

# all angels' church

Dear Friends in Christ,

Over the next four weeks, we will be entering a season of reflection on stewardship. In our stewardship, we live into the truth that all we are and all that we have—our time, talents, and treasures—are ultimately a gift from God. To be good stewards of the many gifts we have been given, we take a humble posture, aware of the power and opportunities entrusted to us through these treasures, these talents, and our time. The arc of stewardship we will reflect on is as follows:

Stewardship is rooted in gratitude,  
Lived through dedication,  
And bears fruit in freedom.

The starting place: gratitude. My life with God begins and ends with gratitude. In the midst of the pain and joy of this world, I give thanks to God for the incredible gift of simply being alive in this incredible world we share. I give thanks for Jesus and what he has done for us all. I give thanks for the gift of this church community to accompany me on the way. So how do I express this gratitude? On heavy days when I am feeling down, I always return to gratitude to reignite my prayer life. A simple 'thank you' prayer restores my soul to focus on God the Giver of All.

*During this season of stewardship, I invite all of us to try out the practice of a daily 'Gratitude Journal.' Begin the day by jotting down all the causes for gratitude you have in your life and end your list by saying "Thanks be to God." In this practice I have found that my soul opens up and my heart grows in the radiant presence of our generous God. (Psalm 65:9-13)*

The action: dedication. In stewardship, we choose to give to God what God has chosen to give to us. When Jesus says, "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is Gods," the truth is that everything belongs to God and everything is owed to God. We commit our whole lives to God, dedicating our time, talents, and treasures to God, in part, through our faith community. In our tithing, we dedicate 10% of our gifts to the work of the church. Our financial tithes determine how the vestry sets budgets, and it is our collective financial offerings that enable us to employ clergy and other staff, feed our neighbors who are unhoused or in hardship, and keep the lights on.

*During this season of stewardship I invite us all to examine prayerfully how we can intentionally dedicate our time, talent, and treasure to the work of God's kingdom overall and the work of All Angels' Church in particular. If you are new to pledging you may want to work your way up to a 10% tithe by adding a percentage to your giving each year. Stay tuned for a separate appeal inviting more detailed reflection on time and talent. (Malachi 3:10)*

The fruit: freedom. For me, stewardship in gratitude and dedication are essential steps on the path to spiritual freedom. I was raised in a household with extreme anxiety about money. My dad worked for a struggling company, and the words "layoff" and "furlough" were often discussed by my parents with fear in their voices. Whenever my dad took out the checkbook to pay the bills, the house grew tense and gloomy. We children made ourselves scarce on those days to avoid the fallout. For me, tithing—putting aside at least 10% of my income for God's work—helped me get free from that oppressive anxiety around money. My relationship with money changed radically when I chose to give it away to what I cared about rather than hoarding it to comfort my inherited anxiety. In tithing, I experienced the freedom that comes with faithfulness to God and God's purposes.

*During this season of stewardship I invite us to reflect on our own relationships with our schedules and with our money, and pray about how those relationships are healthy or unhealthy. How could those relationships shift towards trust in God's grace, towards greater freedom? (Luke 16:13, Matthew 6:25-34)*

Rooted in gratitude, shown through dedication, and flourishing into freedom, may this stewardship season be one in which we grow closer to our loving God as we declare with joy and trust, in word and in action: "our world belongs to God." Please use the next four weeks to pray and reflect on your stewardship of God's gifts, fill out the enclosed pledge card and bring it to church for Dedication Sunday, November 13.

In Christ,

The Rev. Jarrett Kerbel

Priest-in-Charge