



TRUE THANKSGIVING

*"Sing a song of thanksgiving **AS IF** the rains we have longed for have already come."*

*"But still the people sing a song of thanksgiving, trusting that the rains will eventually come and that God is looking after them. They sing a song of praise as if the rains that they long for have already come. This is true thanksgiving."
Joel 2:21-17 (paraphrased)*

Dear friends and members of First Church,

Being the church and being Christians defines us, differentiates us as holy, sacred, blessed, uniquely and identifiably, ordinarily and extraordinarily, as ever changing, transformed/transforming/transformational people of Love and Justice. Although it may have felt like dry spells through the years of the pandemic and then an unexpected pastoral transition, God's grace continues to rain down on us. Our way of being the body of Christ, our ethos of being love and justice, tells the story of how we are doing.

This year, as we once again enter into this perennial season of stewardship and making our commitments and pledges, may we both remember God's torrential love, grace and generosity and continue our faithful response with praise and thanksgiving **AS IF** love and justice already bears fruit in us. Our gifts of supporting the church by our prayers, presence, our gifts, God's tithes, service and witness has been, is and will be transformative.

Stewardship is a way of living as followers of Christ. In giving, we practice who we are as those sustained by God's generosity. We live through all kinds of changes, changes that are constant, inevitable, and certain, **AS IF** God does care for us, **AS IF** we are God's first fruits, **AS IF** we are the means by which God cares for others and our world, **AS IF** we have more than enough, **AS IF** we are more than enough to overcome the scarcity, fear, and anxieties of this world in which more than enough is never enough.

We are reminded in the book of Joel, which was written during a hard time in the history of the Hebrew people when there had been no rain for a long time, the crops were very poor, and the grasshoppers came to eat what little grain they did have, in and through those changing and challenging times, the people did remember God who cares for them. We are reminded that the people continued to sing songs of thanksgiving, trusting that the rain will eventually come and that God is looking after them. They did sing a song of praise **AS IF** the rain that they longed for had already come. That is true thanksgiving and that is also our story, our song, our faithful thanksgiving even today, even still in these ever changing days.

As we arrive into our perennial stewardship campaign in which we are re-membered through the Word of God, let us also arrive into God/our stories, by living each and every day **AS IF** God takes care of us and we, the Body of Christ, take care of one another and our world. Especially, let us re-member the last, the least, the lost, the coins of God's own currency in God's kingdom.

Let us pray-

*Gracious God, when we forget to share, when we forget to give thanks, when we forget that you are with us, when we forget to care for others, inspire us with your generosity and grace so that we may have reasons to celebrate and give thanks. May we become change makers by walking together faithfully, learning new ways of thanks-living **AS IF** you go the way with us, **AS IF** your love already bears fruit in us, eternally, here and now. May it be so. Amen!*

*These past years and these last months of a pastoral transition, would not have been what it was without your faithfulness - thank you. Let us steward forward together into the new year **AS IF** we are God's beloved people already experiencing in and through changes, God's rain and spring new crops.*

Thanks be to God!

Pastor Wongee (she/her)



Pledge to the church

Your financial pledge is a blessing that transforms from currency to ministry. This cumulative number and commitment allow our Finance Committee and the Church Council to confidently fund existing and future ministries. It has long been our practice to create a balanced budget that enables the church to move forward with financial integrity. That's why the budget we've shared with you is based on a PROPOSED budget for this year and with faithfulness, AS IF, we would continue being the church, faithing (faith is a verb) into the constant/inevitable/certainty of changes, trusting we are not alone and God goes the way with us. This proposed budget is what we will work with until we have enough information to estimate our income in the coming year. Your pledge is a sign of discipleship that financially gifts the church, the body of Christ, to make visible God's call to become co-creators of justice and love for all creation. We receive your pledges as tokens of your first fruits, an affirmation of your trust that everything we receive comes from God. Our pledge is an expression of our confidence in God's work, both in our lives and in this community of faith. Purposeful giving is a means of grace and gift of discipleship.

- The Stewardship Committee

We invite you to prayerfully consider your pledge this year and remember God's generosity and offer your thanksgiving. Whether you are able to sustain your giving, or grow your giving, you'll know that you have taken time in conversations with God listening. And if things have changed for you; if you are in financial distress, unemployed, or otherwise struggling, we understand and would encourage you to return your pledge card with a note to our pastor who is and will be praying with and for you. Both financial pledges and prayer requests will be kept confidential. **Please return your pledge cards by Thursday, November 21st so that we can gather these gifts together on Consecration Sunday, November 24 and celebrate with thanksgiving.** In worship, both in person and online, we will ask for God's blessings on these gifts. We will praise God for all God has done, is doing, and will do in the year ahead.

Thank you for your pledges and we look forward to our celebrations of God's generosity and our thanksgiving together!



Please visit our Stewardship webpage for more information.

HOW TO SET UP YOUR 2025 GIVING

Mail your Pledge Card to:
First United Methodist Church of Seattle
Attn: Stewardship
P.O Box 19596
Seattle, WA 98109



OR set up your pledge online:
www.firstchurchseattle.org/give

Once you've completed the online or paper pledge card, you'll have the opportunity to:

- 1. Set up your own online giving through our website.
- 2. Set up a personal login that you can use to update your giving at any time.

Note: *Recurring gifts will not be assigned an end date. You may update or end your gift at any time by logging onto your giving account, or contacting us.*