

I Was Thinking..... September 1, 2024



As summer begins to wind down and we shift towards autumn and begin to think about harvest and Thanksgiving, it also seems a good time to reflect on our Pentecost prayer, “Come Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.” In John 14:26, Jesus shares God’s promise to send the Holy Spirit to teach and to guide the disciples after he has gone. In Galatians 5:22-25, Paul also shares with new Christians that there are signs that the Holy Spirit is at work in their lives. Paul calls this Fruit of the Spirit: kindness, generosity, patience, faithfulness, humility, self-control, joy, peace, and love. He cautions these new Christians to make choices in how they live their lives; that they can intentionally pursue the Fruit of the Spirit by living Spirit-led and Spirit-filled lives, or simply fall into habits and desires that lead to a hollow and meaningless life.

For Christians, pursuing the Fruit of the Spirit through making intentional, Spirit-led choices also means thinking about how we can best use the resources that God has gifted us: time, talent, and treasure. When we give of our time, talent, and treasure to bring the Kingdom of God closer and to build up the body of Christ, we are making a statement about who we are, what we value, and how we want the world to be. Giving of our time, talent, and treasure helps us to grow in our faith and in our discipleship when we think carefully about what we are doing and why. This also puts us in alignment with God’s mission in this world.

Anglicans express their understanding of God’s mission in this world through the 5 Marks of Mission:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
3. To respond to human need by loving service;
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation;
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

When we intentionally give of our time, talent, and treasure to help support the work of making these marks a reality, we are also inviting the Holy Spirit to grow the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

In a 2022 article for the Anglican Church of Canada, the Venerable Cheryl Toth (Stewardship Officer for the Diocese of Qu’Appelle) wrote about the relationship between Fruit of the Spirit and giving.

“As with Paul’s contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit so we can contrast our society’s attitude to money and that of our faith. In a world which promotes a belief that there is a **scarcity** of resources, Christians proclaim the **abundance** of God. In a world that heightens **fear**, Christians declare we live with **faith**. In a world that encourages us to **acquire** more and more, Christians **give** to meet the needs of others and their community. In a world that says we give to others out of **obligation**, Christians promote **giving joyfully**. In a world that uses money for **transactions** in which we get something for what we give, Christians use money for

transformational purposes that may not be realized for generations. In a world that says how we use our money is a **private** matter, Christians encourage one another to be **transparent** about where they give and why. In a world that promotes **ownership**, Christians talk about **stewardship** and see ourselves as those who take care of what belongs ultimately to God alone. Spirited stewardship helps us grow to be more loving, peaceful, joyous, kind, self-controlled and generous in how we share our resources for the renewal of the world God loves.”

What does all of this mean for ACPC? Over the five Sundays of September, ACPC will be exploring the Fruit of the Spirit through our Sunday church services. Each week, the readings, the sermon, the music, and the prayers will be focused on one or two features of the Fruit of the Spirit. It is my prayer for all of us that we will leave church Sunday mornings to think about ways that we might each more intentionally live out and welcome the Fruit of the Spirit into our lives. And in doing so, it is also my prayer that we will each think about ways in which we can all be faithful stewards of the time, talent, and treasure that God has gifted us.

To that end, I am attaching a Stewardship Letter on behalf of myself and the ACPC Council. As we all reflect on the many blessings of our lives, this is a great opportunity to think about what we intend to do in the year ahead in relation to our time, talent, and treasure. Please note that we are NOT looking for a firm commitment to giving; rather, we are taking an inventory of what we all INTEND to do. This information, which will be held confidentially by me and by our treasurers, will help us to plan our budgets and to plan our activities within ACPC and the broader community for 2025. It will help us to better identify how people want to share, what talents might be put to use in our current ministries, and what ideas people might have for new ministries. For some people, this might be a case of indicating that they intend to share their time, talent, and treasure in the same ways that they have already been doing. For others, this may be an opportunity to think about making a change. But for all us, it can be a time to pray on what brings the Fruit of the Spirit into our lives and how sharing through stewardship might increase that fruit and help us to achieve God’s mission.

Sometimes it can seem that stewardship campaigns are only concerned about money. But please be assured that we are looking equally at the gifts of time, talent, and treasure as we move forward with making plans for ACPC’s future and considering how we can positively impact God’s world. Please feel free to ask questions or to share what is on your heart as we journey through September.

May this truly be a time for the Spirit to come and to renew St. James, St. Bee’s, and Christ Church. May God bless us, strengthen us, and give us a sense of peace as we set about doing His will. Amen.

- Reverend Joanne, Pastoral Administrator -