

Today kicks off our annual four weeks of Fall Stewardship Emphasis at King of Kings as we prepare to make our commitments to our congregation in the coming year. “What’s Stewardship?” you might ask. Traditionally, in American church life, stewardship is the practice of using the resources with which God has blessed us for the good of our congregation. While some people may be tempted to think of it primarily as a form of fundraising, it encompasses not just money, but three sorts of resources that God gives us: Time, Talent, and Treasure. During our Stewardship Emphasis in the fall, we typically encourage one another at King of Kings to consider how we will use our gifts of time, talent, and treasure for the good of our congregation in the coming calendar year.

For example, over the next month you might ask yourself how often you will attend worship or in what way you might serve on a weekly or monthly basis in a ministry of the congregation for the coming year—that’s a commitment of your time. You might consider what talents God has given you and how to use them to bless the congregation. If you are good at using a weed whacker or a power drill you could help care for the property; if you enjoy singing you could join the choir; if you have office experience you could fill in at the office when the secretary is ill—that’s a commitment of your talent. And, if God has blessed you financially, you might reflect on what percentage of your income God is calling you to share through our congregation—that’s a commitment of your treasure.

Perhaps you heard me say earlier that, typically and traditionally, in our Fall Stewardship Emphasis we encourage one another to consider how we will use our gifts of time, talent, and treasure for the good of our congregation. We will do that this year as well. On September 28 and 29 you’ll receive two forms: The **first** is a Time and Talent survey through which you may sign up for a variety of tasks such as reading a lesson on Sunday, serving on Altar Guild to set up communion; teaching a BING lesson; or helping to set up for or clean up after Coffee Hour. The **second** is a Commitment Card on which you may write an amount of money that you “pledge”—that is, an estimate of how much you plan to give, weekly or monthly. Only the Financial Secretary sees this card; the information you write is confidential. If your financial situation changes during the year, you may contact the Financial Secretary and change your pledge amount, no questions asked. This year we will again be offering these two ways for you to make a commitment to God’s work through King of Kings for 2025, but the focus of our Fall Stewardship emphasis is a bit different this year.

This year, in our stewardship emphasis, we’ll be looking not only at “Time, Talent, and Treasure,” but also, more specifically, at “Legacy” as a facet of stewardship. We’ll be asking, “What kind of legacy am I preparing, for my family, my congregation, and my community?” Before we talk about legacy, let me offer a definition of stewardship. “Stewardship is everything I do, once I say ‘Yes’ to God.” I’ll say that again and then ask you to repeat it after me. “Stewardship is everything I do, once I say ‘Yes’ to God.” Now, together: “Stewardship is everything I do, once I say ‘Yes’ to God.” It’s how you use your time, how you take care of your home, how you save, spend, and share your money, how you value your family and friends, and how you make a difference in your community. You are already a steward of your time and talent and treasure as you use the gifts God has given you to care for yourself and to bless others. And

you do this in a variety of ways: in your family, through your job, in your volunteering, and in your community. The spin we will take on “everything you do once you say ‘Yes’ to God” this year is this: How will I be a steward of everything God has given to me in a way that will last beyond my lifetime? What sort of legacy will I leave my family, my congregation, and my community?

Let’s take a moment to think about what legacy. There’s more than one definition. **One** is “an amount of money or property left to someone in a will,” as in, “My aunt died and unexpectedly left me a legacy of \$3,000.” For this meaning, synonyms include bequest, inheritance, and endowment. Over the years King of Kings has received bequests—or legacies of money—from members after their deaths. But King of Kings has also received countless legacies according to the **second** definition: “the long-lasting impact of particular words, events, or actions that originated in the past and persist into and influence the future,” as in, “Frank Lloyd Wright left us a rich legacy of buildings that are both innovative architectural creations and genuine works of art.” A legacy can be money or property, but it can also be something else, either tangible or intangible. Here are some examples... James Earl Jones left a legacy of memorable performances on stage and screen. JFK left a legacy of the Peace Corps. Bull Connor left a legacy of racism. Oscar Romero left a legacy of courage in the face of government-sanctioned violence. Maya Angelou left a legacy of stories and poetry—and resistance to domestic violence. Examples of legacies are money, property, books, recordings, teachings, and moral examples.

What are the legacies that King of Kings has received, according to this second definition? Certainly the monetary bequests, left by Janet Nickerson, Marj Zercher, and Mary Ann Tienken—and at least one physical bequest: Mary Ann also left directions in her will for the donation of the baptismal font. If we stretch the definition, we also have physical legacies that remind us of members, given not in their wills but as memorials by family members or friends. We could call these “unintentional legacies,” because, even though they weren’t literally donated by the person who died, they do remind us of that person. Here’s a list of legacies at King of Kings: the **piano** in the sanctuary, in memory of Carl Sperrazza, Jim Meaney’s father-in-law; the **Paschal Candle**, which stands at the baptismal font, in memory of Al Zipperle’s wife, Ronnie; the **bells**, in memory of Beth Henry’s husband Clem, and the **chimes**, in memory of John Wurster’s first wife, Barbara; the Kennedy-Zupko **Garden**, in memory of Jim Kennedy and Wilma Zupko, which you see through the window as you exit the sanctuary; **trees** in memory of Wilma, of Roberta Wurster, and of Dick Heidmann, on the lawn to the left of the sanctuary; the **church sign** at the driveway, in memory of Dave Rant; and **benches** in memory of Bob Grice, Joann’s husband, and, most recently, John Wurster. We have monetary legacies and physical legacies, but we are also blessed with many other legacies at King of Kings.

We are blessed with a legacy of **Bill Stratis**, who approached the bishop sixty-plus years ago about starting a Lutheran congregation in New Windsor. Our relationship with the Scouts owes much to **Wilma Zupko**, who shared her time and talents as a Scout officer and as the liaison between the congregation and the Scouts. The flag flying near our church sign, donated by the Scouts, reminds us of her legacy. **Dick Heidmann** shared his architectural skills, leaving us the legacy of the design of our sanctuary; and many members and **Mission Builders** put sweat equity into reconstructing this space in which we are gathered. **Ruth Koch and Claire Kobel** left us a legacy of protocol for the Altar Guild; just ask any member about their Altar Guild training, and I’ll bet they heard “Claire and Ruth said...” more

than once! Several members left a legacy of their sewing skills to the 50th Anniversary Quilt hanging in the narthex, including **Carole Miller, Lynn Mills, and Wilma Zupko. Roberta Wurster** left a tangible legacy for the Stewardship Team in a well-organized file cabinet in the Sacristy. **Jimmy Meyers, Ed Timberger, Jim Kennedy, Kurt Ottway, Art Krahn, John Wurster, Wil Krosc, Ed Mayer, Jesse Koder, and John Nix** each left a legacy of care for our buildings. Stretching the definition of legacy once more, to include someone who is still living but no longer here with us, **Patt Kaufmann** introduced the hymn, “You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore,” which Lori Cooper called, in her German accent, “Der Hymn von Patt,” “the hymn from Patt.” And Patt’s mother, **Cynthia Beckles**, left us not only her imprint as Head Usher for many years, with strict training, but also a legacy of humor; at Young at Hearts and Women of the ELCA meetings, she would read a funny vignette or share a quip, my favorite being, “Some of you are in the will, and some of you are in the won’t.” Each of these saints of King of Kings shared their skills or their wisdom or their energy or their knowledge or their enthusiasm; each practiced stewardship in everything they did after they said ‘Yes’ to God, thus leaving us a legacy to enjoy and an example to follow!

As we begin this Stewardship Emphasis, let us give thanks for the legacies we have received from our forebears in faith at King of Kings! As you enter this time of reflection and preparation for Commitment Sunday, I invite you to think about—and give thanks for!—the legacies you yourself have received—from family, from work opportunities, from education or training, from mentors or neighbors or friends. And I invite you to consider what legacies you are already creating—in your home, in your family, in our congregation, and in your community—and how you are practicing stewardship: “everything you do, once you say ‘Yes’ to God.”

Listen once more to our theme Scripture for these next four weeks and consider, now that you have said ‘Yes’ to God, how God is calling you to serve—with whatever gifts God has given you! St. Peter writes:

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. AMEN