

## First Things – part three, counting the cost

11/20/2016 Andy Figueroa

Jesus said, “*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

This is a very different kind of **First Thing**. Here, in fact, Jesus is telling his potential disciples that they must first determine if they have what it takes to persevere in the faith. Although Jesus is talking specifically about the cost of discipleship, the general principle of *counting the cost* holds true for most important work, and that's why we ask you to give us an estimate of your next year's gifts.

Like the builder who must first count the cost of his tower, the vestry will preside over the development of a parish budget for 2017. Our budget is a lot like a household budget. Like most households, we pay our expenses with current income, and that income is your weekly tithes and offerings. By responsibly *counting the cost* and planning well, the vestry is able to squeeze the best value from your weekly gifts.

How are we doing? For this year, we will know how we're doing once all of you have participated in the on-going in-gathering of *Estimated Tithes and Offerings*. By tithes and offerings we specifically mean the people's ordinary giving. This specifically excludes special gifts that are made from time-to-time that may be designated for such things as foreign missions, building projects, and memorials. Your ordinary giving is our ordinary income. We keep a balanced budget, so our ordinary income equals our operating expenses.

Here is a snapshot of the current and past two years showing the number of households that participated by returning their *Estimated Tithes and Offerings* and the resulting ordinary income:

Year	Participants	Ordinary Income
2016	47	\$204,000 budget
2015	44	\$196,899 actual
2014	44	\$187,532 actual

As a parish, we are growing and we have growing needs. Your tithes and offerings are the fuel for the engine of our ministry. Thanks to the generosity of the people of this parish, estimated giving and actual giving have kept up with our needs. Of course the more you give the more we are able to do as a parish. As of 11/13/2016, we have received 26 cards, so keep them coming so we can finish up by next week.

If you have not yet participated in the in-gathering, won't you please thoughtfully help us *count the cost* by completing your card and placing it in the box near the baptismal font.

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