

HOPE GROWS HERE

Some Thoughts on Stewardship from Joyce Weary, Lauren and Brian Cantoni



If you look up “Stewardship” in a dictionary, you will find this definition: “The job of supervising or taking care of something, such as an organization or property.”

As Esperanza members within a multigenerational family, we have consistently given to our church home annually for over 25 years. This shared

commitment has been an anchor for our family, one that gives us joy. While those positive feelings are very similar amongst us, interestingly enough, our introductions into Stewardship varied greatly.

From Joyce:

Stewardship, as used in the church, was new to me as an adult since I was raised Roman Catholic. Attending Mass every Sunday was ingrained in me or else you were doomed for eternity. Roman Catholicism in my youth not only had Bishops and Archbishops, but weekly bingos, sock hops, fundraising events and sometimes even endowments to keep the churches going strong. Stewardship was never a subject, but giving to a diocesan fundraising event was and we were expected to do so. The difficult thing about churches and money is that regardless of whether you are making a pledge or giving at fundraising events, it’s tough to make a forward-looking budget. Every year, when we make pledges to our church, our council develops a budget using those commitment amounts. This helps our church plan financially for the future. Without pledges, there isn’t a good path forward to plan. As it is, even with pledged giving, the reality is that people move, lose jobs, switch churches, etc. and the pledges are forgotten.

Continued on next page

As you can imagine, a church budget is a dynamic target and keeping it balanced is no easy task. It is, however, made much easier if we can all submit a pledge to help our council make a best guess forecast, knowing that life can throw curveballs and we may need to adjust along the way.

From Lauren: My introduction to stewardship was a little different. I was raised going to both Lutheran and Catholic Churches. I don't recall much about stewardship being discussed at Mass but we definitely knew to show up and buy tickets at St. Gerald's Fair every year. There were also pierogies by the dozen (homemade by the neighborhood Polish babushkas) to buy when I went to Mass with my grandmother. My experience at St. John's Lutheran Church was different. There was no annual fair and absolutely zero pierogies in sight, but we did have ice cream socials which included messages about stewardship at the services held prior. Over the years, some pastors were pragmatic, while others clearly got excitable on the topic. However, one thing was very consistent: they all made an ask. That ask was to pledge a meaningful amount, recognizing that the dollars would be different from family to family. Without our financial gifts, our church could not and would not be sustainable long term. As a result, even as a newly confirmed church member, I knew that I played an important part (albeit a really small one) in keeping our church alive...and that's a great feeling. Time and time again, I've been amazed that with charitable giving, whatever amount you give, you always get back more – somehow, somehow – in return.

From Brian: My introduction to stewardship happened right here, at Esperanza Lutheran Church. To be honest, it was my time on the church council that truly opened my eyes to the importance of giving. I saw firsthand the difficulties in planning for a year ahead with only half of members turning in pledge cards. Imagine having a business with no budget projection for the year – or one with only half of the data. Thinking of more recent times, being hit with a pandemic and lacking a full time pastor, 2020 was a real challenge for Esperanza. The thing is, the building in which we meet needed to be maintained whether or not services were held inside. Roofs always need fixing. Air conditioners break. Plumbing leaks. It's just like your home! That all takes money, which comes directly from our pledged giving.

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As a family, we know that Hope Grows Here! We are back worshipping in person! For those preferring to worship at home, we are livestreaming and recording our services and have them available online to watch on demand. We have projectors and screens in the church to ease reading the hymns and the liturgy - without having to touch a thing! We also had a security system installed, we had several young adults go through confirmation in October and, last but not least, we welcomed a new full-time pastor to lead our flock.

In summary, our hope is that Esperanza Lutheran Church will be around for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. When we pledge our gifts to Esperanza, we are making a loving commitment to let our Hope Grow Here. Please join us!

Pledge online at <https://myesperanza.org/pledge/>

Give online at <https://myesperanza.org/giving/>

Visit Hope Grows Here to learn more about our Stewardship program by visiting <https://myesperanza.org/hope-grows-here/>