

# Discerning Your Giving Ministry

THE REV. CN. TIMOTHY DOMBEK



Although it didn't occur to me as a youngster, looking back now with the perspective and wisdom of age I can honestly say that one of the great privileges of my life had to be growing up in a household where our parents practiced tithing. They saw it as what we would call today a "spiritual discipline." In the church I grew up in — not Episcopal — they would say it was being obedient to God.

No matter. They tithed, and the five of us boys saw it firsthand. These days I like to say, "My parents tithed out loud," meaning we knew they gave to God first, and we lived on the rest. I can tell you we never were without anything we truly needed.

Years passed, and in 1985 I joined the Episcopal Church, got confirmed, and received my first pledge card at the Cathedral of St. James, in South Bend, Indiana. It just so happened that at the same time I became an Episcopalian I also changed career paths, going from a steady-paying job into the then-new field of financial planning, as a self-employed person.

My journey into the Episcopal Church meant so much to me — saved my life in many ways — that I wanted to give back in gratitude for all I had received. Single, starting a new job with no guaranteed income, I felt now was as good a time as any to tithe. So very naively I wrote on my pledge card, "I pledge 10% of all my income for the coming year," and turned it in. And I did give 10% of every paycheck I received that year, mainly because I wrote my check to the church first before spending any other money. Not surprisingly, I never went without anything I truly needed.

The surprising thing about the "giving ministry" that my spouse, Beth, and I now practice is that giving generously causes the light of Christ to shine in our hearts in a new way. *Giving away money is so much fun.* We still give to other organizations, too, but that is over and above our tithe that we give to God through the life, work, and ministry of our church, first and foremost. And we still never go without anything we truly need.

Thanks be to God for all of God's generous gifts, which enables each one of us to give generously, as well.

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## For reflection...

- Many of us have a "ministry of giving," in that we give money to causes and organizations. Where does giving to God through the ministry of your church rank in your ministry of giving?
- Who has modeled generosity for you in your life?
- How would your life change if you practiced giving to God through the ministry of your church first each month, before giving to anything else?

*directors.*