



*Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.*

1 Peter 4:10

# The Church of the Advent

## Stewardship 2020

**O** MERCIFUL CREATOR, thy hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for thy loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of thy good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

*Collect for Stewardship*

## **A Message on Stewardship from the Senior Warden**

Dear Members and Friends of the Church of the Advent,

Each year at canvass time we are called on to give back something of ourselves to God in a very specific and particular way: a pledged financial contribution to support the budget of the Advent in the year to come. This stewardship brochure provides information and reflections to help each of us thoughtfully and prayerfully consider our pledges. I begin it with a request, followed by an assurance, and a challenge.

The request is that you give generously. Last year, the Wardens and Vestry called on the Parish to participate in what we termed “Ten Percent for the Advent,” a call to increase individual pledges by at least ten percent. A great number of you met or exceeded this request, demonstrating the commitment, vitality, and momentum of the Advent’s congregation as we entered the transition period following Fr. Warren’s retirement. Now, a year later, I ask you to maintain or exceed that level of giving. Our stewardship goal for this year is \$600,000 in pledged income. That’s a big figure, but in reality not much beyond the \$570,000 we achieved last

year. And it's less than half of our annual budget. We are blessed with a strong endowment that helps maintain the fabric and worship of our parish. But all aspects of our pastoral, musical, and educational programs depend on current giving, as do our ministries of service to those in need. It is our responsibility, in this day and time, to support the Advent in a real financial way just as those who came before us have done. And we have a good deal of work to do to move toward a more prudent balance between spending from current income versus endowment funds. This balance should be about half and half, but presently we are almost two-thirds reliant on endowment funds. This habit is unsustainable, and must change.

The assurance is that the lay leadership charged with the secular affairs of the Advent—including the budget and the endowment—takes very seriously the responsibility to manage the funds pledged to, and spent by, the Parish in a responsible way. We are now into our second decade of balanced budgets while still growing programs. Of course, this has been helped by largely favorable economic conditions (a few years in the middle notwithstanding!); and growing revenue in the form of increased pledging. But we have also developed a diligent practice in the Vestry and the finance committee of detailed budgeting, thorough oversight, and good old fashioned Yankee thrift (despite many of us being Southerners!).

The challenge is to expand your stewardship beyond just monetary gifts, as critical as those may be. The Advent also needs our participation and service. To that end, we have dubbed this year's canvass the "Time and Talent" appeal. I think of this as the logical successor to Ten Percent for the Advent: as we move into a new year, one which will likely see the arrival of a new Rector, let us show with the gift of our time and talent the same vitality and momentum in our Parish that we have already shown by increased financial giving. In addition to your pledge card, the stewardship package also includes a card listing a wide array of opportunities for service, participation, and learning here at the Advent. Pick something new, or redouble your commitment to an activity in which you already participate, and come one more time a month. Maybe that's serving

at the altar, or at the community dinner, or any number of other things. The key is that the Advent needs your personal presence and involvement, not just your financial support.

I thank you all for your generous gifts, those financial, and those of time and talent. May God continue to bless our beloved Church of the Advent.

Faithfully yours,  
C. Thomas Brown, *Senior Warden*

**A**LMIGHTY GOD, FATHER OF ALL MERCIES, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we shew forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

– *A General Thanksgiving*, Book of Common Prayer

## **Giving: A Grudging Love Story**

I've been told by family members that I wasn't a generous child. I had my stuffed animals and then I had my trucks and my trains and then finally my books. With none of these loved possessions did I part happily. As I grew older I learned not to wail when someone touched one of my things but I kept an eye on anyone who showed an interest in something that belonged to me.

When I was ordained and went to my first parish I soon learned that people expected me to say something about giving and especially about giving of one's treasure to the church. In order that I not be a complete hypocrite this meant I had to significantly increase the amount of money I was willing to let go of. It was agonizing! All I could think of was what I wasn't going to be able to buy for myself. Fewer books! Fewer records! Smaller amplifiers and speakers! A more modest car! I'm embarrassed to say that I wrote out my monthly check to All Saints Church, Birmingham, with unconcealed irritation.

But then over time something began to change. What I gave to the church increased year by year and so did my giving to other things I cared about. And I felt better about letting go of my money. Sure, there were times I missed not being able to afford something I wanted (a complete set of the Mozart Piano Concertos lusted over in 1976, darn it!) but by that time giving away things was beginning to be not so much something I did but rather something that defined who I was.

Learning to let go is perhaps the most necessary of all the spiritual disciplines. And it's something we learn in different ways and circumstances all our life long, until at the last, having had lots of practice, we are made ready to give even our life back to the God who made us and receives us home.

This is the time of year when we are encouraged to think about what portion of our treasure we're going to give to the Church of the Advent.

We know that the Advent is a place set apart, a treasure house of Christian worship and devotion, not easily duplicated. And we know that, despite having a significant endowment, what we value here

can't happen without the financial support of the people who worship in this holy place. The generosity of previous Adventers keeps the building from leaking and falling down, but what goes on inside the building and by extension in the lives of those who worship here, depends on us, the living.

This letter, however, hasn't been so much about what the Church of the Advent needs from us as it is about what we need to do for our souls' health. And if you're a reluctant giver, someone who jealously guards your trucks and stuffed animals, isn't it time to loosen your grip on life? I think what you'll find is that everything you let go of returns as a blessing.

One last thing. If you don't feel too happy giving things away, don't worry. It's like that mustard seed Jesus talks about in his parables. It may start little but once it's planted it grows and blesses everyone around it, including even us reluctant givers. And before you know it you've become a cheerful giver and then perhaps a sacrificial giver, "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." – Romans 12:1

Fr Truman Welch, *Interim Rector*

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What follows on subsequent pages is the practical mechanics on pledging and how it works at the Advent. If you have been pledging for decades, you may skip the rest of the brochure. If you haven't, or if you have questions about how pledging works at the Advent, please read onwards!

***In any case, please return your pledge card and your Time & Talent worship selections to the Advent in a collection plate or by mail, no later than December 1, the First Sunday of Advent.***

***You may also pledge online on the church's website, [www.theadventboston.org](http://www.theadventboston.org). When you pledge online, you will get an email confirming your pledge. If you do not receive such an email,***

please contact the Parish Office at 617-523-2377 ext. 122, or [office@theadventboston.org](mailto:office@theadventboston.org).

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## **MEMBERSHIP AT THE ADVENT**

Anyone is always welcome to worship at the Advent. And as we all hear from the pulpit every Sunday, we very much try to extend a warm welcome to all of our visitors. Once a visitor becomes more than just a visitor, however, and decides to make the Advent his or her Christian home, then it is time for that visitor to become a member of the Parish.

To be a member of the Church of the Advent, one must commit both to regular worship at and regular financial support of the Parish. At the Advent, as is the general Episcopal tradition, we commit to support the church financially with a pledge of giving for the upcoming year through the annual Stewardship Campaign.

By our Parish by-laws, only members of the Parish who make a recorded financial contribution are allowed to vote at the Annual Meeting, and only financially supporting members of the Parish may serve as Vestrymen and Officers. By Parish tradition, we have extended this requirement to the other ministries in the Church, from acolytes to ushers to readers to church school teachers, and on and on, all of whom must also be pledging members.

Membership in the Parish is a way of formalizing your spiritual discipline of regular worship in and regular support of God's holy church. If you have not supported the Advent financially in a regular way, but think of it as your church, your spiritual home, or your Christian family, this is an especial call to you.

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## PLEDGING

A pledge card is enclosed with this brochure. Cards are also available at the back of the church or you may contact the parish office to get one. You may also pledge online on the church's website, [www.theadventboston.org](http://www.theadventboston.org). Click on "Pledge Online" and follow the instructions.

Once you have made the decision to pledge, hopefully prayerfully and joyfully, you can fill out your card and return it to the Advent in a collection plate on any given Sunday, with the First Sunday of Advent, which this year is December 1, being the deadline of sorts. We make the First Sunday of Advent our deadline for three reasons:

- ✘ First, and most important, it is important simply to have a deadline so that we can hold ourselves accountable, rather than ignore the question of the disposition of our worldly treasures until some vague moment in the future when we might want to face it.
- ✘ Second, that date is our Feast of Title and Dedication, we being the Church of the Advent, and so it is a fitting date to dedicate all of the pledged giving we have done as a Parish family through the Stewardship Campaign to God's holy church and her work.
- ✘ And third, practically, if we know the pledging total by that date, it can help the Vestry more fairly budget for the upcoming year.

There are a few questions the pledge card will ask, other than the amount of your annual pledge—such as whether you want to pay weekly or monthly, or whether you want envelopes for your pledge or not. You may answer these as you like, as there are many ways to follow through on your pledge.

This year's Stewardship Campaign 2020, in addition to your monetary pledge, also provides the opportunity for all parishioners to further enhance their commitment of worship at the Advent by contributing/giving of their "Time & Talent". The Vestry recognizes

that each parishioner contributes monetarily as much as one is able/willing to give; additionally, this year's campaign affords the opportunity for each of us to further commit our "Time & Talent" to any of the list of activities (enclosed and/or on our website). Simply check the box(es) by the activity that you are willing to support with your "Time & Talent" and return with your pledge card. These commitments will be an expression to everyone (including our new Rector) of the activities we, the parishioners, value as part of our worship at the Advent.

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### RECORD-KEEPING

Once your pledge card is received by the Parish, it will be recorded in the Parish office. It then becomes your responsibility to fulfill the pledge during the upcoming year. Some people put a check weekly or monthly in a pledge envelope and drop it in the collection plate. Others simply have their bank or online bill-pay send a regular check. If you give cash, though, ***it is important to put the cash in an official pledge envelope*** so that it can be recorded as given by you, and count toward your pledge.

Your financial contributions will be recorded by the Parish office toward the fulfillment of your pledge. A statement will be mailed to you in April, July, October, and early in December, with a record of your pledge and your donations to date, so that you can keep track of how you are doing on your promise, or make sure that the Parish office hasn't missed something. And, of course, every January the parish office will send you a statement for tax purposes.

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### QUESTIONS OR DISCUSSION

Members of the Stewardship Committee would love the chance to talk to you individually about stewardship and giving at the

Advent. As we have said before, our Stewardship Campaign is not first and foremost about collecting dollars to pay for the church's electric bill, though that is important. It is about giving all members of this our Christian family a formal opportunity to deepen our relationship with God through the sacrificial giving that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ asks of each of us. Let us all use this Stewardship Campaign as a chance to examine our relationship with money and all worldly things, and to ask God to help us redirect our eyes and our hearts to those things of eternal value.

If you would like to speak with a member of the committee, please feel free to do so directly, or contact the office if you would like to have someone get in touch with you.

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

David Lapin

Philip Le Quesne

Peter Madsen

Meg Nelson

Dn Daphne Noyes (ex officio)

Frederick Ou

Kyle Pilares

Paul Roberts

Kara Rodgers

Adam Rutledge

Steven Sayers

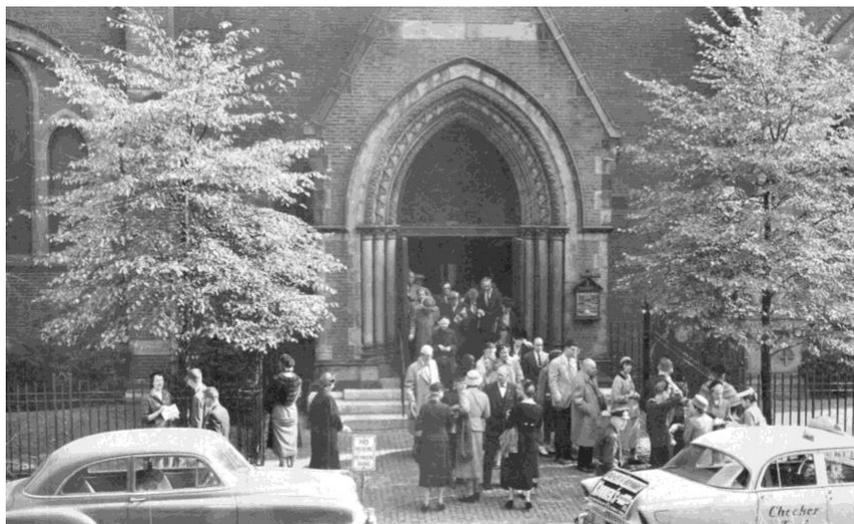
Fr Jay James

Thatcher Gearhart

Francesco Piscitelli

*Co-Chairs*





*Many nations will come from afar to the name of the  
Lord God, bearing gifts in their hands, gifts for the  
King of heaven. Generations of generations  
will give you joyful praise.*

Tobit 13:11

*Cover photo by Julianne Turé.*

*Back photo from "The Advent Looks Ahead" stewardship brochure,  
mid-1950s*