

## SESSION GUIDELINES FOR FAITHFUL FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

**“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”**

*Psalm 24:1*

All that we are and have belongs to God. We may realize the true value of all that we are and have through careful stewardship of God’s world. Stewardship is more than a concept. It is a way of life lived from the graciousness of God. In gratitude to God and with care for humanity and nature, we seek to live as Christian people in response to the renewal of all creation that God has begun in Jesus Christ.

**“All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas  
or the world or life or death or the present or the future --  
all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.”**

*I Corinthians 3:21-22*

When anyone of us becomes a member of the body of Christ, he or she accepts God’s call to be a steward of the new creation. The literal meaning of ‘steward’ is caretaker of another’s household. It is a biblical concept that defines our relationship with God. We are partners with God in caring for creation.

**“Life is a gift to be received with gratitude; a task to be pursued with courage.”**

*The Confession of 1967*

The mission of the Church is a mission of caring for God’s new creation in Jesus Christ. How we respond to God and to both neighbor and nature is part and parcel of our stewardship. As amazing as it may seem, God in Christ has called us into partnership as stewards of the earth and its fullness. As Adam and Eve were caretakers of the Garden of Eden before the fall, we in Christ have been restored to their place as caretakers of God’s world.

Within this context of stewardship of God’s gifts, including all we are and have, time, talents and treasures, the Session of First Presbyterian Church has adopted these guidelines for the financial stewardship of Christ’s church. We expect every member to consider these prayerfully and seriously.

- I. In order for our church to carry out an effective mission, we need the offerings, large or small, of everyone.
- II. We do not specify what any individual must give to be a member of the church. Financial stewardship is ultimately a matter between an individual and God.
- III. Even though one’s financial stewardship commitment is between the individual and God, the topic of financial stewardship itself can neither be optional nor off the table of discussion. Jesus Christ has given it this importance. We as a congregation can do no less.

- IV. As stewards of God's church, Christ calls each of us to offer a portion of what we have been given to sustain the mission (purpose) of this church.
- V. In biblical times, God's people were required to offer a tenth of their income to the service of the Temple. A tenth is a tithe. Many churches today, including ours, encourage a tithe of income as an offering goal.
- VI. We encourage every member to contribute a portion or percentage of her or his income and challenge everyone to increase that portion as our gifts from God increase.
- VII. It is easy to fall into habits that make our offerings to the church an afterthought. But for the Christian, the church is a priority, and each one of us should prayerfully plan our offerings as seriously as we plan our expenditures.
- VIII. Stewardship is a spiritual discipline that should be taught, beginning with children at home and in our church school. If we begin to make God's work a priority early on in life, it will allow growth in stewardship as we continue our faith journey.
- IX. There are three ways to look at one's offerings:
  - 1) as a donation: an amount we can give without thinking about it or missing it;
  - 2) as a commitment: an amount that we can give only with some arrangement of our priorities and planning;
  - 3) as a sacrifice: an amount that we can give only by giving up something else.

We ask our members to think of our offerings to the church in the categories of a commitment or a sacrifice rather than a donation. We believe that this consists more with what Christ is calling us to do.

In summary, stewardship is a much broader concept than financial stewardship. All we are, not just what we have, belongs to God. Without our gifts of time and talent, the church cannot carry out Christ's mission. This message may be particularly important for our youth who have so much to offer, but whose financial resources are limited. Also, there are those among us who struggle to meet their basic expenditures on food, shelter and clothing. They cannot be expected to sacrifice these life necessities. Their stewardship is just as important as any other because their gifts of time and talent are vital to the life of this congregation.

Many others of us have received more than enough material gifts. If what we have received allows us to spend our resources among many options, then the Session asks us to think prayerfully and seriously about making the mission of Christ's church a high priority in the area of financial stewardship.

**“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

*Matthew 5:21*