for the upcoming year.

In this special stewardship worship issue you will find material which includes the Bible study materials from October 4 and 18, along with the personal stewardship worksheet from *The Messenger*, which was also enclosed in your letter.

God has entrusted this great historic sacred place to our care; the responsibility for its preservation, its presence as a vital force in the community, and above all for its growth in mission of serving our Lord rests with each of us. I will be praying in the month ahead for our continued growth as stewards of the gifts God has given us and for our growth in mission and ministry.

Faithfully,

 The Very Reverend
 Beverly F. Gibson, Ph.D., Dean

A PRIVATE ANALYSIS OF MY STEWARDSHIP

I. What I think my stewardship response of time and treasure ought to be:

I. What my stewardship response really is:

III. What I would like my stewardship response to be
(may be different from either I or II):

- Today . . .
- In 1 year . . .
- In 3 years . . .
- In 5 years . . .

IV. These things are preventing my stewardship response from being what I would like:

STEPS TOWARD BECOMING A TITHER

This worksheet is for Christians who:

- ✘ Trust God to give us the gifts he promises;
- ✘ Want to give a responsible proportion of what God has given them to do what God wants done in the world;
- ✘ Believe in tithing as an important Biblical standard for Christian stewardship;
- ✘ Cannot, because of already existing commitments, become tithers immediately;
- ✘ Are considering making tithing an active goal for their lives.

-
1. Enter your annual income. _____
 2. (Optional: subtract the amount you pay in taxes) _____
 - _____
 3. **Balance** = _____
 4. Move the decimal point one place to the left. _____

This Would Be Your Tithe

5. Enter your annual contribution to your parish and to other Godly causes outside your family. + _____
 + _____
6. Add these up. = _____
7. Divide line 6 by line 3. = _____

This Is The Percentage of Your Income

You Are Now Giving

8. Enter the amount on line 3. _____
9. Move the decimal point two places to the left.
 This is a 1% increase in giving. _____%
10. What would be the total dollar amount of your giving next year? Add line 5 and line 9. \$ _____

This Would Be Your Pledge

JESUS' TEACHINGS RELATED TO STEWARDSHIP

Conversations about stewardship (being caretakers of the household of God) usually begin by acknowledging the reality that all things come from God and that out of gratitude and obedience we return a portion of those gifts to God. This is certainly true, and later this month we will consider how the "tithe" arises from this truth.

Today, however, our conversation begins with considering how our identity in Jesus Christ should guide our approach to stewardship. Consistently throughout the gospel accounts of his ministry on earth, Jesus instructs those who would follow him about his essential desire and requirement for disciples: he wants all of you, every bit of your life, to belong to him. He warns his followers repeatedly of the dangers of possessions. Although not evil in themselves, possessions are powerful distractions from living as disciples.

Consider Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler in *Luke 18:18-25*. To this good, righteous man, Jesus says that there is one more thing he must do: "Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

In the days ahead, please spend some time reading the Bible and prayerfully considering what the following passages suggest to you about living your life as a follower of Christ.

❖ "Treasure in heaven" and the pitfalls of possessions form the subjects of these passages: *Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:33-34; Mark 10:21; Acts 2:45; Acts 4:32-35*. What do you think Jesus means by "treasure in heaven"? If possessions are not evil in themselves, then how are we to think of and deal with them?

❖ Jesus teaches about fear and anxiety concerning how we will live in these passages: *Luke 12:2-9, 22-31; Matthew 10:29-36; Matthew 6:25-33*. Why do you think Jesus counsels us about the dangers of trusting in financial security? What is the alternative way of trusting that he emphasizes? (Consider here the parables of the prepared slaves and housebreaking in *Luke 12:35-38 and Matthew 25:1-3, Luke 12:39-40 and Matthew 24:43-44*, respectively.)

❖ In the Temple, Jesus observes the widow's offering: *Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:41-44*. What does Jesus suggest God expects of us?

WHAT DOES JESUS CHRIST EXPECT OF US AS STEWARDS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD?

STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

Almighty God, your loving hand has given us all that we possess; give us grace to become faithful stewards of your bounty and to honor you by returning to you what is needed for the growth of the mission entrusted to us as Christ Church Cathedral; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. *2 Corinthians 9:6-8, 11-12*

THE TITHE IN THE LIVES OF GOD'S PEOPLE

In I Chronicles 29, King David tells all of the officials of Israel, gathered at Jerusalem, about his provisions (freely given from ancestral houses and leaders of the tribes) for building a holy house for God. His son, Solomon, who at this time was still young and inexperienced, would build the Temple. David concludes by blessing the Lord and presenting his offering with these words in verse 14:

But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

These last words are familiar to us, like the words of the traditional Lord's Prayer, surviving from the Elizabethan Church and making their way into contemporary worship services. Through various revisions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (until 1979), the people's offerings have been brought before the Holy Table with these words: "All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee." They express the fundamental understanding of stewardship in the scripture: everything we have, everything in creation, comes from and belongs to God, and our offering to God is "giving back" a portion in gratitude and thanksgiving.

The portion that we give back is often spoken of as the "biblical tithe" of 10% of our earnings or possessions. The first mention of the tithe in scripture occurs in Genesis 14:18-20, when Abraham encounters Melchizedek, who blesses him after a significant military victory; then Abraham "gave him one tenth of everything." The important issue in this passage is *why* Abraham gave—out of genuine thanksgiving. Other passages in the Torah, listed below, address how the tithe was to be offered in ancient Israel.

By the time of Jesus, the tithe was deeply ingrained in faithful living, so much so that it had become a kind of legal obligation. Jesus went beyond this formality to teach that tithing without mercy and love is meaningless and to promote sharing all of what we have with the poor, the sick, orphans, and the elderly.

This sharing all things in common became the practice of the early Church, as we see in the book of Acts. Such sharing eventually returned to the concept of "tithing" a tenth of all land or produce for supporting the common life of the Church. In the Church of England, traditionally, these tithes once received were divided by canon into four parts: between the bishop, the clergy, the fabric of the church, and the relief of the poor. Over time these divisions developed variously, but the tithe itself long remained a point of law and a direction in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Never, in this sense, has the tithe been a part of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, although our offerings are conventionally divided in a way approximating the original four-way split.

As Christians, looking to Jesus Christ as our Lord and seeking to follow in his way, we seek to be "converted," as he asks us to be. Our conversion is from earning to letting go, from ownership to stewardship. The first step in our conversion is acknowledging that what we have, much or little, is God's gift to us. The next step is letting go after working hard, "joyful giving" with open hearts and hands.

Here are some passages from the Bible for you to read and prayerfully consider as you respond to your call to stewardship.

- ❖ I Chronicles 28 and 29 recount David's instructions concerning the Temple and his praise to God. Reflect on David's life and leadership and what his example here offers us in our life as the church.
- ❖ Here are several passages from the Old Testament that deal with how the tithe is to be accomplished. Consider how they might be translatable into the terms of our lives. Genesis 14:18-20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21-25.
- ❖ These passages from the Old Testament convey the context of the tithe. Consider what they tell us about where and how our offerings are to be made. Deuteronomy 12 and 14; 2 Chronicles 31:5-6; Nehemiah 10:35-39.
- ❖ Read Matthew 23 and Luke 11 and consider what Jesus is teaching about "conversion" in understanding of the tithe.

How are you developing your sense of the tithe in your life?



VESTRY STATEMENT ON THE TITHE

~Resolution of Christ Church Cathedral Vestry approved on October 10, 2005

To demonstrate meaningful and sacrificial financial support of the church including making and fulfilling an annual pledge of support; to consider that the Christ Church Cathedral vestry upholds the tithe as the standard of giving and encourages the parish to consider proportionate giving; and to be working toward the tithe.

VESTRY OF CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL

V. Lyn Bennett
Cartledge W. Blackwell III
Sage M. Bolt
John D. Davidson
Mary Esther T. Elliott
Lewis H. Golden
Steven B. Hall
George B. Inge
Robert W. Israel

Banks C. Ladd
Charles S. McKay
Alison S. Mitchell
Barbara L. Mitchell
Lucy F. Moore
Hetty C. Newell
Henry R. Seawell IV
Margaret M. Thigpen
Thomas B. Van Antwerp

A LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Dear Cathedral Family,

You have been remarkable stewards of the gifts God has given you this year. The year 2015 has been an extraordinary time in our shared life at Christ Church Cathedral. The election in February of The Reverend James Russell Kendrick to be the fourth bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast was followed by months of intense planning, preparation, and service for the Consecration Celebration, held July 24-26 here at the Cathedral and in Expo Hall of the Mobile Civic Center. The Cathedral Family, joined by Episcopalians from throughout the diocese, offered a tremendous outpouring of time, talent, and treasure for the building up of the mission of the Church. I believe that this experience has been a watershed moment in our spiritual growth as the Cathedral church of the diocese.

Through the months of summer, when attendance and activity and giving normally wane, our numbers held steady in every respect and even surged ahead in some! I continue to give thanks on a daily basis for the amazing self-giving of the Cathedral Family this year.

Once the dust started to settle following the consecration and we began planning for the program year ahead, it quickly became apparent that this continues to be a "not business as usual" time in the life of the Cathedral Family. As your leadership looked toward the annual stewardship campaign for 2016, we decided to take a slightly different approach to our usual every member canvass. In acknowledgement of your ongoing commitment to supporting the mission and ministries of Christ Church Cathedral, this year's pledge campaign, *Growing Our Mission*, has relied primarily on a personal letter from me (with enclosed pledge card) asking for your continued financial support of our ministries; follow-up calls are being made by the Stewardship Leadership Team.

There is a three-fold challenge to growth in this year's campaign. First, for those of you who routinely make and fulfill a pledge of support, I have asked that you prayerfully consider increasing your pledge by 1% or more (out of your adjusted gross income) for 2016. Second, for those of you who give regularly, but who do not always complete a pledge card, I have asked that you fill out and submit an estimate of your giving for the upcoming year as an aid to our planning for ministries in the year ahead. (And I would also challenge you to consider increasing your present giving by 1% or more.) Third, for those of you who have felt unable to make a pledge in previous years, I have asked that you begin the discipline of making a

(continued on the next page)



CHRIST
CHURCH
CATHEDRAL

GROWING IN MISSION:
STEWARDSHIP 2016

MOBILE,
ALABAMA