



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A - Proper 20 - September 24, 2017

As you know, over the past couple of weeks the Cathedral has been engaging in discernment about stewardship and many of you participated in an evening of answering questions and providing feedback that we will use as we discern how we are going to move forward and mission and ministry in the years to come.

To many people in the Episcopal Church, stewardship means the annual pledge drive – the beg-a-thon, if you will. And I think if we’re going to move forward in healthy ways, we have to expand that definition to say that stewardship is our personal response to God’s generosity in the way we share our resources of time, talent, and treasure. Stewardship reflects our commitment to making God’s love known through the realities of human life and our use of all that God has given us. It is also our service to God’s world and our care of creation. While parish members are encouraged to make an annual stewardship pledge, this pledge represents our specific Christian commitment to “work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God.” Thus says the *Episcopal Dictionary of the Church* and the *Book of Common Prayer* on page 856.

And in my view, we are stewards not only of the building and the finances, but we are also stewards of the mission and ministry that God has entrusted to us through the legacy of Their Majesties King Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma.

Stewardship also requires us to be grounded not in church membership, but rather in discipleship, membership meaning that we belong to an exclusive group and discipleship meaning that we behave as followers of Jesus, a “club” that is not exclusive, but open to everyone.

And part of discipleship means discerning who God is calling us to be and what God is calling us to do. And according to the responses that you gave last week, it seems as if God is calling us to be faithful worshippers value a sense of place and who use how we’re fed from that place to serve God’s people through outreach and good works, all the while spreading that good feeling of that out into the world, inviting others to come in and take part as well. That’s my understanding of your feedback.

When I went through the responses, I read things like:

- People accept you as you are – handicaps and all. They accept me and help me to accept myself.
- The Episcopal Church keeps up with what’s going on in the world – women, gay rights, it doesn’t shy away from controversy.
- Coming from a rigid and authoritarian Christian tradition, the freedom to believe and worship vibrantly and not out of obligation or fear – this gift is the single most important gift.
- We must realize that music isn’t just for show—music is praying twice!

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These are good and noble causes and, yes, they will require our time, talent, and treasure; not time, talent, or treasure, but time, talent, and treasure.

And I am personally committing to that cause and want to let you know that I will be committing \$635 a month to the cause—\$560 a month to the Cathedral of St. Andrew, \$50 a month to the Society for the Increase of the Ministry, and \$25 a month to the Chang Clergy Children's Fund for a total of \$7,620 a year, \$6,720 of which will go directly to the Cathedral. This figure represents exactly 10% of my take-home pay after my housing allowance is deducted. And if we use this year's figures, it would make me the sixth largest contributor to the Cathedral – even though I'm pretty sure I'm not the sixth richest person.

So, next year, I will give \$6,720 to our Cathedral and I will give it gladly and I will give it unreservedly and I will give it as a disciple of Jesus who believes not only in this Cathedral community, but also in this denomination, the Episcopal Church. As I have said on many occasions, the Episcopal Church saved my life when I was 30 years old and \$6,720 seems a small price to pay for that.

And I invite and encourage each and every one of you to join me in this commitment to our cause and I thank you and advance for your prayerful consideration of what you can and will do for the gospel, for God, for Jesus Christ, and for the mission and ministry that has been entrusted to us by God through the legacy of Their Majesties King Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma.

And I would like to close with a personal note of gratitude for all you have done for me; not only when I was here as your Canon Pastor 10 years ago, but also for the past nine months of affirmation, of vibrancy, of camaraderie, of collegiality, of encouragement, of fulfillment, and (most of all) of joy. I am truly blessed by God and I am truly blessed by each and every one of you.

Amen.