



## Serving the Greater Community

### **A Prayer attributed to St. Francis in *The Book of Common Prayer*:**

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. *Amen.*

### **How we flourish at Nativity with our community outreach:**

Parish leader Carl Sigel wrote in the November 2013 issue of *Glad Tidings*, "Responding to the needs of others in our community and around the world has always been a high priority for Nativity members since our first worship service together on December 5, 1985." Indeed, the outreach projects supported by our church have often been initiated here and continue to flourish through the ongoing resources, time and talents of our dedicated parishioners.

Take a look at next year's intended outreach initiatives:

- **Nativity Garden** – Installation of a proper deer and rodent fence plus new model to include more families and participation in Plant-a-Row;
- **North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light** – Continuation as a NCIPL sponsor of events as Nativity is recognized as a leader in Care for Creation in Raleigh;
- **Honduras Medical Mission** – Sending three ambassadors in January, furthering our long-standing commitment to improve the quality of life in Honduras;
- **Inter-Faith Food Shuttle** – IFFS has its roots in Nativity and many of our parishioners are frequent volunteers to this local hunger-relief organization;
- **Episcopal Campus Ministries** – Continued support for this important program serving students at NC State University, Meredith College and William Peace University; two parishioners serve on the Advisory Board;
- **Stop Hunger Now** – Proposed follow-up to highly successful packing of 10,000 meals in spring 2013;
- **US-Uganda Orphan Education Fund** – Initiated at Nativity, five of six current board members are parishioners and we support the education of one student each year;
- **Farmworkers Ministry** – In conjunction with the Diocese of NC, our church will focus on the plight of farmworkers as a social justice issue;
- **Homeless Ministry** – Exploration by the Outreach Ministry Team to become more actively involved in an established faith-based effort.

### **Our Goals for 2014:**

With the advice and recommendations of the Outreach Ministry Team, the Stewardship Ministry Team strongly supports a concerted increase from \$4,000 to \$11,500 to strengthen numerous outreach projects. Your prayerful pledge will enrich Nativity's long history of community engagement.

# Flourish in Faith *Stewardship Narrative Series*

Proper 27 - Luke 20: 27-38

Sunday, November 10, 2013

*Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living;  
for to him all of them are alive.*



When I was a sophomore in college, I became a religion major. I studied the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament from the perspective of a scholar. Or at least I thought I did. I needed for things to fit together, to line up. I wanted – and expected – explanations for miracles, healings and the Resurrection. I got caught up in the details, and for awhile they got in the way of my faith.

So when the Sadducees present Jesus with a rather bizarre case study of a widow who, obeying her obligation under Jewish law, marries each of her late husband's seven brothers in turn, each of whom subsequently dies – and ask Jesus whose wife will she be when she dies – I recognize them as the sophomores of scriptural interpretation.

As does Jesus. The Sadducees have tied themselves up into theological pretzels, and they want Jesus to unravel them. And he won't. They are obsessed with issues of death. Jesus points them – and us – to life. Resurrection life. New life that is not just a promise that will be fulfilled when we die. We can choose the new life now.

There are many spiritual practices that make it more possible to choose life: prayer, service, study, worship. The spiritual practice of giving was a hard one for me to adopt. Early in my adulthood I was a latter-day Sadducee, working through all my financial obligations, lamenting what I didn't have and worrying about what I needed to save for. I gave only what I thought I could afford. I was a walking case study for the mindset of scarcity – tied up into a financial and spiritual pretzel.

The combination of a priest friend and my wife challenged me to give from abundance. To look toward Resurrection life, and to think about a tithe. I didn't want to, at least not at first. But my wife prevailed, and we started giving proportionally to support God's work in the world. It became a discipline, and in the course of the few years it took us to get to a tithe, I discovered that I no longer gave out of obligation, but out of gratitude. The practice of giving opened me up to new measures of God's grace, and the Resurrection opened up in a new way. And somehow, and this is still a mystery to me, we ended up having more.

It is a gift we can live into now – if we choose it. And if we practice it. And if we learn how to not look back into the snare of scarcity.



**The Rt. Rev. Mark M. Beckwith,  
Bishop**  
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## *Reflection Questions*

- Have you experienced the difference between giving out of obligation versus giving out of joy?
- How is giving *life-giving* for you?
- How do you experience the Holy Spirit nurturing new life in you?

