

# OFFERTORY MOMENTS 2011

## **JANUARY 5**

When you opened your Christmas presents, how did you feel? Did you like them, each and every one? Were there a few that you had to “fib” about when you thanked the giver? Were there some you wanted to take back and exchange for something else? Were there some that didn’t fit? I hope not, but the probability is that SOME of what you received was not as appreciated as OTHER gifts. When God receives the gifts we give this morning, how will God feel? Will God respond with “That was WONDERFUL! You really shouldn’t have! Your generosity pleases me! Thank you for your generous gift!! We know that God responds in love, no matter what we give, but now is our chance to please God with our generosity. Let us give God’s Tithes, and our offerings.

## **JANUARY 12**

Jesus never condemned money but he did condemn stinginess. It was the Apostle Paul who wrote that “The **LOVE** of Money is the ROOT of all evil.” But Jesus knew that when money comes between us and God, the money is closer to God than we are. God calls us to trust God enough to put at least 10 % of our money into God’s care. When we do, God takes care of us so that we can live well on the other 90%. Let’s give God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **JANUARY 19**

Our gifts to God aren’t “taxes.” Neither are they “membership dues.” They aren’t even a way to guarantee our blessedness or our salvation. Our giving is our grateful response to God for God’s love, mercy and grace, already given to us. We don’t deserve God’s love, but God loves us anyway. Let’s respond by giving God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **JANUARY 26**

In his parables, Jesus often highlighted the extravagance of God. The shepherd, off looking for that one sheep and leaving the 99 alone. The sower who went out throwing all those seeds on the hard ground, into the thorns...just throwing seeds everywhere. That manager who risked so much to the three servants in the parable of the talents. God’s love and grace toward us is SO EXTRAVAGANT and GENEROUS! Our response should likewise be extravagant and generous as we exercise our discipleship by our giving. Let us give God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **FEBRUARY 2**

Paul says to Timothy in I Tim. 6:17; “Tell those rich in this world’s wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage – to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they’ll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life.” Hearing Paul’s words, let us gain life that is truly life, though our extravagant and generous giving to God’s work. Let us now present God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **FEBRUARY 9**

Giving generously of our money is just as important as learning to pray. In fact, the giving of our money IS prayer. That is why the high point of every worship service is not the sermon, not the anthem, not the hymns nor the stirring organ pieces. The high point of worship is the offering, for this is the place where we give to God what belongs already to God...where we give generously and cheerfully in an act of prayerful worship. The offering is the place where we demonstrate that our purse, our pocketbook, our wallet and our checkbook have been converted, along with our mind and heart. Let us now give God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **FEBRUARY 16**

When we celebrate the Baptism of a new Christian or a tiny baby, we, as a church, join in promising to find the joy of living in giving support and love to this new person in faith. Giving involves deeper meaning to our lives than receiving, though we have received much. We can all think of ways this has been true in our own lives. As Followers of Jesus, we give out of the love we have received from Christ, because we NEED to give in order to fully live. As we give to others, as we give back to God, we live more fully. Let us now give God's tithe, and our offering.

## **FEBRUARY 23**

In Eugene Peterson's version of the scripture, The Message, we find this reading in Matthew 6, (today's lectionary lesson.) "You can't worship two Gods at once. Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can't worship God and money both." I doubt that any of us could be accurately accused of LOVING money. But we certainly like having it and spending it. Someone has said that our checkbook says more about our values than any other indicator. When one-tenth of our spending goes to God, we can feel we are at least on the way to loving God more than money. Let us give generously as we present God's tithe and our offerings.

## **MARCH 2**

This next Wednesday will be Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, which is the season for us to prepare for the time of the suffering and death of Jesus. Traditionally, Lent is a time of sacrifice and self-denial. This year, I want to offer you a challenge. Can you, for the six weeks of Lent, give a full tithe of your income to the church? If you are giving a tithe now, can you give a few percentage points more? If you take this challenge for Lent, can you keep it up? Giving is not about our church's need for money. It is about our spiritual growth and development. This Lent, I encourage you to begin the practice of tithing. If you are worse off by Easter because of your giving, then you can adjust. Let us now give generously, God's tithe and our offering.

## **MARCH 9**

Someone said, a long time ago, that Christianity is like the educational process. It doesn't matter what grade we are in, as long as we are making progress toward the next step and the next level of learning. Our giving to the Church of Jesus Christ is the same way. At whatever level we are, we must be moving forward to reach the next level. Someone else has said that our level of sacrifice in our giving is a direct reflection of our spiritual growth. Let us grow in the knowledge and love of God, and in our giving as a reflection of that love, as we now give God's tithe and our offerings.

## **MARCH 16**

The scripture tells us in Luke 9 that "Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem." That means, he was determined to go through with whatever was ahead, even if it meant that he would die. Jesus was DETERMINED! And his reason was his love for you and me. He made up his mind. That is what WE must do. We must make up our minds. One thing we know we can do for the love of Jesus and to Honor God, is to give, generously and sacrificially. We can only do this if we are DETERMINED to do it. So, let us make up OUR minds to follow the one who died for us. Let us give God's tithe and our offerings.

## **MARCH 23**

Did you know that not everyone liked Jesus? Not everyone wanted to follow him. I'm not just talking about the Scribes and Pharisees and the Romans. There were citizens like you and me that didn't like Jesus, and rejected them. There is a verse in John 6:66 that says, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."

In Eugene Peterson's version, "The Message," Jesus asks the twelve if they also wanted to leave. Peter spoke up and said, "Master, we've already committed ourselves, confident that you are the Holy One of God!" Some of what Jesus said was difficult, like his requirement of sacrifice. Let us be with Peter and the Twelve, as we are committed to sacrifice, as we now give God's tithe and our offerings.

### **MARCH 30**

The word, "GRACE" comes from a Greek word, "Charis." It forms the root of our words, "Charismatic," "character," and "charity." It literally means, "GIFT." It specifically relates to God's gift to you and me of love, salvation and eternal life. Because grace is a "gift," it is free. It is without condition, and if comes to use even though we don't deserve it. How do we respond to a gift? Don't we want to give in return? When we realize God's incredible and eternal gift, how can we respond? There are many ways, and ONE is by giving sacrificially and generously to God. Let us now respond to God's gift by giving God's tithe and our offering.

### **APRIL 6**

There are a lot of generous people who give because they have felt blessed by God. I have NEVER heard one of these say, "I wish I had not been generous." I have never met a tither who regretted giving the tithe. The Christian motive for giving generously is Thanksgiving! God has given us all we have. God has given Jesus. God has given us life. What more can God give? We do not give in ORDER to receive. We are ALREADY recipients of God's gracious goodness. We give in order to say, "Thank you, Lord." Let us give God's tithes and our offerings.

### **APRIL 13**

Today is Palm Sunday. We celebrate the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. From this day of Holy Week, Jesus knew there would be NO TURNING BACK! He was totally committed to the outcome, no matter what! And he knew that things could turn bad. Are we totally committed? Can we take the risks of sacrificial giving? Can we give our all to the Kingdom of God? Let us begin with our gifts, as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

### **APRIL 20**

Easter Sunday is the highest moment of celebration of the Christian Faith! Though Jesus died on Good Friday, and the world looked very dark, there was yet to be Sunday Morning! Christ Arose! We are assured that the presence of the Holy Spirit always surrounds us. It is likely that today, there will be more people in church than on any other day of the year! So, in celebration, and in gratitude, let us express our thanksgiving, our appreciation and our commitment. Let us give God's tithes and our offerings.

### **APRIL 27**

Today, the Sunday after Easter is sometimes called "Low Sunday." That is because this is one of the two or three least attended Sundays in the church year. It seems incredible that after celebrating Easter that so many would stay away the very next Sunday. BUT....YOU are here! You have chosen to worship on this day. Thanks be to God! In true thanksgiving for the constant love of God, let us celebrate with our generosity, as we give God's tithe and our offerings.

### **MAY 4**

Proverbs 23:25 says, "May she who gave you birth, be happy." Today, on Mother's Day, we honor either our mother's memory, or our mother's life among us. We all either HAVE a mother or HAVE HAD a mother. One of the things we always want, is to make our parents proud by living lives that would give them happiness. Our commitment to our Heavenly Parent, God, is a similar longing. We want to please our Heavenly Father through our devotion, our obedience and our generosity to God's work. Let us be generous to God as we give God's tithe and our offering.

## **MAY 11**

Is there anyone here who WOULD NOT want to be known as a GENEROUS person? We don't see many folks who want to be known as a STINGY person, do we? In II Cor. 8, the Apostle Paul writes about the Christians in Macedonia, who, though they were desperately poor, were incredibly happy, and gave an outpouring of pure and generous gifts. He says they gave whatever they could, far more than they could afford, and they begged for the privilege of helping out in the relief of poor Christians. AND THEY WERE INCREDIBLY HAPPY! The plate we pass for the offering is GOD'S plate....God's offering. Let's find that incredible happiness by giving generously by God's tithe, and our offerings.

## **MAY 18**

One of the holiest moments in worship is the giving of our gifts during the offering. But, giving our money is NOT ABOUT MONEY! That may be shocking to you, but our generosity in giving to God is not about money. IT IS ABOUT OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND OUR DISCIPLESHIP TO JESUS CHRIST. Generosity is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, it is a MEANS OF GRACE, and, it is a SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE. Our generous giving to God's work through the church is a matter of reaching out to the world, and expressing our thanksgiving for God's GRACE. Let us now give God's tithe, and our offerings.

## **MAY 25**

In I Timothy 6, The Apostle Paul tells us "...to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous." He says that if we do that, we'll build a treasury that will last, gaining LIFE THAT IS TRULY LIFE! When we wonder how we can do God's will, we need only to look at this teaching. This is one thing we can actually do, to be aligned with God's will..."do good, be rich in helping others and BE EXTRAVAGANTLY GENEROUS." As a result, Paul says, "we will have LIFE THAT IS TRULY LIFE!" By our generous gifts to God's work through God's church, let us find life that is truly life, as we give God's tithe, and our offering.

## **JUNE 1**

A little girl in a Holston Conference church saved her money from babysitting, birthdays and Christmas gifts for three years. Then, she gave the entire \$10 to her church to go toward our ministry in Sudan. The pastor asked her to tell her story of saving the money. Then, he said, "No one in this church will give more than this child today." The church received a record offering that Sunday. Can we give as much? The Apostle Paul says that God does not ask us to give from what we DO NOT have, but from what we HAVE! Let us count our blessings and give thanks to our most Generous God, as we generously give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **JUNE 8**

In his book, HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH, Arthur Simon says "The problem is not that we've tried faith and found it wanting, but that we have tried mammon (or materialism) and found it addictive, and as a result find following Christ inconvenient. We are human beings, not human "havings." God loves for who we are, not what we have."

God, in love, has given us every good gift. We have the opportunity to give back to God what is already God's. May we experience freedom from our addictions to material things by giving generously to God through the church. Let us now give God's tithe and our offerings.

## **June 15**

**DIDN'T RUN - MOVED TO AUGUST 24**

## **JUNE 22**

As we come to the moment of the offertory, we want to consider why we give our money and talk about money in the church. The reason is that MONEY IS NOT ABOUT MONEY! Money is NOT about budgets and bills.

MONEY and our generosity have everything to do with our personal spiritual growth. Money has everything to do with our spiritual discipline and our Discipleship to Jesus Christ. Our giving and our generosity grow as our faith and commitment grows. The two work together and never separately.

MONEY is about making Disciples of Jesus Christ and transforming lives, and Generosity is one of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus spoke MORE about MONEY than ANY other subject except the Kingdom of God. Let's remove money from the dollars and cents of it, and make it a spiritual matter, as we now give God's Tithes, and our offerings.

## **JUNE 29**

This week we celebrate our country's birth and our continuing freedom. We give thanks for all those who have sacrificed so much on our behalf. We also remember those who have given what Abraham Lincoln called "the last full measure of devotion," and we remember and honor Jesus, who gave his life for us. We are indeed, a blessed people. In Luke 12:48, Jesus said, "To whom much is given, of him will much be required." Since we are "blessed to BE a blessing," It is our choice as to how we will share our blessings. We now have the opportunity to bless others and to help extend God's Kingdom by the presentation of our grateful gifts to God as we give God's tithes, and our offerings.

## **JULY 6**

There is a story of a church that put an ad in the newspaper saying, "Leave your wallet at home. Plenty of churches just want your money. Come worship with us. We won't ask you to give." A certain pastor read that ad, and said to her congregation, "I don't want to be a part of a church like that. I WANT to give!" She said, "Giving brings joy, because, in sharing to make a difference for others, we participate in that for which we are created." Her sermon stirred a new sense of generosity in her congregation. It matters what we give, because giving is deeply and firmly connected to our spiritual development. Let's give generously as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **JULY 13**

Prominent author Herb Miller, a United Church of Christ pastor says, "The question in Jesus' teaching about financial security is one that all of us ask every day of our lives." That question is, "Will I try to achieve financial security through money, or through prayer?" Herb Miller suggests that we tend to resist what Jesus implied was the right choice...that is, through prayer. Do you pray? Do you ever pray about money? Do you dare to ask God to help you be more generous for God's work? What percentage of our income do we believe God is calling us to give to God's church? Let's pray about that. Let us now give generously as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **JULY 20**

The Apostle Paul writes to his protégé, Timothy, in "THE MESSAGE" version of the New Testament, "A devout life does bring wealth, but it's the rich simplicity of being yourself before God. Since we entered the world penniless and will leave it penniless, if we have bread on the table and shoes on our feet, that's enough." Then Paul tells Timothy, "Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble....but you, Timothy, man of God: Run for your life from all this. Pursue a righteous life—a life of wonder, faith, love, steadiness, courtesy. Run fast in the faith!" That is good counsel for all of us. How do we do it? ONE of the ways is through our generosity to God's work through the church. Let's run fast in the faith, as we give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **JULY 27**

A man who was unemployed struggled to keep his dignity and pay the family obligations. One night his ten-year old daughter brought him a little purse and placed it in his hands, saying, "I've been saving this and I want to help. And don't try to give it back!!!" In the purse was \$3.87, but it was much more. It was all the daughter had. It was one of the greatest gifts the family had ever received. When we give, it is not so much the SIZE of the gift that is most important. It is the SACRIFICE the gift represents. When we give to God, the level of sacrifice and generosity is more important than the SIZE of the gift. But the gift changes lives for the Glory of God. Let us give sacrificially as we give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **AUGUST 3**

Do you remember the wedding of England's Prince William and Kate Middleton last spring? Listen to the prayer that they asked to be a part of their wedding, which was watched worldwide by a television audience of over three billion people.

"In the busyness of each day keep our eyes fixed on what is real and important in life and help us to be generous with our time and love and energy. Help us serve and comfort those who suffer. We ask this in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen."

Could we pray that prayer in our daily life? Can we ask God to help us be generous with time, love and energy, so we can serve and comfort those who suffer?

One way to be generous is with our gifts to God's work. Let's now be generous as we give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **AUGUST 10**

Charles Allen was one of the great preachers of Methodism in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He once said to his congregation, "When we sing *Take My Life And Let It Be*," some of us may want to be careful about singing the second stanza of that hymn, especially the words, "Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold." That may sound a little harsh, but it illustrates how easy it is for us to sing and state the words of hymns and creeds and scripture, but to have no sense of the meaning of the words. Jesus admonishes us to give generously, cheerfully and sacrificially. Let's do that now as we give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **AUGUST 17**

Albert Schweitzer, one of the 20th Centuries greatest humanitarians, once said, "Life becomes harder for us when we live for others, but it also becomes richer and happier." Schweitzer left a world-class career as a musician and scholar to spend most of his adult life as a medical missionary in Africa. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his life-saving work. His words are still true. It may be harder for us to live for others, but life becomes richer and happier. Let's live the rich and happy life by living and giving for others, as we give God's tithes, and our offerings.

## **AUGUST 24**

There is a story about the driver of an armored truck who drove his truck around a corner and mistakenly joined a funeral procession. A man on the street, watching the procession go by, and seeing the armored truck right in the middle exclaimed, "Look at that! I guess you can take it with you!" It turns out he was wrong, but in another way he was right. Jesus teaches that our gifts to others have eternal value, and they last eternally as our treasure in Heaven.

What we give for the making of Christian Disciples has eternal consequences. That's why we take this offering; to make Disciples for Jesus Christ. Let us give generously as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

## **AUGUST 31**

Do you remember the whimsical song lyrics, “School days, school days, good old golden rule days?” It was written way back in 1907. As school gets back into full swing, we remember such lyrics, and we are struck by the phrase “golden rule days.” It comes straight from the Bible. There are dozens, maybe hundreds of phrases in our daily conversations that come from the Bible. “The letter of the law.” “See eye to eye.” “By the skin of your teeth.” “The handwriting on the wall.” “A sign of the times.” “A drop in the bucket.” And the list goes on and on. How interesting that the Bible has such broad influence in our everyday language, but for many, has little influence in behavior. One phrase we ought to be aware of and live into is “God loves a cheerful giver.” Lynn Payne of a firm called Generous Giving, says, “My heart wants to be more generous.” By giving cheerfully and generously, we can add to our personal happiness, and make God glad. Let’s now be generous and cheerful as we give God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **SEPTEMBER 7, 2011**

Almost everyone in this room will remember precisely what they were doing ten years ago this morning. We refer to it as “nine-eleven.” Our country was attacked by terrorism in New York and Washington, DC. Many innocent people lost their lives, and many more...firemen, police officers and others, GAVE their lives in an effort to save others. Sacrifices were made on behalf of people in need.

Jesus said, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for friends.” As those who laid down their lives on “nine-eleven,” Jesus also laid down his life for us. So many sacrifices have been made to allow us to be here, to serve God’s Kingdom in this place, and to reach out to God’s children across the world. What we can do, is to give of our resources...and give generously, so that the sacrifices made in our behalf can be shared with others. Let us now give God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **SEPTEMBER 14**

St. Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, says, “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” Notice two things about this verse. First, it does NOT say, that “money” is the root of evil. It says “The LOVE of money is **A** ROOT of ALL KINDS of evil.” Money is not evil, but the LOVE of money, at its ROOT...or FOUNDATION is what leads to evil acts. And it is not THE root of evil, but ONE of the roots. This clarification of a widely misquoted text helps us to see what Jesus consistently taught... that when we allow anything...including money...especially money, to get between us and God, we are losing our way. To be sure we don’t lose our way, we commit the first fruits...and the tithe, to God, and generously give to the work of God’s Kingdom. Let’s now give God’s tithes and our offerings.

## **SEPTEMBER 21**

Do you know what the Holy Trinity is? There are actually two. The first is the holy trinity of “ME, MYSELF, AND I.” No one is more important to us as ourselves. But the REAL Holy Trinity is God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit of God. When we put the REAL Holy Trinity first instead of the me, myself and I trinity, we come a little closer to the richness of life God intends for us. We can begin to realize this and get this in perspective when we practice the spiritual discipline of tithing, and giving generously beyond the tithe. Let us generously give tithes and offerings to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

## **SEPTEMBER 28**

In Ecclesiastes 5:10, the writer tells us, (in Eugene Peterson’s version,) “The one who loves money is never satisfied with money...” Some pollsters tell us that one of the consistent concerns of most people is whether they have enough money. Yet, it is pretty clear that no matter how much money we may have, it never seems enough. The prophet Malachi says that when we bring the full tithe into God’s storehouse, God will “open up heaven itself to you and pour out blessings beyond your wildest dreams.” To trust God in faith is to give the full tithe and be generous and sacrificial to God. God’s

blessings may not always be in riches of money, but richness in life's purpose and meaning in our lives. Let's give generously of God's tithes and our offerings.

### **OCTOBER 5**

Budgets and bills and resources are often the focal points when we consider the church's work. But the real concern is not about the budget and the lack of resources, but the generosity and the abundance of God. Our gifts to God have little to do with budgets and bills, but have everything to do with our spiritual focus, our spiritual maturity and our spiritual discipline of giving. Budgets and bills will take care of themselves if we give from our need to be generous, as God has been generous to us. Let's now give God's tithes and our offerings.

### **OCTOBER 12**

*More than a century ago, a college teacher named Katherine Lee Bates wrote a poem, reflecting the transformational experience of a trip through Chicago, across Kansas and into the Rocky Mountains. We know the poem as the stanzas of "America The Beautiful."*

*As we consider our offering, what does "America the Beautiful" have to say on that subject? The answer lies at least in part at the end of the third stanza:*

*America! America!  
May God thy gold refine  
Till all success be nobleness  
And every gain divine!*

*When our gold or our money is "refined" by God, it is transformed into something more than a way to meet expenses. It becomes a "holy tool" for God's work. When we ask God to take our silver and gold and refine it for God's purposes, we are truly living as Christian Disciples, reflecting the abundant generosity of God, the source of all that we have and all that we are.*

*We can now reflect God's Grace and generosity as we present God's tithes and our offerings.*

### **OCTOBER 19**

Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church and author of *The Purpose Driven Life* and *The Purpose Driven Church*, as well as other books, has said, "I would tell you from my own personal experience, I have grown more in my faith, I have grown closer to Jesus Christ and my heart has been changed more by learning to give by faith than any other discipline in my life."

What does God desire from us in our giving? We know about the tithe...ten percent of our income. Rick Warren suggests we learn to give by faith, believing that God will take care of our needs when we give sacrificially and generously. Our gifts make a difference in the world, and our giving makes a difference in our spiritual journey. Let's give by faith as we present God's tithes and our offerings.

### **OCTOBER 26**

A layman once stuck his head in the pastor's office and said, "I want to tell you something. I'm not yet a tither, but I'm getting close!" The pastor said, "Hallelujah! That's all I can ask....that you are growing in your love for God and love for your church, and showing it by your growth in generosity." Has our faith grown? Is it growing? Common wisdom tells us that if we are not growing, we are diminishing. As we grow in faith, are we growing in the spiritual discipline of giving? What percentage of your annual income is God calling you to give? Is it three, or five, or is it ten percent? I hope you'll pray about that, and come to a Biblical understanding, and then give that as a sign of your spiritual development.



## **NOVEMBER 2**

Do you remember the radio commentator, Paul Harvey? He once told a story about a woman who called the Butterball Turkey Company and asked if a 23 year-old turkey she had found in her freezer was any good. The answer was that if the turkey had been kept frozen at 0 degrees it would be safe to eat, but would have very little flavor or nutrition. She said, "That's what I thought. I'll just give it to the church."

When we need a teacher or coach for our children, when we need a doctor for a serious medical problem, when we need a lawyer for a legal issue, do we seek out the BEST, or the cheapest? When we give to God, who has given us life, do we seek to give generously and sacrificially, or just enough to get by?

The answer to that question has everything to do with our spiritual journey and faithfulness. Let us now give generously and faithfully to God by God's tithes and our offerings.

## **NOVEMBER 9**

November is in full swing. Thanksgiving is not far away. THANKS GIVING is a two word phrase, meaning that in our thankfulness, we GIVE GENEROUSLY! From the days of the early pilgrims and down through the years of our country's history, we have received the generosity of others, and have been given a wonderful heritage. When we give God's tithes and our offerings, we contribute to the work of God's Kingdom, and participate in God's generosity.

As we remember all for which we have to be thankful, let us give generously as we give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **NOVEMBER 16**

This week, we will enjoy one of our favorite holidays...Thanksgiving. Most of us will eat too much, watch too much football, and possibly overdose on family gatherings. Thanksgiving reminds us that we are abundantly blessed. Jesus told a parable about a man who was abundantly blessed and built bigger barns so he could keep his blessings for himself. Jesus disapproved of that man's selfish decisions. We are reminded by Thanksgiving that we are "Blessed to BE a blessing. We are called to share God's abundant blessings by giving of what we have for the benefit of all God's children. Let's really celebrate Thanksgiving by giving thankfully, as we give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **NOVEMBER 23**

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, the season of expectation, leading to the realization of God's promise in the birth of Jesus. It may be difficult to focus on the faithfulness of God in these weeks of parties, shopping and traveling. It is hard to keep our priorities straight with so much on our minds. But that is just it, isn't it? Our priority is God's love, and God's greatest gift to us. Let us prioritize our giving by being generous with the presentation of God's tithes and our offerings.

## **NOVEMBER 30**

As some people would say about this month, "Tis the Season!" In John's Gospel, the writer speaks of "THE WORD" who was in the beginning with God. He says that in this word was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

We love the lights of this season, on trees, on lampposts, around doorframes. This light that comes into the world is Jesus, the Christ. Jesus tells us to be the light to the world. How do we do that? We do it by our witness, our compassion and our generosity. We can let our light shine by celebrating the presence of Jesus, and giving generously to the work of God's church around the world.

Let us shine our light as we give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **DECEMBER 7**

We all know the story so well! Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in a stable. Shepherds heard the angels singing of Glory to God. The angels told the shepherds that a savior has been born, who is the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. There was joy and excitement. God has become flesh and blood, and as Eugene Peterson puts it, has moved into the neighborhood. God's extravagant gift is to become like us, and give us everything he has...everything we need.

How can we respond? We can give to God what we have, and give to God's church, the body of Christ, our generous tithes and offerings. In this season of giving, let us give to God, who makes all things possible, as we now present our tithes and offerings.

## **DECEMBER 14**

It is ONLY a week until Christmas. Can you believe it? Are you ready? Is your shopping all done? And...is your heart ready? Are you ready, once again, to receive the spirit of Christ into your life? Are you ready to be blessed by the opportunity to give generously and sacrificially to help others and change lives? God has Blessed us to BE a blessing to others. Let your generosity reach into your heart and out of your life, as we give God's tithes and our offerings.

## **December 21**

Did you get what you wanted for Christmas? Did you get lots of "things?" Was your Christmas more fulfilling because of what you received...or because of what you gave? Many generous people report that the joy of giving exceeds anything we receive. Generosity is an attribute of Spiritual Maturity. In the church, we seek to change and transform lives after the example of Jesus Christ. Let's let joy and happiness and spiritual maturity into our lives as we reach out to others through the giving of God's tithes and our offerings.

## **DECEMBER 28**

New Year's Day brings the hope of new things. God makes all things new. Today is the first day of a year, and the first day of many opportunities to serve God and the Church of Christ. Our mission is to Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the World. That is a pretty big task. But we don't do it by ourselves. God is with us! We can participate in the Kingdom of God by our generous and sacrificial giving to God's work and will. Let us now give as generously as God has given as we present God's tithes and our offerings.