

HOPE STARTS HERE!

Stewardship 2020/2021

Giving Sunday is November 15, 2020

www.myesperanza.org



Hope Starts Here! By Tom & Susan Vega

We have been asked to share our story as part of the 2020 Stewardship program. How can we share with you the impact Esperanza has in a meaningful way? How do you "stewardship" to a congregation when you are the "new kids" in school?

We hail from suburban Chicago, raised two children, who now have families of their own in Wisconsin and Iowa. We were active members in two ELCA churches for over forty years before moving to Arizona, serving in committees, councils, choir and more. As we grew in our Lutheran faith, we gave our time, talent and treasure and instilled this same belief in our children.

Retirement brought new challenges and decisions, such as moving. We lived and worked in the same community since being married. How on earth can we move from our comfort zone and leave our church family and friends to live in a new state and new neighborhood? After much prayer and discussion, we chose to downsize, sell our home and pack our possessions in a Conestoga Wagon (... a PODS container) and came to Ahwatukee. As we look back, we saw that our faith helped to make the decision easier. In facing difficult decisions in our lives, our church community was there to help and support us. This support helped to show us how stewardship - the giving of yourself for others, made a difference in our lives.

Recently, Pastor Paul used a scene from the Indiana Jones movie *The Last Crusade* to emphasize a point in his sermon. If you recall, as the character is searching for the Holy Grail, he selects the wrong cup. The Crusader Knight states, "he chose...poorly".

In an earlier scene, Indiana Jones must cross a deep chasm with no indication of a bridge. He must remind himself to have "faith" in making a decision. He steps off the cliff, not knowing the outcome, and discovers a hidden bridge which allows him to cross safely.

In we moving to Arizona, we were confident in our faith and stepped off a cliff into the unknown. We did not fall into the chasm and our faith supported us. We have found in Esperanza our "hidden bridge" which allowed us to cross confidently to a new community.

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Esperanza has provided the means to express our stewardship in different ways. Whether it is participating in the Thursday Matters discussion group, supporting the Navajo Nation, Habitat for Humanity, Welcoming and Inviting Team and Call Committee are all part of our stewardship life.

This year has brought turmoil and uncertainty to all of us. We see the entire Esperanza faith community has been a strong anchor in these times. Members have responded and leaders are emerging to support the congregation and the community of Esperanza.

We encourage you to seek ways to practice being "good stewards" at Esperanza. Stewardship captures all that God has entrusted to our care -- our time, our talents and our treasures -- to love God and our neighbors, both inside and outside the church wall and our homes. Your expression of stewardship is important to the Esperanza community.

Two stories can mark Esperanza in 2020. One is a story of woe and discouragement and includes all the difficulties that we are experiencing. This is a story of circling the wagons and seeing the worst. The other story tells us, "In the midst of a lot of bad news, God is doing something". The story expresses curiosity and anticipation and does not ignore reality. It is anchored in confidence that God is with us and is at work in our lives.

We feel it is the second story is the Esperanza story that is being discovered within us. It is a story of opportunity, shaping tomorrow by the good things we are doing today to find the bright spots. Out of the chaos of 2020 Esperanza has the leaders and "stewards" who are breathing life into the positive narrative. Your stewardship efforts make this narrative grow.

Let us all keep growing with Esperanza,

Tom and Susan Vega