

## Receiving and Giving

Pastor's Perspective:

The new year begins. The old year fades. The giving and receiving of Christmas gifts concludes and the joy and surprise of the gifts fade. Resolutions are part of our move into the new year. Those resolutions are our attempt to, by our own resolve, change something about how we are living. We succeed sometimes. Sometimes we don't.

I read recently a headline that "Charitable Giving Could Drop \$21 billion a Year because of Tax Changes." My first reaction was about why I give to The Lord. It wasn't about the specifics of the recent changes to the federal tax code. Also I understand that only a portion of charitable giving is to religious ministries and congregations. But it did cause me to consider my financial giving and receiving.

The first thing I realized is that our Christian motivation for giving is different than receiving a tax advantage. The sequence is exactly the opposite. Christian financial giving is the second action. Receiving is the first action. Our giving is a response to our receiving from The Lord. We believe that every-thing, and that means everything, is provided by God for our use and pleasure. Therefore our giving is in response to our receiving everything. So for me the receiving of a tax benefit, or the possible loss of it, will not affect my giving. I will continue to give God thanks through my response of giving.

The next thing I realized is that I am deeply thankful for your generous financial and personal contributions to ASLC and all of the additional ministries that affect people's lives positively. It demonstrates your awareness of the Christian sequence of "Receiving and Giving." The Spirit is active in our mission and ministry.

The third thing I realized as I considered the implications of that title is that this coming year will be filled with receiving and giving. We have received appropriate time for transition and succession planning. Each day I realize how important that time has become for me personally and for all of us as a congregation. Each of you has, and will continue to, receive opportunities to contribute your heart and mind and spirit to the plans and ministries and events during this year of transition.

The congregation will receive partnership with the Metro Washington D.C. Synod and the whole church as the transition and call process unfold. You will receive your next pastor with anticipation and excitement.

All that we have received and all that we will receive is from God. That means changes to a tax code do not change our interaction with each other or the world. It means that our receiving from God is constant and our giving back to God continues constantly.

Pastor Gary ....