

## 5.0 GIVING AND WHY IT MATTERS

If none of us needed to raise any money for mission and ministry, giving would still matter, because it is God's instrument to address in the human being at the very core--original sin. For us who trust our lives to the Redeemer for justification, we cannot deny the sin-sickness of our soul and our very personal need for His grace. In simple terms, our lives are covered by His blood. What lies beyond the scope of this paper, is an exploration of sin and how our disposition in the natural state is toward the self; I am simply trusting that as biblically orthodox Jesus followers, we may accept this as foundational for our view of the human condition. What I have come to understand about the spiritual life, however, is just how the redemption of Jesus addresses this core issue for eternal purposes and how the Holy Spirit daily engages us in the Way of Life shared by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This reflection on giving and its godly purpose for His people serves as a departure for personal reflection and discussion among the people with whom we partner everyday for the sake of God's Kingdom.

### **Foundational Guidelines from the Holy Scriptures for the Pilgrim:**

#### Patriarchs

*"If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth." Genesis 28: 20-22*

#### Settling in the Land

*"A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord." Leviticus 27:40*

*"...and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O Lord, have given me.' Place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before him. And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household. When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe..." Deuteronomy 26:10-12a*

#### Levi's Apportionment

*"I give you the finest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain they give to the Lord as the firstfruits of their harvest. All the land's firstfruits that they bring to the Lord will be yours." Numbers 18:12*

#### Malachi's Exhortation on God's Promise

*"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. 'Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'" Malachi 3:10*

## Heavenly Treasure

*"...store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and Mammon." Matthew 6:20,24 a,c*

*"I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." Mark 12:43-44*

## Paul's Teaching on Cheerful Generosity

*"But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others." 2Cor. 8:7-8*

*"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2Cor. 9:6b-7*

The first fruits of what God has given is released to Him for His purposes, which are: to further His work according to His plan and to shape the human heart for generosity and joyful sacrifice. Moreover, His generosity cannot be exceeded by human giving; generous human giving will, however, gloriously reflect the enormity of His heart for His people. For us who have been through a realignment of doctrine and structure, our focus on the Holy Scriptures requires us to take seriously the manifold wisdom contained therein and to provide the kind of spiritual leadership for the local church that strengthens our witness in the world and furthers the effective reign of God in our day.

It is also very apparent that the doctrines practiced by the ancients were focused on the individual and his or her personal volition. What is less obvious, however, is the involvement of the community gathered by Him and for Him. His plan included provision for all of the tribes, which was a communal provision. The storehouse for Jerusalem was of concern to the Lord because of its impact on the worship life of the whole people of God. Jesus communicates for those near and far away, the law of sowing and reaping and lifts up the example of the widow who sowed with profound generosity. And, Paul's teaching addresses the work of evangelization and the support required for work in areas where the resources may not be as plentiful. There is a dynamic interplay between the individual and the community and among the communities as they are multiplied through the seasons of the Canaanite conquest, the post-Babylonian resettlement of the land, the ministry of Jesus on Jew and Gentile alike and the apostolic expansion of the first century.

## **The Effects of the Realignment:**

The Episcopal Church required a substantial commitment from its congregations, many times in excess of the biblical tithe, making it difficult for local churches to give to regional and local mission projects that they deemed worthy. Consequently, in the realignment, many local churches redirected their giving either toward those local mission projects or to overseas dioceses that were providing oversight or both. It may be true also that some of our congregations have not been practicing an approach to congregational giving whereby a distinction is made between a tithe and an offering. In the biblical context, as the theology of giving was shaped by their interaction with the living God matured, the tithes were given to support the Temple and those who were appointed to serve God there and offerings were given for various events and needs under different mandates, as God allowed (thank offerings, harvest offerings, etc.) In practical terms, the tithe was appointed to support the temple; other offerings were given to address specific needs that emerged on the basis of circumstances and planned projects. (In an effort to keep this reflection reasonably brief, I will trust that this understanding is commonly understood) What has made all of this more difficult for our people, is the loss of stability resulting from the required surrender of our properties, so replacing stable worship and ministry settings has risen in priority for many among us. This is understandable and needful.

There is no exact parallel circumstance that might circumscribe our post-modern experience of the church, but the 10-10-10 principle of the ACNA strives to provide a foundation for the practice of tithing (Operating the Office of the Archbishop and supporting the various committees that are producing overseas partnerships, a new prayer book, exploring support for Marriage, Family and Singles, etc.), permitting and encouraging the giving of offerings over and above the tithe for various programmatic needs (ARDF, Seminaries, Overseas Mission Partnerships, etc.)

For us who have surrendered property and funding for staff, we are feeling the financial pressure that comes with a realignment of this kind. In my view, the diocese is at its best when we work together as a missional network, or in our case, 4 missional networks of churches carrying the gospel to the world. The bishop is called alongside to serve as the chief missionary and teacher, for the expansion of God's kingdom, just as the apostles operated to establish and strengthen congregations in the ancient world. Any diocesan budget is everyone's budget, stewarded by our Executive Committee and its co-leaders (Bishop and President), for the benefit of all and to the glory of God. Our purpose is to advance God's Kingdom, so our focus must increasingly orient our spending priorities beyond our needs for operational expenses. In every way possible, it is to our common advantage to identify diocesan resources and press them toward the frontlines of mission and those frontlines are the local church. Moreover, local churches are partners in the regional (Deanery) effort to pool resources for work that lies beyond the capacity of the local church to accomplish in its own. To this end, diocesan resources have been allocated to each deanery to foster new church development. We have also committed diocesan resources to penetrate Hispanic culture and establish works in places that are beyond the reach of our current congregations.

## **Let Us Commit to and Covenant With One Another:**

Would you be open to commit yourself and your congregation to a Covenant for Partnership in the gospel so that every congregation has a proportionate stake in the work we are doing together for the sake of Christ?

Let us, then, **commit** to the 10-10-10 principle which guided the formation of the ACNA and **covenant** together to celebrate with joy the opportunity we have to share the first fruits of whatever the Lord provides for us and through us for His Kingdom. Let us more fully reflect our partnership in the gospel so that Jesus may be the only way to explain the depth and beauty of our relationships with one another, personally and communally.

### Every Congregation will:

1. Commit through its clergy and lay leadership to regular congregation-wide discipleship training in the area of giving with the standard being: cheerful generosity and lavish gratitude or in practical terms, tithes and offerings
2. Commit through its Vestry to give the first tenth to the Lord for the sake of the Kingdom, through the Diocesan budget
3. Commit through its clergy and lay leadership to participate with other Deanery churches in an annual fund-raiser for Deanery Church Planting and other regional projects that further the Kingdom of God
4. Commit through its lay leadership to increase funding for regional and city-wide offerings for service and evangelism in the local community and around the world

### The Bishop and Executive Committee will:

1. Commit through a growing investment in disciple-making, to support, with resources and trainers, the local church in its effort to make disciples that give generously in every conceivable way
2. Commit through the Canons to give the first tenth away from its Operating Budget for the sake of the Kingdom, through the Operating budget to the work of the Province and to make offerings for projects from resources the Lord provides through His generosity beyond the tithes of the congregations
3. Commit a second tenth or more to the Deaneries for new church development and operational support with a goal of giving 40% directly to church expansion and planting
4. Commit to join with each Deanery in raising funds for Church Planting, as well as, for emergent needs appropriate to an emerging proto-diocese
5. Commit through those skilled in Major Gifts to increase support for the work of Church planting and Kingdom expansion

This must be a communal investment that we make in the partnership we share in Christ, rooted in the trust we have in the Lord to guide and direct our efforts to further His Kingdom. Should we be so filled with such grace by the Almighty Lord that we desire this kind of partnership above the congregational patterns of our past, we just might be in a position to enjoy the Lord's favor as the Lord promises through Malachi.

We must minister outwardly from the indwelling Holy Spirit who is making us a new creation in Christ. If we say 'yes' to this, then let our 'yes' be 'yes'. Nobody I know in this diocese wants to act as a supervisor of another who has said 'yes' and begun to do 'no'. We must see that in this present need, we have an opportunity to participate in a different kind of community that is so trusting of the Lord's grace, that we are willing to receive Him and reach for one another in partnership so that others in this world might find in us such joy and satisfaction in our common life that they desire it for themselves.

This means that we will stand together before the Lord in covenant and common commitment to the work He entrusts to us together, and thereby allow Him to search our hearts and minds for the Truth that is in us. Let the words that define our common life be: **Partners** who **commit** and **covenant** for the **Kingdom of God**.

Some practical considerations:

1. Every congregation and the diocese could commit to operate on 80% of revenues, leaving 10% for the tithe (10-10-10) and 10% for offerings that could be used by church vestries for regional and local evangelization and missions work, including any funds that might be given toward the work of the Deanery.
  - a. Regarding Offerings--If tithing as stated above were to be a worthy goal, then the habit of giving offerings could be incrementally phased in over time (2%/year over 5 years) Diocesan offerings are apportioned for 2016 for Deanery Church Planting and Support.
  - b. If congregations needed time to move toward the tithe, two years could be allotted to allow for this transition, with measurable progress expected quarterly.
  - c. If a congregation had no vision for making offerings, then it could operate on 90% of the offerings that it receives.
  - d. Congregations would establish habits of giving 'firstfruits', so the notion of withholding the tithe for congregation priorities deemed more necessary or important would be abandoned.
  - e. The pledge process for the diocese has been abandoned in order to allow our covenant together to take hold; the diocesan budget is built on actual congregation giving.
  - f. Congregations now give in the current month 10% of the tithes received in the previous month. Payment by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month should give sufficient time for checks to be cut and mailed. This also allows for a short cash flow period for management of available funds.
2. Every church plant would establish tithing as a practice among its members and will operate on 90% of its revenues for the first 3 years, so as to enable the planting team and its members to practice effective discipleship in regard to money and its godly use.

3. Church plants are encouraged to defray startup expenses by forming an LLC and/or operating under the Deanery for up to 3 years, thereby lowering overhead and management expenses.
4. Church plants that are tithing may apply for grants from the Deanery on a matching fund basis.
5. The diocese is working to establish an approach to Major Gifts that will allow, by God's grace, increased funding for church planting, university mission and penetrating cultures and regions that lie beyond current resources.

