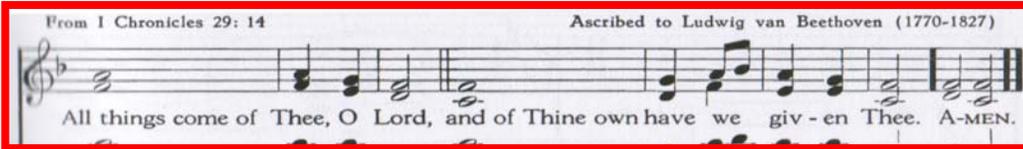


# Greenwood Community Church, Presbyterian

805 Main Avenue, Warwick, Rhode Island, 02886 Tel. (401) 737-1230; Fax (401) 739-8067  
The Rev. Dr. Stephen L. Clark, Pastor



Dear Members and Friends,

The Stewardship Committee is launching a three week campaign, **“Transformed by Grace, Faith & Love,”** leading up to **Commitment Sunday November 19** ... which, appropriately, is the Sunday before Thanksgiving. As I've written in years past, the name of the national holiday itself hints we best express our *THANKS* by *GIVING*; giving is THE Bible-honored and time-honored way of acknowledging our gratitude to God. In our giving we express our gratitude by returning a portion of what God has given us, as succinctly expressed in the above doxology sung each Sunday at the Methodist church in which I was raised, and where my mother STILL sings in the choir as she has since 1965.

Each week during this emphasis (*materials are produced by Parish Publishing, LLC*) we will be focusing on one of these three virtues, GRACE, FAITH, AND LOVE. To save on printing costs, a copy of the weekly Bible Study (*see information within*) will be emailed to all on our emailing list, posted on our website (*at [www.gccp.org/christian-education](http://www.gccp.org/christian-education)*) and copies will be available in the narthex. (*Also, for those who may be new to “church-speak” about these things, please see back of this page for a “glossary” I wrote in 2016.*)

I have said or written the following in some way or another each of the twenty-one years I've been privileged to be your pastor, and I'll say it again: The overarching biblical context and motivation for giving is *spiritual*, not *institutional*; the people of God are to give primarily to God, not primarily to meet a budget. Yes, our church certainly has ongoing expenses, obligations and programs, all requiring an operating budget funded by donations, and it is certainly true the more we give, the more we will be enabled to do! As highlighted in these pictures as well as in the life of our church of late, this is a really **GOOD** time to foster and encourage the kind of faithful giving that'll not only help keep our ministry **GOING**, but keep it **GROWING**! And there is certainly always more we would all like to do ... to strengthen what is good and right about all our various ministry endeavors, to maintain and beautify and enhance this center of worship so it may serve well into the future, to “equip the saints for ministry” and expand our horizons for outreach to our community and a world in need! However, let me again encourage each and every one of us to have the primary motivation of *GIVING TO GOD*.

As each of us prayerfully considers how we will fill out the enclosed Commitment Form, may we allow our giving to proportionally reflect our gratitude to the God Who has first given so much to us.

*Stephen L. Clark, Pastor*

**PLEASE BRING YOUR COMMITMENT CARD NOVEMBER 19** for dedication during worship. If you can't be with us that day, please send it to the office OR bring it to worship the following week.  
**THANK YOU !**





## A BASIC PRIMER FOR THOSE WHO MAY BE NEW TO ALL THIS

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "STEWARDSHIP?"

The English word "steward" comes from the Anglo-Saxon words "stig" or "stye", meaning an enclosure or a hall, and "wéord," which means keeper. A steward is, literally, a "stye-keeper;" the word now means a person in charge of the property or affairs of another.

A steward acts as a trusted supervisor and/or an administrator of finances and property on behalf of the owner of the property. The relationship between owner and steward is one of confidence; character traits of a good steward are integrity and trustworthiness. As Psalm 24 succinctly says, *"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it; the world, and all who live in it."* God is the Owner of all, and we are called to be His faithful stewards, using the time, talent and treasure He has given us to manage according to His intention and will.

### WHAT TO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY "MAKE A PLEDGE?"

A pledge is a written declaration of intent to donate a specific amount of money over a certain length of time. In making a pledge to the church you are making a pledge for the next calendar year with the intention of paying in full by December 31. The pledge is not legally binding; we all understand life happens and circumstances can change; however, you are encouraged to make a pledge you may reasonably expect to uphold. We recognize that for various reasons some people may prefer to give without pledging; a pledge is certainly not required for church membership. However, (a) those who pledge find a pledge commitment can serve as a gentle yet persistent reminder that we have the ongoing privilege and responsibility to consistently and dependably support the work of the church's mission with our finances, and (b) pledging helps better enable our Session to responsibly and more accurately plan and budget for the future of our church.

### WHAT IS THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR?

The Liturgical Calendar orders the annual life of the church according to the life of Christ and events of salvation history. The Common Lectionary recommends a set of Scripture readings organized around the Christian year and attentive to the broad themes of the biblical story. In the Old Testament, seasons of fasting and feasting were observed as occasions for festival worship; for the New Testament church, Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and promised return give meaning to the seasons, help order the annual cycle worship and guide the selection of Scriptures read and proclaimed in worship. Over the years a cycle of festivals and seasons has emerged and is now generally observed throughout the ecumenical church, including these days and seasons:

- Advent, the season to recollect the hope of the coming of Christ, and to look forward to the Lord's coming again,
- Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Christ,
- Epiphany, a day for commemorating God's self-manifestation to all people,
- Lent, a season of spiritual discipline and preparation, beginning with Ash Wednesday, anticipating the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ,
- Holy Week, a time of remembrance and proclamation of the atoning suffering and death of Jesus Christ,
- Easter, the day of the Lord's resurrection and the season of rejoicing which commemorates his ministry until his Ascension, and continues through
- The Day of Pentecost, the celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

*The church also observes other days such as Baptism of the Lord, Transfiguration of the Lord, Trinity Sunday, All Saints Day and Christ the King.*



# parish

## *Transformed by Grace, Faith and Love*



Dear Members and Friends of Greenwood Church:

In the coming weeks our congregation will undertake a stewardship emphasis prepared by Parish Publishing entitled *Transformed by Grace, Faith, and Love*. We begin this three-week emphasis on **Sunday, October 29**. During the three weeks, we will focus on God's gifts of grace, faith, and love and how God uses these gifts to shape us so He can accomplish His plan on earth through us.

**Sunday October 29, "Transformed by Grace:"** By grace, we acknowledge God's call to be His stewards, and we express our gratitude for the wonderful privilege to serve God through our stewardship. By grace, God gives us physical and spiritual blessings, especially the gift of His Son, Jesus. God's grace gives us life and salvation and that same grace makes it possible for us to know God's will and be equipped to do His will.

**Sunday November 5, "Transformed by Faith:"** By grace, God gives us faith. This precious gift of faith enables us to place our trust in Jesus. Through faith, along with God's strength and wisdom, we, as ordinary people, can do extraordinary things. Stewardship is our faith in action. Stewards guided by faith become Jesus' hands, feet, and mouth in this world.

**Sunday November 12, "Transformed by Love:"** Love comes from God. "*We love because He first loved us*" (1 John 4:19). God demonstrated His awesome love for us by sending His Son, Jesus, to the cross to atone for our sins. He wants His love within us to overflow to others.

We pray each of you will join us for worship and work through the prepared Bible studies (Bible studies will be emailed *and* made available in the narthex) as we focus on the virtues of Grace, Faith, and Love in the coming weeks. We will learn how God uses these virtues to develop a closer relationship with us as well as to prompt us to action with our time, talents, and treasure.

Please prayerfully consider how you will fill out the enclosed Commitment Form, and bring it to worship with you on **Commitment Sunday, November 19**. You may also drop it off in the church office at your convenience.

May God bless all of us for our continued faithful stewardship of the many blessings He has entrusted to our care.

Serving Christ together,

The Stewardship Committee

## *Transformed by Grace, Faith and Love*

**Grace, Faith, and Love** are the focus for this year's stewardship emphasis. These three spiritual pillars are foundations for the steward who has received these gifts from God. As sinful and selfish people, we have done nothing to deserve or earn God's grace, faith, and love, but we do receive them with joy and gratitude. These three pillars transform our hearts so we become "God-centered" rather than "self-centered." We have a new direction and purpose for our lives. Through His gifts of grace, faith, and love, God transforms us into responsible stewards who seek to please Him. Our faithful stewardship is evidence that we are people transformed by grace, faith, and love.

### **Grace Engenders Gratitude**

Webster's New World Dictionary defines grace as "the love and favor of God toward human beings." Grace is God's unmerited favor. It is unmerited, unearned, and undeserved. Grace is not ours to earn; it is God's to give. As the apostle Paul wrote, "*What do you have that you did not receive?*" (1 Corinthians 4:7). As Christians, we understand that all we are and have are by God's grace. "*And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace*" (John 1:16). God lavishes us with his grace. Each day we celebrate God's gift of life. We bask in the beauty of God's creation. We receive blessing after blessing from our wonderful, giving, and gracious God.

The zenith of God's grace is the gift of His Son, Jesus, Who gives us the gift of salvation. As an old acronym for grace so aptly states, we have "God's Riches at Christ's Expense." Even though we are undeserving, God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on a cross, and we are given eternal salvation. God was not bound by necessity to give salvation. It is the result of God's gracious will; salvation is a gift. Many may strive to earn this gift, but none of us is capable of doing so.

By God's grace, God calls us to be His stewards. The Rev. James Ryle, founder of Truth Works Ministry, wrote, "Grace is the empowering presence of God enabling us to be who He created us to be, and to do what He has called us to do." God's grace gives us both the desire and the power to do His will.

Knowing that God has graciously given us our physical and spiritual lives, we seek to show our gratitude by how we live and what we do with our lives. An important way to show our thanksgiving is to be God-pleasing stewards. Faithful stewardship expresses our love and gratitude to God, and our faithful stewardship gives evidence of God's grace in our lives.



## Faith Produces Works

Faith is the most precious gift anyone can receive from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Faith is “*more precious than gold*” (1 Peter 1:7). By His grace, God gives us faith.

The writer of Hebrews defines faith as follows: “*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith enables us to place our trust in Jesus. By grace through faith, we are saved from our lives of sin and ensured that we can live with Jesus forever in heaven.



Stewardship puts that faith into action. Stewardship is a whole-life response to God’s acts of creation and redemption. Through faith, we understand that our stewardship is God working in and through us. Our new life in Christ finds expression in Christian stewardship through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not what we do, not what we give, not how we serve — but what God does, what God gives, how God serves through us. Stewardship is our response to His love and gifts to us. Through faith, we are empowered to be God’s hands, feet, and mouth to our world.

In Ephesians 2:10 Paul wrote, “*For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*” Through faith, we are saved, and that same faith energizes us to live out our faith by doing the good works God has prepared in advance for us to do. Our good works as stewards give evidence of our faith. “*So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*” (James 2:17).

## Love Prompts Action

In 1 John 4:19 we read, “*We love because He first loved us.*” Because God loved us so much that He would give His Son for us (John 3:16), we, too, can love. And just as Christ’s love for us led Him to labor for us through His passion, His death, and His victorious resurrection, so we, too, are prompted by our love for Him and others to labor.

God expects that the love He “lavishes” on us will naturally flow out of us into others. Real love is evidenced by action, both in labors of love to fellow believers and to our neighbors as well (Galatians 6:10).

Christian stewardship should never consist of only occasional activities, but is rather a steady and increasing outflow that shares God’s love in us with others. Jesus said, “*Freely you have received, freely give*” (Matthew 10:8, NIV). By grace, our giving, helping, and serving are joyful expressions of gratitude motivated by love because of what God has given to us and done for us. The love of Jesus strengthened in us by the Holy Spirit, through Word and Sacrament, flows through us so we can show love to people around us.



Through faith, we understand that we exist only out of God’s love and grace, and we are enabled to see God’s love at work in our lives. With God’s strength, we are empowered to live lives worthy of his love.

## My Commitment to the Lord

*“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).*

### Being faithful with my time and talents ...

- Read God’s Word
- Pray
- Worship
- Join Bible studies
- Witness
- Serve



### Being faithful with my treasure ...

My (our) faith goal in 2018 is to grow in the grace of giving by pledging \_\_\_\_\_ percent of my (our) income.

My (our) weekly commitment will be \$\_\_\_\_\_

My (our) monthly commitment will be \$\_\_\_\_\_

Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

*Prayerfully consider the faith goal of tithing ...  
... giving ten percent.*

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Greenwood Community Church, Presbyterian**

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*Keep this half for your records*