

REVEREND FUN ©GCI, INC.



I TOTALLY MISUNDERSTOOD THE CONCEPT OF THE 10 PERCENT TITH

Mark Your Calendars

- October 4: Blessing of the Animals, 5 p.m.
- October 17: Parish Work Day, 8:30 to 12:30
- October 18: St. Luke's Day (healing service)
Vestry Meeting

October 24: International Food Fair

Wednesday 11 a.m. services in the Lady Chapel have resumed, including the laying-on of hands in healing and a simple celebration of the Holy Eucharist

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The Stewardship Season Is upon Us

Soon it will be time for us to make our annual financial pledge for 2010. This is a simple process for some, and a complex conundrum for others. The first step is a calculation, so you can know the percentage you are currently pledging. The easiest way to do this is to find your most recent income-tax return and find on it either your "total income" or "adjusted gross income." Next, take the amount of your current pledge and multiply it by 100 (move the decimal point two places to the right). Then divide that number by your total income. The answer is the percentage you pledged for Christ's mission in the world from this parish church. At right is a simple chart to help you with your figuring

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|-------|
| 1 | Amount of My Pledge: | _____ |
| 2 | Line 1 × 100: | _____ |
| 3 | Annual Income: | _____ |
| 4 | Line 2 ÷ Line 3: | _____ |

Annual Income	Annual Pledge	Percentage
\$10,000	\$200	2%
\$20,000	\$500	2.5%
\$25,000	\$52	0.2%
\$50,000	\$2,000	4%
\$75,000	\$1,000	1.3%
\$150,000	\$7,000	4.7%

The number you get in Line 4 is the percentage you pledge. Don't be dismayed if it turns out to be surprisingly small, like .2 per cent (just 2/10th of 1 per cent). Many of your fellow Christians are in the same boat! The point is to learn what percentage you are currently giving.

At left are some examples of what pledging represents when compared to total income.

Obviously, your numbers will be different—everyone's are unique, after all. Every situation is also unique, as well. Nevertheless, I encourage you to start by knowing the *percentage* of your income that you give to support the mission and ministry of your parish church. If you want to be totally accurate here, you can make this calculation based not only on your pledge to the general fund, but also including other donations (the Absent Guest Plate each week, donations for flowers or to the Memorial Fund, special gifts for designated purposes, etc.).

The Challenge: This year we hope all parishioners will raise the percentage of their income they pledge by one full percentage point. If you are pledging .2 per cent, consider raising this to 1.2 per cent. If you are pledging 4 per cent, calculate what 5 per cent would be. The idea is that, slowly and over an extended period of time, we come to that place where we are all tithing. You may find that a change from 4 to 5 per cent is too steep all at once;

consider raising from 4 to 4½ or even 4¼ instead. The point is first to know the percentage, then steadily to raise that percentage until you reach a tithe.

What is a tithe? The word “tithe” comes from the Old English *teogoba*, meaning “tenth.” A tithe is a one-tenth part of something, paid as a contribution, usually to support a religious organization. For most of our Jewish friends a tithe is a minimum requirement of membership. For us Christians, however, tithes are normally voluntary and paid in cash, check, or stocks—anything with a cash value.

Why a tithe? One of the earliest records we have of humans giving to God is that of Abram (soon to be renamed Abraham). In Genesis, we read that Abram gave one-tenth of everything to Melchizedek, who was a priest of God Most High (see Gen. 14:18-20). Later in Genesis, Jacob (who was Abraham’s grandson) also makes a commitment to give back to God one-tenth of what he has received (Gen. 28:22).



In more recent times, the tithe has been consistently and repeatedly affirmed as the standard for members of the Episcopal Church by our General Convention. Jesus, who gave everything, looks for us to give with extreme generosity. Thus, our church recognizes that the tithe is only a starting point in the life of giving in generosity for the gospel and the world. The General Convention stated numerous times in its resolutions that the tithe is a *minimum* standard of Christian giving.

How do we get to a tithe? Simple: start by knowing the *percentage* of your income that you give. Then consider raising that one full percentage point for next year. If you are now giving nine per cent, then *bingo*, you will be tithing. For most of us, however, the process of getting from our current level to that of the tithe will take several years, perhaps a even a decade or longer. It may require us to admit that supporting our church is a higher priority than taking that cruise vacation, or eating frequently in restaurants, or even buying that new car this year. In short, it will require sacrifice. Based on the information above, here’s another table showing what it would be like if people giving at these levels raised their pledge by one percentage point. For comparison, we also see the amount of an actual tithe:

Annual Income	Current Annual Pledge	Current Percentage	Raise of One Percentage	Tithe
\$10,000	\$200	2%	\$300	\$1,000
\$20,000	\$500	2.5%	\$700	\$2,000
\$25,000	\$52	0.2%	\$300	\$2,500
\$50,000	\$2,000	4%	\$2,500	\$5,000
\$75,000	\$1,000	1.3%	\$1,725	\$7,500
\$150,000	\$7,000	4.7%	\$8,500	\$15,000
\$250,000	\$5,000	2%	\$7,500	\$25,000

Now that you’ve done these calculations, you might consider some others. What percentage of your income do you spend on other items (housing, food, clothing, entertainment, vacations, automobile costs, savings, etc.)? This further analysis will reveal your financial priorities, and the place of the church in your ranking. Obviously, we value our homes, our sustenance, our protection—but how well do we value our faith? The cartoon on the next page gives us a poignantly funny poke at our values.



Stewardship begins and ends with the understanding of God’s ownership of all there is: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” (Revelation 22:13).

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” (Psalm 24:1). “To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.” (Deuteronomy 10:14). “The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.” (Leviticus 25:23). “Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.” (Job 41:11).



HOW COME THE WAITRESS GETS 15% AND GOD ONLY GETS 10%?

This year, I hope you will join me by calculating the percentage of your giving to the church of Christ, and then increasing that giving by a full percentage point. Doesn't God deserve more than a waitress? ✕

Barrie †

Funeral Preferences

Do you have your funeral preferences on file at the church? There are very, *very* few in our files, which indicates that perhaps some of these may have gone missing. If you do not have your funeral preferences on file, please consider doing so. (And if you think you have them on file, please check with Gayle to be sure we have them!) Having a copy of your instructions here at the church is very helpful at the time of your death. Families in grief sometimes cannot find this information, or cannot face encountering it. A copy at your parish helps us begin to make our plans for your funeral, and it helps your clergy with the care of your loved ones.

No matter what your situation, no matter what your age, you should also consider completing a "Five Wishes" booklet or similar instrument. This will guide those you designate in carrying out *your* wishes about health care should you become unable to communicate for yourself. This is not something only elderly people should consider, as accidents do happen. Be a good steward of your family life, as well as your church community, by having your legal paperwork in order. ✕

Special Thanks to...

- Jane Sarnicki, for organizing our Trinity Sunday field trip to New York to worship and ring the big bells at Trinity Church, Wall Street.
- Kathiann Krott, for organizing our Parish Picnic and for teaching our Sunday School.
- Muriel Depken, Marie Mitchell, and Greg Kouletsis, for donating perennials from their home for the church and rectory gardens.
- Grace Oliff, for her tireless labor to make our Italian Night a successful reality, a fun evening, a filling meal, and a helpful boost to our finances. She also organized the annual fall breakfast—thanks for that, too!
- Chuck May, for hanging bulletin boards and cork strips throughout the building this summer.
- Marie Mitchell, who, with the help of Ginny Baird, finished the needlepoint for last of the blue kneeling cushions at the altar rail. We will bless and dedicate it as soon as it returns with its foam innards.
- Jamie MacKenzie, Ginny Baird, Grace Oliff, Daniel Oliff, Muriel and Allen Depken, for trimming bushes and ivy and otherwise cleaning up on the north side of the church this past June.
- Greg Kouletsis, for organizing our parish excursion to the New Jersey Jackals baseball game in June.
- Doug Craig, for continuing to make our web site more beautiful, more helpful, and more accessible.
- Sue Keitel and Ginny Baird, for cleaning our hand bells.
- Elaine Gustenhoven, for helping to organize our seasonal decorations into sensible and safe storage.
- Chic & Lorraine Wohrle, for donating a brand-new couch for our parish hall's conversation grouping on the stage. (A reminder: if we decide we want to keep the lounge permanently in that temporary location, we will absolutely install a ramp and railings so it is accessible to everyone.)
- Jim Gwynne, for taking on the ministry of parish recycler.
- Everyone who helped with the combined Eucharist and picnic in Van Saun Park in August.
- Ginny Baird, for playing the organ during Michael's vacation. ✕

Welcome, Friends!

This month, we welcomed the Friends for Life ministry into our church buildings. Operated by Good Shepherd Community Services, Inc., of Fort Lee, this group has ministered to persons with AIDS since 1992. They will have client services in our parish hall and downstairs rooms on Wednesdays and Thursdays—and it is already a great boost to see all the activity on those days! On other weekdays, staff

Friends For Life



will use the offices on the north side of the building (the former Rector's and Administrator's office). Our parish offices are now located in temporary

quarters in the back of the parish hall, and there is a good deal of disruption and confusion as we construct a few new storage spaces here and there. The long-term goal is to build new offices for the Rector and Administrator in the "courtyard room." That way, visitors walking into our building will first encounter a welcoming presence instead of storage room. We need to rely on the patience and good graces of everyone in this interim time, during which some short-term inconveniences will make way for significant long-term gains.

Friends for Life is making a significant contribution to the life of our community and the vitality of our space. They are also helping us financially, through a monthly rental payment as well as significant support for the costs of needed renovations. We anticipate further support from the Bishop's Church Extension Fund in the new year, and with this we expect there will be no direct cost to the parish for these changes. The costs for renovation can only be kept within budget if we have sufficient volunteer help with simple tasks, like painting, organizing, and cleaning. We are planning a parish work day for this purpose on Saturday, October 17, from 8:30 to 12:30.

Please sign up if you are able to come, so we can plan accordingly. Your parish family needs your help! ✘



Doors of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Fort Lee (former home of Friends for Life). All are now welcome here!

There Are Bells on the Hills, and We Never Heard Them Ringing

In the midst of all the mess and confusion of renovation and moving offices at the Church, this month we also had a musical group gather for the first time. Most of us missed it, as it came well after the service ended. Thanks mostly to newcomer Sue Keitel, our hand bells have been put back into service! The first rehearsal of our fledgling ringers was September 13, and it included Annunciation veteran ringers Ginny Baird and Cindy Palladino, as well as a complete first-timer named Jeff (who was not the only Jeff in the group!). This is one of the signs of abundant life in our community, and it was easy to miss among so much confusion. Brava, Sue! We cannot wait to hear the joyful peal of our hand bells ring out once again! Anyone interested in joining our ringers, should contact Sue (suegeo92@aol.com or 201-483-7722). ✘



e-News

This is the first issue of our electronic newsletter at Annunciation. We will distribute this primarily through the free Google group for Annunciation Parishioners. To join, sign up for a free group account at www.google.com (click on "sign in" at the upper right). Then send a request to join our group to annunciationparishioners@googlegroups.com.

A limited number of paper copies will be made available for those without internet capability, and copies will be mailed to those friends and family who are homebound or far away.

So far, e-News is entirely a production of the clergy, and this is obviously not a good long-term strategy for many reasons. If you feel you might be called to assist or even take over this important ministry, please contact the Rector. ✘

The Church of the Annunciation

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