



# Extravagant GENEROSITY

The Heart of Giving

Dear Family we call LPC,

You have heard much already of our stewardship emphasis in the last couple of weeks. *EXTRAVAGANT GENEROSITY: THE HEART OF GIVING* has been challenging me in ways I've never really thought about before, as I hope it has you. Bottom line ... our task is to journey the road we have already traveled, for some of us many times, to discover how we want to express our love for God through our *generous giving*.

*Generosity* is a term we rarely use. Some may think it is reserved for only the wealthy. Actually, *generosity* is not about our bank accounts, it is about our *hearts*. Jesus' response to the widow's offering shows this. *Generosity* reflects God's nature.

November 6 is *Commitment Sunday*. What is God asking *YOU* to do in 2012 for your church family and beyond? Well, begin with prayer, and then recall the truths regarding the grace of giving that you've been taught all your life. There is a question raised by the psalmist, which may serve us well during our personal time of consideration:

"What can I give back to God  
for the blessings he's poured out on me?"  
(Psalm 116:12, The Message)

We can only find the answer in our *hearts*. Nothing we have is too big or grand to offer our awesome God. No gift is too small if it represents our prayers, a sacrifice, and a generous portion of our resources. When our *hearts* are filled with *gratitude*, nothing God asks of us seems unpleasant or impossible.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church said this about *generosity*:

*Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.*

For Wesley, all things belonged to God and were to be used to deepen our relationship with God and positively impact the world for God's purposes. Knowing God leads to *generosity*.

Your *Estimate of Giving* flyer is included with this letter along with the introduction to my sermon two weeks ago. Why is it important to take this step? Because your prayerful, intentional efforts to ask God for insight, and then act upon your decision, will express your love and gratitude for God in a personal and tangible way. Your *Estimate of Giving* also enables the church to implement ministries and support mission throughout the year. Giving calls us to put our trust in God as we give away resources we think we need.

Let's pray for one another this next week during this important time for our church. Pray that together we might grow in the grace of giving.

Prayerfully,

*Terry*

"Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart.  
They shouldn't give with hesitation or because of pressure.  
God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7, CEB)



**LAKWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
**Rev. Terence A. Lucarelli**

**EXTRAVAGANT GENEROSITY: THE HEART OF GIVING**  
***EKG: MINISTRY FLOWS FROM THE HEART***

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**The Introduction to my sermon and the series on October 16, 2011:**

A survey completed by our denomination at the end of 2010, reports that the income in three of every five congregations has declined in the wake of the economic crisis that began in late 2007. *It went on to say that the majority of PC(USA) congregations have felt the impact of the economic crisis in the form of less money available from investments and savings accounts, less money available for mission and benevolence, more requests for cash assistance, more unemployment among church members, a staff salary reduction or a salary freeze, and challenges for capital campaigns and building programs.* In the spring of 2011, 24% of Presbyterian ministers described their congregations financial situation as “serious” and 47% described it as “tight, but we manage.” *The latter is where we find ourselves, but if our current trend continues ... we may be moving into the former.*

*No, I'm not being an alarmist ... I am being a realist.*

Thanks to special gifts we have received in the last couple of years, we've been able to maintain our *programming* and our *mission giving*, albeit at a very *reduced* level ... “tight, but we manage.” Our staff has not received a raise in three years ... *And yes, we all are very thankful for our jobs .. “tight, but we manage.”*

At the completion of our nearly four year *Capital Campaign* and *Building Program*, we find ourselves with some wonderful improvements to our buildings and with no debt to repay ... which was very intentional from the get go. Sure, we had to cut back drastically on what we had dreamed of doing, but the end result is a campus restructuring that is both *very functional* and one that has *met the goals we had determined.*

*But here's the question: We have a great location and great facilities to do mission and ministry right here where God has placed us, but will we have the money necessary to continue that high quality of mission and ministry we are accustomed to, or will there be additional cuts ... to programming, to missions and yes, even to staff?*

Oh gosh, I said that word, didn't I? *Money.* And why *shouldn't* i? Did you know that Jesus talked *more about money* that he did heaven and hell combined? 11 of his 39 *parables* talk in some way about money. And if you were to look at the entirety of Luke's Gospel, almost 1 of every 7 verses refers to money in some way. The *only* single subject Jesus talks about *more than money* is the *Kingdom of God.* *Not prayer, not sin, not even love.*



### Why is returning an Estimate of Giving Card important?

By completing and returning an Estimate of Giving Card, you are expressing your intent and affirming your desire to honor God with your resources. Returning your Estimate of Giving Card makes it possible for our church to plan and implement ministries without hesitation. Knowing your plans allows wise management of resources throughout the year. All ministries our church implements are dependent on the generosity of God's people.



### What happens to my Estimate of Giving Card once I return it?

Your Estimate of Giving Card will remain confidential and is not a legally binding contract. It is your personal commitment to the Lord. If your situation changes and you would like to increase or decrease your estimate, call the church office to speak with our pledge secretary, Meg Sheffield.



### Scriptural Definition of the Tithe

The Bible speaks of the tithe as a standard for giving. The tithe is defined as the first ten percent of our earnings, returned to God and the work of the church. This is difficult for some, and others have grown in their generosity well beyond this biblical standard.

Growing in the grace of giving is a worthy, God-honoring goal to consider each year. Your intentional decision to give in proportion to your resources will enable you to accomplish your personal, good steward goal.



*Extravagant*  
**GENEROSITY**

The Heart of Giving

### ESTIMATE OF GIVING

**LAKWOOD  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
2012**

Monthly Income						
Percent	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$10,000	\$12,500	
12%	\$300	\$600	\$900	\$1,200	\$1,500	
<b>10% A Tithe</b>	<b>\$250</b>	<b>\$500</b>	<b>\$750</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$1,250</b>	
8%	\$200	\$400	\$600	\$800	\$1,000	
6%	\$150	\$300	\$450	\$600	\$750	
4%	\$100	\$200	\$300	\$400	\$500	
2%	\$50	\$100	\$150	\$200	\$250	

## A Personal Challenge

Finding ways to grow deeper in our faith requires opening our hearts to prayer and a willingness to personally evaluate and challenge existing habits. One way to do this is to return a portion of our financial blessings to God through our tithes and offerings. Our giving recognizes God as the source of our blessings. Our gifts help to create and implement ministries that change lives, transform communities, and spread the good news of Christ.

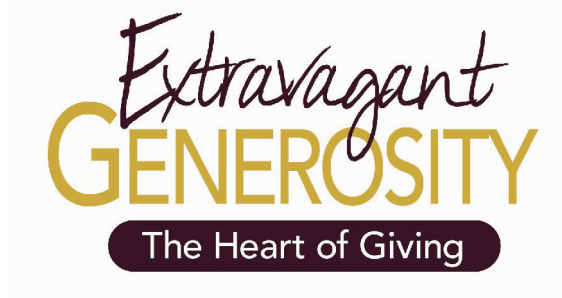
*"I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting. God loves it when the giver delights in the giving."*

**(2 Corinthians 9:7, The Message)**



## How much should I give?

Giving comes from the heart, and prayer is essential for determining what to give. Your decision to be faithful in giving originates out of your love for God. Evaluate your current giving. Does it reflect your blessings? Is it generous? Is it time for you to increase your giving to God and the work of the church? In these questions, you will find your answer. See the chart on the other side of this flyer for an illustration of the tithe.



## Estimate of Giving

Trusting God for the future, I/we desire to be faithful in giving so others can experience God's love through the ministries of our church.

### Estimate of Giving for the Next 12 Months

\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
12-MONTH TOTAL

Anticipated schedule and amount:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly for 52 weeks

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly for 12 months

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Quarterly

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Annually

Name(s):

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Your Address:

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Preferred Telephone Number:

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Primary E-mail Address:

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Preferred Method of Sending of Gifts  
(Please choose one)

- Through the use of offering envelopes
- Electronic Checks
- Contact me about other giving options such as stocks, etc.

Signature(s):

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**Please bring to the church on November 6, COMMITMENT SUNDAY or mail to the church by that date. Thank you!**

Lakewood Presbyterian Church  
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You may wish to e-mail your commitment to Meg Sheffield directly: [sheff4@comcast.net](mailto:sheff4@comcast.net)