

It's Up To You Stewardship Sunday Address

November 18, 2012

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be now and always acceptable unto you O lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Please be seated.

I would first like to thank Darcey for the opportunity to bring you this stewardship message.

It is hard to believe that a year has gone by since my stewardship address in November last year. I think I said it all last year when I provided the 5 reasons why you should be generous with your givings , so I will not repeat the same message again this year.

My initial thoughts were to lock the doors to the church and hand out the pledge forms and pens to everyone this morning for immediate return and not allow anyone to leave until the total of the pledges was high enough. It was pointed out to me that that would not work. Firstly, it would be rather unfair on the patrons of the 10 o'clock service since they would not be given the chance to increase their givings because the 8:15 service would have taken care of all the required increase. Secondly it was pointed out to me that my plan was flawed because the Fire Marshall would not like the idea of me locking the exits in case of an emergency. So I have scrubbed my plan A and have gone to plan B.

As we kick off this year's It's Up To You stewardship campaign you will be glad to hear the preliminary results of the Financial Task force's approach to a number of parishioners. Pledges have been received that will extinguish the accumulated deficit of \$ 45k that existed as at December 2011. To those families I say a heart-felt thank you for your generosity. What needs to be addressed now is to increase the level of regular givings so that we avoid accumulating deficits in the future, this is where each of you can demonstrate your generosity and increase your contributions and help put your church onto a proper financial footing. I am asking each of you to stop and think how important St. Simons is to you and your family and reflect on what you can do to help achieve the increase in regular givings that helps supports your church family. Again this year I am issuing a challenge to you to increase your givings by 10%.

Last year a number of parishioners accepted the 10% challenge contained in my 2011 stewardship message. I approached 4 of these generous individuals and here are their own personal genuine thoughts on St. Simons and Stewardship. These are not made up. All names withheld to protect the innocent.

Person #1

As I mentioned in our brief conversation I give to St Simon because I can. I give to help with the work the church does for those that need help, and to help sustain an institution that our community needs if it is to remain a caring and moral community. My Grandmother was a strong believer that churches were necessary to teach society right from wrong and if you follow that logic a strong church community will result in society that cares for each other.

Person #2

For 27 years St Simons has been a very special part of my life. "Always" through both joyful and sad times it has been my Spirit Booster, whether from a Worship service or a fun fund raising event. The warmth and friendship is abounding, and it speaks in volumes of the goodness of this congregation. I sincerely hope I will be able to support and be a participant here amongst so many fantastic people, so I can continue to receive my Booster shots in my spiritual journey of Life.

Person # 3

Thank you for asking me to express my views.

There are a few things that you should know as I speak of my church givings.

- 1) I am the cheapest most frugal person I know and so do not give away money lightly
- 2) I also do not make a huge amount of money at my job so again am very conscious of where I spend my funds,
- 3) I knew I would be making 20% less income in 2012 than the year before.

I have been a member of many churches and the people and atmosphere of St Simons makes me feel more willing to give to the church than any other church I have ever attended. I also feel the request for giving is done with lots of forethought by the Stewardship Committee so I do not feel pressured into giving but feel motivated into giving.

I was impacted by David's sermon last year and took a serious look at my givings at that time. I honestly never really thought of St Simons in the same vein as that of running a business and, like running our homes, we need to have a budget we stick to as well as a constant source of income. This is one of the reasons I firmly believe in EFT. The church then knows the amount of givings they will receive each week so I made sure my givings were done by EFT for that reason.

I have noticed the committees seem very frugal so I am more willing to give knowing my givings are used wisely. Also in my own life I do not believe in deficits and non balanced budgets and feel the same should apply at St Simons so want to do my part to help with that.

I looked long and hard and felt I would try to increase my givings by 10% as requested even though my income has gone down significantly. As the year goes on I can honestly say I have not noticed any difference in my lifestyle after giving 10% more to the church. As it comes off automatically it is like heating, insurance etc coming off my bank account. It makes me feel very good with myself knowing I have committed and am acting on this increase. I also believe we should all share the burden so no matter how much we make or our own challenges, we should all stretch and give a bit more than we feel comfortable with and as David said last year, it gives true financial freedom and joy. Thank you again for letting me share my thoughts on church givings. I encourage you all to try and go down this path I have gone down and I am sure you too will feel very happy with your decision as I have.

Person # 4

I try to live an active life to maintain my body on a physical level. But there is more to my body than the skin, bones, muscles, and extra pounds I have acquired over my lifetime. What about my spirit or soul? I need to look after that just as much as my physical body and that is where my church plays an important role. Over the relatively short time I have been at St Simons I have come to appreciate all the good works that go on here undertaken by the members of this congregation. I enjoy coming to worship regularly and I feel like part of a large family. I believe that with that membership comes a responsibility to provide some, time, talent, and treasures to support my larger family. That is why I increased my regular givings pledge 100% in 2012 from \$ 2,600 to \$ 5,200 a year. I support St Simons in a meaningful way because it supports my spiritual well-being. How important is St Simons to you?

I would like to thank each of these 4 individuals/families for sharing their thoughts and for their generous support of St Simons.

Before I conclude here are a few thoughts I had that I would ask each of you to consider and reflect on.

- 1) Provincial and federal governments will provide you a tax credit of a combined 40%. For every \$1000 you give your final out of pocket amount is only \$ 600 once you receive the government tax credits.
- 2) The church's costs continue to rise with inflation. If you don't manage to increase your regular givings there will be a deficit and your support rate actually decreases. Don't you just hate inflation.
- 3) Completing and returning a pledge form helps us forecast what to expect as regular givings. I am asking each and everyone of you to co-operate with our request to fill in and return your pledge form regardless of the level of your givings so that we know what you are committing and we can plan accordingly. Pledge forms were sent out in the mail Friday November 9th.
- 4) Going on EFT also helps us forecast givings and makes the church cash receipts more predictable. Please go on EFT. Please ignore the instructions on the EFT form to send to the Diocese. Just hand the EFT form back to the church and we will process it.
- 5) If you are currently on EFT still complete a pledge form so we know what your commitment is. We want to make sure everyone has had a opportunity to think about their commitment to the church and had an opportunity to increase their givings amount.
- 6) Take time to think about how important St Simons is to you and decide on your level of support. It is important and deserves more than 5 seconds to decide on your level of support.

Well I have said enough except to say St Simons is counting on you to respond in a meaningful way. Please pledge and give generously and we won't have to talk deficits and shortfalls. Let's achieve the increase in givings we need. It's up to You!

Let me end my message with a prayer –

Lord God

Please help each of us stop and reflect on how important having you and St Simons in our lives is. Help us decide on our level of support for 2013 and beyond. Help us become more generous Christians and experience your grace in our lives and your joy.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.