



November 2020 - [Estimate of Giving Form](#)

Dear Disciples of Bethlehem,

We invite you to a life of generosity!

We know what generosity looks like, hopefully we learned this concept when we were fairly young – maybe you remember that time your sibling offered you that last cookie out of the cookie jar, or maybe it was that time a dear friend extended an offer of a helping hand when you didn't have the courage to ask! Maybe it was that hand-written note or text you received with the exact words you needed to hear at that moment! Or maybe it was the gift of knowing your faith community was praying for you and it brought you a sense of peace during a very anxious time.

If we seem to know what generosity looks like –why do we tend to struggle to give what we've been given?

A global pandemic, unprecedented division in our country and world, and financial uncertainty for many—our first human inclination might be to turn inward and cause us to struggle. However, the God who created the stars and paints the sky with rainbows continues to lead us –calling us to live out the mission God has called us to at 1145 N. 5th Ave, St. Charles, Illinois and beyond!

Even as we struggle, we know a God who is generous with us and continues to invite us to lean into the life-giving practice of generosity every single day. Here are some of the things our faith teaches us about a life of generosity:

Generosity is central to the heart of God.

God gave us life so that we can give life to one another.

Generosity stands at the heart of creation –it's our salvation story, our purpose, our calling!

Generosity is like grace –surprising, extravagant, always overflowing our petty calculations of what is possible, prudent, and deserved!

Generosity is not an obligation but an invitation –an invitation to participate in God's redemption of all things!

Generosity is paradoxical – it is sacrificial, *and* it is the way to the most abundant life!

God Calls us to be Re-gifters!

The term re-gifting actually came from a "Seinfeld" episode on recycled gifts. We invite you to watch the 1 minute clip here --<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VGbY6sirHM>. In this clip, we see one character incredulous when her gift is re-gifted and another angered at receiving the gift because it wasn't heartfelt.

As followers of Jesus, ***we actually want re-gifting of God's blessings to be a normal part of our faith life.*** To live generously, ***we want to be a re-gifter! God calls us to be re-gifters!*** The Apostle Paul says, "What do you have that you have not received?" (1Corinthians 4:7). All of our resources come from God.

If we treat what we have been given, whether it is our relational capital, financial capital, physical resources, or intellectual capacity as something that is ours, then it removes our sense of humility and gratitude.

It is important as disciples of Jesus that we continually remind ourselves that our resources are not ours—but gifts from God to be re-gifted to others!

As is the case each year, it is time to make our commitments for the work God has given us to do. As you begin to consider what your gifts will be in the coming year, we encourage you to do a couple of things:

1. First, reflect and pray about what gifts God has given you that can be re-gifted
2. Second, we invite you to reach out to another Bethlehem disciple and enter a conversation with each other about what you plan to re-gift other than just monetary gifts this coming year—for example, what might you be planning to do with your gift of time this coming year? Have you been sensing God nudging you to step out and do something you haven't done before?

You can fill out an estimate of giving form by visiting our website and [clicking on the LINK to fill out the form online](#) or by clicking on the link that will be in Friday's e-blast over the next several weeks. You can also stop by the church office to pick one up. Forms will be available at Melody's office window.

We also know many of you have opted to give electronically—thank you! We invite you to fill out an estimate of giving from online as well! This way you can indicate if you are increasing your gift amount, holding steady, or need to decrease your amount for the coming year.

You can also alert Deacon Heather to your estimate of giving for next year by sending her an email to heather@bethlehemluth.org, you can call her at 630-584-2199, ext. 222, or you can also text your gift intent to her cell at 630-339-7164. Knowing this information allows our congregational leaders to form a ministry plan that aligns to the level of giving anticipated.

As we live through this pandemic, we have prayed together each week the "Prayer of Good Courage." This prayer is one that we will want to continue to pray as we live into year 2021!

*Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go,
but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

Many blessings to us all as we work to be God's re-gifters in the world!

Pastor Sarah Rohde, Pastor Paisley Le Roy, Deacon Heather Feltman