



## *Sierra Vista Presbyterian Church*

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Dear Members and Friends of Sierra Vista,

When we started our 2023 Stewardship program back in November, we decided that instead of using “canned” materials, we would share our personal thoughts about tithing and why it’s important to support Sierra Vista financially. Several members of the Session submitted comments and they were distributed during our Stewardship Drive. Dr. D suggested that anyone in the congregation or those who watched on Facebook who wished to make a comment about tithing, stewardship or why they support Sierra Vista financially, should also send in their comments.

This **SPECIAL EDITION** of the Sierra Visitor Newsletter shares the comments that were received. Both members and non-members shared their thoughts and comments. We hope that the comments shared here will encourage you to tithe and give more as we live together as stewards of God’s gifts.

The Session of Sierra Vista Presbyterian Church

Members and Friends of Sierra Vista Presbyterian Church,

We have attended SVPC for around four years, and during that time, when we read the Treasurer's Report in the monthly newsletter, we read that the church is spending more money than it is taking in. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that spending more money than is generated is not sustainable. We couldn't run a household or a business effectively with that economy and mindset.

The congregation chooses church leadership that we trust to set up a budget and spend the available funds wisely. Where does the church get the money that it spends? By and large it comes from the congregation that attends the church. We understand that there is a reserve fund from a sale of property, and there may be other sources of income here and there, but continuing to deplete that reserve fund for day to day expenses, and not generating sufficient income to meet expenses is a poor way to run an enterprise, and does not plan for the future. So that raises the question of how do we generate more income? One way is to increase the number of people in the congregation who give money to the church. Another way is to increase the amount of money that each person/family gives to the church. That brings us to the subject of tithing.

What is a tithe? A tithe is ten percent, so tithing means giving 10 percent of one's earnings back to God. In the New Testament Paul avoids mentioning a percentage, instead advocating bountiful and cheerful giving. (Taken from the Jeremiah Study Bible) In Genesis 28:22 we see the first mention of giving ten percent of one's resources to the Lord. Jacob said "...and of all that you give me I will surely give a tenth to You." He didn't say, "Well, I'll see how I feel about it in the morning," or "I'll just wait to see how things go." He made a specific promise to God that out of all that God would give to him, he would give a tenth of that back to Him. In Deuteronomy 14:22-29 we learn the tithing principles that the Israelites lived by. Notice the last part of verse 29, "...that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands which you do." If we look at Malachi 3:10, we read "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it." If you start reading at verse 8, you will see that the Lord says that by not bring their tithes, the Israelites have robbed Him. And in verse 10 He is actually challenging them to test Him on how much He will bless them if they tithe. Can you imagine the Creator of the Universe challenging you to test Him? Well, that's our Abba Father, and He does just that. That's the only time He tells us in the Scriptures to test Him, but when it comes to how much we are willing to give to Him, He does. We have to step out in faith, and believe and trust Him to do what He says He will do. You may think, "I don't have that kind of faith!" Of course you do. Have you ever flown in an airplane? Did you trust the flight crew to get that piece of machinery up in the air, and fly safely to your destination? That takes faith! Have you ever undergone a surgical procedure? Did you trust the surgeon to perform an intricate procedure while you were asleep under an anesthetic? That takes faith! You put your faith in humans, why would you not put your faith in the Almighty God? He says, "Test me on this." We cannot out-give God. And if we short-change God, we are short-changing ourselves. He loves a cheerful and generous giver.

Once we learned to tithe, we began to see God's abundant blessings in our lives. It is our prayer that you will see God's blessings in your life also. Try it. You'll like it!

Sincerely, Darryl and Donna Jean Mortensen



Harold and Sam Maxwell

For years we struggled with how much we could "afford" to tithe. We had children to raise, bills to pay and retirement to plan for. We had to continually remind ourselves that all our blessings were from God. When we focused on what God has done in our lives it made it easier to continue or increase our annual tithe. What we have learned from our tithing experience is that we never missed the resources that we "gave" to God. I put gave in quotes as we are just giving back a portion of what God has given us. Giving back to God has also helped us budget the rest of our spending. We learned a long time ago if we did not plan our donations, savings, and investments we would spend everything we earned. God wants us to recognize Him by being disciplined givers. If you are a disciplined giver, you will be blessed in other areas of your life.

The financial aspect is only one part of tithing. God wants us to tithe our time and talents as well. Without the tithing of our time and talents, Sierra Vista cannot accomplish the mission of the Church which is to bring others to the knowledge of God. I serve on the Board of Trustees at Sierra Vista. We are responsible for the maintenance and operation of the physical facilities. The reason I chose to serve in this capacity is two-fold. First, I help manage the use of our facilities. We have many community groups, that have God as a component of their belief system, that use our facilities and that requires use coordination. Some of these groups are Protestant, some are Catholic, and others are non-denominational, but all are seeking to honor God. Secondly, as a Trustee I am responsible for the repairs around the facilities. This is a way that I can do the repairs and not have to hire a trade to perform the repair.

Sam's contribution of time and talents is that she serves on the Nominating committee as well as teaching Sunday School for our youth. Even though our youngest is 34 years old Sam believes that it is part of her calling to educate and witness to our children about our God.

I would recommend that you prayerfully consider how much time you can tithe to Sierra Vista. 10% of a 40-hour work week? Two hours a month to host 1 fellowship hour? Your time is as important as your treasure.

Love in Christ,

Harold Maxwell  
Chair of the Board of Trustees  
Sierra Vista

12/2/2022, Season of Advent, Day 6

Dr. D.

I have been seriously thinking about your request to tell our story of why we give to Sierra Vista Church.

First, I have to say that when I was growing up, my mom always made sure my brothers and I went to the nearest Church (Sunday School) near our house. Consequently, we grew up in many churches. Though she had little to spare ... raising 3 kids on her own with help from family and other times ... she always made sure we had money to place in the offering. She also gave to anyone who needed help, no matter what. So I grew up in a home where giving back and sharing was a standard we were taught. One side effect was, during this point in history, emphasis was always on giving, not telling of gifts and good deeds. It is still difficult for me to share by telling what I do in terms of gifts of time, talents, and monetary gifts.

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With that said, this is what I can and will share. It is my belief that I should be following the teachings of the Bible (I don't always make it, but God loves me anyway). Sierra Vista is where I choose to tithe because we, as a church family, do not focus on growing our buildings and things. We focus on helping others, sharing what we have and letting God provide for our needs.

I also choose to share time and energy with several agencies in Yuma along with Sierra Vista because the focus is on God's work in our community.

God has given me more blessings than I can count and list. I truly feel I gain more from giving than keeping. It all belongs to God, anyway, and I am just a steward of His generous gifts.

With love in Christ.    Gloria G    GG

## **Lynette Hamilton**

A brief summary of why I support Sierra Vista Presbyterian Church.

I love God and He wants us to give a tithe to our church. Our tithes help pay for Pastor Darren, who helps us grow in our faith with his sermons and worship services and education classes. Our Music team, Brian and Mary Ellen, who helps us praise God in song each Sunday, and Brian also teaches classes. And Pastor Darren's Admin. Assistant, Sarahi. Our tithes also help pay for a place to meet and fellowship with each other and to reach out to others to spread the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **Leonard Troxel**

It's that time of year again where we put emphasis on what God has given us, and what we return to God. Stewardship of our time, talents and treasure is one of the fundamental aspects of our faith as Christians. As you know, I'm not a pastor so I'll put my thoughts as simply as I can; I find it is best for me if I keep things simple!

There are two parables that Jesus preached that have always stuck with me. The first is from Mark 12:42 and I know it is one you have heard many times before, it is the Parable of the Widow's Mite. Regardless of what I write here, the essence of the story is both simple and profound. Out of her poverty she gave all she had, trusting in God that he would provide for her needs in the future. The second story is from Matthew 25: 14-30 and is the Parable of the Talents. We have all been given different blessings by God throughout our lives and it is what we do with those blessings that matters. Many times I think back to how my father and mother raised both my sister and I in the Christian faith and what it has meant throughout my life. No matter if it was money from bottles and cans we turned in at the grocery store, we grew up in Oregon with the Bottle Bill, or money we earned picking berries in the field or doing chores around the house or even Birthday and Christmas money we got from family there was always the focus on returning to God a portion of what he had given to us. As we learn in the Bible, giving of 10% of our annual earnings, productions, or possessions, and I would count abilities as well, is what the Lord has asked us to give to His church for the continuation of His work.

We all have different stories and memories when it comes to the topic of stewardship of God's gifts, but I think it is important not to make the decision on giving into a complicated one. God has given us His blessings and in return He has asked us to give back to Him a small portion of what He has first given us.

As we contemplate our giving for the upcoming year of 2023, remember that what we have is because of what He has first given to us. Giving back to Him is a way to show our love, gratitude, and obedience to His word.

God's many blessings be with you and your family.



## Tithing – Barb and Glen Moss

Tithing, as defined by scripture is giving back to God a minimum of 10% of what He has provided for us. Tithing is returning to God a portion of His bounty to support the church and its life. Tithing does not include the extras that come along like special offerings and special giving. It is a blessing when the church receives more than the 10% tithe.

In the Moss household, we have experienced that when we tithe, we seem to have more than we planned for. It's almost like the more we give – the more we have to give.

When we first started attending Sierra Vista, the Stewardship campaign was in the form of a "Faith Promise". In that program, an annual pledge was made and then sealed in an envelope. Those "promises" were never opened but instead were returned at the end of the year so that the promisers could determine how well they had done against their pledge of support. Sierra Vista operated on an unknown amount of anticipated income. Over the years, we have moved to an annual pledge system.

Historically, there are those who are great givers, but never fill out a pledge card. There are those that pledge heavily, but actually give sparingly. There are always those who consider their projected earnings and then pledge a tithe amount.

Tithing is a personal matter and in Sierra Vista, the only ones who know the pledged amounts are the pledger and the treasurer. The treasurer consolidates all pledges, adds in estimated income from facility users, and then prepares an estimate of income versus expenses. Historically – at least from my perspective – the budget has always been based on a "guesstimated" income – but there are known expenses such as salaries, utilities, insurance of personnel and facilities, equipment repairs, cleaning and committee expenses. Of all components of the budget, personnel expense is the largest single component. In the Presbyterian Church, the called pastor is paid wages, housing allowances, and benefits according to the Presbyterian Board of Pensions.

Sierra Vista has been fortunate that we have some savings and investments that we can fall back on. Over the years, we have been blessed to have special donations that have been made, excess property that has been sold, and other earnings to help us through lean times. Unfortunately, in the recent years, we have seen a decline in attendance and in giving and therefore have had to dip into the reserves. We are an aging congregation but we are a beacon in the community. We are recognized as a praying church and a giving church.

May we continue to reach out to others and be a blessing to the community.