



April 2020

Dear Friends,

This is, perhaps, the easiest Stewardship letter I have ever had to write. I don't need to say anything fancy. I don't need to tell you that Jesus talks about money more than anything else. I don't need to remind you why the church is essential in times like these. I just need to tell you to look around at the four walls of your house. Look out the window at the empty streets. Look at the news and see the vast disparities this virus is revealing. Look inside at your own need for connection and spiritual depth.

I'm sure what you'll find is that the message of Jesus has never been more essential in our lifetimes. Bodies matter. The most vulnerable matter. Creation matters. Community matters. Giving to others is essential for our own well-being. Having rich inner resources is vital. God is with you in the suffering, and God is with us when we work to overcome it.

This is what we do at First Church. As you will see in our [2020 Stewardship Brochure](#), our life together is designed to spiritually center our lives in ways that allow us to go forth and serve the world. In rich and meaningful worship, in caring for one another, in the extraordinarily generous program of in-kind giving and missional service, and in ensuring the next generations have what they need to value service and sacrifice, we are uniquely poised to meet the acute needs of the world – needs that are growing even as I type. The time of First Church is now.

Nevertheless, I also want to be clear that this could easily be the most difficult Stewardship season in a generation. We have put together a tight, purpose-driven budget for the rest of this calendar year. Yet, I know many of us have lost our jobs, or are suffering from financial insecurity in ways that are entirely new to us. To you, I want to say – *we have got you. We are here for you.* But in order to do so, in order for those statements to be true, the rest of us must pitch-in and be church like we never have before. If you are one of the lucky ones who finds themselves emerging only slightly scathed from the developing financial crisis, we need you now more than ever.

In this [Stewardship Brochure](#) for 2020, you will find resources on how to think about your giving. The Bible asks us to think about all our assets (financial and time) in terms of a tithe – meaning we should be giving away at least 10% of ourselves. Personally, each time I have inched my financial giving closer to that 10% mark, the easier it has gotten. As a species, it seems to me we function better when our hands are open. All of this is to say, however, that your individual gift to our communal ministries in this time must be prayerful. It must take into consideration what your own needs are, what resources are available to you, and how you can best use them to bring about the Kingdom of God.

Because, friends, Church was made *for this*. The time to be church is now. We need each other, and we need you. Now more than ever it is clear that whatever we do we must do it together. And for that reason, I am grateful to be serving with you.

In faith,

*Elissa*

[The Rev. Elissa Johnk](#)