

Tree-mendous Faith

A Stewardship Program

OVERVIEW:

The four-week program focuses on the steward as a disciple of Christ. Emphasis is on the six *marks* of a faithful disciple—worship, prayer, scripture, spiritual relationships, service, and especially giving.¹ As disciples, we are asked to live faithfully which means serving and giving generously. Jesus likened living faithfully to producing good fruit and to the harvest. The apostle Paul reminded that the Holy Spirit empowers us. Paul likened the Spirit's empowerment to the production of fruits. These "fruits" are instilled in us as the qualities exemplified by a disciple. The disciple's giving is also equated to an offering. The disciple gives from the heart what has been provided by God. All belongs to God. True disciples give their all. They share their time, their talents, their God-given abilities, and their resources. These are given as an offering and as a way of glorifying God.

The program uses a process of implementation which relies on a letter campaign, a designated Stewardship Sunday, and an opportunity to symbolically commit as a disciple of Christ. The program gives suggestions and samples which can be adapted to a specific church and modified to a church's order of worship.

THEMATIC SCRIPTURE: John 15:8 NLT

When you produce much fruit, you are a true disciple of Jesus Christ. This brings great glory to God.

PROGRAM THEME:

The theme visualizes the image of "good fruit" as an example of the empowerment of the true disciple to live a life of generosity and faithfulness.

THEME VISUALIZATION:

The theme is visualized with a tree which over the course of the program emphasizes the source of our "tree-mendous" faith, the church, and Christ's disciples. Finally, the tree bears our "tree-mendous" fruits.

Week One

Set up a form of tree visible in the sanctuary or worship area. Such as a large drawing or facsimile of a tree or an actual free-standing tree. Some stores selling interior décor may have fake trees as well as resource shops. The tree should have green leaves and exposed roots. Mount a sign reading ***Jesus Christ*** at the base (roots) of the tree.

Week Two

Mount a sign reading **The Church** on the trunk of tree.

Week Three

Mount a sign reading **Christ's Disciples** in the leaves of the tree.

Week Four

Hang the congregants' apples (Time and Talent) among the leaves of the tree.

NOTE: The Time and Talent form in the shape of an apple is presented as an offering as well as commitment to serve by the individual disciple. (Also see Letter Campaign—Mass Mailing)

Create multiple copies of a fruit which can be “hung” on the tree. Suggest the apple for its color and shape lends to the recording of information for time and talent for each individual. Cut out the “apple” shape to enclose in the mailing.

LETTER CAMPAIGN PREPARATION

Working in cooperation with the Financial Secretary who can provide certain statistics, organize the number of giving units from the prior year into three groups.

GROUPS -- 1) Top Givers 2) Moderate Givers 3) Lowest Givers

A FOURTH GROUP -- Non-givers

Non-givers = the number of members who attended during prior year but did not give.

NOTE: Giving Groups are categorized by a range in the amount of annual giving. Names are kept confidential. For example, one group giving \$1, 000 to \$5,000 annually may fit the top givers or the moderate givers. The group divisions are arbitrarily decided with the help of the Financial Secretary. These groups are for implementing the letter campaign and are not made public. (See Attachment A)

MASS MAILING

Mid way (Week Two) in the program the letter campaign is initiated in the form of a mass mailing to all the giving units in Groups 1-3 plus the non-giving households in Group 4. This is the most important step in the program since each group has a special letter customized to the giving pattern. The program offers samples of the four letters. (See Attachments B, C, D, E)

NOTE: All four letters address “Tree-mendous Faith” on the part of the disciple and encourage the giving of “Tree-mendous Fruit. All four letters invite the disciple to participate in Stewardship Sunday (Week 4) as means of dedication and celebration. All four letters enclose materials for Stewardship Sunday: Estimate of Giving Card and Time and Talent Commitment form. (See Attachments F and G). Each of the four letters includes a special message of inspiration for the giving group and the non-giving group to prayerfully consider increasing commitment in the next year. In order to maintain confidentiality, the Financial Secretary is delegated the responsibility for the mass mailing of the four categories of letters based on the categories in Attachment A.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

These scripture passages can be used to inspire newsletter articles, bulletin inserts, and worship messages and meditations.

EQUIPPING THE DISCIPLE

Galatians 5:22

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

Hebrews 13:21

May he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him.

PRODUCING “GOOD” FRUIT

Matthew 7:17,20

A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

Philippians 1:11,22

May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God... I can do more fruitful work for Christ.

II Corinthians 9:10

For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.

James 5:7-8

Be patient...consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. ⁸ You, too, must be patient. Take courage...

HARVESTING THE FRUITS OF THE DISCIPLE’S LABORS

Psalms 128:1-2

*How joyful are those who fear the LORD—
all who follow his ways!
You will enjoy the fruit of your labor.
How joyful and prosperous you will be!*

Galatians 6:9-10

So, let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

RESOURCES

1) **Power Surge**, Chapter 5 “**The Marks of Discipleship**” by Michael Foss

2) **TITHER-in-PROCESS**

This process is a goal every disciple should pray about and work to achieve. A tither-in-process increases giving by 1% each year until the giving equals 10% of annual income. The percentage is based on scripture from Deuteronomy 14:22-23 which commanded the Israelites to give tithes. The scripture provides a basis for giving to the Lord.

“You must set aside a tithe of your crops—one-tenth of all the crops you harvested each year. Bring the tithe to the designated place of worship—the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honored...this applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil and firstborn males of your flocks. Doing this will teach you always to fear the Lord your God.”

This challenge can be incorporated into the Stewardship Program as a Stewardship Moment in worship, part of a meditation or message, or part of the letter campaign.

ATTACHMENTS

Samples of the Program's Materials

ATTACHMENT A EXAMPLE OF GIVING GROUP CATEGORIES

First Church

Annual Giving Ranges from the Prior Year

<u>Annual Offerings</u>	<u>Giving Amounts or Pledges Fulfilled</u>
\$21,001 plus	1 giving unit
\$19,001-\$21,000	1 giving unit
\$17,001-\$19,000	2 giving units
\$15,001-\$17,000	2 giving units
\$13,001-\$15,000	0 giving units
\$11,001-\$13,000	3 giving unit
\$9,001-\$11,000	5 giving unite
\$7,001-\$9,000	0 giving units
\$5,001-\$7,000	2 giving units
\$3,001-\$5,000	1 giving unit
\$2,001-\$3,000	4 giving units
\$1,501-\$2,000	6 giving units
\$1,001-\$1,500	8 giving units
\$501-\$1,000	10 giving units
\$101-\$500	15 giving units
\$1-\$100	23 giving units
\$0	12 member households

This church considered:

\$11,001 to \$21,000 plus as its Top Givers (Group 1 9 giving units)

\$2,001 to \$11,000 as its Moderate Givers (Group 2 12 giving units)

\$1 to \$2000 or less as its Low Givers (Group 3 62 giving units)

Twelve households formed the Non-Givers (Group 4 22 giving units)

ATTACHMENT B SAMPLE LETTER TO GROUP 1: TOP GIVERS

NOTE: According to First Church's categories, it sends this letter to 9 giving units. The parts in red customize the message.

Dear Generous Disciple of Christ:

This fall we profess a *Tree-mendous Faith*. We recognize God's faithfulness and honor God's steadfast love. We celebrate church's history and its ministry to the community. Now, as part of Stewardship Month, we add to a *Tree-mendous Faith* our offering of *Tree-mendous Fruit*.

Our lives are filled with God's abundant gifts. Even during the tough years, God is with us. God gives the church strength to survive and to plan. God comforts and encourages each one to endure hardship and uncertainty. God continues to provide for our needs and empowers us to work for our wants. *Tree-mendous Fruit* represents God's love for us, and the love we, in turn, share with our neighbors. Every good gift comes from God, and we are called by God to use our gifts, to multiply our fruit, and in so doing spread God's love to others.

You are among the most generous givers to the ministries of First Church. Your annual pledge of support and love is vital to the church's ongoing mission. With heartfelt appreciation, your offering of love is recognized as sustaining this church. May God bless you and guide you to continue to give and to consider increasing your pledge.

On Stewardship Sunday, the congregation renews its support to the church in 202X and dedicates a portion of God's gifts to maintain and expand the church's ministry through another year. Please plan to worship either in person or live streaming. That Sunday, the enclosed Estimate of Giving Card and Apple form offering your time, talent, and treasure will be blessed at the sanctuary tree. These can also be mailed to the church. Please mark the envelope "202X Giving".

May God, the most Generous of Givers, bless and keep you always.

In love and gratitude,

The Stewardship Ministry

ATTACHMENT C SAMPLE LETTER TO GROUP 2: MODERATE GIVERS

NOTE: According to First Church's categories, it sends this letter to 12 giving units. The parts in red customize the message.

Dear Faithful Servant:

This fall we profess a *Tree-mendous Faith*. We recognize God's faithfulness and honor God's steadfast love. We celebrate the church's history and its ministry to the community. Now, as part of Stewardship Month, we add to a *Tree-mendous Faith* our offering of *Tree-mendous Fruit*.

Our lives are filled with God's abundant gifts. Even during the tough years, God is with us. God gives the church strength to survive and to plan. God comforts and encourages each one to endure hardship and uncertainty. God continues to provide for our needs and empowers us to work for our wants. *Tree-mendous Fruit* represents God's love for us, and the love we, in turn, share with our neighbors. Every good gift comes from God, and we are called by God to use our gifts, to multiply our fruit, and in so doing spread God's love to others.

You are among the faithful givers to the ministries of First Church. Your annual pledge of support and love makes possible the church's ongoing mission. There is great appreciation for your offering which serves God in so many ways and touches so many lives. May God bless you and guide you to continue to give and to consider increasing your pledge.

On Stewardship Sunday, the congregation will renew its support to the church in 202X and dedicate a portion of God's gifts to maintain and expand the church's ministry through another year. Please plan to worship either in person or live streaming. That Sunday, the enclosed Estimate of Giving Card and Apple form offering your time, talent, and treasure will be blessed at the sanctuary tree. These can also be mailed to the church. Please mark the envelope "202X Giving".

May God, the most Generous of Givers, bless and keep you always.

In love and gratitude,

The Stewardship Ministry

ATTACHMENT D SAMPLE LETTER TO GROUP 3: LOW GIVERS

NOTE: According to First Church's categories, it sends this letter to 62 giving units. The parts in red customize the message.

Dear Friend in Christ:

This fall we profess a *Tree-mendous Faith*. We recognize God's faithfulness and honor God's steadfast love. We celebrate church's history and its ministry to the community. Now, as part of Stewardship Month, we add to a *Tree-mendous Faith* our offering of *Tree-mendous Fruit*.

Our lives are filled with God's abundant gifts. Even during the tough years, God is with us. God gives the church strength to survive and to plan. God comforts and encourages each one to endure hardship and uncertainty. God continues to provide for our needs and empowers us to work for our wants. *Tree-mendous Fruit* represents God's love for us, and the love we, in turn, share with our neighbors. Every good gift comes from God, and we are called by God to use our gifts, to multiply our fruit, and in so doing spread God's love to others.

You are among those supporting the ministries of First Church. Without your gift combined in love with the gifts from others, the church cannot continue to serve another year. The church depends solely on our monetary gifts and our volunteering to serve. May God bless you and guide you to continue to give and to consider increasing your pledge.

On Stewardship Sunday, the congregation will renew its support to the church in 202X and dedicate a portion of God's gifts to maintain and expand the church's ministry through another year. Please plan to worship either in person or live streaming. That Sunday, the enclosed Estimate of Giving Card and Apple form offering your time, talent, and treasure will be blessed at the sanctuary tree. These can also be mailed to the church. Please mark the envelope "202X Giving".

May God, the most Generous of Givers, bless and keep you always.

In love and gratitude,

The Stewardship Ministry

ATTACHMENT E SAMPLE LETTER TO GROUP 4: Non-Givers

NOTE: According to First Church's categories, it sends this letter to 12 households. The parts in red customize the message.

Dear Member or Friend of First Church:

This fall we profess a *Tree-mendous Faith*. We recognize God's faithfulness and honor God's steadfast love. We celebrate church's history and its ministry to the community. Now, as part of Stewardship Month, we add to a *Tree-mendous Faith* our offering of *Tree-mendous Fruit*.

Our lives are filled with God's abundant gifts. Even during the tough years, God is with us. God gives the church strength to survive and to plan. God comforts and encourages each one to endure hardship and uncertainty. God continues to provide for our needs and empowers us to work for our wants. *Tree-mendous Fruit* represents God's love for us, and the love we, in turn, share with our neighbors. Every good gift comes from God, and we are called by God to use our gifts, to multiply our fruit, and in so doing spread God's love to others.

Just as God depends on us to be the *hands* and *feet* helping one another and caring for creation, the church depends on its members and friends to fund its mission and serve its ministries. Please pray about offering the church a monetary gift with a 202X pledge and/or supporting its ministries with your time and talent.

On Stewardship Sunday, the congregation will renew its support to the church in 202X and dedicate a portion of God's gifts to maintain and expand the church's ministry through another year. Please plan to worship either in person or live streaming. That Sunday, the enclosed Estimate of Giving Card and Apple form offering your time, talent, and treasure will be blessed at the sanctuary tree. These can also be mailed to the church. Please mark the envelope "202X Giving".

May God, the most Generous of Givers, bless and keep you always.

In love and gratitude,

The Stewardship Ministry

ATTACHMENT F SAMPLE ESTIMATE OF GIVING CARD

ESTIMATE OF GIVING CARD FOR _____(YEAR)

When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples.
This brings glory to God. John15:8



Tree-mendous Faith
produces
Tree-mendous Fruit

NAME(S) _____

ESTIMATE OF GIVING \$ _____ weekly, monthly (circle)

SIGNATURES _____

Provide envelopes to maintain confidentiality.

NOTE: The Estimate of Giving Card and the Time and Talent Form (apple) can be presented as part of the Offertory during worship. Suggest those who are able come forward with their cards and apples. Have a basket at the tree to receive the cards and some volunteers available to assist hanging the apples on the tree. Also have some volunteers circulate the worship area to collect cards and apples from those unable to come forward.

Offertory Dedication should include the offering of time, talent, and treasure as well as monetary offering.

ATTACHMENT G SAMPLE TIME AND TALENT FORM

List opportunities, tasks, and specific ways the congregation can serve and share individual abilities, skills, and talents.



NAME: _____

Circle or write in ways you can offer your abilities and talents.

MUSIC choir bells music committee

EDUCATION adult youth children nursery

MINISTRIES stewardship mission evangelism

PROPERTY building maintenance grounds upkeep

OFFICE newsletter publicity special mailings

WORSHIP acolyte lector altar guild

OTHER WAYS _____