

REMARKS FROM SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12
SENIOR WARDEN, JOHN S. MCCLELLAND, JR.

As I was beginning to organize my thoughts for this morning’s comments my wife Julie offered some unsolicited advice. She said “You could easily say the same thing you said last year; nobody remembers what you said then”. Not only was she right, which is not unusual, but what she said was very, very important. It really doesn’t matter what is said or presented to encourage participation in our stewardship program. The only thing that really matters is that each and every one of us takes the time to prayerfully consider the value of our relationship with God and our parish.

“Building Our Mission” is the theme of this stewardship year the goal of which is to involve every household and every person in the Cathedral family. In order to carry out our mission of sharing God’s love through the fundamental ministries of Christ Church Cathedral—worship, Christian formation, pastoral care, and outreach—every one of us needs to contribute to the financial support of this sacred place.

Like any household, Christ Church operates on a budget. In order to live responsibly we need to know the amount of our annual income. That is one reason each of us will be asked to make a pledge or commitment of financial support that will allow us to determine the level of funding available for our work.

The fundamental reason we are all asked to make a pledge or commitment of financial support is that the bible tells us that this is our responsibility. The biblical teaching on giving is the tithe—10% of all that we have, or our gross income. The Christ Church Cathedral vestry upholds the tithe as the standard of giving, the goal to which we all should strive. We understand that suddenly assuming the tithe is not possible for most of us. But we do encourage you to think of your financial stewardship in proportional terms—as an important and appropriate portion of your personal or family budget.


Between now and November 1st every household in the Cathedral family will be contacted by a member of our stewardship team. This team is comprised of vestry members and those who have been recruited and agreed to assist. They will share with you their commitment to Christ Church Cathedral and ask you to make your pledge or commitment on or before our ingathering on All Saints’ Sunday, November 2nd.

You should soon receive a personal letter from Dean Gibson asking for your commitment. Enclosed will be a pledge card on which you can write your pledge or your financial commitment. Please return the card to Christ Church Cathedral, either in the alms basin or through the mail.

Our lives are filled with both blessings and needs. However we choose to convey our gratitude and desires there is no question that God is listening. We know God is listening and has blessed us as we continue to “Build our Mission” under the guidance of Beverly, Dan, and Christopher. God is also listening as we make our stewardship decisions. I pray that each and every one of us makes a stewardship decision that truly reflects the value of our relationship with our God and our parish.

If you have any questions please contact me, a member of our vestry, or one of our clergy. Please join us in praying for growth in our stewardship and our mission.

Yours Faithfully,


John S. McClelland, Jr.
Senior Warden

A PRIVATE ANALYSIS OF MY STEWARDSHIP

- I. What I think my stewardship response of time and treasure ought to be:
- II. What my stewardship response really is:
- III. What I would like my stewardship response to be (may be different from either I or II):
 - Today. . .
 - In 1 year. . .
 - In 3 years. . .
 - In 5 years. . .
- IV. These things are preventing my stewardship response from being what I would like:
- IV. These are the things I can and will change to move closer to the response I would like:

STEPS TOWARD BECOMING A TITHER

This worksheet is for Christians who:

- ✕ Trust God to give us the gifts he promises;
- ✕ Want to give a responsible proportion of what God has given them to do what God wants done in the world;
- ✕ Believe in tithing as an important Biblical standard for Christian stewardship;
- ✕ Cannot, because of already existing commitments, become tithers immediately;
- ✕ Are considering making tithing an active goal for their lives.

- 1. Enter your annual income. _____
- 2. (Optional: subtract the amount you pay in taxes) – _____
- 3. **Balance** = _____
- 4. Move the decimal point one place to the left. _____

This Would Be Your Tithe

- 5. Enter your annual contribution to your parish and to other Godly causes outside your family. + _____
+ _____
- 6. Add these up. = _____
- 7. Divide line 6 by line 3. = _____

This Is The Percentage of Your Income You Are Now Giving

- 8. Set a date by which you want to achieve your goal of tithing:
____1 year ____3 years ____5 years
- 9. What percentage would you give next year to reach your goal of tithing by the date you have set? _____%
- 10. What would be the total dollar amount of your giving next year? \$ _____
- 11. How much would you like to give through your parish? _____

This Would Be Your Pledge

A LETTER
FROM THE DEAN

Dear Cathedral Family,

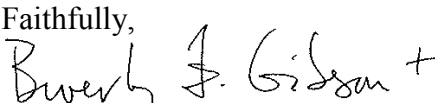
The theme of our 2015 stewardship campaign, *Building our Mission*, indicates the fundamental purpose of Christian stewardship: we return a portion of the gifts God has given us to the church for use in furthering the mission of God’s kingdom in this place.

In this special bulletin insert you will find information meant to be helpful as you reflect, pray, and respond to God’s call to mission through your stewardship. Senior Warden John McClelland’s remarks from his Sunday, October 12 presentation explain your Vestry’s commitment to stewardship and working toward the tithe. To assist each of us in understanding the tithe and proportional giving, a worksheet for your personal use is included; Junior Warden Bob Israel will explain its use in his remarks today.

The Bible study materials from my “teaching moments” on October 5 and 19 are also reprinted here for those of you who were unable to be with us those days.

Every household in the Cathedral family is being contacted by a member of the Stewardship Leadership Team and asked to prayerfully consider their pledge for 2015. Each household should have received a letter from me, along with a pledge worksheet (for personal use and not to be returned) and a pledge card. We are asking everyone to return a signed pledge card on or before our ingathering celebration on All Saints’ Sunday, November 2.

I give thanks for each of you and look forward to building our mission together here at Christ Church Cathedral.

Faithfully,

The Very Reverend
Beverly F. Gibson, Ph.D., Dean



CHRIST
CHURCH
CATHEDRAL

BUILDING OUR MISSION:
STEWARDSHIP 2015

MOBILE,
ALABAMA

STEWARDSHIP TEACHING FROM SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5

CHRIST AS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR STEWARDSHIP

As we go out into the world this morning following our worship, we will sing these words in our hymn:

*The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation, by water and the word;
from heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.*

These words remind us that the core of our identity, the foundation of who we are—individually as Christians and corporately as the Church—lies in our union with Jesus Christ. For us—each one of us and all of us as the Church—he came from heaven to earth and gave everything he had, his life, so that we could live eternally in him.

Conversations about stewardship (being caretakers of the household of God) usually begin by acknowledging the reality that all things come from God and that out of gratitude and obedience we return a portion of those gifts to God. This is certainly true, and later this month we will consider how the “tithe” arises from this truth.

Today, however, our conversation begins with considering how our identity and foundation in Jesus Christ should guide our approach to stewardship. Consistently throughout the gospel accounts of his ministry on earth, Jesus instructs those who would follow him about his essential desire and requirement for disciples: he wants all of you, every bit of your life, to belong to him. He warns his followers repeatedly of the dangers of possessions. Although not evil in themselves, possessions are powerful distractions from living as disciples.

Consider Jesus’ encounter with the rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-25. To this good, righteous man, Jesus says that there is one more thing he must do: “Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

In the days and weeks ahead, please spend some time reading the Bible and prayerfully considering what the following passages suggest to you about living your life as a follower of Christ.

- 1)“Treasure in heaven” and the pitfalls of possessions form the subjects of these passages: Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:33-34; Mark 10:21; Acts 2:45; Acts 4:32-35. What do you think Jesus means by “treasure in heaven”? If possessions are not evil in themselves, then how are we to think of and deal with them?
- 2)Jesus teaches about fear and anxiety concerning how we will live in these passages: Luke 12:2-9, 22-31; Matthew 10:29-36; Matthew 6:25-33. Why do you think Jesus counsels us about the dangers of trusting in financial security? What is the alternative way of trusting that he emphasizes? (Consider here the parables of the prepared slaves and housebreaking in Luke 12:35-38 and Matthew 25:1-3, Luke 12:39-40 and Matthew 24:43-44, respectively.)
- 3)In the Temple, Jesus observes the widow’s offering: Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:41-44. What does Jesus suggest God expects of us?

If Christ is indeed our foundation, what does he expect of us as stewards of his household?

STEWARDSHIP TEACHING FROM SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19

THE TITHE IN THE LIVES OF GOD’S PEOPLE

In I Chronicles 29, King David tells all of the officials of Israel, gathered at Jerusalem, about his provisions (freely given from ancestral houses and leaders of the tribes) for building a holy house for God. His son, Solomon, who at this time was still young and inexperienced, would build the Temple. David concludes by blessing the Lord and presenting his offering with these words in verse 14:

But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

These last words are familiar to us, like the words of the traditional Lord’s Prayer, surviving from the Elizabethan Church and making their way into contemporary worship services. Through various revisions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (until 1979), the people’s offerings have been brought before the Holy Table with these words: “All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee.” They express the fundamental understanding of stewardship in the scripture: everything we have, everything in creation, comes from and belongs to God, and our offering to God is “giving back” a portion in gratitude and thanksgiving.

The portion that we give back is often spoken of as the “biblical tithe” of 10% of our earnings or possessions. The first mention of the tithe in scripture occurs in Genesis 14:18-20, when Abraham encounters Melchizedek, who blesses him after a significant military victory; then Abraham “gave him one tenth of everything.” The important issue in this passage is *why* Abraham gave—out of genuine thanksgiving. Other passages in the Torah, listed below, address how the tithe was to be offered in ancient Israel.

By the time of Jesus, the tithe was deeply ingrained in faithful living, so much so that it had become a kind of legal obligation. Jesus went beyond this formality to teach that tithing without mercy and love is meaningless and to promote sharing all of what we have with the poor, the sick, orphans, and the elderly.

This sharing all things in common became the practice of the early Church, as we see in the book of Acts. Such sharing eventually returned to the concept of “tithing” a tenth of all land or produce for supporting the common life of the Church. In the Church of England, traditionally, these tithes once received were divided by canon into four parts: between the bishop, the clergy, the fabric of the church, and the relief of the poor. Over time these divisions developed variously, but the tithe itself long remained a point of law and a direction in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Never, in this sense, has the tithe been a part of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, although our offerings are conventionally divided in a way approximating the original four-way split.

As Christians, looking to Jesus Christ as our Lord and seeking to follow in his way, we seek to be “converted,” as he asks us to be. Our conversion is from earning to letting go, from ownership to stewardship. The first step in our conversion is acknowledging that what we have, much or little, is God’s gift to us. The next step is letting go after working hard, “joyful giving” with open hearts and hands.

Here are some passages from the Bible for you to read and prayerfully consider as you respond to your call to stewardship.

- 1) I Chronicles 28 and 29 recount David’s instructions concerning the Temple and his praise to God. Reflect on David’s life and leadership and what his example here offers us in our life as the church.
- 2) Here are several passages from the Old Testament that deal with how the tithe is to be accomplished. Consider how they might be translatable into the terms of our lives. Genesis 14:18-20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21-25.
- 3) These passages from the Old Testament convey the context of the tithe. Consider what they tell us about where and how our offerings are to be made. Deuteronomy 12 and 14; 2 Chronicles 31:5-6; Nehemiah 10:35-39.
- 4) Read Matthew 23 and Luke 11 and consider what Jesus is teaching about “conversion” in understanding of the tithe.

How are you developing your sense of the tithe in your life?

STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

Gracious God, we are thankful for the abundance you have provided in our lives. All that we are and all that we have comes from you. Give us grace to offer back to you what is needed for the mission you have entrusted to us here at Christ Church Cathedral. Then, empower us by your Holy Spirit to use those gifts for your glory and the building of your kingdom through our mission. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



VESTRY OF
CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL

Sage M. Bolt	Ann H. Luce
John D. Davidson	John S. McClelland, Jr.
Mary Esther T. Elliott	Charles S. McKay
Robert D. Forster	Alison S. Mitchell
Lewis H. Golden	Lucy F. Moore
Tray W. Hamil	Hetty C. Newell
George B. Inge	Henry R. Seawell IV
Robert W. Israel	Elissa E. Watkins
Banks C. Ladd	Wythe L. Whiting

VESTRY STATEMENT ON TITHE

~Resolution of Christ Church Cathedral Vestry approved on October 10, 2005
To demonstrate meaningful and sacrificial financial support of the church including making and fulfilling an annual pledge of support; to consider that the Christ Church Cathedral vestry upholds the tithe as the standard of giving and encourages the parish to consider proportionate giving; and to be working toward the tithe.