

Dear Members and Friends of St. James' Parish,

It is once again the time of year when the church asks each of us to pledge our support and provide an estimate of giving for the mission and ministry of our Parish in the coming year.

As a congregation, we have much for which to be thankful. Our mission is being realized in many ways: new faces in our midst, seriousness about personal spiritual growth, re-energized youth and young adult programs, and opportunities to learn and deepen our faith. We continue to reach out and serve our community, the Gospel is being proclaimed, the sacraments are ministered, and joy and laughter are present. As a community of God's people we have much for which to give thanks.

Each of us has many things personally about which we might also offer thanks. One of the ways we live out our thankfulness is to return a portion of the material gifts God has entrusted to our care to His church. This letter is to invite you to reflect on what your gratitude might move you to share from the material things you hold in trust for God.

Our Christian mission requires funding. You alone can decide if you wish to pledge your support. The rule of thumb to guide you is based in the Old Testament and in the standard for giving in The Episcopal Church - the tithe. The tithe, the giving of 10% or more of your income to the church, is considered by some to be unreachable. This is why tithing should be entered into prayerfully. When giving through prayer and in the proper spirit of cheerfulness and gratitude for all God has freely given us, then we realize the meaning, "...for God loves a cheerful giver." During these tough economic times, we can rest on God's promise that His people who freely give of their treasure will be blessed with a wealth of spirit and richness of life that is given to those who seek first His kingdom. I urge you to consider moving forward in faith by increasing your giving percentage each year. That is, if you were giving 5% of your income, to increase it to 6% or 7%. You will not regret choosing to be obedient to God's charge.

Our leaders and members of the Vestry have made their 2010 pledges, and are all either proportionately giving, tithing or have an active plan in place to reach the tithe. Would you make this a matter of personal reflection and prayer? We urge you to do your part in helping St. James' Parish fulfill and grow its mission and ministry by making a pledge of support. Please prayerfully consider how you can continue to be a faithful steward of that which God has entrusted to you.

You will soon receive a pledge form to complete, and we ask that you pray and reflect carefully before filling it out. We encourage you to present your pledge form as an outward showing of faith and support at our special service and coffee hour on Stewardship Dedication Sunday, November 22nd. If you are not able to present your pledge at the Altar on Stewardship Sunday, we invite you to place it in the alms basin or mail it to the Parish Office.

I ask that you prayerfully consider pledging the most generous gift you can to the 2010 St. James' Parish Stewardship Appeal. Thank you also in advance for finishing strong in fulfilling your 2009 pledge in the days ahead.

Thank you and God bless you!
Dwayne Crawford