

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. The purpose is two-fold. First, the Gospel calls us to be faithful stewards of God's gifts. Second, it is necessary that our parish plan a ministry budget for the new 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." Andy has written a series of helpful articles intended to inform us about the salient issues we ought to consider when contemplating the Gospel call to give for the Kingdom of God.

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

Fr. Brad Cunningham+
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First, Be Reconciled to Your Brother

11/9/2014 Andy Figueroa

Jesus said, If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
(Matthew 5:23-24 ESV)

This morning, adjacent to the baptismal font, you will find a box into which you may *cast* your confidential "2015 Estimated Tithes and Offerings" cards. The box will remain in place for the rest of November.

In writing about financial stewardship this season, I have carefully avoided the use of the word "pledge." Pledge is the wrong word because a pledge means a promise or a vow, and rather ruins the joy of giving as an act of love and worship. If you find that word off-putting, I'm with you. In spite of our sometimes ambiguous use of language, we don't mean to be conducting a "pledge" in-gathering and we don't want you to "pledge." Alas, changing even our own culture takes years, but we are making progress.

The Biblical narrative about giving is found throughout the text beginning in Genesis and

winding its way through the law, the history, the books of wisdom, the prophets, the Gospels, the letters, and the Revelation of St. John. For students of stewardship at every level, the Bible provides an abundance of consistent guidance, and for those who are well versed in the disciplines of giving, it is encouragement for the saints.

One major aspect of giving isn't even about the gift, it's about love. Giving well has so much to do with getting our hearts right. That's harder than giving a lot of money. How do I even approach getting my heart right? Because I'm human, sinful by nature, and broken, I can do so only with God's help. Getting started seems like an act of my will, but that, too, is probably another act of God's mercy that just feels like my will.

There is circular logic here that says that if I get my heart right, the right giving will follow, and that if my heart isn't right, my gift is not wanted. But Jesus also said that my heart will follow my giving. *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (Matthew 6:19-21 ESV) So, I give, and as I grow in the disciplines of giving well, my heart warms, and I find joy and peace in the giving.

You will find a copy of this article at <http://2chronicles36.org/>