

22 OCTOBER 2017

A leap into the abyss of God

THE RT. REV. DAN EDWARDS

Jesus' detractors tried to catch him with the twin traps of rules and money. Is it lawful or not to pay taxes to the evil Empire? We use rules and money to keep us safe. Follow the rules and hang on to the money. Manipulate the rules so we can keep more money. If we get enough money, we get to make the rules. Then we can get even more money. It isn't that we're greedy. It's that we are afraid. Rules and money keep us safe.

But Jesus broke through the small-minded consciousness traps. If Caesar's image is on the coin, give him the silly thing. What matters is giving to God what is God's, that which is formed in God's image — ourselves. St. Ignatius prayed, "All that I am and all that I have You have given me. I give it all back." Whoa! "I give it all back." All?

That is taking a flying leap into the abyss of God. That is breathing out trusting that the air will still be there for us to breathe back in. Jesus invites us to give ourselves to the God of infinitely generous grace trusting that God will give us back ourselves again blessed with more life than we had before. It is an act of trust and love.

We miss the point if we give to the Church, Christ's Earthly Body, just to fund a mission of

which we approve. No, giving is a vital act of faith. In olden days, the legal process for conveying a parcel of land was to hand the other person a clod of the dirt. When we give a portion of our money — don't get hung up on rules about percentages — it represents giving our whole lives to God. If we feel a hesitation, a reluctance to let go of our money, that's fear (the chosen tool of all

For reflection...

- What are the earliest experiences you can remember of learning you needed to follow the rules and have enough money to be safe?
- When you are asked to give — by a beggar on the street, by the Church, by a charity — do you feel any tension or discomfort? Describe the feeling in both its emotional and physical forms.
- Can you recall a positive experience of giving anything — time, money, work? How would you describe that experience? What was positive about it?

oppression) clutching at our souls. A flying leap into God is a scary thing. Rules and money are so much easier to calculate, more manageable, than the awesome living God who loves a cosmos into being, who loves us into being.

We get free to give from trusting God who loves us. When we dare to trust, God shows his love inviting us to trust more and live more freely. Life springs out of the consciousness traps like a jailbreak. That launches the adventure.



Dan Edwards was a layperson in Idaho, then a priest in Georgia, and now serves as bishop of Nevada. His missional priorities are community organizing, multicultural ministries, relational spirituality, and stewardship.



Sunday, October 22, 2017
Witness by Lauren Tonokawa

Hi everyone! My name is Lauren Tonokawa. I'm the daughter of Doug and Jane, and sister to Matthew. I'm 27 years old and I've been a part of the Emmanuel family for 27 years. If you do the math, that means I've been a part of the Emmanuel family just as long as I've been a Tonokawa. I wouldn't be here, on this Earth or in this church, if it wasn't for my mom.

Although I've been going to church for nearly three decades, I couldn't tell you the difference between the New Testament and the Old Testament.

For 27 years, I've been going to Sunday School, sitting in church, receiving communion without retaining everything happening around me. I can't help it. I'm a hyper visual person and when I can't see what I'm hearing, my mind wanders. During the sermons and readings, I would sit in this special place and think through situations in my life and work, and I would question why things are the way they are.

Even though I haven't retained an ounce of Biblical knowledge, being a part of this family has shaped my values and who I am as a person. I learned that people are different and that's okay. I learned that there is a baseline level of right and wrong that map back to the Ten Commandments; and beyond that, the adjectives we use to describe each other are subjective. I learned that things don't have to be as they always have been, that mental constructs are meant to be broken. I learned that it's okay to make mistakes. I used to be an acolyte. If I messed up and put the wrong candle out first, I would get to the back of this church, sit in Uncle Leland's lap and cry.

Along the way, I developed my own definition of stewardship.

To me, stewardship means planting trees I may never sit under; that my impact on this place will outlive me.

One way I do this is through my work. I work for a nonprofit that empowers entrepreneurs with solutions to climate change. When I started working, I learned it takes money to do good things.

I will pledge to Emmanuel again for 2018 and I hope others will join me.