



# **Essentials**

**An easy-to use, four-week stewardship emphasis  
For churches of any size and any worship situation**

A stewardship resource published by the [Ecumenical Stewardship Center](#)

In partnership with the [Center for Faith and Giving](#)

©2020 Ecumenical Stewardship Center

©2020 Center for Faith and Giving

Ecumenical Stewardship Center

101 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, IN 47374

Phone: 855-278-4ESC (4372), Fax: 765-966-1293

Email: [office@stewardshipresources.org](mailto:office@stewardshipresources.org)

Website: <https://stewardshipresources.org>

## Contents

Introduction: These Three Remain: Faith, Hope, and Love Thinking Theologically about the Way Forward.....	1
Why Have a Stewardship Emphasis?.....	5
Why Faithful, Hopeful, Loving?.....	6
Use With the Faithful, Hopeful, Loving Year-Round Stewardship Resource.....	7
Leadership.....	7
Components.....	7
Time Frame.....	7
Materials.....	8
Timeline.....	8
Follow-Up.....	10
Suggested Resources.....	11
Sample Introduction Letter.....	12
Faithful Generosity Devotional.....	13
Hopeful Generosity Devotional.....	14
Loving Generosity Devotional.....	15
Invitation Sunday Devotional.....	16
Sample Stewardship Story.....	17
Sample Case for Support.....	18
Sample Ways to Give.....	19
Sample Commitment Forms.....	20
Sample Thank You Letter for Adults.....	21
Sample Thank You Letter for Youth.....	22
Sample Thank You Letter for Children.....	23
Sample Devotional for Dedication Sunday.....	24



## **These Three Remain...Faith, Hope, and Love** ***Thinking theologically about the way forward***

A global pandemic. Civil unrest. A society divided. A church struggling to find its place. These seismic shifts make us feel like we are on shaky ground. Our familiar church lives have been disrupted. Many of us don't know when we will be able to participate in face-to-face worship again. Camps and conferences have been canceled. Sunday school and youth groups are meeting online, if at all. The routine elements of pastoral ministry such as meeting with parishioners in homes, hospitals, and the church office are different or nonexistent. Face-to-face board and committee meetings are not happening or are cautionary tales. How do we prepare a way forward when we don't know exactly what to prepare for?

While right now the amount seems more than manageable, it is important to remember that change has always been with us. The North American twenty-first century church is not the church of the first century—nor the fifteenth, the eighteenth, nor even the twentieth. We are the “stewards of God’s mysteries” (1 Cor 4:1) for this time and this place. But regardless of the circumstances and changes we encounter, there are some biblical and theological certainties in which we can trust and that can calm our anxieties.

- **God will go with us into the unknown.** From God’s promise to Abram to “go to a land I will show you” to Jesus’ words that “I will be with you to the end of the age”, we know that whatever the landscape of the church looks like in the near or distant future, God will be there. This is a good time to remember that the words *fear not* appear over 150 times in the Bible. Even in the wilderness God provided, and can be trusted to do so again and again.
- **The body of Christ will not die.** The Judeo-Christian tradition is based in communion with God and each other, beginning with Genesis where God declares that it is “not good to be alone”, to Revelation where it is prophesied that the nations will walk together in the New Jerusalem.
- **The true mission of the church will remain relevant.** When Abram receives the invitation to be blessed by God it is not only for him individually, but for the legacy of his progeny—by whom all the nations will be blessed. Jesus echoes this love in John 3:16 and Matthew 28:19. Our hurting world needs the church to practice the healing balm found in passages like Matthew 5 and Matthew 25.

Even though they may look different in the future, our faith practices are based on these certainties:

### **Worship – the Celebration that God is *Faithful***

The worship and praise of God is our delight as a part of the divine creation. An important expression of that worship takes place as a gathered body. Right now, churches need to consider what Hebrews 10:25 means in a twenty-first-century context. Some congregations have engaged in new technologies—some grudgingly, but some with open hearts, minds, and imaginations as to how the church can witness to God’s faithfulness in new contexts and with new audiences.

Moving forward, regular engagement in church worship may actually increase with wider availability of access and increased familiarity and creativity with technology. A continued telling of compelling stories of the faithfulness of God will remain essential in or out of a global pandemic.

### **Study –Why are we *Hopeful*?**

What does it mean to believe? What does it mean to be a part of a faith community? What shape does my life take when I am called to put on the likeness of Christ within my own character and being? How do I account for the hope that is in me? Why should I be hopeful in difficult moments? Is God trustworthy? What does God expect of me?

However the church is changing and whatever it will look like in the future, another thing that remains true is that we will have to offer and engage in meaningful study of Scripture to understand what we believe, why we believe it, and how to practice that belief. It is the method through which we set expectations, create community norms, and establish an identity. The way of Jesus is a journey that requires learning and encounters with the stories that tell Jesus’ story. The need to teach the faith will always remain with us so that we not only can have hope, but so that we can bear witness to the hope that is in us.

Study challenges and shapes us. While best done communally, it can be done individually and opportunities for asymmetrical leaning should not be overlooked. Stewardship education is a natural part of our faith formation.

### **Service to others – Loving what God Loves**

Another thing we can count on is that whatever the new normal, sharing the love of God in tangible ways will continue. The very qualifications for seeing the Realm of God that Jesus gives in Matthew 25 indicate that food for the hungry, water for the thirsty, clothing for the naked, care for the sick, and a witness for justice and compassion continue to be the cornerstones for mission. Whatever form this takes will still need to be resourced.

As an act of discipleship and response to a loving and grace-filled God, followers of Jesus will still need to faithfully steward their time, talents, and resources to sustain the common good. Ongoing awareness of how to do this, establishing opportunities to commit to this process, and celebrating and dedicating these commitments will still be a part of our future.

### **Prayer –The *Desire* for Faith, Hope, and Love**

Prayer is at its deepest level intimacy with God and with others. It is individual and communal. It is speaking and listening. It is a desire to seek to know the heart and desires of God and to be set free to do these same things. To learn how to pray is fundamental to spiritual formation. To pray regularly is a part of spiritual discipline. Prayers can be our own extemporaneous words or those of another disciple of Christ from across the centuries. Both have power and efficacy.

Prayer may not change the circumstances, but it can change the one who prays. We cannot pray for the well-being of others without soon realizing that we must act on their behalf as well. To be for the other in advocacy is to share with the other in rejoicing and in suffering. When you pray for your enemies, their number may grow surprisingly small. Prayer petitions God for the Realm to come and that we will be fit for its arrival. When we have deep need, sometimes prayer is the only refuge. The church, in whatever form its future takes, will pray. It will pray to discern, and it will pray to act. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus left a road map we might follow. Prayer gives voice to our desire to know that faith, love, and hope are real and available in this moment and the moments to come.

### **Stewardship – the *Expression* of Faith, Hope, and Love**

If worship, study, service, and prayer are elements that comprise faith formation and give shape to the life of discipleship, then surely stewardship is the full expression of living into our calling. When God gave dominion of the “fish of the sea, over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gn 1:28) to humankind, we were called implicitly to be stewards. To rule in the world as God rules in the cosmos, for the benefit of all things, requires living as a steward.

The Sabbath reminds us that God provides enough so that we can work six days and have enough for seven. It represents, like manna, God's providential care. The work of the steward is to be certain that resources go where they are needed. There is no reason for anyone to lack food, shelter, clean water, or wellness. When scarcity exists, it is a testimony that we are not fully living into our calling.

The church of the unknown future will still need stewards. It will need to voice a concern that we have a responsibility to care for that which God saw as very good. (Gn 1:31) The church of the unknown future needs those who will steward the mysteries of God—the essence of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God loves the world and the church of the future must both remember and tell that story.

We travel toward a destination we cannot see and to places we are yet to know, but of this we are certain. There will be a church, because Jesus said so, and that church will have work to do and will need resources to get it done. Inviting people into this relationship with God, to fellowship with community, and to care for the world is the purest expression of the abiding nature of love. And when that moment comes that our desire is fulfilled and our work is done—the Realm will have arrived.

This is what the future holds.



## **“It’s been a really difficult year. Why should we have a stewardship emphasis?”**

2020 has been a year like few others. The problems seem overwhelming: pandemics, unrest, economic hardship—and these are just a few of the daily news headlines. We are distressed by all the problems facing us. The church has been hit especially hard, as many have chosen not to meet in person for a significant period of time. Even as in-person services resume, there are legal, ethical, and health challenges to consider. Some of your members and attenders may not be willing or able to attend worship in person when services resume.

Most likely, however, your church’s ministry has continued—perhaps in new, unexpected ways. A stewardship emphasis gives your congregation the opportunity to—most significantly, consider the importance of heartfelt generosity in their own faith journeys,—and to support the ministries of your church that take place very day of the year.

Faithful, Hopeful Loving *Essentials* helps you easily engage your church in an emphasis when your attention to stewardship may have been put on hold for a time. You can adapt Faithful, Hopeful, Loving *Essentials* to any worship scenario.

Being faithful stewards of all we have been given is a loving response to our hurting world. Generosity is necessary for our gaps in society to be filled. Sharing our time, talents, and money empowers all of us to build paths of life. Imagining with the Holy about a future time when humanity will reflect the hospitality of God can inspire us to action, reflecting the divine image that is within each of us.



## **“Why Faithful, Hopeful, Loving?”**

The stewardship emphasis theme Faithful, Hopeful, Loving for 2020 was created long before the events of this year unfolded. However, the theme has significant connection to our current experiences. The year-round resource features a dozen different Scripture passages, but emphasizes the well-known 1 Corinthians 13 text.

Faithfulness—not size, status, wealth, or heritage—is God’s measurement for Christians and congregations. All of Christ’s disciples and all of Christ’s congregations are called to be faithful to God’s mission and purpose. Generosity is a faithful act of discipleship, wrapped in trust in God and God’s purposes, whether we see them clearly or in a mirror dimly.

Hopefulness is a basic Christian characteristic. Despair and hopelessness can be damaging to congregations and their members. God offers the victory of hope through Christ and the Holy Spirit. To have a future we must live with hope. Generosity is a hopeful act of discipleship, made as a statement that God is still at work in the world, and we partner in these acts of redemption through our generosity.

In verses 4-7, the apostle Paul unpacks love’s characteristics: patience and kindness, and a lack of envy, boasting, arrogance, edginess, resentment, and bullying. Christians and congregations must experience and share love that looks like this. It is not optional: it is imperative.

Generosity is a loving response, made in gratitude for God’s love for us, and celebrates a unity in Christ that surpasses the difficulties that seem to work so hard to divide us.

The apostle Paul concludes this chapter by telling us that faith, hope, and love last. During your stewardship emphasis, you will encourage your congregation to support your mission and ministry by sharing their time, their God-given talents, and their financial resources. This is as it should be. But in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul reminds us that even if we practice generosity that leaves us with nothing and even requires our lives, if those incredible gifts have not been given in the spirit of love, the giver has gained nothing. This theme balances the importance of generosity with giving faithfully, hopefully, and lovingly.



## “We already have the Faithful, Hopeful, Loving year-round emphasis. How does that fit with *Essentials*?”

*Essentials* provides a basic, easy-to-share emphasis that may be helpful for churches who are providing a variety of worship experiences—or no worship experience—or who want to offer a stewardship emphasis in a short time frame with limited personnel and preparation time. The year-round emphasis enhances *Essentials* with additional options for Scripture emphases, more worship and study materials, and reproducible digital files for in-person worship such as bulletin inserts, bulletin covers, and commitment cards.



## “Who Should Be Involved?”

The Faithful, Hopeful, Loving emphasis can be successfully carried out in small churches with just three persons: an emphasis chair, a communications coordinator, and the clergy or designee (the designee should have the authority to plan your worship services). Larger churches can include additional persons.

The emphasis includes preparation, invitation, and follow-up. A list of responsibilities follows with leadership noted, including additional leadership if desired.



## “What Are the Components?”

The emphasis includes three components:

- 1) **Preparation** (your team’s and your church’s);
- 2) **Invitation**; and
- 3) **Follow-up**, including thanks and dedication.



## “What’s the Time Frame?”

A ten-week time frame is recommended, with 6 weeks for preparation, 1 week for invitation, and 3 weeks for follow-up and dedication.



## “What Materials Do We Need?”

Because it is more of a possibility than ever before that your church’s members and attendees may not be gathered in one place, we recommend at minimum creating a Faithful, Hopeful, Loving Resource Packet to share digitally, via postal mail, or both. You will find editable samples (created with Microsoft Word 2010) at the end of this resource. The timeline gives suggestions of additional materials that can be included in the packet and/or incorporated into your virtual and/or in-person worship services.



## Suggested Timeline

**\*Choose the date of your Commitment Sunday first.**

WEEK	Emphasis Chair	Communications Coordinator	Clergy	Additional
<b>1</b> (6 weeks before Invitation Sunday)	Create follow-up and dedication strategy	Determine communications strategy	Begin to develop four worship services and dedication service	<p><b>Emphasis Chair</b> can invite 3 storytellers (1 each for Faithful, Hopeful, Loving) and choose adult studies, youth studies, and children’s stories for Sunday School classes and/or small groups</p> <p><b>Worship Staff/Leaders</b> can help develop worship services</p> <p><b>Clergy</b> can customize communications and devotions</p>

<b>2</b> (5 weeks before Invitation Sunday)	Continue work on follow-up and dedication	Prepare materials	Continue work on worship services and dedication service	<b>Emphasis Chair</b> distributes studies and stories to teachers/leaders <b>Emphasis Chair</b> invites volunteers for follow-up <b>Communications Coordinator</b> records storytellers for use in digital communications and worship <b>Worship Staff/Leaders</b> can help develop worship services
<b>3</b> (4 weeks before Invitation Sunday)		Send/post materials		
<b>4</b> Faithful Generosity Sunday				
<b>5</b> Hopeful Generosity Sunday				
<b>6</b> Loving Generosity Sunday				
<b>7</b> Invitation Sunday				
<b>8</b> Follow-up week 1	Oversees follow-up			<b>Volunteers</b> can help with follow-up
<b>9</b> Follow-up week 2	Oversees follow-up			<b>Volunteers</b> can help with follow-up <b>Financial Secretary</b> prepares report
<b>10</b> (Dedication Sunday)				



## Follow-Up

Faithful, Hopeful, Loving *Essentials* suggests a two-week period between Invitation Sunday and Dedication Sunday for follow-up. It is not unusual for a significant number of households to not return their commitment forms: this year that may be true for even more of your faith community.

The Financial Secretary or equivalent church leadership should provide a list of households to be contacted. Next, consider dividing the list into three groups: those who contribute and normally submit a commitment form; those who contribute and do not normally submit a commitment form; and those who do not contribute and do not submit a commitment form. The first group may only need to be reminded to return their commitment forms. This can be done with letter, a brief telephone call, or an email.

The second group, who contributes but normally does not submit a commitment form, may have forgotten to respond or may not understand why to make a commitment. A letter to this group can serve as a reminder and an educational tool. However, personal contact by telephone is probably more effective. By engaging in a conversation about faith and ministry, these members are more likely to re-think their ideas about making a faith commitment and re-evaluate their giving.

The third group, who do not contribute and do not normally submit a commitment form, may not yet feel a part of the church family, may still be growing in this area of their personal faith, or have other concerns. These households can be contacted by mail.

This year especially, it is important to consider how the pandemic may be affecting your faith community's economic health. Also, you may have new virtual attendees or formerly disengaged members who have been connecting via your virtual worship. It is appropriate to consider including them in this process. They may be waiting for an invitation!



## Suggested Resources

- 1) Invitation Letter
- 2) Four Devotionals
- 3) Four Stewardship Stories
- 4) Why Make a Commitment
- 5) Case for Support
- 6) Ways to Give
- 7) Commitment Forms for adults, youth, and children
- 8) Thank You Letters for adults, youth, and children
- 9) Dedication Sunday Devotional

You will find samples of each on the following pages. You are free to edit them to make them as useful as possible for your congregation. Resources can be copied for distribution via postal mail. Text and images can be repurposed for distributing in digital format via your website, email, and social media.

You also may want to include:

- 1) Studies for small groups and/or Sunday school classes
- 2) Sermons in written form
- 3) A narrative budget, if you have one



[DATE]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

2020 has been a year like few others. The problems seem overwhelming: pandemics, unrest, economic hardship—and these are just a few of the daily news headlines. We are distressed by all the problems facing us. And we are disappointed because we have been unable to gather together in person for worship.

Perhaps now more than ever, we need to be intentional about how we respond to a broken and hurting world: faithfully, hopefully, and lovingly. For the next several weeks, I invite you to join me in exploring these essential characteristics of our individual and common spiritual journeys.

1 Corinthians 13 is often read at weddings, but we learn much about faith, hope, and love in this text. **Faithfulness**—not size, status, wealth, or heritage—is God’s measurement for Christians and congregations. God offers the victory of **hopefulness** through Christ and the Holy Spirit. In verses 4-7, the apostle Paul unpacks **love’s** characteristics: patience and kindness, and a lack of envy, boasting, arrogance, edginess, resentment, and bullying. Christians and congregations must experience and share love that looks like this. It is not optional: it is imperative.

The apostle Paul concludes this chapter by telling us that faith, hope, and love last. May we trust in this promise as we continue together as a faith community.

In Christ’s service,

NAME, clergy



<sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
<sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.  
<sup>4</sup>They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.  
<sup>8</sup>For I the LORD love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
<sup>9</sup>Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.  
<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations.  
-Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Much like the ancient audience for whom the words of Isaiah 61 were originally spoken, faith communities are in a new place.

Like those who faced rebuilding Jerusalem, many of us feel that our beloved churches have suffered the brunt of attack, and we wonder if it's even possible to rebuild them so they will be around for more than another generation.

The words of Isaiah 61 call us to a different path, one of action and faith. The prophet's message was not a call to grasp at security or embrace complacency. These were words of challenge, risk, and service. Is not this message still relevant for us today?

To respond to this call to ministry we will have to take off our mourning clothes and take the risk of being generous, in order to bring about this realization of God's will.

**Reflect:** What is something you are looking forward to now? What helps you in the waiting when the promised future seems far off? How does God's faithfulness support you in your waiting? Is someone waiting for you to be faithful?

**Pray:** Everlasting God, you have been faithful to us beyond measure. We can hardly wrap our minds around the eternal nature of your love for us. May we live in gratitude for what you have done for us, and may we live always to your glory. Amen.



<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup> love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup> No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

-Romans 12:9-21

Romans 12 does not offer a unicorn-esque view of transformation as stewardship. Before we can care for people and their existential reality, we must examine the world and who we are in this world. The product of such examination ought to be a desire to enhance and improve our personal state so that how we live in this world and how we perceive this world changes.

Transformation as stewardship is not complacency with the world's current offering. We march for justice. We protest with our feet and with our prayers. We hope with our actions against anything that is inhumane and non-life giving or life affirming.

What hope for the world is there if the church community genuinely cares for the needs of others, but lacks its own hope?

**Reflect:** Do you consider yourself to be a hopeful person? Why or why not? How does your answer shape your ability to be generous?

**Pray:** Generous God, we know that we have hope always through your son, Jesus Christ. Help us to hear you saying that over all the other voices of this world that try to drown you out. When times are hard, guide our feet so that we run to you— with both hands stretched out--instead of running away from you. Help us hold our head high with hope and give us a reminder today that hope is a spiritual lifeline that is unbreakable. It's in Jesus precious name that we pray. Amen.



<sup>1</sup>Shout out, do not hold back!  
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!  
Announce to my people their rebellion,  
to the house of Jacob their sins.

<sup>2</sup>Yet day after day they seek me  
and delight to know my ways,  
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness  
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;  
they ask of me righteous judgments,  
they delight to draw near to God.

<sup>3</sup>“Why do we fast, but you do not see?  
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”  
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day,  
and oppress all your workers.

<sup>4</sup>Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight  
and to strike with a wicked fist.  
Such fasting as you do today  
will not make your voice heard on high.

<sup>5</sup>Is such the fast that I choose,  
a day to humble oneself?  
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,  
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?  
Will you call this a fast,  
a day acceptable to the LORD?

<sup>6</sup>Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them,  
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

<sup>8</sup>Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;  
your vindicator<sup>[a]</sup> shall go before you,  
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

<sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;  
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

-Isaiah 58:1-9a

These words of Isaiah 58 echo down to us across the centuries. Although the culture, language, and millenium of our time are radically different, the message is no less pertinent.

We live in a world where the problems seem overwhelming: world hunger, homelessness, epidemics--and these are just a few of the headlines on the front page. We are distressed by all the problems facing us.

Being faithful stewards of all we have been given is a loving response. Generosity is necessary for our gaps in society to be filled. Sharing our time, talents, and money empowers all of us to build paths of life. Imagining with the Holy about a future time when humanity will reflect the hospitality of God can inspire us to action, reflecting the divine image that is within each of us.

**Reflect:** How have you worked towards justice? How has your church worked towards justice?

**Pray:** Justice-loving Lord, you have given all peoples one common origin. It is your will that all should be gathered together as one family in you. Fill the hearts of all believers with the fire of your love and with the desire to ensure justice for all. By sharing the good things you give us, may we secure—through loving justice—release of the bond of injustice for all our siblings throughout the world. Help our light to break forth like the dawn, so that healing can spring up quickly. May there be an end to division, strife and war. May there be a dawning of a truly human society built on love and peace. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.



<sup>1</sup>If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,<sup>[a]</sup> but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup>or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup>It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup>Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. <sup>9</sup>For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; <sup>10</sup>but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. <sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. <sup>12</sup>For now we see in a mirror, dimly,<sup>[b]</sup> but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup>And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

-1 Corinthians 13

Oak trees take a long time to grow and are some of the strongest and most durable trees in existence. God's righteous healing may seem to take time to those who hurting. However God is working to do something different. God is being a steward: actively creating a world in which all are able to rejoice in God and be clothed in garments of salvation and righteousness. **Do I believe in God's faithfulness?**

The power of hope comes from the belief that the pains, the struggles, the frustrations, the annoyances, and the fears of our lives and this world are not the *only* things in this world. Hope comes from those moments of pain that create endurance, then character, and then hope. Hope is the rejection of the status quo, rejection of the way things are, and the belief that something better is not only possible, it is coming. **Where do I see hope?**

To be good stewards of God's love, we are to actively work to show God's love in the world. Some show God's love by working for social justice. Others visit and listen to those who are alone. Others show God's love by making sure the business and work of a faith community reflects the love of God. **How am I showing God's love?**

**Pray:** God of new life, thank you for the gifts of faith, hope, and love. Thank you for reorienting us toward you. We pray that we will respond to all that you have done for us with gratitude and praise. With joy we pray in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.



[DATE]

Hello, Cascade Church friends,

I'm Janet Smith, Cascade Church representative to Camp Hillside, our West Coast Synod camp. I attended camp as a child and youth for many years, and now I volunteer as a counselor each summer. Camp Hillside has brought people closer to God and to each other for nearly 50 years. Many persons have formed lasting friendships at Camp Hillside, and several of our synod pastors say their call to ministry began there.

You may think camp didn't happen this summer. But it did! Although we couldn't have sessions at Camp Hillside, we held virtual camp for more than 100 persons, including 14 from Cascade Church. More than two dozen creative volunteers and staff worked quickly and diligently to make this happen. Groups met weekly from mid-June to mid-July. Some attendees were campers as children who had moved from the area, but were able to re-visit camp virtually, and brought their families. Songs were sung, games were played, and Bible stories were shared around virtual campfires.

I helped with the sixth-grade camp. A parent of a camper said, "Joel looked forward to camp every week. It was great to have something dependable for him in this time of such uncertainty and anxiety."

The financial support of Cascade Church directly to Camp Hillside and to our synod, along with volunteer support and camper participation, allows Camp Hillside to continue to be a vital ministry. Thank you so much for your support! And if you'd like to know more about virtual camp or anything else at Camp Hillside, please reach out.

SAMPLE CASE FOR SUPPORT: DELETE THIS TEXT BOX BEFORE COPYING

Replace the text box with your church logo

### Your Church Mission Statement

Example: Helping people find God, grow their faith, discover their purpose, and make a difference.

Here are just a few ways we live out the mission to which we have been called:

- Example #1
- Example #2
- Example #3
- Example #4

We care for our community by providing support in crisis, such as illness or bereavement. We keep in touch with members who are housebound or who live in seniors' residences. Our ministry personnel and volunteer visitors make this church a caring community where each person experiences God's love.

Quote from a beneficiary of your church's mission, such as "The birthday gift basket from the church meant so much. Living alone can be so lonely, and this year, especially so. Thank you for remembering me."

As people of God, we are called to work in the world around us. We provide time and money for God's work beyond our church walls. This work takes place in our neighborhood, in our city, in our country, and in countries all around the world. We also support the work of our denomination and our judicatory through our mission support.

Quote from a beneficiary of your church's mission, such as "We are so grateful for the NAME OF CHURCH's support of our summer lunch program ministry. Even in the midst of COVID-19, we are preparing and distributing meals to children who receive free meals during the school year. You are helping to reduce food insecurity for some of the most vulnerable in our community."

The ministry and mission of our church are fulfilled with the spiritual and financial gifts our members and friends choose to share. ***Will you help our mission continue to thrive?*** Please let us know your response by completing and returning the enclosed commitment forms.

SAMPLE WAYS TO GIVE: DELETE THIS TEXT BOX BEFORE COPYING

Replace the text box with your church logo

There are many ways to make a gift to [YOUR CHURCH NAME]!

- **During Worship**

- Cash & Checks
- Via the QR code in the church bulletin and on the screen that takes you to our website giving page where you can make a gift using your debit or credit card
- Using our text to give option
- Via our mobile app

- **Any Time**

- Mail a check to the church office
- Set up an automatic payment (one-time or recurring) through your bank via bill pay or electronic transfer. Reach out to [NAME, CONTACT INFORMATION] if you need assistance or more information.
- Use the QR code below that takes you to our website giving page where you can make a gift using your debit or credit card
- Use our text to give option [INCLUDE INFORMATION]
- Download our mobile app [INCLUDE INFORMATION]



SAMPLE QR CODE: YOU MUST CREATE YOUR OWN CODE. SEE <https://www.qr-code-generator.com/> FOR MORE DETAILS.

**Thank you for your generosity!**

Please complete the appropriate commitment forms and return to the church office. You can mail the cards or scan and send via email to [NAME, EMAIL ADDRESS].

I/We thank God for the opportunity to support the ministries of this congregation.  
As I/we seek to be devoted to good works and acts of charity, I/we commit to pray the same for others in our church family.  
My/our financial commitment for the upcoming year is \$ \_\_\_\_ per week/month/year. (Circle one)  
I/we understand that I can adjust this estimate of giving at any time by contacting the financial secretary.

\_\_\_I/we would like to speak with someone about using my gifts and talents to support our church's ministry.

\_\_\_I/we would like to speak with someone about our giving plans.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

©2019 Ecumenical Stewardship Center

I thank God for the opportunity to support the ministries of this congregation.  
As I seek to be devoted to good works and acts of charity, I commit to pray the same for others in our church family.

My financial commitment for the upcoming year is \$ \_\_\_\_ per week/month/year. (Circle one)  
I understand that I can adjust this estimate of giving at any time by contacting the financial secretary.

\_\_\_I would like to speak with someone about using my gifts and talents to support our church's ministry.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

©2019 Ecumenical Stewardship Center

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old, and I am in the \_\_\_\_\_ grade.

I usually come to church with \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you, God, for your love, a place to worship you, and the people of this church family. I will gladly give my time to (please check)

\_\_\_pray for this church, our pastor, and our leaders

\_\_\_go to Sunday school and worship

\_\_\_pray for the Sunday school teachers

\_\_\_pray for children who do not have a church home

For God's work through this church, I will gladly give (please check)

\_\_\_25 cents a week \_\_\_50 cents a week \_\_\_\$1 a week \_\_\_\$2 a week

Other amount: \_\_\_\_\_

©2019 Ecumenical Stewardship Center.

Replace the text box with your church logo



[DATE]

Dear [NAME],

During the past month, we have been learning together and growing deeper in our understanding of faithful, hopeful, and loving generosity. I hope that you will agree with me that this has been an enriching experience.

Thank you for your response in support of the mission and ministry of this congregation. Your financial commitment of [\$\_\_\_\_] will help us all continue to be faithful, hopeful, and loving witnesses of the gospel in our neighborhood, in our region, in our country, and in our world.

[IF APPLICABLE] We also acknowledge your interest in serving the church through gifts of time and talent. [NAME] will reach out to you soon for more conversation.

[IF APPLICABLE] We have noted your interest in additional conversation about your giving plans. [NAME] will reach out to you soon to schedule a time to chat.

On [DATE], we will give thanks to God for these blessings and to dedicate ourselves to another year of generosity and service. [INCLUDE SPECIFIC PLANS AND INSTRUCTIONS HERE.]

Most Sincerely,

Church leadership or clergy

Replace the text box with your church logo



[DATE]

Dear [NAME],

During the past month, we have been learning together and growing deeper in our understanding of faithful, hopeful, and loving generosity. I hope that you will agree with me that this has been an enriching experience.

Thank you for your response in support of the mission and ministry of this congregation. Your financial commitment of [\$\_\_\_\_] will help us all continue to be faithful, hopeful, and loving witnesses of the gospel in our neighborhood, in our region, in our country, and in our world.

[IF APPLICABLE] We also acknowledge your interest in serving the church through gifts of time and talent. [NAME] will reach out to you soon for more conversation.

I am so grateful for the ways you are participating in our church's ministry. You are not just the church of the future: you are the church now!

On [DATE], we will give thanks to God for these blessings and to dedicate ourselves to another year of generosity and service. [INCLUDE SPECIFIC PLANS AND INSTRUCTIONS HERE.]

Most Sincerely,

Church leader or clergy

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER FOR CHILDREN: DELETE THIS TEXT BOX BEFORE COPYING

Replace the text box with your church logo



[DATE]

Dear [NAME],

During the past month, we have been learning about faithful, hopeful, and loving generosity. We know that these are important ways that we can be like Jesus and show love to our families and friends.

I am so happy that you will be praying for our church and sharing a gift of money with the church! I hope your generosity will continue to grow as you grow.

Soon, we will have a special time of thanks to God for these blessings and to say yes! to God's call to us. [INCLUDE SPECIFIC PLANS AND INSTRUCTIONS HERE.]

Church leader or clergy



<sup>1</sup>If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, <sup>2</sup>make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was<sup>in</sup> in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, <sup>8</sup>he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God.

-Philippians 2:1-11

Stewardship is not our getting the glory. It is the hope that what we do will point to the Source of all gifts. It is the hope that whatever God entrusts to us will reflect divine grace, love, and mercy.

We sing, teach, preach, heal, prophesy, give, and serve because our lives are God-bent and heaven-bound. At our best, we do not cater to our own whims. We seek the health of the corporate because it is comprised of individuals who have gifts that must be stewarded and nurtured.

**Pray:** Generous, gracious, and loving God, we celebrate the faithful, hopeful, and loving generosity of those before us, who stewarded and nurtured our gifts. We give thanks for the multitude of blessings and opportunities you give to us. And we dedicate ourselves to serve as the hands and feet of Christ today--faithfully, hopefully, and lovingly—in our neighborhood, our country, and our world. Lead us and guide us, we pray. Amen.