

transforming generosity

Year-Round Stewardship

Season of Pentecost

BY THE REV. CHRIS HARRIS



Most of us are familiar with the classic “stewardship trinity” of time, talent and treasure. In the fall, nearly all of us focus treasure through our annual pledge campaigns. But do we place an equal emphasis on stewardship of our spiritual gifts? If you don’t, I would like to suggest that the season after Pentecost is a

perfect opportunity to focus on “time and talent.”

Some churches conduct a formal “Time and Talent Campaign,” complete with bulletin inserts, sermons and testimonials from parishioners about how they use their gifts. The campaign ends with a “Celebration Sunday” when parishioners offer their gifts and abilities to God in the year to come. Churches can use the information to create a database of the talents of their members, so that, for example, if there is a need for sprucing up the church grounds, the church has a list of those who love gardening. Stewardship committees also can introduce parishioners not currently serving to ministries that might be a good fit for their talents.

A note of caution: Do not limit your campaigns to filling “church jobs.” In the fall, do we not remind people that financial stewardship is really about adopting a spiritual practice of generosity, which in turns deepens our relationship with God? Reinforce that theology in your time and talent campaigns by providing ways for people to offer their gifts in the local community or world. This might require scouting ahead to develop partnerships or volunteer opportunities with homeless service centers and the like, but it’s vitally important.

Pentecost reminds us that God has entrusted us with a variety of gifts, talents, skills, passions, even our life experiences and more. It is the work of the church to discover them, tease them out and then find ways for us to offer them to God and build the Body of Christ.

The Rev. Chris Harris Assistant Rector for Congregational Development at St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church in Poway, California, and a member of the TENS Board of Directors. For more information or help incorporating time and talent into your year-round stewardship ministry, contact him at charris@stbartschurch.org.

For reflection ...

- ❖ Have you heard people complain, “All the church talks about is money?” How might an equally robust time and talent campaign change that opinion?
- ❖ Does your church talk about ministry from the perspective of filling the needs of the church, or does it focus first on getting to know its parishioners and their gifts? What are the messages that each approach sends about how we understand the Body of Christ?
- ❖ Does your church depend on a small but dedicated group of people, serving in multiple ministries? Do people suffer from burnout? How might a time and talent campaign help to change that culture?