

Listening and Talking . . . by Rev. Tom Cici

Self-sacrificial love is generous. The opposite of being self-centered and selfish is self-giving love. The apostle Paul encourages us, “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus . . . who emptied himself, taking the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:3-4, 7).

One month ago, on the last Sunday of July, I talked about stewardship in my sermon. In that stewardship talk, we encouraged one another to raise the bar in our weekly or monthly offerings by 1 to 5%. We acknowledge the double-figure rise of inflation since the beginning of the year. Our finance committee reported that we had been taking money out of capital each month since the beginning of the year and requested that everyone give a little more each month.

I am happy to report that at the end of July, our income did match our expenses – first time in about six months. Marian and I will continue to donate an additional \$50 per month for our Centennial family. The finance committee reports that some others have also raised the bar in their offerings. They also claim that our cash offerings have definitely increased which means that some people are giving \$5 to \$15 per week more than before. We hope that everyone will continue raising the bar. We appreciate whatever you can give.

We know that God will continue to fill our needs and that we can continue to pass it on. Whatever God gives us, we share with others. Whether we share our time or food or labor or money, we each serve as a pipeline for God’s gifts. This is the heart of stewardship – receiving and giving God’s abundant gifts.

We all have different motives for giving. Some give because they want to see a difference in the world – “I see a need, I care about it, and I’m going to do something about it.” Still others might say it’s more about their relationship with God than anything else. God is hospitable, gracious, generous, and calls us to be the same. We are called to share God’s gifts.

Our CWF (Christian Women) demonstrate unconditional love by reaching out to the poor of our community in several ways. Some ladies are making mats, consists of 430 grocery bags, crocheting together specifically for residents of “Tent City.” Others are providing Blessing Bags. Others are caring for our neighborhood with the Blessing Box in our green space. They motivate all of us to discover our God-given gifts and use them to the fullest.

The Greek word for this type of love is agape – uncalculating love for all people, unselfish love, love in all circumstances, love with no reservations, unfettered love, love with no conditions, love with no strings attached. I’m convinced that people who live from their True Self – their soul, God abiding within, living out God’s unshakable love, living by God’s unwavering peace, sharing their gifts from God – these people are living from a truly God-centered place instead of a self-centered place. Blessings on all as we Journey together.



GENEROSITY