

Faith Practices



“Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” - 2 Corinthians 9:7.

The maturing disciple knows that everything belongs to God; we are merely caretakers and managers. In response to God’s touch in our lives, we offer ourselves joyfully to others: our time, our talent and our financial treasures. God has blessed us abundantly, providing us “with food and clothing, home and family, daily work, and all I need from day to day” (Luther’s Small Catechism). In and through our baptism we receive and discover our spiritual gifts.

The growing disciple finds ways to unpack and use those gifts for the sake of Jesus, the church and the world. Knowing God has entrusted us with abilities and goods we ask, “How can we use these resources to love God?” Thus we do not waste time striving to be rich in things, but to be rich in love. The maturing disciple is also maturing in financial stewardship, understands the biblical concept of the tithe and is growing in sacrificial and joyful giving toward and beyond a ten percent response in all areas of life.

Part of the disciples job description is to give freely.

“The gifts of God for the people of God,” the pastor announces, inviting parishioners to the Lord’s Supper. The gift of the body and blood Christ keeps on giving; we give because of what we have been given. Instructing the Corinthians how they are to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, the Apostle Paul prefaced his remarks with this same paradigm for giving.

“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you....” (1 Corinthians 11:26). The implication should have been clear to them: “Give what you have so abundantly received.” The Words of Institution followed immediately upon this preface.

Luther made a similar connection. He faced his own dilemma of giving. In the medieval world, priests, nuns, and religious orders played a key role in relief of the poor. Priests dispensed alms to the poor; tables outside the cathedrals collected food and other goods for them; masses brought in money for them. Taking apart this elaborate welfare system raised the urgent question of relief of the poor. Luther brought 1 Corinthians 11 to his defense. He commended to his own congregations the ancient practice of gathering food and material goods in the church and distributing them among the poor. Then, he noted, the sacrament was “properly used” and people “understood this fellowship...well.”

Luther took an additional step in his own version of welfare reform and created a new priesthood which would now be responsible for relief to the poor: “the priesthood of all believers.” Convinced that there ought to be no beggars in Christendom, he counseled every village to become acquainted with the poor in its midst. After all, this is what the priest would have done. If we would include ourselves in the “priesthood of all believers,” we must accept the duties and responsibilities of that calling.

Empowered by the Body of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, we move into the world in witness and service, giving what has first been given us. Think of the Offertory Prayer: “We offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us — our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love.” The prayer contains both the form of our giving (giving money, volunteering our time, sharing our talents) and the attitude which accompanies it (joy and thanksgiving). The faith practice of giving marks the Christian life of discipleship for Christians who are also priests.

“God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.”

– 2 Corinthians 9:8.



Dollar or cent signs are every-where. We see them in advertisements, in store windows and outside gas stations. Money is a pretty big deal to us. It is one of many of life's necessities. Did you know that, aside from the many New Testament references to Kingdom of God, the Bible spends more time talking about money related issues than any other subject?

Look at a dollar bill and find the phrase "In God We Trust." The words remind us that every time we use money to buy or to invest we affirm our trust in God.

WE ARE BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

Share the words to a prayer we often use in worship and discuss its meaning.

Dear Lord, We offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us, our selves, our time and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Look over these ideas for nurturing a generous heart.

Chose one, two or more.

Feel free to adapt them to fit your situation.

- Identify your gifts. Plan ways to use them to help others. Then help your loved ones do the same.
- Scan your own cupboards for canned and dry goods you can share with a local food pantry.

6% of the world uses over 40% of the world's resources and creates over 70% of it's waste.

- Help children identify clothes they've outgrown and invite them to share them with younger children in need. As a family, deliver your contributions to a local clothes distribution center.
- Add up the wealth you have accumulated. Is it more than enough, just enough, or not enough?

Based on your response, decide what you can do to help

others in your local and global community who have “not enough.”

*There is enough in this world for everyone's need,
but not for anyone's greed. — Mahatma Gandhi*

- Make a contribution to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal or Disaster Relief.
- Model regular giving to your church. Help your children fill their church school offering envelopes when you fill yours. Explain to them why people give.
- Set aside funds for charitable gifts and church offerings off the top of your monthly net income. Giving first inspires a different feeling than waiting to see if there is anything left over.

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

— Luke 12:34

- Use Matthew 6:24-34 for a family devotion. Jesus encourages us to trust God to take care of our needs — just as God cares for the trees, flowers and animals in creation.
- Let your children participate as you do the monthly bills. Older children might organize the checks by number before filing them. Seek to help them nurture a sense of financial responsibility and accountability.

In God we trust.

- When you are involved in outdoor activities, bring along a bag or two to pick up the trash in the area.
- Plant saplings and seedlings in the spring to increase the beauty of the earth and to replenish the soil and the air.
- On a birthday or baptism day, join in prayers thanking God for the gifts that person brings to the family.
- Gift wrap “words” or visual symbols that represent the gifts, talents and abilities that God has given the birthday person. Present this package along with the other gifts you give.