



FIRST PRES

October 2017

1sttogive

**Take some of the
firstfruits of all that you
produce from the soil of
the land the Lord your
God is giving you and
put them in a basket.**

DEUTERONOMY 26:1

Dear First Pres,

How are we doing, eight or so weeks into **First Things First**—this examination of our priorities before God? Has anything surprised you? Convicted you? Blessed you? I'm examining myself right along with you, and I've spent the most time talking to God about my calendar. It might surprise you to know that even in ministry it is all too easy to get running along in my day and miss that time with the Lord.



In these next few weeks, we'll turn our attention to our priorities around money. It's a First Pres tradition to spend some time each fall prayerfully preparing for the upcoming year of worship and ministry, and asking the Lord how He would have us give financially to the work He's doing among us. So it's a strikingly appropriate time to consider how we can put God first in our financial lives.

If you're new to this tradition, the pages of this magazine can provide helpful context. If you've been around for a while, ask the Lord to show you the next step He wants you to take in putting Him first in your giving. He's doing big work among us—let's join Him in that work!

Yours in Christ,

Tim

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FIRST PRES MAGAZINE

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Bringing Our Firstfruits

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

When you have entered the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name and say to the priest in office at the time, "I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the land the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us." The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the Lord your God. Then you shall declare before the Lord your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labor. Then we cried out to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, Lord, have given me." Place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before him. Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household.

For Reflection

1. In this passage, tithing is an occasion to remember how God has brought His people through times of scarcity and praise Him for His salvation. Take some time to praise God for His deliverance in your life.
2. The Hebrew people gave the firstfruits of their crops. For most of us, the parallel is to give out of our paychecks. How are you giving your "firstfruits" to God? How is He calling you to take a step further in obedience?
3. Spend some time thanking God for "all the good things... [He] has given to you and your household."

TIME to GET STARTED



Lindy Keffer

Hall of Fame hockey player Wayne Gretsky famously noted, “You miss one hundred percent of the shots you don’t take.” In life, as on the ice, we can miss out on really important moments because we’re waiting for the perfect moment, which may never come. Deciding to start giving to the local church might feel like this if you’ve never done it before.

Even if we deeply desire to give, education debt, credit card debt, job instability and lack of a budget can all make it feel like now is not the right time.

"Maybe next year, after I get a raise."

"Maybe in five years, after I pay off my school loans."

"Maybe in 10 years, after my kids are through college."

If we wait for the moment that feels perfect to begin giving, that moment may never come.

Kairos vs. Chronos

The Bible uses two different words for time: *chronos* and *kairos*. Chronos describes the 24 hours in each day—hours that drag on or fly by, usually in inverse proportion to our wishes. Chronos marches on. Chronos never runs in reverse, no matter how badly we'd like to get some of our days back. Chronos is what stresses us out when we're trying to answer the question, "When's the right time to start giving?"

Kairos, on the other hand, is where the eternal meets the temporal. It can be translated "the right time," or "the appointed season." Kairos is a moment when God's Spirit makes space for His will to be enacted here on earth.

What if we started thinking of giving in terms of kairos, rather than chronos?

What does God want to do in you, if you choose this moment to begin a pattern of generosity? Meet your needs? Free you from slavery to "stuff"? Show Himself to be your strong provider? Change the world around you? He is able to do all of those!

Giving and Discipleship

If discipleship means growing closer to Christ and becoming more like Him, financial giving can be a very precise instrument for accomplishing the work of discipleship in our lives. Executive Pastor Jennifer Holz describes what that looks like in her family: "When Adam and I

discuss our discipleship as a couple, the most concrete and continuous part of it is our monthly practice of financial giving to the Lord. We wrestle with what it looks like to follow Jesus in many areas of our daily lives—raising children, making decisions at work, loving our neighbors and handling conflict. We are grateful that giving is one spiritual practice in our lives that is so clear cut, so non-negotiable. Often the Lord uses this one anchored practice to get our hearts on the same page about what really matters in life—not what we have, but what we are able to give away in the name of Christ."

We're Going to Help You

If you're wrestling with whether to begin giving—and when to do so—our church tradition of considering our giving each fall might feel a little uncomfortable. May I encourage you to view that discomfort as an invitation into a kairos moment? Answer God's call to meet with Him. Ask Him to make His presence very evident in your life and your finances.

If you're a beginning giver seizing the moment and taking a shot for the first time, we want to help you. First, you're invited to sign up for our next **Financial Peace University** class, beginning in January. Using simple principles developed by Dave Ramsey, FPU walks participants step-by-step toward stability and financial freedom, which can make giving seem much more feasible in our lives.

Second, if you need help to make sense of your own financial situation, we can connect you with someone within our church family who would love to help at no charge. Just call Michelle Adams-Fooshee in our Business Office at 719-884-6165, and she can make the connection for you.

If God's been calling to you to begin giving, don't let this moment pass by. Take a shot and allow God to turn it into a kairos moment.



FREE INDEED

My Journey with God, Money and Giving

AN INTERVIEW WITH TIM MCCONNELL

FPM: Freedom is a big theme for you when you teach about financial giving. Why?

Tim: One of the guiding verses in my life has been John 8:36: **"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."** Jesus teaches liberation, not oppression. No-where does our confusion on this issue surface more than around the topic of money.

We naturally think: *God is trying to get our money, God wants our money, God doesn't want us to have money.* On top of that, there seems to be a dragon floating through our neighborhoods and whispering in our windows, "Never enough. Never enough." Though we are the wealthiest and most comfortably resourced people in the history of humanity, we live with a feeling of scarcity. We're burdened by the constant scramble for more. We feel anxious—even worthless—when our pay rate doesn't rise and we can't immediately buy the next phone, the next car, the next vacation.

The teaching of the Bible on handling money *liberates* us from overwhelming anxiety, greed and a disordered life. It grieves God to see His children live under false oppression.

FPM: Why do you preach specifically about the tithe?

Tim: That's closely related to the first question. I preach so forcefully about the Biblical model of the tithe because I know it liberates people who follow it.

Tithing also liberates the church to be what God intended it to be. Today's Church—in a big-picture sense—is anemic from underfunding. That's not as true here at First Pres as at other churches I've served, but it is sad to see the Church in

our times limping along because fully-committed Christians have grown accustomed to giving at the rate of 1.5 to two percent of their income. God sees the church as a 10-percent project, and we are running it as a two-percent project.

Imagine your vet tells you to feed your dog two cups of food each day, but you only give her two tablespoons. Soon she is anemic and sick. You stop wanting to be around her and she does no good for your family! In the same way, the Church is feeding on much less than God intended—but somehow we blame the Church for its inability to innovate and affect change in the world.

FPM: When did you first answer God's call to tithe?

Tim: Abigail and I started putting God first in our financial life during seminary. The seminary president, Tom Gillespie, told us students that he always tithed the churches he served a full 10 percent.

It was a timely message, because I had wondered what I should do. Why give money you just earned right back to the church that paid you? Maybe we should give to something else. But Tom's answer was the right answer. It models the tithe for the church, and it disciplines me to remember that no matter how hard I work to add value to the church I serve, both my effort and the church itself belong to God. All I have comes from Him.

Early in my ministry we had very little income to speak of, but Abigail and I tithed the tiny amount back to the church we served. Later, during my academic years, I again had very little to work with. Our home was expanding with kids and cars and everything else, but we took 10 percent and gave it to the Lord as a first act of devotion. We never lacked.

FPM: Can you share a story of how this surprising relationship between tithing and freedom has worked itself out in your life?

Tim: As a young adult, an inheritance from my grandparents created an odd burden in my life. Out of their labors, they provided resources for me to get an education and start a household. The money was in my name and given for my progress, but it carried my grandparents' intentions with it. I struggled with how to think about that money. Was I free to use it as I saw fit? Should I tithe on it?

A spiritual mentor finally said to me, "Tim, if you can't give it away, then it isn't yours." I talked about that with some family members who reiterated that they wanted Abigail and me to be totally free to use the resources as we saw fit, not looking over our shoulder for someone else's approval. So we took the amount we still had at that time and pretended it was a gift we just received that day. We tithed from it to produce a meaningful mission engagement with Kenya and a few other things at our church. It's hard to describe why, but finding the freedom to tithe on that inheritance gave us great peace we hadn't had before.

FPM: Looking back over years of tithing, would you change anything?

Tim: I have never regretted a single gift I have made to the Lord and His work. I have regretted cars I've bought. I've regretted bad investments. I even regretted one of the homes we bought, and we had to make a quick shift into something else. But I cannot name a single gift to the Lord I've made that gives me anything but joy looking back. Not one.

“
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looking back.
Not one.
”

God is on the Move!



Vacation Bible School and Serving Springs

One hundred eighty-eight students and 50 adult volunteers packed The Connection, our elementary school floor, in July to follow the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys and learn what it means to be missionaries to our own city during **VBS 2017: God is on the Move!**

Added to their number were 20 middle school students participating in Serving Springs, a week-long experience in servant leadership. Clad in their orange shirts, Serving Springs participants played a vital role in leading their younger peers a step closer to Jesus and performed acts of service at front-line ministries around the city.



No One Hurts Alone

Every week, our Caring Ministries staff make dozens of visits to members of the First Pres family who are hospitalized or staying in rehab or assisted living facilities. In addition, our Faith Community Nurses, Stephen Ministers, Pastoral Care Team and deacons regularly extend Christ's love through phone calls and visits to those in need of special care. So far in 2017, they've made more than 2500 calls and visits in care for our church family.



For usher Roy Strickler, those visits brought encouragement when he was deeply in need of it. When a brief hospitalization for surgery unexpectedly turned into an extended stay, visits from deacons, pastors and his fellow ushers helped him through that difficult time. Roy says, "The support I got when I was so ill was awesome. It's something I will never get over. I was in the hospital almost four weeks and there wasn't a day that went by when I didn't have a visit from someone on staff, or from a deacon. It was a tremendous outpouring of love and caring."

God is on the Move! That was the theme of this summer's VBS, but it also describes what's happening every day within our church family in hundreds of big and small ways. Your generosity frees First Pres to move in swift obedience to all that God is calling us to do: worshiping well, proclaiming the gospel and giving ourselves away for the next generation.

Here are a few ways God has been moving among us in the past year:



A New Online Home

The current first-pres.org, launched in late 2016, provides a more user-friendly way to share the good news we hear from the pulpit each Sunday. The Sermons section organizes audio, video and transcripts for each Sunday's message. The calendar feature puts upcoming events and registration links at your fingertips. Each item on the site is easily sharable with your friends, and we're organizing our worship bulletins to better connect to more information online.



Moms Drawing Close to Christ

The fall semester of MOPS opened mid-September with a buzz of energy. A record 19 infants got to enjoy snuggles in the Nursery's infant and crawler room. Bigger babes and preschoolers played on the playground, colored pictures and enjoyed a Bible story and a snack while young moms and mentor moms met in the Worship Center. That's the every-Thursdays view of MOPS.

But the most important thing going on at MOPS requires a closer look to catch it. It's not big and loud. It's deep and powerful. It's moms stepping into the light of Christ and finding their identity in Him. Moms like Kat, who had little interest in a life of faith when she started attending MOPS five years ago. But slowly, over time, things changed. She found herself being drawn closer to Jesus as she walked with peer and mentor moms. And this summer, Kat and her two sons were baptized in our Worship Center.





Keychain Leadership

Our new Sunday night meeting for high school students, called Kaleo, provides an opportunity for the students themselves to take significant leadership—from greeting their peers to orchestrating worship. It's an idea that Fuller Youth Institute calls "Keychain Leadership," as in handing over the keys to the car, rather than giving younger people merely nominal leadership roles.

Scott Boss, Student Ministries Associate says, "I'm so excited to see students lead because of their hearts for Jesus and their hearts for their friends. They are passionate about reaching their friends with the gospel and we are giving them a guided avenue to do it."

Restoring Our Wounded

For years, Men's Life Bible Study has circled up before dawn on Tuesday mornings. In recent months, one participant repentantly shared the pain of an affair he'd had. He agreed to let two of the Tuesday morning men to come alongside him and enter into a restoration process modeled after Galatians 6:1-2: **"...if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the spirit should restore that person gently."**

Pat Hartsock, Pastor to Men, reports that after months of meeting together, "He is restored. His marriage is restored." Further, the value behind the restoration process is a vital one in the life of our church: "It's safe to be transparent with one another. We don't shoot our wounded. We restore our wounded."



WORSHIP WELL. PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL. GIVE



Close Neighbors

We don't take our strategic location in the heart of downtown Colorado Springs for granted. One way we make the best use of our facilities is to share them with partner organizations who are also investing in our city. Fuller Seminary, Pikes Peak Young Life and Mission Catering all make their homes at First Pres.

For Fuller, the partnership has been key in allowing the seminary to meet the needs of the Church in a changing culture. With offices in Café 225 and classroom space in Stevens Hall, Fuller staff facilitates hybrid classes with on-line and in-person components.

Will Stoller-Lee, Director of Fuller Seminary Colorado, is enthusiastic about the collaboration: "Our new model is perfect for this season of the seminary's mission. Students experience the tangible convergence of theological education and practical ministry. We have experienced generous hospitality from pastors and church staff and have been kept well-caffinated by the baristas at Café 225."

New Worship Center, New Worshipers

These pages give just a glimpse of all that goes on at First Pres. God is on the move in so many more ways—we can't even scrape the surface. But it is all for nothing if we forget the main thing—worshiping God and inviting those who don't yet know Christ to take a step closer to Him.

Our new Worship Center, opened in March, is the only dedicated contemporary worship space in downtown Colorado Springs. It became the anchor for a new Sunday morning worship schedule that helps families worship together and makes it easier to invite friends to worship. More important is what's been happening in recent worship services: adults and children alike have reached points of decision and come forward after services to pray and begin a saving relationship with Jesus. We praise the Lord for these new brothers and sisters in Christ.



OURSELVES AWAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION.



ONE MISSION

*O*ne mission, many expressions. It's part of our DNA.

Since the very beginning of our church family, First Pres has committed itself to the command in Matthew 28:19, **"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...."** Nowhere in our history and in our ministry is this more truly expressed than in our mission activity, a multi-dimensional effort that's not limited to just the church's Missions budget.

From ministering to Chinese immigrants at the turn of the last century, to sponsoring Compassion Children, helping with disaster relief all over the world and founding CityServe, we are a church family that takes its God-given gifts seriously and gets to work.

Where Do Our Gifts Go?

Today, all you have to do is look at First Pres' finances to see the enormous priority we place on ministry that reaches out to our community and around the world.

In 2017, \$575,000 was managed by our Missions staff and lay leaders who directed it to...

- Support for Hope Community church plant, led by Rev. Nate Stratman in North Carolina.
- Ministry development in Cuba, Egypt, India, Mongolia and Guatemala.
- Partnership with over 20 local agencies serving those in our community with the highest needs.
- Financial and organizational support to CityServe.

In addition to the Missions budget, outreach flows from a number of other areas of the church budget. We've hosted refugees—both adults and children—



Alison Murray

many expressions

for summer ESL (English as a Second Language) classes. We help at-risk children learn to read through free Rise and Shine tutoring.

Because of the strategic location the Lord has entrusted to us, we are able to partner in ministry with the Pikes Peak Chapter of Young Life. We support the YMCA's seventh grade initiative and camp activities. Café 225 is home to the Colorado campus of Fuller Seminary, and it has hosted Alpha, God Questions and numerous Bible studies. It's also impossible to quantify the community benefit provided by Café 225 as local non-profits hold their board meetings there, and business, civic and non-profit leaders gather on a daily basis, promoting the growth of relationships and collaboration across our city.

More than a Tithe

In monetary terms, nearly 18 percent of all dollars given to First Pres directly

fund mission activity each year. These offerings are received through pledges, Adult Sunday Community offerings and in response to special offerings such as Give Back the Blessing, Disaster Relief initiatives and the *Something Significant for Christmas* gift catalog.

That figure doesn't begin to account for First Pres family members who directly support Compassion children, local mission agencies and missionaries. Finally, the people of First Pres invest countless volunteer hours tutoring, mentoring, teaching, painting, fixing, hosting, creating, listening, praying, counseling and being present all across our city and throughout our world.

First Pres has a truly remarkable, unbridled generosity of spirit all born out of the Spirit of Christ Himself. When we go into all the world to make disciples, we count it a joy and such a privilege!

commitments

In the next few days, you'll receive a letter in the mail with a commitment card enclosed. If you don't receive one by October 20 and you'd like one, you can pick one up at church. We encourage you to take this opportunity to ask the Lord what He would have you give to First Pres in 2018.

Why A Commitment Card?

God doesn't ask us to promise to give. He simply asks us to give. So what's the card about?

It's part of the rhythm of each year in the life of our church to consider financial giving each fall. The card is a tool that can help in several ways:

1. It can prompt prayer and conversation. It's an occasion for asking God to lead us in our generosity and for coming to an agreement as a couple or family about what we'll give.
2. It's a spiritual milestone. Many in our congregation have shared that writing down a commitment helps them to remember it and follow through on it.
3. It helps First Pres to be wise in our financial planning and decisions. We

know that God will provide all we need as a church, and we trust Him to do so. But when we have a record of the giving commitments of the people of the church, it allows our leadership to be accountable stewards of God's provisions.

This Side or That Side?

There are two ways to use this card, represented by the two different sides. If you choose to complete the card and bring it forward in worship on Commitment Sunday, October 22, you need only fill out one side.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

I commit to giving to First Pres in 2018:

per week \$ _____ per month \$ _____ per quarter \$ _____ = per year \$ _____

☐ Please send information on auto bank withdrawal. ☐ Continue auto withdrawal as shown above.

☐ Request envelopes (NOT necessary unless you give cash and would like a statement).

☐ I (we) have made a commitment for 2018 giving commitment online.

Signed: _____ Print name: _____

Visit www.first-pres.org/commitment to submit your commitment in faith online.
Visit www.first-pres.org/give to set-up your regular giving online.
All financial commitments are confidential and may be adjusted if unforeseen circumstances arise.

2018

If you know an amount that you plan to give, complete this side. (Don't cut out this card—wait for the one on its way in the mail!)

unday2017



God is calling me to give
though I don't yet know a total amount.

☐ I've never given before. My commitment is to simply begin giving.

☐ I plan to give _____ percent of my 2018 income.

☐ Other _____

Signed: _____ Print name: _____

Visit www.first-pres.org/commitment to submit your commitment in faith online.
Visit www.first-pres.org/give to set-up your regular giving online.
All financial commitments are confidential and may be adjusted if unforeseen circumstances arise.

2018

If you don't know an amount, but you know that God is calling you to give, complete this side. (Don't cut out this card—wait for the one on its way in the mail!)

First Time to Give

If you've never given to First Pres before (or maybe you've never given to any local church before), God has good things in store for you as you take this step of obedience. If you check the box indicating that God's called you to start giving for the first time, we'll be glad to follow up with you—not to pester you, but to find out what kind of resources might be helpful as you begin this journey of generosity.

If you can't be with us in worship on October 22, you can always mail in your commitment card, or fill it out online at **www.first-pres.org/commitment**.

**“Place the basket
before the Lord
your God and bow
down before him.”**

DEUTERONOMY 26:10



SAVE THE DATE!

1sttogive

Commitment Sunday
October 22

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