

OVERVIEW

COMMITMENT CAMPAIGN 2017

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight ... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

—Hebrews 12:1

This year's campaign theme, "Run the Race Together," was chosen to express the incredible power that comes from bringing together our collective gifts of time, talent, and treasure in support of God's calling.

We want everyone at Trinity to be more informed and reflective about stewardship. This packet will help you facilitate "family discussions" with various groups and individuals on this important topic. Included are details on historical giving trends and information on how our investments directly influence the many ministries of Trinity. We have also provided a guide to foster interpersonal dialogue about stewardship, including reflection on how we formed our own beliefs about giving.

Our goal is to encourage participation in the commitment race by all members. More importantly, we want all of Trinity to understand what we can accomplish together when we meet our goal. We believe engagement in stewardship begins with conversation. Thank you for your help in facilitating these conversations.

Campaign packets, including pledge cards, will be mailed September 26.



SHARING YOUR STORY

GETTING STARTED



Example

WHAT MY PARENTS TAUGHT ME

By Margaret Reiser

My earliest memories of giving to the church are of sitting with my parents in the third row on the right at Trinity when I was a small girl, my father putting the weekly envelope into the plate that was passed. When I joined the church as a teenager, it was expected that I would also make a pledge, which I paid first out of my allowance and later from various summer jobs.

In other family recollections, giving and volunteering generally seemed to go hand in hand. Not only did my family attend every church service and family night supper, with me participating in choir and the youth group, but my father and mother were actively involved as volunteers and elders of the church. It seemed that they were pretty much in the middle of anything important that happened at church.

Now decades later, it occurs to me that Bob and I have followed some of these early unspoken principals in the way we think about our own giving to Trinity as well as to other organizations. Here are three themes we have found of help:

- ▶ We believe the church benefits by having each member give, rather than having a few people carry the majority of the cost.

Organizations that become reliant on a small group of donors often struggle, whereas those with a broad group of donors at all levels tend to be healthier. There is meaning for each person in giving their share, whether large or small.

- ▶ We have decided in our own lives to give of both our time and money to the things we care the most about, as exemplified by my parents. Trinity Presbyterian Church is at the top of that list.
- ▶ Bob and I find that it helps us to sit down each year and make a giving plan. We started doing this when we married in 2004, and I think it has helped us to talk through the decisions we are making and be comfortable with them.

Through watching my parents and through our own experience, I truly believe that the giving of time and money is one of the joys of the Christian life. It gives each of us the opportunity to feel a sense of purpose and commitment in joint communion with fellow members, and allows Trinity to shine its light in our city and to reflect on and within each of us.

DEVOTIONAL

AN ABUNDANT LIFE

by Rev. Jeremy Jinkins

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight ... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.”

—Hebrews 12:1

There is a story from the Gospel according to Luke about a wealthy farmer. His crops were so productive that surplus grain was spilling out of his barns and silos. Wondering what he should do, the wealthy farmer answered himself saying, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.” The parable this story sits within points back to our Hebrews passage; the weight of security and the clinging sin of trusting his own work rather than God’s providence is palpable. Seeking peace the farmer goes on to say that having done this, “I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, and be merry.’¹

At first blush we may say to ourselves, “Good for him! He is laying out a sensible retirement plan.” But let us remember a handful of important details. The farmer has good and productive lands. The farmer already has deep stores of grain and goods. He *already has* what he needs. His desire for security weighs him down, and as he seeks to calm his soul, our wealthy farmer stumbles into self-interested clinging. In the parable Jesus warns that because we cannot see into the future, our attempts to control our fate is a futile one.

For us today I think the passage speaks of our tendency to see scarcity in the face of abundance. Frederick Buechner sees this kind of ‘clinging’ on to security as a very basic derailment in our faith. He says,

Avarice, greed, concupiscence and so forth are all based on the mathematical truism that the more you get, the more you have. The remark of Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35) is based on the human truth that the more you give away in love, the more you are. It is not just for the sake of other people that Jesus tells us to give rather than get, but for our own sakes too.²

Here at Trinity we have been blessed by so many who have given so much. Our church is not simply a beautiful physical plant residing on beautiful grounds inhabited by lovely

and kind people. Trinity is a force for good in this city that has changed the history of Atlanta for the better. We are inheritors of a great tradition; to paraphrase Bernard of Chartres, we are able to move further only by standing on the shoulders of giants.

I’ve heard Commitment Campaign Co-chair Esther Stokes mention on a number of occasions that “what happens at the corner of Howell Mill and Moores Mill has the power to change Atlanta.” Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great of cloud of witnesses, who have prepared the way, let us put down all the fears that hold us back, along with our anxiety and need to control, and let us look forward to our race together to see what we can accomplish.

Reflection Questions

1. In what areas of my life do I believe I see scarcity?
2. Why do we have a tendency to see scarcity in the face of abundance?
3. Who are some of the giants on whose shoulders we stand? Who is a part of the great cloud of witnesses?
4. How can our abundance change Atlanta?

Prayer for the Season

Blessed are you, God of all creation; through your goodness you have filled our cups to overflowing. We have enough, and more than enough. Your goodness has created us, your bounty has sustained us, your love has redeemed us. As individuals and as a community of faith, we seek to see your will and understand your way. With faith seeking understanding, we ask that you help us know more clearly what you would have us do with the wealth entrusted to our care. Give us hearts to love and serve you, and enable us to show our gratefulness by giving ourselves to serve our neighbors here in Atlanta, and indeed in the world. Amen.

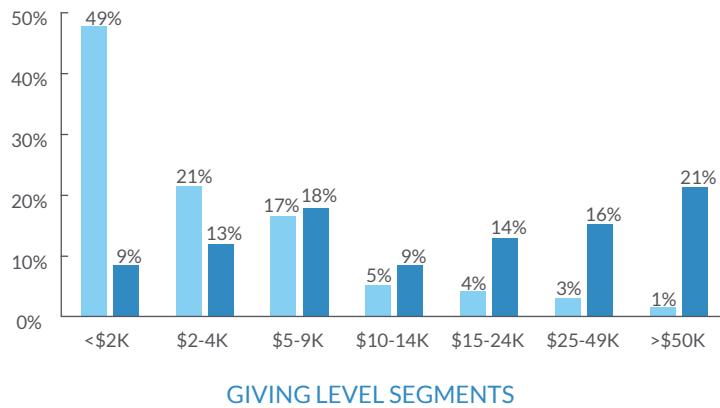
¹Luke 12:17-19, *The Parable of the Rich Fool*

²Frederick Buechner. *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*. (Harper & Row: New York), 1973.

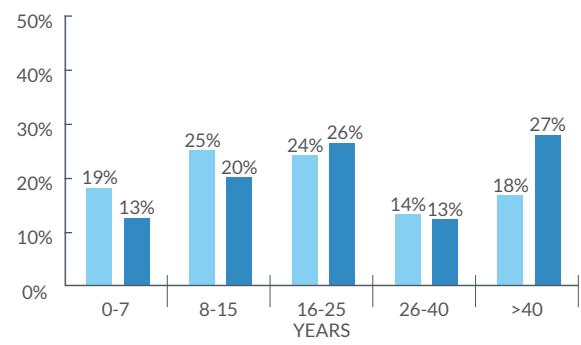
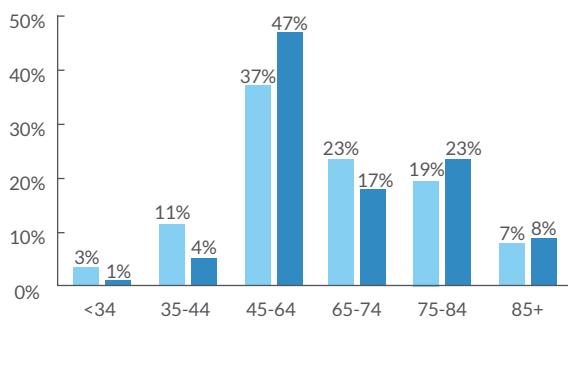
GATHERING THE FACTS

GIVING PRACTICES AT TRINITY

Are there opportunities to increase the pledge amount for larger numbers of members?



What can we learn from inter-generational giving patterns?



■ Percentage of Pledges ■ Percentage of Dollars

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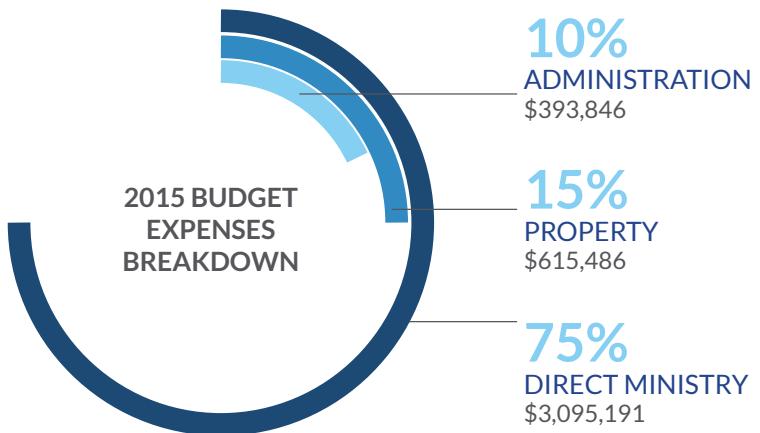
2015 BUDGET

Allocated Expenses

Mission	\$1,032,683	25%
Finance & Admin	735,992	18%
Worship & Music	759,804	19%
Children & Family*	382,478	9%
Youth & Family	396,793	10%
Congregational	312,745	8%
Adult Education & Spiritual Formation	374,655	9%
Commitment	131,260	3%
Basketball & Activities	26,078	0.64%
Operating Reserve	(47,966)	-1%
 Total Expenses	 4,104,523**	

*Includes child care

**In 2015, 6% of Trinity's budgeted income was from non-pledged gifts, Trust Fund, and other non-pledged sources



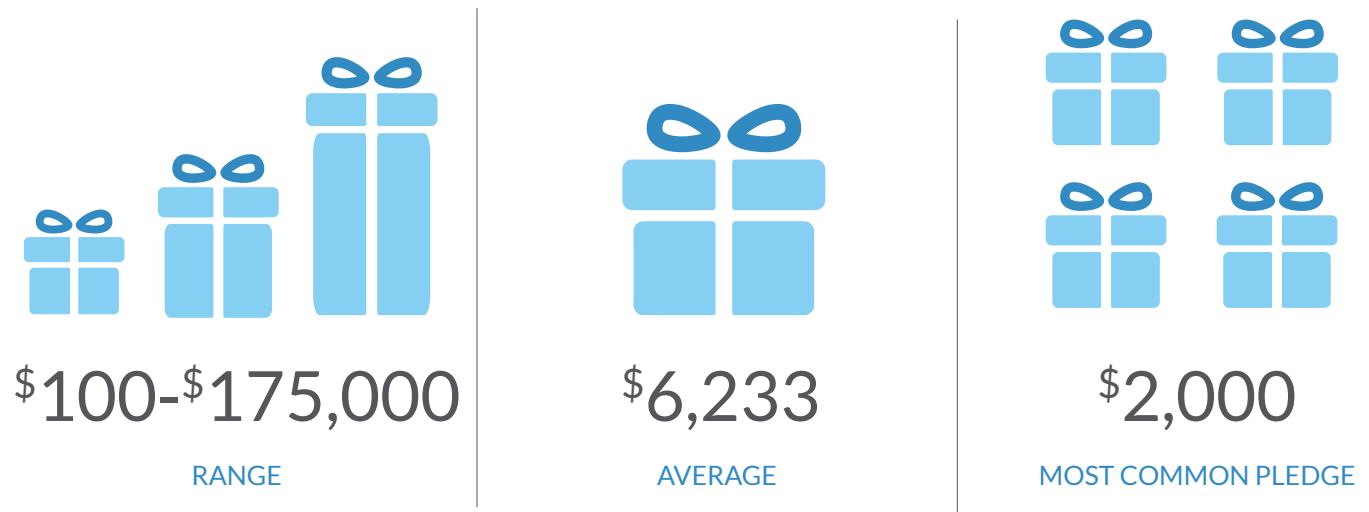
“ We are surrounded by God's benefits. The best use of these benefits is an unceasing expression of gratitude. ”
—John Calvin



IMAGINE
IF WE COULD INCREASE OUR PLEDGE
TARGET BY 10% – WE COULD ...

- 01 Help address deferred maintenance
- 02 Fund staff cost-of-living increases (the first since 2014)
- 03 Expand mission work in Haiti and Cuba
- 04 Improve the sanctuary sound system for hearing impaired

2016 PLEDGES



“ To be grateful is to recognize the love of God in everything He has given us—and He has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His Love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces from Him. ”

—Thomas Merton

GIVING TRENDS

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of Pledges	742	675	688	707	705	675	695	656	608
Realized Pledges	\$4,064,589	\$3,670,381	\$3,528,354	\$3,778,609	\$3,729,650	\$3,795,548	\$3,987,132	\$3,941,367	\$3,724,709
Percentage of Goal	98%	87%	90%	99%	94%	101%	100%	94%	96%
Giving Households	62%	56%	56%	57%	57%	55%	58%	54%	52%

The number of organizations seeking contributions continues to increase—private schools, arts groups, political causes. How do we reprioritize our giving to put the church and God first?

	Religious Giving as % Total Giving	Religious Giving as % of Income
Latter-day Saints	89.0%	5.55%
Pentecostal/ASG	83.4%	2.93%
Other Protestant	69.1%	2.57%
Baptist	76.9%	2.01%
Lutheran	62.1%	1.48%
Greek/Russian/Eastern Orthodox	62.1%	1.34%
Jewish	40.6%	1.36%
Methodist	62.9%	1.23%
Episcopalian	52.0%	1.22%
Presbyterian	56.6%	1.20%
Catholic	49.8%	0.74%
Muslim/Buddhist	36.1%	0.61%
Jehovah's Witness	40.9%	0.55%
None	24.1%	0.27%

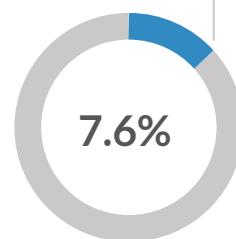
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Christian giving is a responsive act. It represents gratitude to God. It is a symbol of self-giving. Therefore, giving is not a once-for-all event, but a regular part of life. It is a spiritual discipline that reminds us who we are and whose we are.

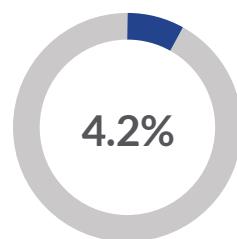
—Herb Mather

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Households that earn \$50-75K give an average of 7.6% of their discretionary income to charity



Households that earn \$100K or more give an average of 4.2% of their discretionary income to charity



ACTION PLAN

YOUR CHECKLIST



Ambassadors Assigned To Groups

- Review and update the roster for your group
- Prayerfully discuss your pledge with family and loved ones
- Submit your pledge early. Pledges can be made online at www.trinityatlanta.org/pledge-now
- Schedule with your group leaders a date or event at which you can present on behalf of the commitment campaign
- Tell your story and encourage others to tell their stories
- Remind members that the pledge cards will be mailed out September 26
- Attend the October 2 luncheon and encourage others to attend
Stewardship Celebration Luncheon with Tom Tewell
12:00 pm, Williams Hall
- Encourage others to pledge
- Help the commitment co-chairs by relating what you might learn in conversations



At-Large Ambassadors

During the commitment process we will identify people who do not affiliate with groups and will be assigning them based on relationships; as these assignments are made you will be asked to reach out to talk about the commitment campaign, to tell your story, and to encourage the people to participate. You WILL NOT be expected to ask them to give or make increases.

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