Welcome to the Blessed to Be a Blessing Stewardship Narrative Series, designed to complement and support your congregation’s annual giving campaign. Six contributing writers explore stewardship as a response to the blessing of who we are and all we have received in connection with Mark’s Gospel beginning Sunday, October 7th through November 11th.

God’s initiative is always to bless, and that blessing is never earned, it is freely given. Christians primarily know the blessing of God’s grace in the gift of our baptism. The Book of Common Prayer tells us that in our baptism the bond that is established cannot be dissolved. We share the same blessing given to Jesus in his baptism: “This is my beloved, in you I’m well pleased.” By virtue of our baptism, we are blessed to be a blessing.

God blesses what God creates. As the Book of Genesis reminds us, the recital of God’s blessing is infused into the created order. Each day of the creation story ends with the refrain: it is good, it is good, it is good. We too are part and parcel of the created order, each of us designed for goodness and blessedness. The Hebrew word for blessing is barak, which means “the life force of creation itself,” says Walter Brueggemann. Through God’s blessing, all of creation is destined for abundant well-being. Through God’s blessing, there is always enough.

We, in turn, bless God by offering praise and thanksgiving for the goodness of gifts given. To worship God is to offer something of value. We offer praise and thanksgiving not only with our lips but with our lives. The annual pledge campaign can be an opportunity to bless God and bless the community from the offerings of the labor of our lives. Through our commitment to proportional giving, we offer a pledge of thanksgiving for all we have received and for all we will become as we grow into the image of Christ.

The first Sunday of this year’s stewardship narrative series will begin on October 7, the day many congregations will celebrate the Feast of St. Francis. In honor of the saint’s pledge to care for creation, people from throughout the church will bring their animals—dogs, cats, goats, bunnies, hamsters, even horses-- to be blessed. We experience great delight in bringing our beloved creatures forward for a blessing, recognizing how their sheer presence blesses our lives. My hope is that these reflections will spark conversations and exploration of all the ways we praise God through whom all blessings flow—including our intentional proportional giving.

Join me in offering gratitude to this year’s contributing writers:

The Rt. Rev. Catharine Waynick, Bishop of The Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis

The Very Rev. Walter B.A. Brownridge, Dean, The Cathedral Church of St. Andrew, The Episcopal Diocese of Hawaii

Lelanda Lee, Member, St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church and Member of Executive Council, The Episcopal Diocese of Colorado

Cindy Ruiz, Member, St. Elizabeth’s Episcopal Church, The Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth

The Rev. Tim Schenck, Rector, The Episcopal Parish of St. John the Evangelist, The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

The Rt. Rev. Michael Curry, Bishop, The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina

Yours in faith,

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