



First Fruits

Rethinking How We Give

When you enter the land that I am giving you

and you reap its harvest,

you shall bring the sheaf of

the *First Fruits* of your harvest to the priest.

(Leviticus 23:10)



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Dear friend of Transfiguration,

How do you decide how much you will give to God? What are your *First Fruits*?

In ancient times, the gift of first fruits demonstrated faithfulness to God's covenant, gratitude to God, and trust in God's continued provision. Although we no longer live in an agrarian society, when we give to God first, we are offering the first fruits of our labor.

This fall, the 2022-23 Stewardship Campaign is asking our Congregation to consider what it would look like to give our *First Fruits*. Often, our offering to God is not the first thing we consider. It is not until after we have first satisfied our material needs that most of us decide how much we will give to the Church. In effect we are offering God only a portion of our leftovers.

Transfiguration depends on the gifts of God's people to sustain our mission and ministry. How much does God ask of us? Scripturally, God asks us to tithe. For those of us not already tithing (giving 10% of our total annual income), we invite you to use the enclosed worksheet to see what tithing would look like for you.

The operating expenses this year for Transfiguration are expected to be \$1,831,532, while our income from pledges and special offerings is expected to be \$1,757,257. This means we currently have a shortfall of \$74,275. The 2022-23 Stewardship Campaign has a pledging goal of \$2,000,000 which will fully fund our anticipated 2023 budget and help combat inflation.

So, we humbly ask you to make a financial pledge to support the mission and ministry of Transfiguration in 2023. While we greatly appreciate all gifts we receive, our policy is to prepare our budget based upon pledges received. Please review the worksheet included in these materials to help you reflect on what a first fruits pledge might look like for you. As a starting point, please consider tithing for one month as part of your overall 2023 pledge.

We are grateful for all that you contribute to the life of Transfiguration, in your time, talent and treasure. Every gift matters to us and to God. Please join with us in prayerfully considering your *First Fruits* offering this year to support Transfiguration's ongoing mission and ministry.

Cordially,

A collection of handwritten signatures in black ink. The signatures are arranged in three rows. The first row contains the signature of Julia Trizzino. The second row contains the signatures of Peggy Kwoka, Rebecca Tankersley, and Cathleen Dolt. The third row contains the signatures of Courtney Barrow, Nancy L. Torell, and Sally Manning & E.T. Manning.

The earth is the Lord's

and *all that is in it,*

the world and all who dwell therein.

(Psalm 24:1)



The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it

"In the beginning, God" (Gen 1:1). These first four words of Scripture tell us so much. Who created the universe – the earth, sun, stars, seas, plants, and creatures of every variety? God. Who gave us life? God. We recognize this every week as we profess: "We believe in one God ... maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen." Aligning this profession with our practice calls us to reconsider the ways we think and talk about possessions. If everything we have belongs to its creator, God, then our homes, our cars, our money aren't ours at all, but are merely entrusted to us. As you pray about your pledge this year, we invite you to begin where Scripture begins. "In the beginning, God."



We are God's stewards.



Till and Keep it

A steward is someone who manages another's property, finances, or other affairs. Owners entrust their stewards to care for their households, to manage their fields and crops, and to pay their accounts. We are God's stewards. God has entrusted us with resources to care for the earth, for our families, and for all God's people. As you pray about your pledge this year, we invite you to ask God to inform your stewardship over the resources entrusted to you. How are you tilling and keeping those resources?

The Lord God put the human in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

Gen 2:15

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a purple lotus seed pod. The pod is dark purple with a green stem at the top. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue. The word "First" is written in a white, cursive font across the middle of the image.

First

Let us come into God's pres



Figs

ance with thanksgiving

(Psalm 95:2)

Our mission is to seek and serve Christ in all persons

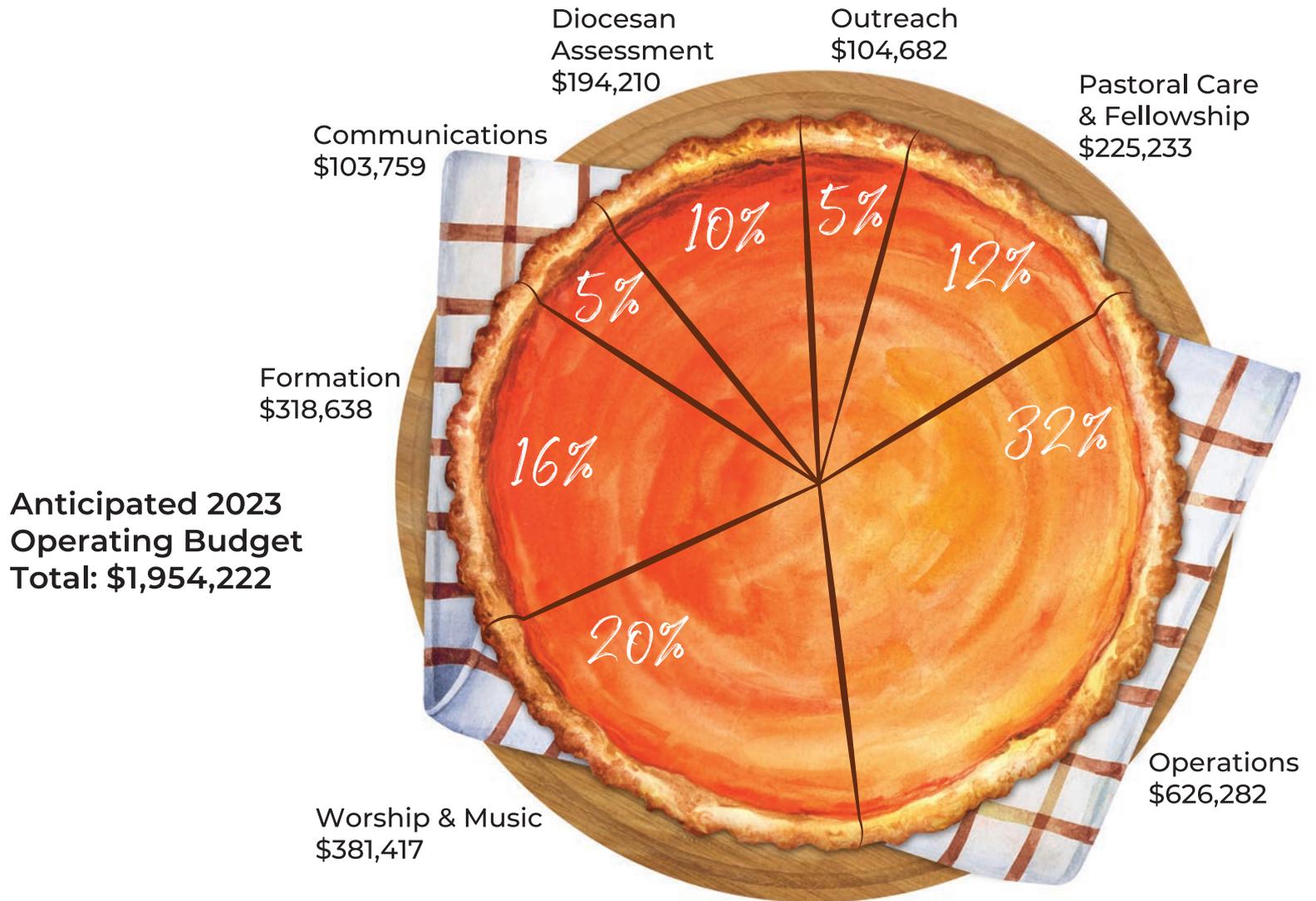
As a community of Christians, our lives are grounded in thanksgiving to God. Each week, we engage in reverent worship. Our members and guests experience God's provision and love through the Word, world-class music, and the Holy Eucharist in which God feeds us with First Fruit, the body and blood of Jesus. Through worship, we are equipped and sent into the world to love and serve our neighbors. Our food pantry and Austin Street ministries share your First Fruits with the hungry. Our children's and youth ministries employ your offerings of thanksgiving to raise up the next generation of faithful stewards. Your sacrificial giving empowers countless ministries to extend the love of God we experience here out into our divided, broken, weary world.

This year, we encourage you to consider prayerfully how you might support our mission more deeply. We need your time, your talent, and your treasure to ensure that we are able to carry out our mission.





Help us to reach our 2023 Stewardship Goal of \$2M.



The above graph is a breakout of costs associated with the mission and ministries of Transfiguration. Categories include an estimate of combined salaries, facilities, administrative costs, and ancillary fees associated with each respective group.

Your giving makes a difference here.

Almost all of Transfiguration's budget is funded by pledges, and unlike some large charities, we receive no support from foundations or corporations. This means every gift from every household matters. Last year, we welcomed over 397 commitments, enabling us to maintain all our core ministries. In addition, we hired a new Parish Administrator and Bookkeeper, filled the open Youth Minister position, and enriched our online presence by hiring a digital communications specialist. Next year, we know that simply maintaining our operation as it is now will cost more, owing to the overall rise in costs everywhere in our world.

What does offering *First Fruits* look like in your life?

When we realize that everything we have belongs to God and is a gift from God, it makes it a little easier to think about how we use the money God has entrusted to our care. We are but stewards of it until the return of the King—our king.

Introduction to Tithing

Tithing is an important theme for Christians because it is a symbol of how God calls us to live our lives as stewards rather than owners.

God entrusts his resources to us and commands us to give back to him the first 10% of everything we earn; By giving 10% of our income to the work of God in the world, we show the depth of our thankfulness and the fullness of our devotion to Jesus. This level of giving impacts all of our lives and has the power to move our hearts more toward Christ (Matt 6:21).

If you're not yet ready to commit to that level of giving, ask God for guidance about where to start or how far to stretch. Generosity is a virtue that, by God's grace, can grow over time.

Pledging

Pledging is a spiritual practice of intentional, disciplined giving. Pledging helps us order our financial life around our spiritual commitment to God and is a tangible act of thanksgiving. Financial gifts enable the parish to share the Good News of God in Christ through the presence of priests, staff, running utilities, routine repairs and upkeep of worship and meeting spaces, educational materials, and outreach support. The church is ground zero for Christian ministry.

The tithe is the biblical norm for giving and has been affirmed by the Episcopal Church as the standard for giving for all members. A tithe is a commitment of giving 10% of one's income to God. It can begin with a smaller percentage and increased proportionally each year.

Transfiguration understands that some income can be unpredictable. Pledging is a statement of intent to give, so consider making the commitment to give a portion of your income, whatever it may be, to God. Life circumstances change and so can our ability to give. A pledge is a plan, not a binding contract. If you need to adjust your pledge, notify our parish financial services team at stewardship@transfiguration.net and they will be glad to help.

Stewardship is a definite commitment, a very real investment of one's time, talent, and treasure. Money and service are separate areas of faithfulness. We are called to use our talents and gifts to serve the Lord, but we are also called to serve the Lord by giving our tithe.

Next Steps

Pray to God, asking for guidance in considering first fruits in your life and making a financial pledge.

Make a Pledge for 2022-2023 to Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration.

If not already doing so, **try tithing**. Determine 10% of 1 month's income and add to your pledge. (See the worksheet on the next page to see how the practice of tithing would impact you for one month.)

Prayerfully **consider an increase** from last year's commitment.

Try tithing Worksheet

Complete this worksheet to calculate an annual pledge plus a one month tithe of 10%.

A. Current 2022 pledge/annual giving = \$ _____

B. Divide the amount noted in A by 12 for 2022 monthly pledge.

(A) \$ _____ ÷ 12 = \$ _____ per month

Pray to God, asking for guidance on making a financial pledge to Transfiguration.

C. Combine your planned increase for 2023.

(B) \$ _____ per month in 2022 + additional \$ giving _____ per month = \$ _____
(monthly increase)

D. Multiply amount in C by 11 for 11 months of giving in 2023.

(C) \$ _____ per month for 2023 x 11 = \$ _____

E. Determine 10% of one month's income.

Take one month's income = \$ _____ x 0.10 = \$ _____
(one month's tithe)

F. Add the amounts in D and E to determine your 2023 pledge.

(D) \$ _____ 11 months' pledge + E \$ _____ one month's tithe = \$ _____
(2023 pledge)

Proportional Giving Chart

Annual Income	1%	3%	5%	7%	10%	15%
\$10,000	\$100	\$300	\$500	\$700	\$1,000	\$1,500
\$15,000	\$150	\$450	\$750	\$1,050	\$1,500	\$2,250
\$20,000	\$200	\$600	\$1,000	\$1,400	\$2,000	\$3,000
\$30,000	\$300	\$900	\$1,500	\$2,100	\$3,000	\$4,500
\$40,000	\$400	\$1,200	\$2,000	\$2,800	\$4,000	\$6,000
\$50,000	\$500	\$1,500	\$2,500	\$3,500	\$5,000	\$7,500
\$75,000	\$750	\$2,250	\$3,750	\$5,250	\$7,500	\$11,250
\$100,000	\$1,000	\$3,000	\$5,000	\$7,000	\$10,000	\$15,000
\$150,000	\$1,500	\$4,500	\$7,500	\$10,500	\$15,000	\$22,500
\$200,000	\$2,000	\$6,000	\$10,000	\$14,000	\$20,000	\$30,000
\$250,000	\$2,500	\$7,500	\$12,500	\$17,500	\$25,000	\$37,500

Thank you for your faithful generosity.

You may submit your pledges through Realm, at [Transfiguration.net/give](https://transfiguration.net/give), or by completing the enclosed pledge envelope to help the church plan for the ministries of 2023.

We are grateful that you are part of Transfiguration and we ask that you pray for us as we plan and prepare for the coming year.

Join us for a church-wide ingathering on October 30, where we will celebrate the gifts God has given us and the work he is doing in our midst.

If you have questions about payment methods or making financial gifts, please contact our parish financial services team at stewardship@transfiguration.net

Campaign Prayer

God of grace and abundance, you are the creator and giver of every good gift, and we are your humble stewards. We are deeply grateful for the beauty and bounty of the earth and for all the blessings of this life. Disturb our comfort with the materialism which surrounds us; relax our grip on earthly treasures; quell our anxiety about the future; and help us trust in your unfailing provision. Move our hearts to keep your covenant by giving the first fruits of our lives to you; through Jesus Christ, the first fruit of your new creation, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.



Honor the Lord with your substance
and with the *First Fruits* of all your produce

(Proverbs 3:9)

