



October 25, 2012

Dear People of St. John's Church:

Every year I am given the privilege of writing you at the start of our annual Every Member Canvass, and every year I struggle to find words that will have meaning for all you—rich and poor, younger and older, newborn Christians and lifelong Christians. Here is what I'd like to say—and what I hope you'll hear—this year.

First—and I will say this again and again until the day I die—Christian stewardship begins with the very basic belief that all that we have in this life does not belong to us, but rather is on loan to us for the duration of our earthly existence. Even someone who has accomplished great things through hard work and perseverance must thank God for the gift of life and the opportunity to succeed. That is why, when we get to heaven, I really do believe that the first words out of God's mouth will be something along these lines: “Doug, what did you do with what I gave you? Did you hoard it or squander it? Did you use it to build up yourself or to glorify me? Give me an accounting of how you used all that I loaned you.” If you had to face God today—right now as you read this letter—how would you answer him?

The second thing I'd like to say is this: although there is no such thing as a single Biblical “tithe” in the Old Testament, God knew what he was doing when he established ten percent in general as an appropriate return to him of what he has first entrusted to us. And so I try every year to give away ten percent of everything I earn. (I will not, by the way, play the pre-tax or after-tax game here; neither will I take deductions, make excuses, or in any way attempt to transfer what I know to be money at my personal disposal to some other account that I can somehow convince myself is not really “mine.”) Of that ten percent that I give away, more than half goes directly to St. John's Church, and the remainder goes to causes and institutions that are somehow engaged in work of which I know God would approve. I make that division because I am convinced that my parish church is the primary vehicle through which I should support the work of God on earth. Schools and other charities may be worthy, needy, and honorable, but none can claim the holiness of God's own Church. In the end, it will be Christ alone who will bring me to my eternal home.

Please join me in thanking God for the opportunity to know and love him here and now, and please join me also in returning to God a portion of your riches for the specific purpose of supporting God's work through St. John's Church. A 2013 pledge card and return envelope are enclosed with this letter. Please respond as soon as possible. And—just as a means to help you work toward tithing—fill in the accompanying worksheet to get an idea of how you can increase the level of your giving. Christian giving is a holy work. May God bless you in that work and in all the work you do in his Name.

Ever faithfully,

The Reverend Douglas E. Remer
Rector