

Aloha Kakahiaka, Good morning.

Well, here we are, it's October. Can you believe it? The end of the Season of Pentecost is in site, the church year will be over in just a short time, and once again we'll be starting the church's New Year along with the first Sunday in Advent the end of next month.

Social custom calls us at times like these to take stock of our accomplishments and if we've measured up to our expectations. We also use these times to anticipate and envision, to identify goals, our aiming points for the future. Think about any graduation ceremony and commencement exercise in school for example. We all do this at the end of the calendar year as well, whether deliberately or in passing. Some of us clean house the end of December in preparation for the New Year, and we may establish resolutions in support of some particular goal in the following months.

As a church we do these things as well, and while there is no liturgical stewardship season, nonetheless it happens every year at about this time for most faith communities. Individually and as a church body we look back and remember the seasons just passed, and then we try to plan for what the future may hold.

This process may include discussions on practical matters, like physical plant maintenance, and it may also include considerations for mission-related efforts like outreach, education, and evangelism.

Any discussion of stewardship includes how we make use of financial resources, offerings of money shared with the church to sometimes do very mundane things, as well as in support of those mission-related activities. And stewardship also considers how we share our time and talent with each other in this gathering as part of the Body of Christ. These are important matters that I hope you will prayerfully consider in the coming weeks as we embark on our stewardship campaign. Please be on the lookout for a mailing this week that includes your pledge card for the next year, along with a request for some feedback on your preferred method of communication for things happening at the Cathedral. Alternatively, you can check out our brand new website and update your pledge there as well, and for our virtual community there will be some electronic communications headed your way.

Let me say though, if we cut short our understanding of stewardship with a limited reference only to talent, time, and treasure we miss out on what may be a far more important matter, namely God's love shared with each of us, and in turn our calling to continue the sharing and passing that love and the gifts God has shared with us along to others.

*That is why this year's stewardship campaign theme, drawing from James 1:17 is so important. **"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."***

This season is our opportunity individually and collectively, here in person, in our virtual gatherings, in those we lift in prayer, to recognize our gifts, to name them, to call them out, to list them and lift them up and celebrate them, because they are from God. These gifts may take on many forms. Yes, there are financial, time, and talent-related gifts. There are also compassion, wisdom, patience, kindness, creativity, and leadership gifts, and a countless number of others.

We each must take the time to do some self-assessment in order to be clear about our various gifts, and you may have preferred ways to accomplish this all important step. The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, or TENS, brings together many clergy and lay leaders across our church from around the country, and in part they consider group and individual devotional practices. One suggestion from TENS is the Ignatian Examen process which may be helpful in recognizing God's work and the shared gifts in your lives. If you're interested, as a daily practice try this five step process:

- 1. In prayer, be aware of God's presence, envision your walk with Jesus, feel the Holy Spirit moving through you, and in gratitude recognize the gifts you've received through Holy Love.*
- 2. Consider the day and its events – name the positives and negatives alike. Remember you're walking with our Lord and sharing these things in his light.*
- 3. Let your feelings, your emotions, your reactions to the events of the day come to the surface. Consider which stand out the most for you.*
- 4. Give them all to God. Share them, and lay them before God in his full light and try to focus in on one area at a time.*
- 5. Look for meaning with an open heart, illuminated by the light of our Lord, recognize the gifts that are being shared, even if they don't seem like gifts initially.*

As we each work through our chosen means to count the gifts God has shared with us each day, we should remember we're not alone. God calls us to extend and share our gifts with each other as the ultimate expression of gratitude and in recognition of his grace and love.

During these next seven weeks, here in the Cathedral on our Walls of Gratitude in the back of the church, and through electronic means we will ask you to share things for which you are grateful each week. You can do so anonymously if you wish, or with attribution. In recognizing and naming our gifts, and then sharing them with each other as sisters and brothers in Christ, we are taking a step toward sharing our individual faith stories and strengthening our church community. Christ asked this of the disciples, and he asks us to do this today.

When you consider each of the readings for today did you hear the theme of God's love for us? Could you sense the sadness in those things that would seemingly separate us from each other, and prevent us from sharing with each other the fullness of God's gift of love to us? God loves us, and even when we are stubborn, or foolish, or hard hearted, we come to experience perfect love and grace through our Lord, Jesus Christ. We have to know this, and live into this, and share this reality. As fellow travelers on our faith journeys Jesus calls us to set aside the things that might divide us, and instead be in partnership with him to love and to serve, and to be simple like a child in how we use the gifts entrusted to each of us to meet God's calling.

In the TENS resources, the Reverend Julia McCray Goldsmith from Trinity Cathedral in San Jose describes her experience in considering her various gifts and her uncertainty for how to best use them in the service of God's love. In working through a form of the Ignatian Examen process, and in subsequent dialogue with a spiritual advisor regarding a financial pledge she determined that even a tithe was not ultimately sufficient. Instead, what she discovered is the need to be more responsive to sharing God's many gifts to her well beyond just a making a pledge of any amount.

It is so tempting to think there is a "right amount" of giving that we are called to, giving of any sort, of any type, to please God. But we can never give enough to earn God's love and grace, because we already have that, freely given and shared to us through our Lord Jesus. As Reverend Goldsmith found, instead Jesus has called us to open our hearts and souls to him and to work concertedly to spread his love to our neighbors as abundantly as he has done for us. We are each called to do this in our own particular way.

On November 21, just seven short weeks from now, we will gather in, hold up, and consecrate our many varied, collective gifts here that Sunday morning. It is my sincerest hope and prayer that as we work through this process, that together we will increase our understanding of each other, our partnership, and our kinship as brothers and sisters in Christ and in this Cathedral of St. Andrew family, each sharing according to our calling.

In prayer I leave you with the text of the final verse of a favorite hymn that we may heed its call:

*"To give, and give, and give again, what God hath given thee;
to spend thyself nor count the cost; to serve right gloriously the
God who gave all worlds that are, and all that are to be."*