

## Stewardship Minute – Tom Brown – November 17, 2019

When I was asked to speak to the 8 o'clock service on the subject of stewardship and pledging, the expression "preaching to the choir" came to mind. My guess is that the church is already the beneficiary of generous pledges from most of you.

The theme for this year's Every Member Pledge campaign is "With Glad and Generous Hearts." But for the fact that this theme came from a Biblical verse, I might have suggested it be "With Grateful and Generous Hearts" because at bottom, as we lawyers like to say, I think pledging is about gratitude to God for His many blessings bestowed on us.

Sally Guy and I have been blessed in so many ways. In spite of some health challenges along the way, we are now blessed with good health; we have three wonderful grandchildren who live close by; we are enjoying an active retirement and we have the fellowship of this church. There are many other blessings, large and small, that make us most grateful to God in this Thanksgiving season.

We are all products of our past. I spent my career as a business lawyer. I think that we need to think of the church, at least in part, as a business.

I want to consider a few business reasons for making a pledge.

- Pledging is important to enable the Vestry to construct a meaningful and realistic budget. Otherwise, the budget would be an uneducated guess that would be subject to constant monitoring and tinkering.
- Immanuel gets no financial support from the national church or the Diocese of Virginia. The financial support goes the other way. 8.4 percent of the church budget goes to the Diocese to support its operations.
- Although we had 22 new pledges last year, they were not enough to offset the pledges lost due to deaths or people moving away. Some of the lost pledges were substantial and will be hard to replace.

Based on our history, we can expect to lose 10 more pledges next year.

Significantly, 50 percent of our pledge income comes from just 30 of our pledging units, a situation that I understand is not unique to Immanuel. So, when we lose one of these 30 pledges, it hurts. The most common pledges are in the \$1000 to \$1200 range -- or less than many people pay for their cell phone and TV service. Although the average pledge number has been increasing, it does not take someone from Harvard Business School to tell us that we can and should be doing better.

We also have too many otherwise active parishioners who do not pledge at all. This is not good, but the good news is that it means that every new pledge or increase in a pledge can have a material positive impact on the mission and operation of the church. If you have not pledged or have not increased your pledge in a while, please do so in any amount. You can definitely make a difference.