

First Fruits

Honor the Lord with your substance and
With the first fruits of all you produce.

Proverbs 3:9

2008 Every Member Canvass
[name of church]

The Mission of our Church

Your Mission Statement Here

O God

You taught us by your Son Jesus Christ that all of our possessions come from you.

Help us to be faithful stewards of our time, our talents and our wealth;

And to consecrate gladly to your service a due proportion for all that you have given us.

Take us and make us your own;

For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

[name of church] Stewardship Commission:

[names of members]

Q: I've never practiced proportional giving before. How should I begin?

A: Reflect on the amount of your pledge last year. Calculate its proportional amount with last year's income. This is the beginning percentage to work toward your goal. Increase your percentage giving each year until you reach the proportional amount that is your goal.

Q: What guidance is there for what the standard of giving should be?

A: The tithe (10%) is the minimum biblical standard of giving to God's world and is also the standard of the Episcopal Church. Gifts of time and talent are more difficult to quantify than money, but the principle of proportional giving still applies.

Q: What should my gift be?

Our individual circumstances vary greatly. We give in proportion to what we have. This is why it is helpful to determine what percentage of our income we are already giving and to adjust that amount to reflect our priorities. It is important to stretch ourselves and to give at a level that celebrates our thankfulness. God offers us the holy habit of giving as a tool to avoid becoming prisoners of money. In giving, we become richer.

What is "First Fruits"

The Bible tells us that God asked His people to bring the first and the choicest of the harvest to Him as their offering. (Ex 23:19)

Giving to God first, before our own human wants are satisfied, is a declaration of trust that God will provide.

The act of giving in this way is a practice or discipline of one of the Holy Habits.

The two important aspects of making one's giving a holy offering is to practice proportional giving and to give first fruits.

As a member of [name of church] community, you are invited to consider practicing the Holy Habit of Giving.

How do we begin?

Consider asking each member of your family to do this exercise. It is never too early to teach children to have grateful and generous hearts.

1. Prayerfully consider all that you have and all that you are. Before deciding on your offering, give thanks for all you have. Making a list of things for which you are thankful is a helpful tool. Do this for one week and you'll be amazed.
2. Determine what percentage of your total income you usually give each year. One way to determine this is to compare your last year's pledge with your tax return.
3. Next, add up all source of your income and create an estimated total for 2008. Determine what percentage of your 2008 income you will give to God's work at **[name of church]**.
4. Consider how you will fulfill your pledge. Ask God's help that your mind and heart will be made grateful and generous through the making of you pledge. Ask God's help that you can be disciplined to give first to Him and to give a portion that is pleasing to Him.
5. Make your offering at the altar on Loyalty Sunday, **[date]**. We will present our pledges for **2009** at all services on that day.

Questions about Pledging

Q: Why is it better to offer a formal pledge rather than just give a weekly plate offering?

A: Signing a pledge card helps the vestry budget for the coming year. All gifts offer thanksgiving to God, but your annual pledge commitment allows **[name of church]** to discern God's will for our community, to plan and to respond.

Q: Will the church maintain a record of my giving?

A: Yes. You will also receive envelopes in which to place your weekly, monthly, quarterly or annual gifts in the offering plate.

Q: Are envelopes the only way to present our regular gifts to **[name of church]?**

A: No. In being good stewards of our gifts from God, it is possible to fund the pledge in other ways. Gifts of appreciated securities, monies from a charitable planning instrument, direct bank transfers and other methods can be established. Contact the church for more information about doing this.

Q: What is the payment period for my pledge?

A: This pledge is for the calendar year beginning January 1, 2008 and ending December 31, 2008.