

A Living Sacrifice, week 3, counting the cost

11/9/2017 Andy Figueroa

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Romans 12:1

Jesus tells his disciples about the cost of discipleship by using the analogy of a man building a tower saying, *“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not **first** sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?”* Luke 14:28

Like the builder who must first count the cost of his tower, the vestry will preside over the development of a parish budget for 2018. Our finances are a lot like yours, paying our expenses with current income. Our income is your weekly offering, your sacrifices. By planning well, *counting the cost*, the vestry is able to squeeze the best value from your weekly gifts, and we are able to accomplish the work God has put before us, and that's why we ask you to give us an estimate of your next year's gifts.

One of the main things the vestry has to consider is the generosity and faithfulness of the congregation. At Holy Trinity, this has been the cause of great joy as participating households (those providing their estimated giving) increase, estimated giving increases, and best yet, actual giving not only increases, but in recent years, has always exceeded estimated giving, as shown in the table below.

Year	Participants	Estimated Giving	Ordinary Income
2018	??	??	<i>Increasing needs</i>
2017	49	\$205,974	<i>\$215,000 budgeted</i>
2016	47	\$193,933	\$215,131 actual
2015	44	\$176,780	\$196,899 actual
2014	44	\$162,762	\$187,532 actual

In church finances, this is almost unheard of. Parish leaders across varying traditions must almost always plan on receiving less than people have indicated they would give.

Cutting to the chase, if we are to meet the challenges of increasing prices, regular building maintenance, decent clergy and staff compensation, and other proper expenses that you can easily imagine, the regular giving of the people also has to increase. We trust those needs will be met by a combination of increased giving from long-time members and new streams of giving from those who have recently come.

This is a perfect time to be among the first to help us *count the cost*. Please complete your card and place it in the box near the baptismal font.

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:15-16

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