

## BUILDING A CULTURE OF GENEROSITY

Generosity continues to grow in the United States. Generosity grew even in the pandemic. Another study found that the median protestant (person in the middle if lined up smallest percentage to largest) only gave 0.62% of their income to the church.

For most people the reason for this has less to do with their wealth or income and more to do with intentionality and regular systematic giving.

Over the course of a year, \$1 per day comes to a gift of \$365, which for about 35-40% of Americans would be significant growth in their giving to the church. The average Starbucks coffee costs \$2.75. This amounts to over \$1,000 if one is purchased each day of the year.

Regular, systematic giving can help all of us become more generous. We get overwhelmed when we think about larger numbers like \$1,000. However, most of us can find \$2.75 per day. As you think and pray about your generosity this year. Consider how systematic giving may help you become more generous.

"How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.." Whether you're a fan of corny jokes, or not, growing in our generosity is a lot like this. Several years ago, we at St. Stephen were challenged by a member to work our way toward being a tithing congregation--giving away 10% of the giving we receive. It seemed like a huge step to take. But each year, our congregational budget has included an increase in our benevolence. Little bit by little bit, one bite at time, our congregation is working toward this goal--to be generous to our surrounding area and the world as we have been blessed. I'm proud to serve a congregation that has this goal, says Pastor Beth."

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### PLACE GOD FIRST IN YOUR BUDGETING AND SPENDING

The Ten Commandments stress that God must be first in our lives. And Jesus said, "Seek first God's kingdom and righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well." (*Matthew 6:33*)

Many experience difficulty giving generously despite the desire and pledge to do so, because they attempt to give from what is left over at the end of the week or month rather than from first fruits, from all they have received.

The simple practice of placing God and the church first in budgeting and spending has helped many to experience joy in their giving. When you do this you are giving from all that a good and loving God has provided. And you are practicing stewardship, understanding that you are but a temporary trustee of what God has entrusted to you.

