

Generosity in Motion ~ March 2021



In the fall and winter of 2020, our NJ Synod made an incredible stewardship ministry opportunity available to its congregations. The name we gave this endeavor was ‘Generosity Again,’ and what a success it was! An informal poll indicated that nearly every congregation reported gains in their annual stewardship appeal if not maintaining their prior year’s reported intention of giving. Given what this year has been like, this was quite a blessing.

One of the primary reasons for this was due to the focus on -as is so often the case and not just with respect to cultivating generosity- communication. In that fall/winter seasonal seminar, one of the central aspects of putting together a strong stewardship appeal was being reminded that in addition to *informing* our congregation about our annual appeal and the need to receive financial offerings and tithes; and in addition to the importance of *asking* every household to join in their congregation’s ‘generosity journey’ -another essential ingredient is *inspiring* our households in their giving. This is something we seek to accomplish through what is referred to as ‘impact’ or ‘outcome’ stories. I think of this being like answering that essential question raised in ‘spiritual direction:’ *where have you seen God at work?*

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Marlton took this part of the seminar to heart, and as a congregation with strong lay leadership they generated a booklet of impact stories from their members. Two of these are shared below. May they inspire you in your giving. And may they help all of us remember that making offerings is a blessing to the one who gives to their congregation for a variety of reasons, not least of which because it is one of the most essential ways the Life of Christ is manifest in our lives: blessed to be a blessing.

I was standing in my kitchen cooking dinner and decided it would be a good time to listen to today's message and music. The selections you provided had me singing and dancing at the stove with such joy in my heart. And now I am crying. I am crying tears of thanks that I belong to such a loving community. That our staff, who have had to reinvent how they do their work, still do their jobs with such thoughtfulness and care. And now I'm sobbing and my rice is going to taste all salty. Everything is a mess but everything is beautiful and loving and God is here. Right here in my kitchen. Loving this messy person. Loving this community. Thank you for inviting me in.
~Peace and love. Allison

I do have some words for Bible Study as one of Brother Brett's ministries: The ministry of Bible study at Prince of Peace is so dear to me in particular because of how deeply it has moved me and how dramatically I have grown in faith since I joined it. I am in a difficult situation now; some might even say, I'm at a crossroads. I set out on a big plan about what I was going to do about it. Oh, but such pain!!! And then I remembered that gem of Truth I learned in Bible study: to trust in God, even if it feels as though I'm stepping off a cliff. I prayed (yelled) for God to take the reins of my life and make it go where God wants it to go. I was met with a strong presence of God, the clear message to slow down and let God direct me one day at a time. Pain gone; comfort received! Not just a little bit but inexplicably so!! And this is how I have been walking,

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at least in terms of that "crossroad." There isn't any crossroad! I am continuing on with faith in God to show me the way, receiving love beyond anything I could have imagined and blessings at every turn. God is still putting people, things, and situations in my path, and now I am listening. Thanks be to God for so richly blessing me and for giving me Bible study and Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. ~In Christ, Liz