



Today we launch our 2014 Stewardship campaign - "Flourish in Faith."

With confidence, the Stewardship team affirms that Nativity is indeed thriving and flourishing. Specifically, we believe that our community supports the vision that we can:

Invest in the Youth and Children of the church by hiring a Youth Minister -We have been blessed with an influx of many new families with children. Our education ministry is committed to ensuring each of our children knows God and will develop a personal relationship with Jesus over their lifetime. A Youth Minister would give continuity and cohesiveness to our children and youth programs as we lead our young people on their spiritual journey.

Enrich our church's history of community engagement by increasing support of the Outreach programs - Our Outreach Ministry wants the church community to be more engaged with those whose basic needs cannot be met. We aim to increase the funds we spend and our individual involvement in outreach programs, showing the world and each other the love of Jesus Christ.

Maintain and enhance our campus by increasing our maintenance investment and restructuring our building mortgage - It is important to be good stewards of what we have and to plan for maintaining our facilities, especially as they age. Increasing our reserves for long term maintenance will allow us to better address issues as they arise. We hope to shift some focus to preventative maintenance as well to hopefully lower overall costs.

During the next six weeks we will explore God's vision for the Church of the Nativity and the ways we may continue to flourish deeply and broadly.

After much discussion and prayer, we have set a goal of \$385,000 in pledges that we believe will support this vision and allow our Parish to flourish. Your prayerful pledge will allow the church leadership to responsibly plan for the affairs of the church, using the gifts efficiently now and planning carefully for the future.

The richness of our shared journey is dependent upon each of us and our openness to God's leading. Let us join together to do God's work through Church of the Nativity, as we continue to build on the foundation in which our faith may flourish.

The Stewardship Team

Flourish in Faith *Stewardship Narrative Series*

Proper 22 - Luke 17:5-10

Sunday, October 6, 2013

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"



God is a real world God, which means God is in the common things of this world. These common things show us God's genius and provide opportunities for our transformation.

Money is one of these things. Money is neither positive nor negative. Money is simply a tool. If the Bible says anything about money, it says that this tool, used wrongly, will wound our souls and our communities. Jesus talked a lot about money.

One indication of Christian maturity is how we handle money and how we talk about money, if at all. Sadly, too many Christian leaders and congregations have the tacit agreement, "You don't talk about money, and we won't give any."

Sadly, too many of us too frequently miss great opportunities to GROW. Jesus' friends asked him to "...increase their faith." I'll bet you Jesus just grinned with delight at that request. What a willingness to learn that request showcases!

Generosity is the learning and teaching in which the Church needs to lead the world. And we can. But Jesus can't do it for us. There are no magic words or sermons or stewardship programs. Each of us will have to be persuaded that the value we place on money is not worthy to be compared with the surpassing value of knowing Christ.

We share what we have, because everything we have is gift. We give graciously so as to bear witness to a generous God in the real world. It's always about God's abundance pouring through us! That's the evidence of us becoming new. I like the way St. Paul put it: "poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Corinthians 6-10)

How do we get there? One step at a time! Begin where you are. Start with the disciples' request: Pray, "Lord, increase my faith."

Then, look at your checkbook. What does it say about your reliance on God? What does it say about your gratitude for all the blessings of this life? What does it say about your participation in building up God's kingdom in the here and now? Answer those questions honestly, and then you're ready to GROW. That's the point, after all.

Growing with God means growing to be more like God. Jesus never told us to worship him; Jesus said follow me. And in walking towards God, we find that love increases, healing increases, joy increases, generosity increases.

Practically, to grow in generosity means facing the chaos of our personal finances. It means weaning ourselves from the excesses we call necessary, while systematically working toward giving ten percent of our net income away every year.

If you're willing to partner with Jesus in this spiritual growth experiment called Stewardship, you'll find out, with St. Paul and thousands of us, that to give is to GROW, and growing is from God. And that "God loves a cheerful giver"

(2 Corinthians 9:7)



The Rt. Rev. Robert C. Wright
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Reflection Questions

- How are your faith and your finances connected?
- What risks are you willing to take to grow in generosity?
- How is intentional giving a way to grow towards God?

