



ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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December 27, 2008

Dear Friend

In these days after Christmas one of the first stories that we hear in our worship celebration is the story of the Wise Men visiting the newborn Jesus. Their first act of adoration of the Messiah is to offer gifts. Giving is a fitting response to God and God's blessings in our lives, and I would like you to consider your gift of thanksgiving to God for the upcoming year.

Our giving to God through the church is one of the most powerful ways that we acknowledge God's grace. Each year we are asked to make a financial commitment called a Stewardship Pledge. It is an act of thanksgiving and an act of letting go and trusting that with God we will have all we need (but probably not all we want). Our financial commitment is important to the church, but more important to our faith lives as we make it clear through our time, talent and treasure that which is really important to us.

In 2010, the theme of our campaign is ONE in '10. The Biblical standard for giving, since the time of Abraham and Sarah has been to give 1/10 back to God as a thank offering known as a tithe. It is a level of giving that certainly requires sacrifice, but is also life giving. I have been giving 1/10 of my income back to the church, since before I went to seminary. I will admit that it is challenging, but I also promise you that it is rewarding. It is amazing how much 90% really is. I will continue to make the commitment to a 1/10 tithe next year. One way to move in that direction is to increase your pledge by a percent or two of income for several years and begin a practice of proportional giving.

Our theme of ONE in '10 draws on the idea of the 1/10 tithe but also recognizes the Opportunity to Nurture our Engagement with God in 2010, by giving.

Giving to God in our annual pledges is first and foremost an **opportunity** – not a requirement. It is an opportunity to be thankful for all that God has done for us through this community. It is an opportunity to say yes to God and accept the even more abundant gifts God has to offer us throughout our lives. It is not a requirement, though, to experience God's unbounded love.

Giving to God in our annual pledges is an opportunity to **nurture** our relationship with God and the world rather than neglect our responsibilities. Each time we make an offering in this way we have God in mind. That alone is part of our challenge as Christians – to be ever mindful of God and God's presence with us.

Finally, giving to God in our annual pledges is an opportunity for us to **engage** God and the world rather than ignore the needy in the world. Our giving to God at St. Luke's allows us to continue and expand our outreach ministries and to teach our youth and adults how important our engagement with the world in God's name is. Our pledges help us to engage more completely with God.

A brief stewardship brochure, a pledge card, return envelope are enclosed. Please consider your 2010 pledge in prayer and **return the completed card to the church on Sunday January 3, 2010** as we celebrate the Wise Men bringing gifts to the newborn Christ. The back of the pledge card has suggestions on ways to calculate your increased pledge for 2010. You may also fill out your pledge on line if you prefer (www.slechurch.org and follow the Stewardship links).

The average pledge in 2009 was more than \$2,000. I hope you can increase your gift by 10% or more in 2010. Like the Wise Men's gifts, ours is a gift to God in hopeful thanks for all of our blessings.

May the blessings of this season and our God fill your life.

In God's Peace,

The Rev. John A. Mennell