

Dollars and \$ense

Jan Porter, Financial Secretary

Discipleship and Stewardship

The “budget season” is drawing to a close. Budget season is the time to look ahead at ministry planning for next year. We listen hard trying to hear how God is asking us to grow in our benevolence and service ministries, to enhance our worship and expand our Christian learning. Remember, it is (and should be) our ministries that determine what our spending plan is, not our budget telling us what our ministry focus should be. I hope you had a chance to come to the stewardship luncheon on October 30 to get your questions answered. We will approve our spending plan at our annual congregation meeting on November 13.

The following Sunday November 20 is Christ the King Sunday—the last Sunday of this church year. It is fitting that our Commitment Sunday will be the last Sunday of our church year. It will be a time of reflection and prayer to hear how God is calling each of us to support our spending plan for doing God’s work next year. More specifically, we will fill out our Commitment Cards and Time and Talent sheets, and present them at the altar during worship. This is the time to reflect on the giving aspect of stewardship.

Recall that discipleship and stewardship have been our focus for this year. Discipleship means growing in our relationship with our Lord Jesus. At our Pastors’ Forum this summer we learned the marks of discipleship: daily prayer, daily scripture reading, weekly worship, giving to the tithe or beyond, serving others, sharing our faith with others. Learning about and growing in stewardship is part of discipleship. Remember in the forum, we looked at the book **Ask, Thank, Tell** by Charles “Chick” Lane. The author describes how we can identify a faithful steward, what a biblical giver actually looks like. He lists six characteristics or values of a biblical giver: intentional, regular, generous, first, proportional, and cheerful. By practicing these values, we will grow in our understanding of stewardship and as disciples of Jesus.

In a previous article I talked about the first two characteristics—intentional and regular:

Intentional means making up your mind to give, making a plan to give, and then following through with the plan. It means not getting sidetracked by all the other demands on the resources that we are managing for God. It means taking a look at our own earned income and prayerfully considering how much of it is needed for God’s work. It means deciding to “invest” in God’s work, knowing that you will be more committed to the Lord if you’ve got some “skin in the game”. It’s about making your commitment to God.

Regular means giving on a regular schedule, whether it’s weekly or monthly. This is the demonstration of our intention, our commitment.

As we approach Commitment Sunday, I ask you to consider the remaining values of a biblical giver:

Generous is the most basic stewardship value. God’s generosity and love in creating us, providing for us, and giving His only Son to die for us is the ultimate demonstration of generosity. We call it grace. Our response is deep gratefulness for God’s gifts to us, the undeserving. We demonstrate our gratefulness by giving generously following God’s own model for us. Out of our gratitude for God’s gracious giving to us we respond by wanting to give of our time, our talents, and our financial abundance so that we might reflect God’s grace and share with others God’s love for us. In Chick Lane’s paraphrase of Luke 12:34: “If your treasure is with Jesus, then your heart is going to be there too. If your treasure isn’t with Jesus, then your heart is likely elsewhere as well.”

First means giving to God first and then living off the rest. Of course we’re really not giving God anything since He owns everything He created in the first place. Rather we mean giving from what God has entrusted to us back to do His work directly. By giving to God’s work first, we make sure that are not putting our own wants and needs first and giving God the leftovers. Where is God on your priority list?

Proportional means giving in proportion to the blessings you have received. The tithe, or ten percent, is what the Bible teaches about proportional giving. When it comes to monetary blessings, God expects those who are blessed with more financial resources to give more toward the needs of others. The New Testament speaks to us about our duty to alleviate the needs of others with few resources. It also speaks to the risk of not giving proportionally—remember Luke 18:25 and Luke 12:16-21?

Cheerful giving results from practicing the other five values. If you are giving intentionally, regularly, generously, first and in proportion to the resources you are blessed with, you will experience the joy of knowing your gift has touched the lives of others through some aspect of our ministry work. It’s the feeling of enrichment and joy of your heart growing closer to Jesus.

He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. You will be enriched in every way for generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 2 Corinthians 9: 6-8, 11

St. John's Lutheran Church Council Candidates

The time has come once again to thank our outgoing council members who have served so devotedly and welcome new council members in the service of our church. Those who will be departing are Brent Lybrand, Council President; Jan Porter, Financial Secretary; Don Frank, Vice President and Evangelism Chairman, and Noel Helms, who has served as Chairman of Christian Education and Property. These members made incredible accomplishments in their various areas and we gratefully extend our gratitude and God's blessings. Those who have agreed to be nominated for Church Council are as follows, in alphabetical order.



LUANN BRYANT Luann has been a member of St. John's since 1965. She is the daughter of Claude Earnhardt and the late Ann Earnhardt. After graduating from Spartanburg High School she attended USCS. As a devoted Sunday School and Bible School teacher, she also organizes and prepares the Acolytes, Crucifers, and Children's Church. She was a mentor for the Girl's Confirmation Class of 2008-2009. She is currently serving on the Youth and Social Ministry Committees. Luann stays very busy volunteering at Mt. View Nursing Home, helping with the Red Door Festival, and as a member of Circle 4. She enjoys driving our mini-bus for church events. She has two boys, Beau and Lee. Beau attends

Spartanburg Community College and Lee is a junior at Spartanburg High School. Luann will do all that she can to help the church and the community in the name of the Lord.



HARRELL CONNELLY Harrell and wife, Shirley Heath Connelly, joined St. John's in 1998. They will celebrate their 48th wedding anniversary in November. They have two children, a son and a daughter, and three grandchildren. Harrell was born and raised in Texas. He received academic degrees from The University of Texas in Austin and an MBA from the University of South Florida. His professional career has been in healthcare, serving as CEO of several hospitals. Harrell's service activities at St. John's include Early Service Choir, Men's Ensemble, Lector, and Cantor.



PATTY CULBREATH Patricia Culbreath was born in Collinsville, Illinois, and was confirmed at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Decatur Alabama. She has been a member of St. John's since 1983. After graduating from Spartanburg Regional Medical Center with an Associate Degree in Medical Assistant and Phlebotomy, she worked in the lab for thirty years. In 2001 she taught Phlebotomy at Spartanburg Community College for nine years. As a member of the American Association of Medical Assistants Chapter, she served as Treasurer and Vice President. Patty was married to the late Preston Eugene Culbreath for thirty three years.



WALKER STOCKLEY Walker Stockley joined St Johns Church in 1986, after marrying Frances the same year, who was already a member. He has been an adult Sunday School teacher, and the Youth Committee chairperson during a previous term on Church Council. Walker has participated on Stewardship and Property committees, and assisted with LCY planning and programs. Frances and Walker have two sons, Charles and Graham, raised in the church. He is employed by Sealed Air Corp. in downtown Greenville.



JEFF WILLOUGHBY Jeff began attending the Lutheran Church thirty three years ago in Michigan with his girlfriend Renee. They have now been married for twenty nine years. Although raised as a Catholic, Jeff and Renee believe it is very important to belong to a church that the family attends together. Over the years the Lord has blessed Jeff with many opportunities to serve His church. Membership Development and Sunday School teaching were his first experiences. He has also served as a Youth Ministry leader while his children, Jeremy and McKinsey were young. He attended National Gatherings, managed the reconstruction of a Youth House, and coached co-ed softball. Jeff also participated in choir and the rewriting of the church constitution. New challenges included serving on the Board of Education and the growth of small groups. Jeff and Renee's family has now expanded to include a daughter-in-law and two year old granddaughter. He believes it is very important to continue in the mission of St. John's so future generations will have the opportunity to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.