



**Proper 30, Year B – October 25, 2009
Covenant Sunday – Theme**

A Homily preached by Dr Margaret French

It's a little ironic to me that I'm up here speaking this morning as I am usually not one who appreciates testimonials. This is because I feel the speakers never get to the point, or just dance around the giving issue. Thus, I resolve to get to the point and be straightforward as I can. This morning I'm going to talk about three reasons why I choose to pledge to Christ Church during annual giving. These three reasons are community, ministry and joy.

So, we'll start with community. I can still remember the first time my husband and I signed a pledge card. We had only been at the church about six months and were newly married when we received our pledge card in the mail. I had never been taught about pledging, we hadn't gotten around to that in my confirmation class. It was exciting to get the card – to be invited to help the church with their work! They needed us, even though we had only been there six months! I think we gave something like \$200 that first year, and when we turned in our card, we walked up with all those other people, most of whom we didn't know yet, and put our card on the altar with them. But when we walked away from the altar, I felt we were fellow parishioners. Since that first pledge card, back in 1994, we have pledged at each of the three parishes we've attended. Giving our money changes my relationship with the parish. When I pledge, I feel am a part of the community in a different way. I am not a transitory visitor, I have made a commitment, and part of that commitment is to make the church better, to be a good steward of the church. Our family started attending Christ Church just over two years ago, but we had been coming to church here for six months before we pledged. It felt different to come here after signing that pledge card. I liked Christ Church before, but now this is our church and I want great things to happen here. Although I look out at the congregation and realize I have met only some percentage of you, we are a community and I need you just as much as you need me. That relationship is wonderful thing. So that's the first reason I pledge, to be part of the community.

The second reason I pledge is ministry. We are all called to be lay ministers in the church, and there is lots of work to be done. But just like our clergy, we can't do it all, so when I chip in my support, I can be part of a greater scope of ministry with the church can do than I can on my own. When I give my money to the church, I am a part of supporting recovering alcoholics during their weekly meetings, I assist grandmothers in Africa and the grandchildren they care for. I can bring the Eucharist to those who cannot leave their homes, and I can provide stability to a family on the brink of homelessness. I support those working through their grief, and I make the church beautiful for Sunday services. I bring joy through music, I visit the sick, I guide our youth in their spiritual development. I can be a part of all of that and more, and it excites me to think of all the ministry I can do, just because I give to Christ Church. That's the second reason I pledge, to do greater ministry than I could alone.

The third reason is about joy, and a little bit more. For the first several years we pledged, I did it because it was what you did, it was a pleasant obligation that allowed the church to do great work. About five years later, I had my stewardship epiphany, and now I give because it gives me joy to do so. Have you ever given a gift to a child and seen their face light up when they receive it, perhaps even before they know what's inside the box or bag? It's a great feeling to be the giver of that gift. Now imagine you're the child, and you've just given a gift to your parent,

perhaps one of those clay things you made in school, or the description of your parent using their initials. I know the look I get on my face when my kids give me things that have taken time, thought and effort. They are my treasures. So take those feelings, and think about God for a minute. After all, this is church. God gives us gifts all the time, and it's wonderful to receive all that he gives us. However, one part of pledging that brings me joy is giving something back to God to say, "Hey, look what I did with what you gave me," and, "I'm thinking about you." Those are some of His treasures. The dollar amount on the pledge card is important for the ministry that we do here, but our signature on the card is important for our connection with God. And when I sign the pledge card every year, in addition to building my relationship with God, it brings me great joy to know I support my community that cares about great ministry.

I will finish with an invitation. As I said before, it's not about the number on the card, it's about our relationship with God. He gives to us, He made us in His image as givers and when we give back, we complete that circle and our spirit grows. While many of you may have your card with you, signed and ready to go, to those of you still thinking, I invite you to join me in signing a pledge card and finding your own three reasons.