

Trinity Episcopal Church Fishkill, N.Y.

... where the gratitude
in our heart



and



the work of
our hands shows
our love for God, family, and
community

Let us reflect on all the gifts we have received
from our creator and then offer praise and
thanks giving to our generous God.

The Rev. Sr. Jean Campbell, OSH
Rector

Reflection — Commitment
STEWARDSHIP 2010

Reflecting on our Gifts

Take time to reflect upon and list some of the
many gifts you have received from God:

Difficult times — such as family and/or financial
difficulties, sickness, or other emotional stress — can
make it difficult to appreciate God's gifts. All of us
have received the Gifts of Time, Talent, and Treasure.



Each of us receives God's gift of 24 hours
in each day. While the number of days
each of us receives is different, it is
important for us to manage our time
effectively. Do we spend too much time at work? Do
we let the small things in life consume too much of
our time?



Each day, we encounter people with
various talents. We use our talents to
earn a living, to provide for our family, for
recreation, and to serve God and
community. We need to reflect on both
our talents and the priorities in our life.



All of the things we treasure are gifts
from God. Relatively, we, as a nation,
are all well off, some of us more than
others, but the gifts we received are
less important than our joy of sharing,
as a thankful response to whatever God
has given.

**In reflection, all that we have, and all
that we will ever be is a gift from God.**

What is Stewardship?

Many people come to hear about stewardship feeling
defensive. Stewardship is frequently associated with
“fund-raising”; however, that association does not
work! Stewards are not fund-raisers — stewards are
caretakers. Christian Stewardship is a way of life
based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament
and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Stewardship is an
expression of gratitude to God. It reminds us that we
are the administrators, not the owners, of our assets.
As in the parable of the talents, each one of us is
responsible for maintaining and wisely using the
blessings that God has bestowed. When lovingly
embraced, Christian stewardship produces a
spirituality that refreshes our lives with the Holy Spirit,
deepens our relationship with Jesus Christ, and
glorifies our Heavenly Father.

What are we to do with God's blessings?

We are called to give back a portion of our time,
talent and treasure to God. Jesus leaves no doubt in
his words and actions that God has definite intentions
for all the blessings we receive. God's blessings are
for restoring and renewing; establishing justice, dignity,
equity, wholeness; and ending suffering, hunger, and
oppression. Stewardship is about the need for people
to give thanks.

Our stewardship involves four Ts — Talent, Time,
Treasure and Truth. The fourth T, Truth, means that
we make an honest effort to focus on the call of
Christ to commit ourselves to prayer, to work, and to
give so that the body of Christ, the Church, may live
and meet Her mission — “... to restore all people to
unity with God and each other in Christ.”.

**“All things come from you,
O Lord,
and of Your own have we given You.”**

GIVING AT TRINITY

How do we give thanks for God's blessings?

We make an honest effort to receive God's gifts with the gratitude in our prayers and worship; to cultivating God's gifts responsibly; by sharing God's gifts lovingly and in justice with others; and by returning God's gifts with increase. We do this by making a generous commitment of our time and talent for ministries within the Church and treasure (money) for supporting the mission of the church.

What is a "commitment"?

A commitment is an estimate of time, talent, and treasure that an individual, couple, or family intends to share with God during the coming year. Your commitment to Trinity says, "I am part of this community, and I want to show that this church and its mission are important to me." Commitment takes giving beyond what is casual. Our financial commitment allows the vestry to plan mission objectives for the coming year.

How much should I commit to the Church?

Some members of our parish have never made a commitment (pledge) before and have never thought of themselves as "stewards." While many of us understand that the issue concerning us is not "What shall I give to God, and why?" but rather "What shall I keep and why?" While money is an important aspect of stewardship, it is not the only one. Please consider all aspects of stewardship in your own life and how you can be a good steward of the time and talents that God has given you.

For guidance, please consider the following standards for financial commitments to Trinity.

Will you meet the New Testament Standard?

According to Luke, Jesus said that anyone who does not give up all his possessions cannot be his disciple. Jesus measured generosity by a radically new standard: the condition of the giver's heart. We have an obligation to provide for ourselves and our families and to maintain a way of life that respects our own dignity as persons. The good stewards ask both "If they can afford their life style?" and "How will their life style affect their ability to advance the Church's mission."

However, if our commitment of money has cost us nothing, it is more like a tip. One of the tests of our discipleship lies in whether we live our life and give to God the odd crumb, or whether we give to God first, and then manage the rest. If we do the first, we will never be satisfied: If we do the second, we will always have enough.

Will you meet the Church's standard of giving?

Tithing is a scriptural based tradition and is not as radical as the command to love God with all we are and love our neighbor as ourselves. The Episcopal Church asks us to recognize the tithe (10% of one's income and time) as a standard commitment. Some of us use the so-called "modern tithe" of 5% as a standard. Others use the concept of proportional giving – making a commitment to give a specific percentage of their income. Many of us are working towards the tithe in increments. We urge every member of the parish to commit at least 2% of their family income. At the very least, look at your current commitment and then prayerfully consider what it would take to give the next higher percentage point of your income.

Ultimately, what we give is between ourselves and God.

Does my commitment really matter?

Absolutely! Regardless of the amount, your commitments of time, talent and money are very important and will help Trinity support the cost of its mission and ministries.

Our financial commitment does not include our gifts for altar flowers, the food pantry, the Rector's discretionary fund, capital projects or other outreach activities.

What should you do prior to making a commitment?

As with any decision, begin with prayer, reflect on scripture and ask God to guide your decision. If you don't feel good about your commitment, you have not given enough! It feels good to give, and there should be no shame in our enjoyment of that feeling. It is a joy that is encouraged and blessed by God.

Commitment PRAYER

Almighty God, whose loving hands has given us all that we possess, You call us to be disciples of your Son, to be stewards of all creation. May the hours and the days you give us be filled with faith, with hope, and with love. May the talents, gifts and blessings you give us be shared for the benefit of family and community. May the money and possessions you give us be spent for growth of self and of church. Help us make the choices that will renew the face of the earth, and will bring us to see you face to face. We ask all this through Jesus Christ. Amen.