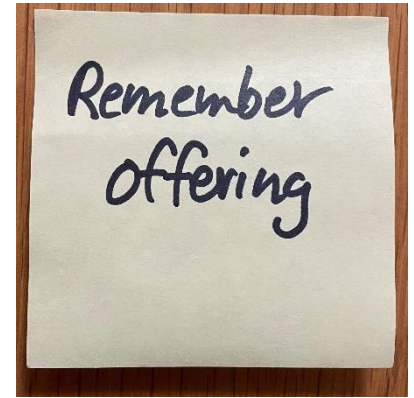


Stewards of God's Grace: November 2021

Remembering to give, remembering to ask

November is a month for remembering—remembering all the saints on All Saints Day, remembering the faithful departed on All Souls Day, and remembering those who gave their lives in the wars of this country on Remembrance Day. To remember is to call something or someone to mind, to bring to awareness something we already know. It's in our memory but not in our conscious awareness until we remember.



Our financial offering to the church can be like that. If you are someone who gives by cheque or cash when you are present in worship, you might be out of practice in giving your offering. If you are someone who gives by post-dated cheques, automatic bill payment or pre-authorized giving (PAG), your offering may reach the church but not really be part of your awareness. If you are someone who gives when a particular request is made, then months can go by without it entering your mind. If you are someone who gives by e-transfer or through Canada Helps, you may only do so when you are in a place with internet access. While giving our offering may seem like an uncomplicated act we all know that the Covid pandemic has changed many things—including how and how often we give our offering. How do we consciously offer God, who gives us all things, a portion of what we have been given? What words do we offer? What song do we sing? What prayer do we pray?

One of the pandemic's effects has been the inadvertent sidelining of the offering. In-person worship in most churches no longer includes the ritual of passing the offering plates. Live-streamed worship services seldom indicate a way to actually give at the time of the offertory. What seems to be happening in many churches is the practice of having a discreetly placed offering plate somewhere in which you can place your offering before the service begins. In virtual services there is rarely a reminder to give your offering although there may be a mention on screen at the end. Whether live or virtual, most of the time giving a financial offering is not mentioned nor symbolized during worship. The gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar but more and more often money is not. What is concerning about this is that relegates our financial giving as an act of worship to an afterthought at a time when we all know our churches need our monetary support. It feeds into a cultural perception that money is not something we discuss—either because it's not godly to talk about money or because it is such a private and sensitive matter we dare not bring it up. Offering our time, our talents, our skills, and our resources to God are important aspects of being a disciple but we are not bringing that to mind symbolically in worship. How can we collectively remember its importance as an act of discipleship if we do not speak, sing, pray or act with it in mind when we gather?

This month when you write your cheque, review your automatic payments, make your e-transfer, donate through your parish website or place money in the offering plate, perhaps you can say this prayer from 1 Chronicles 29 that is used at the offertory in the Book of Common Prayer:

Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, for ever and ever.

All that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine.

All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

Written by the Ven. Cheryl Toth, Stewardship Officer, Diocese of Qu'Appelle