

OCTOBER 2022

**ST. PHILIP  
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

# STEWARDSHIP APPEAL





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# TITHING, GENEROSITY & 2023

**G**rowing up my family would take me to church every Sunday. Every Sunday morning, my dad would write a check for the offering, put it in the offering envelope and then place it into the offering plate. I do not know how much my parents gave to the church, but I know that they did give. Giving an offering to the church was a spiritual practice for them. I didn't ask questions, I simply noticed it. When were you first introduced to giving an offering to the church?

As a church, we are similar to my father; it is something we do, but it isn't something we talk about often, except in October when it's time for stewardship. In this stewardship brochure, I would like to introduce and explain what we mean when we say stewardship and what the Bible says about giving a tithe, giving an offering and what it says about generosity. Then I would like to introduce what we are doing, working on and looking forward to at St. Philip Lutheran Church in 2023.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GIVE A TITHE?

When we give to the church, we are giving to God. As people of faith, we believe that God has blessed us in so many ways and giving a portion of what we have received is one way we give back to God. In doing so, we are giving thanks to God for blessing us with those things. The word the Bible uses to talk about giving to God is "tithe." Leviticus 27:30 describes to the early people what to tithe: "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD." The people lived off the land and God gave them everything they had, so it made sense to make a tithe of what they received from the land and from God.

A tithe is a portion of what you gain or receive. For the early people it was their harvest. The word *tithe* literally means *tenth* in Hebrew, the language of the early people. Therefore, the people gave a tenth of everything they gained. Tithing from what we have received is a faith practice and part of our spiritual life. One of the first acts of tithing was done by Abraham, in the beginning of the Bible. Abraham came back from battle and was met by the Priest and King Melchizedek who attributed the victory to God and blessed Abraham for it. Abraham then gave him a tenth of everything as a way to give thanks to God (Genesis 14:17-20).

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GIVE AN OFFERING?

An offering is described differently than a tithe. An offering is seen as anything above and beyond a tithe. A tithe is seen as the standard giving to the church to be the church; an offering is seen as any additional giving above and beyond your tithe. A tithe is given to the church to operate and run the church and its ministries. An offering is given to specific ministries inside or even outside the church to support other local ministries or outreach ministries.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

In earlier times, everyone worked to grow crops, raise livestock or make goods to trade and sell for the things they needed. Today, we work for money to be able to buy what we need. Therefore, what we harvest is not goods, but money. Instead of giving from our harvest of crops, we give from the money we have earned. The encouragement is to look at your income and budget and begin with setting aside a tenth (10%) of it to give as your tithe to the church, which is giving to God.



You may be thinking, wait a minute, that is a lot of money, I can't afford that much! What we encourage you to do is pray about it and ask God to help you in deciding how much to give to the church to thank God for all the things God has done and continues to do in your life. Depending on what you are giving now, what will it take to get to tithing? Maybe you aren't giving anything right now: the first step is to determine what constitutes ten percent of your income. Then ask yourself, what am I able to give of that ten percent? To start, it may be 5% or 1%. As it becomes a spiritual practice for you, you will be able to increase your giving as a way to continue to give thanks to God.



As a church, we believe our giving is between you and God. We do not ask how much you make to determine how much you should be giving; rather, we ask how much you plan to give next year to help us as a church determine how much we can plan to do in our various ministries and give as well. As a church, we too give from what we receive from your offering. As a church, we give to God as well by giving to the church (the Rocky Mountain Synod and ELCA: Evangelical Lutheran Church of America).

When it comes to giving to God, the Malagasy Lutheran Church has been a great example for me. When its time to give the tithes and offerings in church, everyone gets up to go give their offering and walks around the altar to place their tithes and offerings into a basket. They put their money in their hand and make a fist, they then put their fist into the basket and drop it in. No one can see how much a person is giving, so their offering is truly between them and God. Even if they do not have anything to give, they still go up with an empty fist, but they are symbolically also offering themselves, their time and their talents.





## HOW SHOULD I GIVE?

God invites us to be generous. We live in a culture of scarcity, thinking we never have enough or wanting the best and newest things. This makes it hard for many people to give or tithe; especially with the rates of inflation. However, when we think about giving and tithing as a spiritual practice that results out of our faith and thanksgiving to God, we have to make giving a priority in our life, faith and budget. When we give, we are showing God that we trust God with our lives and our finances. Giving is not for God's sake, it is for our sake and we learn to rely and trust in God to meet our needs; rather than relying and trusting ourselves and in money.

Paul writes to the church in Corinth, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

I love Paul's phrase, "God loves a cheerful giver." I, too, needed to be reminded of this because God does not want me to regret giving from my income. God wants me to be a cheerful giver and give to the church being thankful to God for blessing me with my family, my home, my job and for the gift of Jesus and the love and grace given to me through Christ's death and resurrection. Therefore, I strive to be a grateful and generous giver.



## WHAT DOES ST. PHILIP DO WITH MY TITHES AND OFFERINGS?



Your tithes and offerings go to support the church, the staff and our ministries. They help us to be the church for the sake of our members, the community and the world. God has blessed our church over the past 50 years and this has been possible because of the generosity of the members of our church, which includes you. In order to do worship,

have our building, guide you in your spiritual life, have our staff to run ministry, organize activities, offer service opportunities, develop curriculum, engage in relationships, provide care and support, and create community, we need your support in the form of your tithes and offerings. This is what allows all of us to help carry out God's mission in the world. As we learned in 2020, during the time we were not meeting in person, the church is not the building, it is the people. The church building allows us to gather and meet as the church. Thankfully, we were blessed to be able to pay off the mortgage of the building in 2021, but it still requires much to operate and maintain.

## **HOPES AND DREAMS FOR ST. PHILIP IN 2023**

Thankfully, we are learning how to live with COVID, which allows us to comfortably begin doing the things we stopped doing in the pandemic. After much turnover in our church staff, we have laid the foundation for where we plan to go and can begin moving forward with ministry to, as our mission statement states, "intentionally build relationships through Christ to grow and serve."



In August and September of this year, we invited the congregation to participate in a survey to hear from you about the things you participate in, value and desire at St. Philip. While many of our members are back to worship in person, we still have many members and visitors who worship from home because they physically aren't able or aren't comfortable. The congregation (72%) said the part of church that is most important to them is worship. Therefore, in 2023, we will be putting more time and energy into worship. We would like to enhance our live-streaming with a better setup for our live-streaming team and wall-mounted robotic cameras. Another initiative is to convert the choir room into a little chapel. When we have smaller groups worshipping for services held on days other than Sundays, it would be nice to worship in a smaller place. Converting the choir room into a chapel would allow small groups to worship in a comfortable, intimate and inviting space. A chapel would also allow people to come into the church and have a nice quiet space to pray and be in the presence of God

Intentionally building relationships is a big piece of our mission statement. In order for St. Philip to foster this building of relationships, we need to offer opportunities for people to gather. We are looking at putting time and energy into creating small groups for people to be part of to join in activities they normally do, but to do them with other people. What



would it look like if we had small groups of people who ski together, brew together, walk together, eat together, travel together, you name it. Some of these things naturally happen with groups at the church, so what would it look like to open it up for others to join?



St. Philip has been blessed by our staff and we are grateful for the ministries they lead. Our ministries of Gather, Serve and Celebrate continue to grow and flourish because of the leadership of our staff and volunteers. Your tithes and offerings go to support our staff and these ministries, which are so valuable for growing in our relationship with God, our relationship with others, our lives of service and our ability to come together to praise and thank God.

I am reminded of Connor, one of the children in our church, who shared at our 50th anniversary worship celebration how receiving his first communion was so impactful to his life and his faith. As a church we touch so many lives and encourage so many people in their faith. The hope is that this will lead them into a closer and deeper relationship with God, to grow in their knowledge and understanding of God's hand in their lives, and to desire to serve and give back. I know God will continue to work in and through us as a church to continue to reach people, encourage them, support them and walk with them in their lives and faith.

## **TAKING THE FIRST OR NEXT STEP**

I am grateful to all of you who currently give to St. Philip Lutheran Church. Your giving and generosity have been such a blessing to God and our church. Thank you for supporting St. Philip through your giving to God.

For those who are new to St. Philip or who do not currently give, I encourage you to talk about your money and financial situation with your family, pray about it and consider if and what you could give to God as a way of thanking God. What would your tithe be if you were to give 10% to God? What are you able to give? Where is God leading you to start?

For those who have been giving or tithing, pray about your generosity. Give thanks to God for how God has blessed you and ask God where God is leading you this next year. Do you know what percent you are giving to God? If you are giving, but not tithing, are you able to increase your giving by 1% this next year?

**I invite all of us, ON OCTOBER 18, to have the conversation about money, tithing and generosity.** If you are married, talk to your spouse and pray together. If you are single, talk to God about it in prayer. Take the time to look at your income and discover what your tithe would be. Look at all of the places you give and determine your total offering. Is this above and beyond your tithe or do you consider this to be part of it? Ask yourself, am I a cheerful giver? If not, what would it take to become a cheerful giver?

I then invite you to fill out a Statement of Intent card. This helps us as a church to determine our budget and plan for 2023. You can fill out a digital statement of intent card on our website at [www.stphilip-co.org/stewardship](http://www.stphilip-co.org/stewardship) or you can cut off the card at the bottom of the enclosed letter and bring it to church. Commitment Sunday is October 23rd where we are inviting you to either have submitted your statement of intent card by that day or bring your statement of intent card to worship to offer it to God.

## WAYS TO GIVE

There are many ways to give financially to St. Philip. Many have found electronic giving to be a convenient and helpful way to give. You are able to have your giving automatically withdrawn from your bank account every week, once a month or once a year. A withdrawal from your bank account helps to keep credit card fees down, which can get expensive. If you would like to set up automatic giving, go to <https://www.stphilip-co.org/giving/>. If you have any questions regarding stewardship or your giving, please contact me or Kirsten, our Business Administrator, in the church office at 303-979-4491.

We will continue to receive your tithes and offerings by check or cash as well, by putting it into the offering plate, during worship. Many like the physical and spiritual act of placing their tithe or offering to God into the offering plate during worship, just like my father did when I was a kid and continues to do today.



**YOUR GENEROSITY MAKES AN ENORMOUS DIFFERENCE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY OF ST. PHILIP LUTHERAN CHURCH!**