

Casting our Crowns

Annual Stewardship Campaign

Dear Members and Friends of Holy Trinity Anglican Church,

Every year, we ask our parishioners and friends to kindly estimate their giving for the coming year. This year, for the second year in a row, the Vestry and I have asked Vestryman Andy Figueroa to lead our efforts for the planned giving campaign which we are calling “Casting our Crowns.” Why Andy? For many years Andy has experienced a call to address the subject of Christian giving. As his ministry developed, he has helped parishes, schools and dioceses, in both the Episcopal and Reformed Episcopal Churches to learn about Christian giving and to develop planned giving as part of the ethos of Christian discipleship. With his abundance of experience and his clear sense of calling, the Vestry tasked him to lead our efforts at Holy Trinity Church. As Rector, I am grateful that God has abundantly blessed our parish in so many ways, including sending Andy, with his gifts and skills, to our fellowship. I ask you to consider Andy’s helpful guidance as you make your plans to give your gift to God and his Church.

May God continue to bless us all at Holy Trinity Church.

Fr. Brad Cunningham+

*Rector, Holy Trinity Anglican Church
Fernandina Beach, Amelia Island, FL*

Our Crowns

Our Heavenly Treasure

By Andy Figueroa 10/19/2014

*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*
(2 Timothy 4:6-8 ESV)

Whenever the apostles write about receiving “crowns” in heaven, they are use not using the Greek word for a royal crown, but a winner's crown, a woven garland or wreath that is given in recognition of achievement, and specifically as achievement for faithfulness in the Christian life, doing and living as we are called.

James writes, *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the **crown of life**, which God has promised to those who love him* (James 1:12 ESV). Peter, to the elders of the church, writes, *And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading **crown of glory*** (1 Peter 5:4 ESV).

All of this about crowns in the epistles of Paul, James, and Peter gives context to John's description of heaven in Revelation 4, *They cast their crowns before the throne ...* . This is reflected in our act of worship that is casting our crowns, our earthly treasure, during the celebration of Holy Eucharist, in anticipation of heavenly worship where we will also cast our crowns, our heavenly treasure.

An important part of running the race and keeping the faith is through the money that we give to our local parish. Only a few are called to serve the church full-time, but we all keep Holy Trinity running full-time with our tithes and offerings. Although the climax of our in-gathering, turning in a card with estimated future giving, has little intrinsic value, the actual giving that is anticipated by the card has abundant value as an act of worship and as the resources for Holy Trinity to be the Church in this little corner of God's vineyard. Giving well doesn't happen by accident, and is often quite difficult. In the end, giving well pleases the giver and pleases God, and through our collective giving meets or exceeds the needs of our parish. We, therefore, set aside this period of time each year to more adequately address the giving of money.

During last year's in-gathering, almost every household participated by giving us a card, and many who had never done so before, did so for the first time. Many also stepped up to higher levels of giving. Better yet, total anticipated giving was large enough to have an appropriate and balanced budget. Even better than that, actual giving has exceeded what was anticipated, so the vestry has been able to shoulder expenses that had not been expected, and to do a little more for the sake of the growth and the well being of the parish without depleting reserves. Our parish has been blessed because the people have been giving well: thoughtfully, generously, and sacrificially.

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