



The Episcopal Parish
Founded in 1705

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November 2017

“Life is a God-given opportunity to become who we are, to affirm our own true spiritual nature ... but most of all to say ‘Yes’ to the One who calls us the Beloved.”

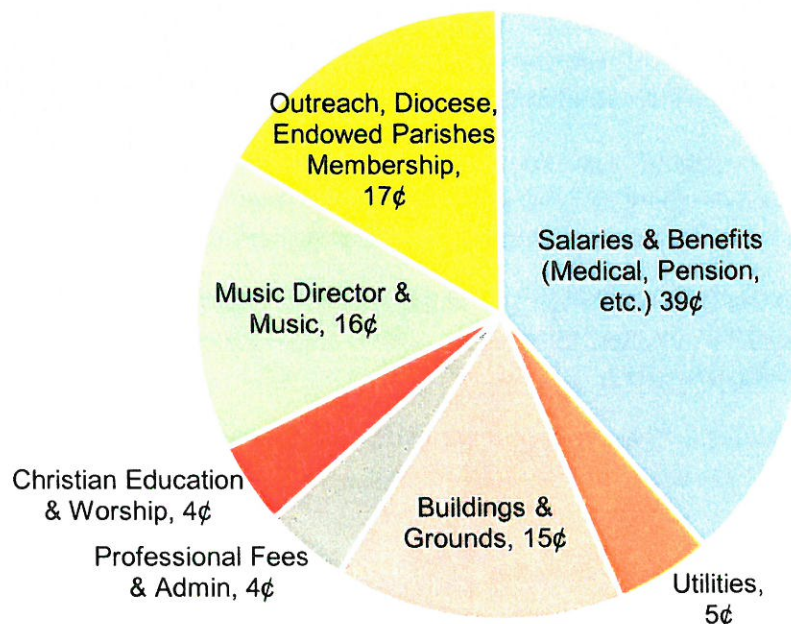
- Henri J.M. Nouwen

Dear Friends,

Life is a journey towards saying ‘Yes’ to the God who loves us. One of the clearest ways of saying Yes to God, is giving generously to the work of God’s Church.

It is right to ask, ‘What happens to my money when I pledge it to Christ Church?’ We are including a rough picture this year of how Christ Church spends a dollar. Each dollar is spent in ways which are aligned with our purpose as a congregation. That purpose is set out in our Mission Statement, describing Christ Church as ‘**A place of faith, hope, and uplifting worship, sharing Christ’s love and making a difference in the world.**’

How Christ Church spends \$1 2017 projected



We hope you see that the aspects of church which you love the most are part of our core purpose and spending. Within the slices of this pie are worship, outreach and ‘in-reach,’ great music, learning and fellowship, pastoral care, lively offerings for youth, and caring for a beautiful campus (which includes the necessary costs of operating, insuring, and maintaining our buildings and grounds). Your dollars also maintain Christ Church’s talented staff, who draw together the efforts of volunteers and look after so many ‘nuts and bolts’ on a daily basis, including details of administration and finance which call for professional expertise.

Only through the generosity of givers like us can the mission of our parish be sustained. One challenge is this: we are too reliant on benefactors who have long since died. **In 2017 only 32 cents out of every dollar of expenditure is paid for by current pledges and other gifts.**

Because Christ Church is blessed with an inheritance, it is too easy to imagine we can 'coast' when it comes to pledging, using endowment funds to cover the shortfall between our giving and the actual cost of what we do. Churches who make a habit of that are in danger of gradually spending down their endowment until it is gone. Then, all of a sudden, previously manageable expenses are crippling, fabric becomes shabby, programs and offerings get abandoned, and parish life drains away.

We can safeguard against that ever happening to Christ Church, by stepping up and fully doing our part, as previous givers have done before us.

Another challenge is the shape and proportions of our pledging: we are perilously reliant on a few top-level givers. **An incredibly high percentage of our 2017 pledge total (34.8%) came from only three households:** that is, \$85,000 out of a total of \$244,514.

Not everyone is equally able to give. Some of us may already be at our upper limit – those on a low fixed pension for instance, those who are out of work, or parents who are struggling to put children through college. Where people are doing all they can, or are going through a time of financial distress, there should never be any pressure from their church (of all places).

But think what might happen ... if those of us who are *not* in such a tight place were all to take a fresh look at what we pledge this year, and raise the bar. By generously supporting the mission of Christ Church today, we not only help it flourish now, we also strengthen it for the future, passing our blessings forward.

Please pray and think deeply about what 'standard of giving' reflects your standard of living. For many, that means giving 10 percent (the Biblical tithe) of their income. For others, tithing is a goal they are journeying towards, increasing their pledge by two or three percent each year.

We might also ask: How does our pledge stack up against our vacation budget? How does it compare with what we spend on luxuries like restaurants and other entertainments? For those fortunate enough to belong to a club, how does our pledge compare with the annual membership dues?

If the answer to such questions is 'Not very well,' it's time for new thinking and a fresh commitment. Generosity always brings its share of joy and satisfaction. 'The one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully ... for God loves a cheerful giver.' (2 Cor. 9:6-7)

November 12 is Stewardship Sunday. The official Stewardship season will run until December 3. Let's be cheerful givers, and break new ground with our 2018 pledging campaign!



Michael Piret, Rector



Peter Colgrove



Stephanie Augustine



Elisabeth Mooney