

## **A Practical Guide To Giving: Questions and Answers**

**What is stewardship?** We believe that everything we have, everything we call “mine,” is in truth a gift from God, which comes to us through our creation and redemption in Jesus Christ. *Stewardship is a person’s management of all of life’s resources*: our time, our talents, and our treasure. We manage these gifts through the responsible use of our freedom and a growing awareness of the meaning of our Baptismal Covenant in Christ. Each of us is accountable to God for what we do to care for the resources, which have been entrusted to us.

**Why make a pledge rather than just “give?”** Our faith in God is not “blind faith”; rather, our trust in God is built upon the sure foundation of the love made known in and through Jesus Christ. That faith teaches us that we are members of one another and members together of Christ’s Body. It is the responsibility of our vestry to build a budget each year in much the same way that families make their budgets. It is always built on the foundation of faith, but that doesn’t mean it is either naïve or “pie-in-the-sky.” There are real costs involved in being a congregation: paying staff, maintaining a building, committing to outreach, and all the rest. As responsible stewards, the vestry makes its decisions about ministry based on what we can realistically expect will come in. We can form a more responsible plan for mission and ministry when each and every member of the church expresses their intentions about the pledge they will make to support the work we are called to do.

**Isn’t my giving between me and God?** Yes and no. We give in gratitude for God’s free gifts, for God’s grace. We give because we are created in the image of God, and God is a Giver. So each of us is on our own journey, and yet the context for our growth is lived out in a *community* of faith as St. Francis church. But we give in gratitude for a *community* of faith such as St. Francis Church, where the Word is taking on flesh. We give in gratitude that we have been given companions for the journey, and that the work we are called to do is a shared responsibility. Just as we seek transparency in what we *spend* as a congregation, so we seek mutual *accountability* from one another. St. Francis has no “benefactors” or an endowment: we are a family and we all do what we can to support the work we share as followers of Jesus.

**What is tithing?** Tithing is an ancient Biblical concept that has its origin in an agricultural society’s response to God for the fruits of the earth. Tithing – the act of offering to God the first ten percent of one’s blessings – is a way to show our caring and sharing for one another and the world, and a way to counter the tendency in our culture to worship mammon. It is a spiritual discipline that many persons claim has been an essential part of their spiritual growth. By putting first things first, we seek to keep Christ at the center of our lives and our community.

\* From *Giving to God: The Bible’s Good News about Living a Generous Life* by Mark Allan Powell (Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006).