



## INFORMATION ABOUT STEWARDSHIP

First Evangelical Free Church (FEFC) of Chicago, Illinois

“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” Psalm 24:1

As Christians, we are called to be wise, responsible stewards of all that God entrusts to us: time and opportunities, abilities, money and possessions, gifts, our bodies, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We acknowledge God's ownership and blessing by faithfully serving Him and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His Gospel and the support and growth of His Church. May we rejoice in the blessings that come to others as a result of faithful stewardship! Our approach at First Free is based on the following, key principles.

### Principle 1: God Owns Everything

- All creation – “To the Lord you God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.” (Deuteronomy 10:14)
- The life of the Christian – “For you have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- All of the Christian's resources – “For from [God] and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!” (Romans 11:36)

### Principle 2: We Are Managers of What God Owns

- Everything about us – “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer you bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1)
- Specifically, our time – “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.” (John 9:4)
- Specifically, our gifts and talents
  - o “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” (Rom. 12:6-8)
  - o “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully

- administering God's grace in its various forms." (1 Peter 4:10)
- Specifically, our treasures – "For if the willingness is there the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have." (2 Corinthians 8:12)

### **Principle 3: Management Requires Personal Commitment**

- "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." (2 Corinthians 9:6)
- "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

### **Principle 4: We are Accountable for Our Management**

- "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10)
- "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." (Luke 12:48)

### **Based on all this, how should we give?**

- In a Free and Cheerful Manner based on God's blessing
  - "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)
  - "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine." Proverbs 3:9-10
- **In Response To Need and According To Ability**
  - "There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need." (Acts 4:34-35)
  - During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. ... The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 11:27-30)
- **In A Systematic and Purposeful Manner** – "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made." (1 Corinthians 16:2)
- **In A Sacrificial Way That "Costs" Us**
  - "Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in

- everything—all she had to live on.” (Mark 12:41-44)
- “But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’” (Luke 19:8)
  - **In A Secret and Humble Way** – “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:1-4)

### **Additional Financial Notes**

The church maintains a General Fund for all ministry operations disbursements. We also use a separate Building Fund to address long-term capital projects and a Crisis and Compassion Fund to administer assistance for people connected to First Free with emergency needs. We encourage non-designated giving to the General Fund as our core act of financial stewardship for the ministries of First Free. From time to time we will make specific needs known and allow for “designated” giving. Common examples are: particular missions projects (such as adult and youth mission trips), youth ministry conferences and camps, and other special offerings. Practically speaking, all offerings are welcome, but regular giving on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis is of tremendous value to the budgeting and planning processes.

First Free receives an offering at our gatherings of worship on Sundays. In addition, we provide the convenience of online giving through a link at our church website, [www.firstfree.com/giving](http://www.firstfree.com/giving). Online giving to the General Fund or the Building Fund can be done on the basis of entering each transaction, or can be set up on an automated schedule of automatic bank withdrawal. Another form of giving is the “bill pay” function of most banks. When you set up the payee record with bank bill paying, please specify the fund in the payee name (examples: First Evangelical Free Church-General Fund or First Evangelical Free Church-Building Fund), so your giving can be properly allocated.

Between January and March we compose a budget for our coming fiscal year (April-March). This budget is presented for congregation vote at the Annual Meeting. Copies of our annual reports, including financial reports, are also available through the church office. If you have any suggestions, questions or concerns, please feel free to contact any one of the following through the church office at 773-561-4175 or [email@firstfree.com](mailto:email@firstfree.com):

- Sylvia Launer, our volunteer Treasurer, who handles expenditures and accounting. Contact the church office for current contact information.
- Jung Hower, our Director of Finance works with the finance team and church officers to oversee all financial aspects.