Father Frank has been kind enough to share his thoughts on stewardship, I know you've heard it before, but hopefully you won't mind the repetition of a speech I gave on stewardship last year.

Good morning, for those of you that don’t know me, my name is Laura McKinley and I have been asked to speak with you about stewardship.  I know what you’re thinking “another talk about money, oh boy”, but I am not here to talk about your monetary pledge, I am here to talk about your time and talent.

I know there are those of you that think “what possible talent do I have to give”?  If you had asked me seven years ago before I came to Grace, that is what I would have thought.  In fact, I never thought I would be here talking to you about this.  When my friend Ann Judge invited me to come to Grace, I was the kind of person to sit in the back row and listen to the sermon.  Then I would get out just as quick as I could once the service was over.  I was shy and afraid to get too involved.  I expected that I would just humor her, come a few times and then go along on my merry way.

But then Ann asked me to join the choir.  I suspect it was a plot to keep me around, but it worked.  I love to sing, but I was really afraid to.  After all, who wants to sing in public? Here I was, this shy introverted person faced with singing while others listened!  I had never done anything like that before - I usually only sung in the car or in the shower.  It sounded scary to even contemplate and I was nervous the first few times, but I got over that.  Everyone was very nice and welcoming, and it helped that I wasn’t alone.

Then an opportunity arose to read during the service.  Of course this is public speaking, so it was very scary to me and I am sure some of you are probably nervous about that kind of thing as well. But, I faced my fear and gave it a try.  I practiced a bit beforehand, and am very glad that I did, because that first time my heart was pounding, my hands shook and it felt as though I lost control of my voice.  I heard words being spoken, but it did not seem like I was speaking them.  I couldn’t even remember reading them much less speaking.  But, after a few times, it felt more natural, and my fear dissipated.

This began for me a journey of self-discovery, and during this time I undertook more responsibilities, like acolyte, hospitality and finally vestry.   Each new thing was scary and had its own unique set of challenges.  I’ll never forget my first day as a chalice bearer.  It amazed me how much there is to think about when you’re serving on the altar, and I was afraid I would mess up, drop the chalice, or even worse - spill the wine on someone.  But I managed that as well, and though I am certain that I have made mistakes, I’ve been able to overcome my fear of them.  It really helps that everyone at Grace is supportive and understanding.  Because of all of you, I was able to face my fears and take on these challenges.

Through all this, I was just doing what I could to help the church.  I never considered that by doing so, I would change myself.  After some time at Grace had passed, and I had undertaken a few challenges, my husband remarked that I had changed for the better.  He felt that I had become more like the person I was meant to be.  He was glad to see me come out of my shell a bit and face the world with curiosity instead of fear.  He still remarks that I am not the same person I was and how proud he is of me, and I have all of you to thank for it.

Just as coming to church and hearing the message changes you without a conscious effort, giving your time and talent can change you just by doing it.  I encourage you to seek out ways to serve, and if you are interested in what ministries are available or have questions about a specific ministry, please ask myself or any member of the Vestry and we’ll make sure to direct you to the right person.  I pray that we all, through God’s Grace find our Abundance of talent and give it in service to Him. Amen