

I, like my mother, have been working for most of my life. She started in the onion fields at 11 and I started at the stables and a food truck at 13. I have always known what it is like to work hard no matter what you earn. This has been the very model of my work ethic in life- its a hold over of my family's Anabaptist theology. I love in labor and labor in love.

This theology has been at the core of my stewardship preparation. I have hoped to curate a communal theology that is based on loving and labor and laboring in love- its the heart of

Kingdom work. And if you only take one thing away from this whole 5 part sermon series, other than Dolly Parton, is that Jesus is calling us to do the work of the kingdom right now!

That's why we started by searching for an example of a kingdom steward. We used Dolly as a starting point and the Bible as a foundation. We allowed the Holy Spirit to come in and guide us and then talked about how that movement matters within the environment of the church. Now we come to our conclusion, where we talk about how these things affect our

hearts and mind but also how they can affect the future of St. Peter's to come.

Today we're putting that collective theology of loving in labor and laboring in love for the kingdom to the test. I want us to be able to come away today knowing that our financial contributions matter, but what matters more is the intention with which we give.

Its important to establish expectations for giving and to be transparent as a institution about our finances. One way to participate in

this transparency is to become a member of this church. Having a letter on file stating that we journey together is a powerful thing, its not a contract, but a commitment to be lived into.

When you are a member you get to vote at the annual meeting. Your voice matters. Our Episcopal church is built in such a way that there are checks and balances, and being a member allows you to participate in a wholistic way.

Being a member is important and it also encourages pledging. Having a pledge matters. It is a mutual agreement with the institution that you are invested in this community and in return may benefit from the resources of our community. As your priest I want to help us foster our community resources so we can benefit from them together.

The Bible directs us to give our first fruits and 10% of our earnings. Our Gospel tells us that we are to give to Jesus because he is the one who will make good his promises of safety

and presence. We give to the church because Jesus gives to us- so we do it with two hands not one.

And this is what I want us to take home today, the base expectation of stewardship- that we give with two hands. Because we give with two hands, and not one held behind our backs, we should be encouraged to give what we can willingly with two hands. If we are giving so much that we have to give and then dig in the pocket to give with the other hand- that's not the point! And for far to long priests have

missed stressing that nuance. We should give because we feel we have been given something through Christ.

So if giving with two hands looks like planned giving- through estate and endowment sources, I would encourage folks to look into that option. If giving with two hands means financial tithing I would ask you keep in mind that “A steward does not own but manages! We stewards manage what God had given us.” And we have to trust God is doing the work in us through the people stewarding us. That’s why

it's important to be a member- to be an active part of our church's stewardship mission through voice and vote.

So as we look back on this month, and we assess our expectations, I invite us into a season of discernment in preparation for giving. Think about what St. Peter's means to you, and how we can show up more in the next program year. You just hired a new priest and this is an opportunity as a larger community to seek coalition and build systems that encourage the best and better practices of our church. Let's

use this time to seek God's presence in our
genuine prayer and hope for an abundance of
more to come in our church. Amen.