

Report of the Stewardship and Mission Table

There was a time in my life that I didn't like to talk about money. A long time.

It became especially awkward for me when I became a pastor, and talking about money in relation to giving seemed to be rather self-serving. My salary, after all, comes out of those offerings people give.

But here's a couple of things I've learned that have changed things around for me:

First of all, I've learned people need to give. It's a spiritual practice. It's a sign of commitment. It connects us with others in a shared mission. And if that's not convincing enough, giving is good for our physical and mental health. (I'd guess that to be true both for individuals and congregations!)

If we're concerned about others' spiritual, emotional, and physical health, talking about money and encouraging people and congregations to give simply makes sense.

The second reason that I'm (nearly) no longer embarrassed to ask people to give money, is that I'm excited about what we do with that money!

Our synod is starting new ministries. We're an Acts 2 church, reaching out to new communities and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. When I'm at my Potomac conference meetings with Rev. Anteneh Gebreselassie, I hear about the joys and challenges of starting a new Amharic speaking ministry and know my congregation helped make it happen.

When the synod council approved the formation of an anti-racism team, members of my congregation were then able to be part of synod-wide conversations about racism. We have learned from each other and received resources which we use in our own congregation. This sharing is made possible because we're part of a synod.

We don't have a large youth group at Good Shepherd in Alexandria, and sometimes youth events are disappointing if only 2 or 3 attend. I am grateful that youth from our congregation can take part in synod-supported youth events such as Shema or Shekinah or Chrysalis. There I am assured that they will meet with other Lutheran youth, developing relationships and having faith-filled conversations which are important for their spiritual formation. (Our youth say that they are grateful that they have a good time!)

At the Stewardship and Mission table we talk about money. A lot.

This past year we've written letters to congregations thanking you for your financial gifts and sharing some of the stories of mission in and around our synod. We've hosted stewardship workshops to share best practices and help congregations develop their own stewardship plans. Most recently, we asked Bishop Graham to help with a YouTube "thank you" video that congregations might share with their councils, at annual meetings, on their website or Facebook pages. (The link is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuxiMJOaCjc> Share it widely!)

Those around the table this year have included synod staff members Rev. Phil Hirsch, Rev. Shannon Anderson, Rev. Tom Knoll, and Maddie Tallman as well as Carolyn Sowinski, Alice Benson, Rev. Greg Durig, Bob Sargeant, Marlynn Bauch, Laura Newbury, and myself.

We want to help you and your congregation get excited about talking about money because your financial gifts translate into ministry.

Thank you for your support of our synod. Thank you for your support of our life together.

In Christ,

Rev. Jeanette Leisk

Chair, Stewardship and Mission Table

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