

November 13, 2012

Dear Friend,

Each year at Trinity we set aside time to focus on the task of Christian Stewardship. The annual stewardship effort is an opportunity for us as individuals, and as a fellowship, to think seriously about a rather serious thing, namely, the role that money plays in our lives as Christian people—and that our Christian faith plays in the way that we order our financial lives.

The first principle of Stewardship is that it is about our relationship with God—it is not merely about supporting the institutional structure of the local church. Stewardship is giving a return to God from what He has given us. For me, and in the experience of many people I know, this is a very personal matter and a crucial facet of our relationship to the Lord.

Yet our relationship with God is not a "stand alone" sort of thing. It takes place within the fellowship of God's people. Hence, while stewardship has to do with our own personal stewardship (our responsible and grateful use of what God has given us), it also includes our common stewardship of God's household—the Church.

As responsible and grateful stewards, we have significant needs as a parish. This may not always be apparent in view of the capital campaign of the past seven years or so, and the work that has taken place as a result. We have been blessed in this respect. But capital improvements draw upon a very different income stream from that of the regular ongoing expenses of a local church. The fact is, our budget has faced increasing deficits in recent years. We are not alone in this. With the financial crunch of the past few years, along with rising insurance and fuel costs, many churches are struggling financially.

It is often said that Stewardship is not about meeting the budget. This is true; stewardship is a relational and spiritual practice. But as stewards, we need to be aware of the challenges that we face as a congregation, and energetically to face them together in the confidence that God provides the resources and direction that we need.

I hope that in the next few weeks that you will give serious thought to your personal stewardship as a disciple of Jesus Christ. I encourage you to commit to "proportional giving"—intentionally offering a percentage of your income to the extension of God's Kingdom. If you do this already, I ask you to consider increasing that percentage, if only by an incremental amount. Finally, I love these words of the Apostle Paul: "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:15)

In Christ,

Fr. Christopher