

## Frequently Asked Questions About Stewardship and Pledging

- **Why does the church focus on money?**

Actually, the church is always focusing on giving from what we receive – that includes time, talents and gifts, and money. For St. John’s all generosity springs out of stewardship – a biblical way of managing what God has given us. We can only give away what has been given to us. We are just as interested in encouraging new volunteers for NOAH, or training new acolytes. We always need volunteers to continue our ministries and work.

Having said that, Jesus understood even 2000 years ago that managing money is challenging, and over 1/3 of his teachings focused on what people did with their money and what generosity looked like in practice.

- **What are some of those teachings?**

Jesus told parables, or teaching stories, about the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the parable of the talents, the story about the tenant farmers who killed the landowner’s son for his inheritance, the widow’s mite. Each of these stories has an element of financial concern. Jesus also made many statements about caring for the poor and the hungry. These stories often have a larger meaning that Jesus wanted us to know: how to love our neighbor as ourselves, how to encourage wisdom in sharing our resources, help overcoming our pride or greed in order to share what we have with others. Ultimately all these parables teach us about how much we trust God with the gifts he has given us—our time, our treasure and our talents.

- **Why does St. John’s need money?**

Pledges are the only source of annual income that the church receives to support its ministries. That’s how we pay ALL our bills—Salaries, lights, phones, insurance, repairs needed. Our entire budget is based on financial generosity and trust in God.

- **Doesn’t the diocese give St. John’s money when we need it?**

Actually we give the diocese money, which is how they pay their bills. Our yearly contribution is called an assessment and we are sent invoices on a quarterly basis. It amounts to thousands of dollars a year. This amount comes out of our yearly budget. We are blessed by the generosity of our parishioners, and we share a tithe of that blessing—about 10%--with the diocese so they can conduct the ministries of the diocese at large, including the same bills we pay—salary, lights, phone, etc.

- **Why do I need to sign a card with my financial promise, or pledge?**

We plan our yearly church budget based on the amount of signed pledge cards we receive. Our goal is always to expand the ministries we do each year, but we are limited by financial concerns, just like every household. When we receive less, we have to cut programs.

- **Who sees my pledge card?**

The people who plan the yearly budget for the church, primarily the Treasurer, the Rector, and the stewardship chairperson. All figures and names are kept confidential.

- **What happens if I make a pledge, but I can’t keep up?**

We understand that lives and circumstances change—let us know. Let us pray for you, and let us help you, if that’s what you need.

- **How do I decide how much to give?**

The biblical mandate for tithing is 10% of gross income. It is freeing to be able to give that much to the church, but it is also an ideal to work towards if you are not currently able to tithe 10%. Some people choose to tithe 5% to their church and 5% to other organizations they support.

But the first thing that we ask is for people to pray—really ask God what he would have you share with your church from your own time, treasure and talent.

- **How do I know how much 10% of my income actually is?**

You can look at your tax return from last year, or paycheck stubs.

- **I've never been a pledging person—why should I start now?**

Because God has asked us to make commitments to our churches and to the work of his kingdom on earth. Making a pledge can also be a personal challenge, kind of like working out or eating right. If I want to be stronger, I go to the gym. I make sacrifices of time and treasure in order to meet my goals. When I want my church to be stronger, I contribute to its mission in the community and the world. I make financial and other sacrifices in order to lift the church up to do the work God has given it to do.

- **I don't really want to give money—can't I just volunteer?**

Of course you can! Your life is a blessing and your time is a blessing and your talents are a blessing! Tithing any of those is a great gift to St. John's. But the ministries also need actual funding to continue, so we would ask that you prayerfully consider if God is changing your heart to include financial generosity as part of your contribution to the life of the church.

- **I've been giving the same amount for the past ten years; do I need to change that?**

We all have the opportunity to become more generous, and many people find great freedom in giving to God and his church from the abundance they have. If you have been giving a set dollar amount, you can increase your giving by a yearly amount that works for you. Or you can try to give a percentage instead of a set amount. That way, each year would reflect the percentage you have chosen to give and it would increase or decrease as your financial picture changes.

- **Shouldn't I wait to see what's left over each month to determine what I can give?**

Try this—give from your first fruits at the beginning of the month. That way you are giving to God first. Most people are surprised that they are still able to meet their monthly obligations with more to share. It is definitely a trust walk with God!!

If you have any additional questions about Stewardship, please contact Tom Bell at [tombell@nycap.rr.com](mailto:tombell@nycap.rr.com) or Mother Laurie at [revlmgr@gmail.com](mailto:revlmgr@gmail.com).