



The Stewardship Team is providing take-home resources for each week of the Annual Pledge Campaign. We hope you will join with us and with one another in common prayer, scriptural reflection, and activities related to the practice of faithful stewardship.

Giving in Response to God's Generosity

Week 1: Sept 25-Oct 1

Generosity and giving are deeply rooted in our faith in and experience of God's generosity towards us. It is easy and natural to focus on our needs or what we lack, and it's easy to be too busy to notice all the ways God provides. What would change if we focused intentionally on God's abundance?

Reflection: Where do you notice God's blessings in your life? What kinds of blessings do you pay attention to? What blessings usually go unnoticed?

How do you see God's generosity reflected in the world around you? In your work, school, neighborhood, or places you volunteer?

How are you blessed by others? By your family and friends, classmates, colleagues, or neighbors?

What do you notice about how people respond to God's generosity?

How does it feel? How do you respond?

Action: Take time this week to notice gratitude. Here are some ideas to help you keep track and celebrate abundance:

- ❖ Hang this on the fridge. Write down what you're grateful for throughout the day or each evening before bed.
- ❖ Write out answers to some of the questions above.
- ❖ Make a list in your favorite task organizer or to-do app and add throughout the week.
- ❖ Say grace at meals.
- ❖ Be aware of moments you say "thank you" and times when others say "thank you" to you.

Scripture

The Lord will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. – Deuteronomy 28:12

Prayer

Gracious God, in the busyness of my day, I forget to stop to thank you for all that is good in my life. My heart is filled with gratefulness for the gift of living, for the ability to love and be loved, for the opportunity to see the everyday wonders of creation, for sleep and water, for a mind that thinks and a body that feels. I thank you, too, for those things in my life that are less than I would hope them to be. Things that seem challenging, unfair, or difficult. When my heart feels stretched and empty, and pools of tears form in my weary eyes, still I rejoice that you are as near to me as my next breath and that in the midst of turbulence, I am growing and learning. In the silence of my soul, I thank you most of all for your unconditional and eternal love. I offer these thanks in the name of your son Jesus. AMEN.

Generosity in Practice

Often, the blessings that come to us don't feel fulfilled until we have shared them with others. Sometimes it can be more of a blessing to give than to receive. One powerful image describes the Dead Sea, which has no river flowing out of it and is so salty that it holds no life. But the Sea of Galilee, which has rivers that feed and flow out of it, is teeming with life. Even the breath that sustains us moves into our lungs and out again.

Reflection: Reflect on moments of generosity and blessing you have experienced, either from what you noticed last week or other times throughout your life.

How does it feel to receive another's generosity?

How does it feel to be generous?

How do you share blessings with others? Is it possible to share them or to share your response to them?

When are you at your most generous? What do you give and who do you give to without thinking about the cost?

What happens when you give without thinking about the cost?

Action: Make a generous gesture this week that you would not ordinarily make. See what happens and how it feels.

- ❖ Go through your list of blessings from last week. Pick out a few that you can share with someone else. Be creative!
- ❖ Consider your "harvest" on the back of this page. Have a conversation about what you share and how you do this.
- ❖ Accept a generous gesture you would ordinarily refuse – an invitation, a gift, advice or help you wouldn't normally ask for. Ask what it's like for the person who gives to you.

Week 2: Oct 2-8

Scripture

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God. – Leviticus 19:9-10

Prayer

Generous God, in grace you freely give, and in love you joyfully command us to imitate you. Let these gifts bear witness to the justice for which you long and offer a faithful response to the loving care that you have first given us in your law, your prophets, and your Son. AMEN.

Dear God,

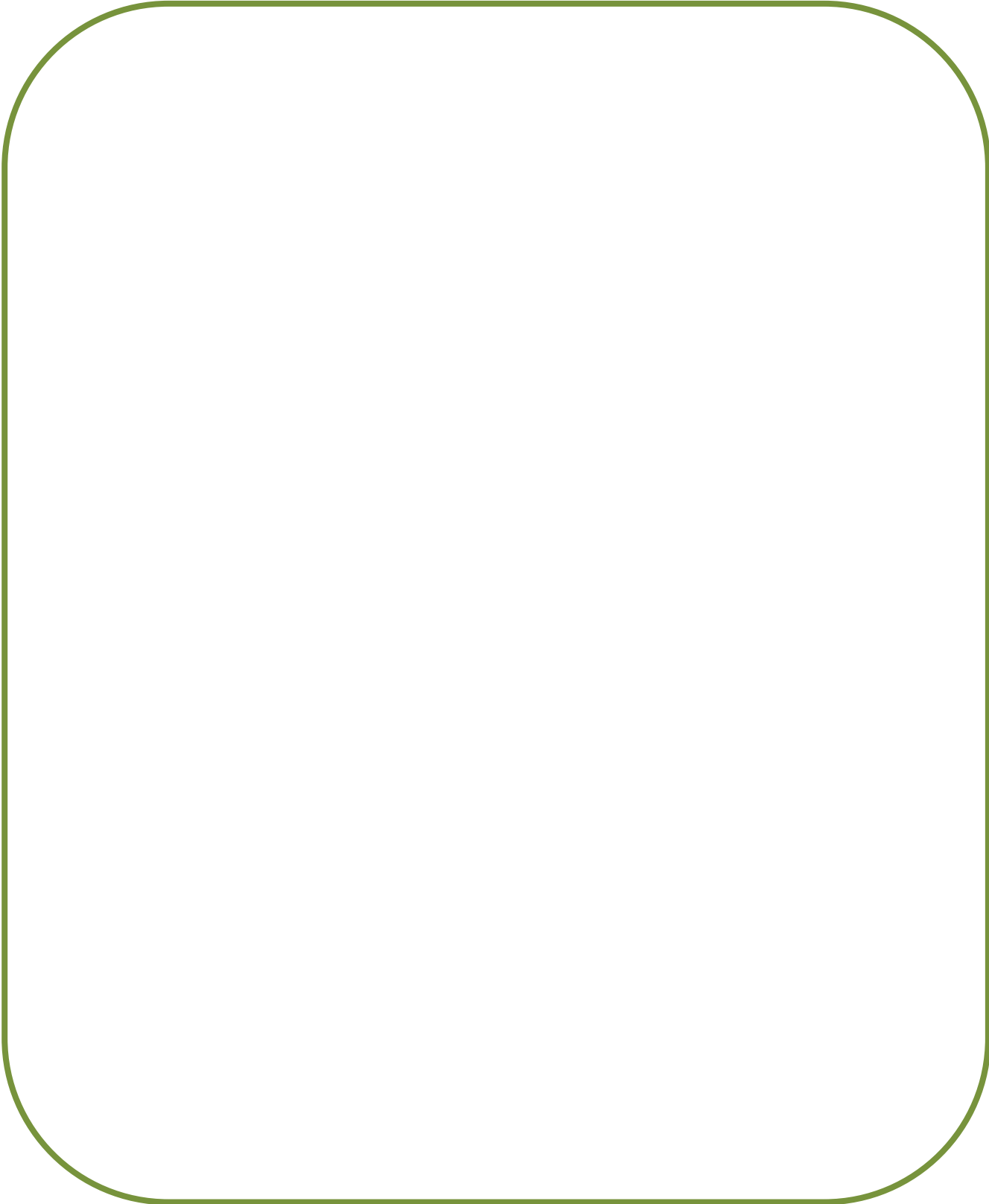
I am so afraid to open my clenched fists! Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to? Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands? Please help me to gradually open my hands and to discover that I am not what I own, but what you want to give me."

Henri Nouwen, The Only Necessary Thing: Living a Prayerful Life

Generosity in Practice

Week 2: Oct 2-8

Draw your "vineyard" and "fields." What is your "harvest"? What does sharing look like?



The Practice of Proportional Giving

Week 3: Oct 9-15

There is a powerful myth in our culture that we can all be strong, independently self-made individuals, but we see time and again throughout the scriptures that we are invited to be something far more meaningful: co-creators with God.

Part of that invitation is to recognize that the blessings in our lives, and even our lives themselves, did not come to us solely through our own labors and are not solely for our own purposes. Our resources have a role to play in community, just as we do, in bringing about the kind of world we want to see together.

Reflection: What are your experiences of giving to something bigger than yourself? Consider which resources you use mostly for yourself, or your family, or your neighbors.

What are your experiences of giving at All Souls? What financial contribution do you currently make?

How did you decide to make that commitment? Are there others involved in deciding how to use your resources? How do you communicate and prioritize those decisions?

How do you feel about that commitment now? Has it been easy or challenging to fulfill, either financially or emotionally?

Action:

- ❖ Notice each time you use the word “mine.” What would it be like to think about ownership differently?
- ❖ Find out what proportion you already give. If you give something, you are already giving a proportion of your resources. Complete the worksheet to find out.
- ❖ Have a conversation or journal or draw about what it would look like to change that proportion.

Scripture

They came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Should we pay them or should we not?” But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.” And they brought one. Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” They answered, “The emperor’s.” Jesus said to them, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were utterly amazed at him. – Mark 12:13-17

Do not say to yourself, “My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.” But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today. – Deuteronomy 8:17-18

The Practice of Proportional Giving

Week 3: Oct 9-15

Find out what proportion you already give.

If you give something, you are already giving a proportion of your resources. Complete the worksheet to find out. This worksheet is private. It's a helpful exercise for you and anyone you decide to share it with. No need to turn it in with your pledge.

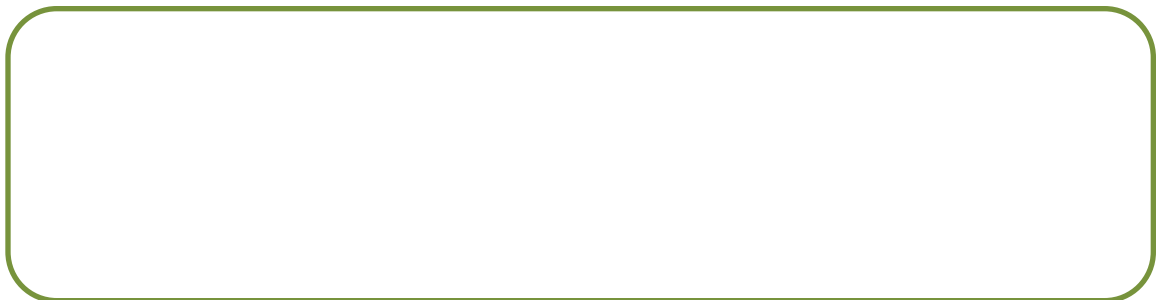
1. How much do you give to All Souls each year?

(If you give monthly, multiply by 12. If you give weekly, multiply by 52. If you put a different amount in the plate each week, guess your nearest average.)

\$ _____

2. What is your annual income?

(This is income as you define it. Some types of income to consider include gifts, returns on investments, scholarships, wages, and retirement income. Scratch paper below.)



\$ _____

3. Divide the first number by the second and multiply the result by 100.

$(\#1 / \#2) \times 100 = \text{_____}\%$

This is the proportion or percent that you currently give to All Souls. Whether you initially made that decision based on the dollar figure or based on the percentage, it can be helpful to see what you're giving relative to your full resources.

If you like, go back to some of our earlier reflections. What percent do you spend on your highest priorities? Is there space to shift things so they align?

Setting Goals for Giving as a Spiritual Practice

Week 4: Oct 16-22

Many of us give generously to All Souls and to others. Most of us wish we could give more. But we live in an expensive place and we may have a fixed income, and every day we see the dire struggles of those who don't have enough to sustain themselves.

Reflection: What are your experiences of abundance and scarcity? What scares or worries you about not having enough?

What do we risk or miss out on when we are not generous with one another?

What would you do differently if money weren't a concern?

In what ways does your spending reflect your priorities? In what ways does it not? Are there things you can change to bring them closer together?

Action: Find ways to let go of fear and move into new possibilities of creation and harvest by opening our clenched fists.

- ❖ Have a discussion with family or friends about your pledge to All Souls. Begin deciding on this year's pledge.
- ❖ Look back through the scriptures and exercises of the last few weeks. Notice if something feels different and where you feel stuck. Share that with someone.
- ❖ Have a conversation about money that scares you or that you would not ordinarily have. Ask someone to donate to a cause you care about, ask your kids and other family members how they would prioritize your household spending, have a retirement planning conversation with someone at your bank, ask for a raise at work.

- ❖ Share your reflections with someone at coffee hour.

Scripture

I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. – Philippians 4:11b-13

He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? – Luke 12:22-26

Setting Goals for Giving as a Spiritual Practice

Week 4: Oct 16-22

What was it like to notice blessing and abundance for the last few weeks? What did you notice or pay attention to?

What passages of scripture, prayers or reflections during this time especially changed your perspective or made sense to you?

What are your goals for giving and generous living as a response to God's abundance?

What will it take for you to fulfill those goals?

If you cannot fulfill this goal now, how many years will you take to get there? What is your plan for growing toward your goal?