

**Stewardship Address**  
**November 20, 2016**  
**Do Unto Others**  
**By Jack Smye**

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be wholly acceptable unto you Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

It is an honour to come before you to present our 2016 stewardship message. I would like to say pleasure as well but I'd be lying. It is a shame that asking for something whether it be a favour, a task, a gift, etc. always seems like a burden (at least to me).

And yet asking is very much a way of life. Politicians ask for our vote. A sales rep. asks to close the deal. Suitors ask for a hand in marriage. A myriad of charities ask for our money and time and yet so often within the church asking for money seems to be taboo. Serving on Stewardship Committee, while an honour and important, appears to be more like the press gang as opposed to what may appear to be higher end opportunities clusters such as Outreach, Worship, Christian Education. But the work must go on.

When I was younger I used to get annoyed at letters sent by missionaries advising that they had just purchased a new tractor, or truck or put a down payment on a church building and knowing God would provide. My thinking was, if God will provide why are you telling us and asking us to provide and not God? The fact is that notwithstanding miracles –they do happen- God works through his creation “us”. If we don't know, or are unaware of a need we naturally will not respond, hence we have Primates World Relief Sunday, Outreach Sunday, St. Matthew's House Food Drive, Kerr Street Ministry Food Drive all within St Simon's Parish. Beyond the church, other charities and institutions are soliciting our money. The “ask” can get tiring and yet it is so necessary.

On Tuesday November 15, National Philanthropy Day, The Globe and Mail ran a big insert “Canadians Giving Spirit”. Some highlights are based on 2013 statistics:

82% of Canadians made financial donations to a charitable or non-profit organization.

Total donations were \$12.8 billion over that 3-year period (an increase of 14% over the previous 3-year period)

41% of the giving went to religious organizations, 13% went to health related organizations, and 12% went to social services the other 34 % was spread amongst other worthwhile institution and programs. We at St. Simons' for 2016 pledged about \$1800 per family just for our religious institution, well above the Canadian average. We are part of the group of average Canadians that raises the average. It would be nice to rest on our laurels and stop giving until the rest of Canada

catches up, but I don't think God is necessarily into statistics. Giving is a personal thing! Forget what your neighbour is doing (if you know). The question is what are you doing, what are we doing!

The bottom line is we donate money, time, talents to what we believe in or what catches are fancy. Case in point. Sonya and I had been married 51 years and over that time had never given anything to a Humane Society. Last year we decided to adopt a cat from the Oakville Shelter. A whole new understanding of their work emerged and now we support the Humane Society. We fund what we believe in.

We all have many demands on our time, talents and money and it's often a difficult task to keep all the demands in perspective. We on the Stewardship Cluster request that you give prayerful consideration pledging for 2017. We fund what we believe in.

For the past 2 years we have had stewardship themes of "What Will You Do With the Abundance God Has Given You" and "Today. Tomorrow, Together," and this year "Do Unto Others". If you have been in church any of the last 4 Sundays, you know Darcey and Alan have been focusing on evangelism and the missional church. On the stewardship committee we asked ourselves what is a missional church just as Darcey asked the congregation and our response was about as enlightened as yours "Dah"? However, we did decide that a missional church is one that serves others (in the community, and in the world). Because of your previous generosity we are in a position where we can not only meet our parish operating costs and Diocesan obligations but hopefully start to serve others. We already do quite a bit of wonderful work through our Outreach Cluster but with generous giving we can do more. I will now just briefly touch on our theme "Do Unto Others" with the prayerful expectation that you will once again be motivated to be generous in your pledging. We fund what we believe in.

According to my Bible concordance there are almost 600 biblical references with the action word "do". God is obviously expecting non complacency. There are just a few with connotations of "Do Unto others". Obviously we have the golden rule that appears in Luke 6 verse 31 which reads in the King James Version "And as ye would that men should do to you, do you likewise under them" Luke goes further and in the New Jerusalem Bible the verses (read 31 to 38) give a prescription for generous behaviour. We have the story of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10 vs. 25 to 37. If you're not familiar with this message, please look it up. Verse 37 is the key, "Go and do thou likewise". We have James' comments on works, James 3: 14 to 20. We have the reference in Matthew 25 verses 34 to 45 of the final judgement "Lord when did we see thee hungry, etc. Verse 45 "Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you in as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me". We have the great commission in Matthew 28: 19 and 20. If you have been a Christian for any length of time all these passages are familiar to you and are a clear indication of what we at St. Simon's ought to be doing. Actions like these take resources, time, talent and money. We have many members of this congregation that work tirelessly on outreach programs. Others work tirelessly on fund raising efforts that allow us to do

the outreach we do. With more money in the form of giving's, less time and energy would be required for fund raising and time could be freed up to do the "Do Unto Others" aspect of our faith. Just last week we had a very successful "Touch of Red" dinner, dance and auction. This is our main fund raiser of the year and a small group of parishioners spend countless hours, organizing the event, asking –yes there's that word "asking" again for donations and auction items. These folks are literally exhausted when the process is finished. Could their time and talents be better spent doing other church related work and or outreach? We'll never know until we can make all our operating costs without the need for almost 8 ½% of our budget coming from fund raising. We fund what we believe in.

There are three words that always wake an audience (or congregation) wake up "and in conclusion." But we are not there yet.

I will spend a couple more minutes going over the logistics of pledging.

First of all, a pledge is not a legal document, but it is a serious commitment (all other things being equal) to offer money, talent and time to the work and operations of St. Simon's. It allows your wardens and parish council to know how much money etc. they can expect in 2017 without guessing. If difficulties arise and pledges cannot be honoured, this also allows the wardens to react "how do we make up a potential short fall in revenue". Businesses are constantly updating their revenue forecasts and reacting (costs adjustments) where warranted.

The pledge form looks like this (show). If possible, we encourage you to make a meaningful increase in your level of giving; hence we have 10% and 6% boxes. For the first time we have included cluster check off boxes, so if you're interested in serving on a particular cluster you may tick off the box or boxes. Rest assured a cluster member will be in contact with you. Most of our pledging families use the electronic funds transfer (automatic bank withdrawal). If you wish to use this opportunity for your regular giving's, the EFT form (show) and a voided bank cheque are required. If you are already on EFT and intend to change your level of giving you will indicate so on the pledge form. Please note in order to have any changes take effect for January 2017 we must notify the Niagara Diocese of changes by December 12 (otherwise it will be February before a change comes into effect). Similarly, if you want to go on EFT please act quickly so we can capture the December 12th cut off.

Today, Fred Roach and Bronwen Bruch will be in the narthex with your personalized pledge form or if you're pledging for the first time, a form with your name on it will be prepared. The pledge box is in the Narthex and will be manned for two more Sundays after today. Pledges are confidential. Only three people are privy to what you pledge, myself as chairman of the Stewardship cluster, Dena LeCompte, our parish administrator and treasurer, and Darcey (on a need to know basis) as our Rector.

And now in conclusion and on behalf of the Stewardship cluster I thank you for your attention and request that you prayerfully consider your level of support for St. Simon's. **Amen.**