**“All Things Come from You, O Lord: The Season of Giving Thanks”**

**A FAQ for Stewardship at St. Julian’s**

**What is Stewardship?**

Stewardship is the Christian practice or discipline of stewarding (caring for, using well) all the gifts and blessing that God and others have imparted in our lives. These gifts are many and include our talents, time, energy, health, experience, education, homes, vocations (professions), and financial resources (among others). In the church, we often speak of time, talent and treasure as way of encapsulating all the gifts and blessing we have received though surely our blessings are too many to number.

**How is Stewardship understood at St. Julian’s?**

We believe that stewardship is so much more than financial contributions to our church. We believe stewardship is way of living each moment of our lives in gratitude for the abundance we experience in all aspects of life. Living a life of gratitude for God’s provision and all our blessings can look like everything from food given to a hungry person, to holding the hand of a grieving friend, to signing up for one of our ministries, to making an annual pledge of financial support to the church. Any intentional act of giving that arises from a deep place of gratitude to God is an act of Christian stewardship.

**What is the “Season of Giving Thanks” and In-Gathering Sunday?**

The “Season of Giving Thanks” that begins in October and ends before Thanksgiving each year at St. Julian’s is the season we ask our community individually and as families to prayerfully reflect quite specifically on how they intend to share their gifts of time, talent and treasure to further God’s work in and through St. Julian’s in the coming year. This season culminates on In-gathering Sunday when we “gather in” a Pledge Card from each person or family, which states specifically what gifts of time, talent and treasure each person or family pledges to share with God through St. Julian’s in the year to come.

**What a Pledge Card?**

Pledge Cards provided during the In-gathering season and collected on In-gathering Sunday, give us the opportunity to express our gratitude to God for all the blessings in our lives through a commitment of prayer, time, talent and a financial pledge to continue God’s ministry in and through St. Julian’s. Again, we “gather in” these cards as one church, a sign of our common commitment to God in Christ and to one another, on a Sunday in November.

**What is the financial pledge for?**

First a financial pledge is a commitment to give with regularity a certain predetermined amount of money to the church over a year. Second our financial pledges allow our church leadership to responsibly and wisely budget for all our financial needs in the year to come. These include salaries for our priests and staff; covering our mortgage, insurance and other building related expenses; funding our ministries (worship, music, evangelism, education for all ages, retreats, hospitality, pastoral care, outreach, etc…); provide support for the ministry of our Bishop and Diocese; and give support to those in need outside our own community. In regard to this last item, we commit 10% of every dollar pledged to St. Julian’s and budgeted to those in need or doing good work outside our own doors. St. Julian’s is making a difference for good and for God in the lives of many, many people, and our financial gifts assure us that God’s mission and ministry through St. Julian’s will surely continue.

**How much should I pledge to St. Julian’s?**

This is a very personal decision, but there are biblical and traditional guidelines that can help. To begin with, Jesus reminds us over and over that generosity leads to blessing for the giver and receiver. Much more specifically, the Biblical tithe, found in the Old Testament, is 10% of gross income and is a worthy goal. However, we think an individual or family should prayerfully come to a dollar figure that feels like you are serving God and stretching yourself, while not placing yourself in a position to accrue debt or that is financially uncertain. Then we encourage you to move up in regular increments each year. The average pledge at St. Julian’s last year about $3,700 (or about $70 a week). If pledging for the first time, perhaps you might consider making this your goal for the coming year and a place to begin moving toward a tithe.

**What value is there for me in making a pledge to St. Julian’s?**

In uncertain times when there are many demands on our pocketbooks and many worthy groups in need, this is a fair question. We believe that a regular financial contribution to God’s work through the church is first and foremost a spiritual discipline. It is a practice that says we believe that our ultimate security, provision and salvation come from the goodness and grace of God in Christ, not from the things we gather or collect in life. Further, sharing our financial resources is an act of simplifying one’s life in a way that reminds us of the things like faith and family that matter most, and sharing helps us more clearly define what is, in fact, “enough”. Lastly, one of the many blessings in God’s economy is that we are, in fact, the beneficiaries (we are further blessed) by our own willingness to give. This speaks to the fact that our giving to St. Julian’s ultimately sustains a community that “feeds us”. Every time a sermon inspires us, a hymn moves us, an education program challenges us, a youth event affirms our child, we are the beneficiaries of our own generosity.

**How is the good stewardship of my financial gift assured?**

St. Julian’s leadership, called the Bishop’s Committee, diligently oversees the finances of the church by a monthly review of financial reports provided by our Treasurer and Bookkeeper. We have an annual internal audit, which will move to an external audit when our annual budget crosses a threshold determined by the Diocese. Each January, we have a parish meeting at which the entire congregation reviews the annual budget with welcome input. There are financial policies provided by the Diocese of Texas in place that are available to all upon request that assure expenses are approved and checks and balances are in place to create transparency in all financial matters.