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From the Clergy Associate for Family Ministries

December Message

Below is a letter I wrote as I tried to come up with a message for our chapel congregation about the importance of stewardship. I invite you to read it and share it with your children as you see fit. And please be in touch with me for further conversation. I look forward to speaking with you.

Faithfully,
Cathy Quinn

Dear Children,

You may have heard your parents talking, or even talked with them, about what it means to make a pledge to St. Elizabeth's Church. A pledge is a commitment to support the life of this community. And it is much more than that. It is a formal way of saying thank you to God.

Everything we have comes from God. We sing about that all the time with Mrs. Hostetler in Children's Chapel when we sing songs like, "He's got the whole world in his hands" and "God made the earth and God made the sky, God made the birds that fly so high...thank you God, for everything..."

We say thank you to God in many ways. In fact, God wants us to say thank you to him all the time, in everything we do. So making a pledge and putting money in the offering envelopes are particular, special ways we do that.

When we make offerings to our church, we are saying to God, we know that everything we have comes from you, God, and our giving a little bit back is a way of saying thank you. "All things come of thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given thee." Making an offering of money is one way we show that we know that all we have is a gift. It is a way we treat what God has given us with the love and reverence that God's gift deserves.

When we give away some of our money in this way, by giving some of it back to God, we show that we aren't too clingy, that we aren't holding on to it too tightly. When we give out of gratefulness, instead of keeping it all for ourselves, our gift in response to all of God's gifts goes to something much bigger than ourselves. And our gift spreads God's love in ways we see and do not see. We come here to St. Elizabeth's to know God's love, to feel God's love, to share God's love, and to reconnect with God and the love that is stronger than anything else. And when we share of ourselves, by being here, by participating in the worship and fellowship of this community, by offering money to help other people as well as ourselves enjoy the blessing of being here, the offering we make has a ripple effect...

It's like dropping a pebble in a big lake. Even a very small pebble makes ripples, and those ripples reach the other side even if we can't see them when they get there.

So think of your pledge, no matter what the size, as more than simply an expression of belonging to a church—think of it as a practice of generosity that will ripple out and touch lives you may never actually see with your own eyes. By making a pledge, we share the love of God that we are so grateful to have received and to continue to receive.

When we make a pledge, we are committing to give with the same kind of love that has been abundantly showered upon us. And we give in trust that we will continue to share in that love, wherever we go, and in all the ways we participate in the life of this congregation. When I give, I give from a place of deep thanks—for St. Elizabeth's, of course, for all of you and all who work here and are part of why being here brings such joy to my heart—and I give because I know that I'm here, and I've enjoyed and grown in every community of faith in which I have ever participated. I give, knowing God loves me and all of us so completely, and I give in thanksgiving that God has given us all that we are and have and know.

You know that song we sing as we finish our chapel services on Sunday morning... “Love, love, love, that's what it's all about. ‘Cause God loves us, we love each other, mother, father, sister, brother, everybody sing and shout, ‘cause that's what it's all about. Joy, joy, joy, that's what it's all about. ‘Cause God loves us, we love each other, mother, father, sister, brother, everybody sing and shout, ‘cause that's what it's all about.”

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Loving and serving with all of you is a joy. Thanks be to God.

May God's love fill you and lift you up to be the people God made you to be.

Cathy Quinn
Clergy Associate for Family Ministries
cquinn@stesridgewood.org

Faithfully,
The Rev. Cathy Quinn
Clergy Associate for Family Ministries