

Intentional Stewardship -By Pastor Shawn

"The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way..." -Proverbs 14:8

In this month's Newsletter, I want to share a new initiative we're beginning at St. Paul's. This fall, from October 11th – November 15th, we're going to be doing a stewardship campaign of sorts. The reasons for this are twofold. First, church leadership, including myself, are desiring to be more intentional, wise, and faithful in planning our annual budget and using our resources at St. Paul's. At the present, St. Paul's, along with most congregations in America, currently practices what's called a "faith-based budget" where we consider what's typically received in a given year, prayerfully think about what God may be calling us to do, and then try to plan a budget around that. The problem with this approach is that it often spirals into what Rev. H.R Curtis calls "crisis driven stewardship." In his own words:

We plan a budget that we think is reasonable and lean, and then if the money doesn't come in, we send out a letter to the people saying what dire consequences are about to ensue if we don't get a big infusion of cash.

Thanks to God's mercy and your generosity, this hasn't happened in my tenure here, but our current approach toward congregational budgeting leaves us open to such dangers. This said, a better approach, according to Rev. Curtis, would be to simply, "Teach the people God's Word, ask them what they planned on giving, and then promise to spend within their generosity."

This brings us to the second and most important reason for our fall stewardship campaign. We want to take an opportunity to hear God's Word in regard to stewardship and have it lead us in making intentional decisions concerning our giving. Psalm 37:5 declares, "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act." Though not about stewardship specifically, the principle of this verse still applies. Let's commit the way we handle our resources to the Lord by learning his Word and being obedient in response.

So, here's the plan. From October 11th – November 15th, we're going to hear God's Word through 10-minute "temple talks" before service, newsletter articles, and bulletin inserts. During these weeks, we will be asking you to prayerfully consider what you give in light of God's Word. All of this will then culminate on Stewardship Sunday, where we'll fill out pledge cards for 2021 and then celebrate at our annual Thanksgiving Feast.

Now, don't let the pledge cards scare you. First, they are completely voluntary. Second, only the financial secretary will see them (and she knows what you give anyways). Third, they are simply a *tool* for you to intentionally consider what God is leading you to give and for the church leadership to responsibly plan its 2021 budget. Think of it this way. If your family was living beyond its means—what would your approach be? You'd seek to balance the budget by seeing what you've got coming in, and then planning to spend accordingly. The pledge cards will practically help us to do this on a church-wide scale while at the same time helping you to thoughtfully consider what you give in light of God's Word. It really is that simple!

Finally, I want to finish with the verse passage I quoted in title. "The wisdom of the prudent," Proverbs 14:8 declares, "is to discern his way..." Ultimately that's what we're trying to be about in this stewardship campaign. We're intentionally discerning our way of stewardship in light of God's Word.