

Good morning!

So hopefully by now you all know that today is the day that we have been asked to submit our financial pledges for the upcoming new year.

I was trying to think of something that I could say that would induce you all to come running forward with your pledges in your hand. But I decided that shouting “fire” would probably send you running out the back door, and I suspect that shouting “the church needs money,” might do the same thing.

For some reason, talking about stewardship has that sort of effect on people. But fortunately, for me, I’m the last one to bring a temple talk on the subject this year. And I think that the other folks who have done these temple talks before me over the last few weeks have already said it all.

The only thing I want to add is a big THANK YOU.

First, thank you for making the church council’s job a whole lot easier. Your pledges are the only thing we have to go on when we put together our budget for next year. Without a good estimate of what the contributions to our ministry will be next year, it’s just a shot in the dark for us to figure out what programs we can sustain, what we can add, and perhaps what we might have to cut back.

But beyond thanking you for making our budget easier to prepare, I also want to personally thank you for your generosity. That includes both your financial generosity as well as the time and talent that you devote to the church. I love this church. We joined more than 35 years ago. It’s home to me and my family. All three of my kids were baptized here, went to preschool and kindergarten here. And, by next summer, Pastor will have presided over marriages for all three of them. We’ve enjoyed worshipping here over the years, and participating in and contributing to the countless programs and activities that the church has sponsored over the years – everything from Christian education, to bowling leagues, bell choir to bel canto choir, chili cook-offs to spaghetti westerns, and a million things in between. Our lives have been enriched beyond measure. And we have you all to thank for that. Not one of us could do any of it alone. But when we join together, with God’s help, and share with one another the blessings and bounty that we have been given, in response to what we have freely received from Him, isn’t amazing what we can collectively accomplish? We’ve built churches in Africa! Imagine that! I couldn’t have done that by myself. We’ve helped to feed the hungry! We’ve helped to brighten the lives of countless children, elderly neighbors, Veterans, and so many others, particularly at the Christmas season when so many feel forgotten! We’ve provided quality Christian education to hundreds, if not thousands, of kids! And we’ve brought the good news of salvation to everyone that walks through our doors, and many who don’t. I’m truly grateful to each and every one of you for making this church and its ministries possible. So thank you.

At this time, I invite you to come forward and roll-up and tie your pledges onto the tree next to the altar near the baptismal font. The location of the tree is a reminder of what God has done for us, particularly in the birth of Jesus and through our baptism. Our stewardship is how we respond to those gifts and the many others God generously gives to us.