

Good morning!

If you don't know me, my name's Michelle Crawford. I'm the Senior Warden this year and the Stewardship Chair. My husband Adam is playing the piano. I promise the Crawford family is not trying to take over St. Jude's. I'm just up here to talk about stewardship.

If you were here last week or heard the sermon on the website, Father Greg pretty much covered the three Ts, so I'll try not to rehash it too much, but I do have a few things to say, so bear with me.

Several years ago I was talking to someone at work about his church, and he said something that stuck with me. He was telling me about how he was helping out with something, and he said, "Because like most churches, 10% of the people do 90% of the work." There's a church just up the street – I'm not going to name names, but it's really big and impressive – and I know several people who go there, and what they've said to me is that most people there aren't willing to give their time and volunteer for things. They just want to throw money at it instead. (That's probably why it's big and impressive.) Now, I don't think that's true of St. Jude's. I almost think we have the opposite experience. Most everybody I see out in the pews is involved in some program or other, and many of you are active in multiple ministries. And we are all more than willing to contribute to special projects for outreach or disaster relief or in thanks. But having been on the vestry for the past three years and the finance committee the past year, what I see every month is a little discouraging. Not *that* many of us see the need to give a regular pledge to this entity called the church. Maybe because it's not glamorous, or maybe because they don't know exactly where their money is going, or they don't want to make a regular commitment. So I volunteered to be stewardship chair this year – I wasn't asked to do this, I volunteered – because I wanted to figure out some creative ways to bring home the point that we do so much more than special offerings, and we need your pledges to keep it all going.

I had a vision of how to tell the story of stewardship through a video, so I've put that together for this morning. At this point I'd like to invite everyone to move up closer so you can see and hear better. I promise it's not too scary up front, and you can move right back afterward. I also want to reassure you that this is not the first step towards having a screen up every Sunday showing praise song lyrics; we're not going there. And if we have any visitors, this isn't how we normally do things. Come back next week when the Bishop is here, it'll be great.

I need to say a few words of thanks to everyone who either volunteered or was coerced into being interviewed for the video. You really helped me turn my vision into a reality. It's hard to be filmed talking without a script, I know! And if you didn't volunteer to be interviewed, surprise, you're probably in it anyway. But there's a reason for that – I wanted to show as many people as I could, getting together and being the church, because we are a family. We're all in this together. That's one of the reasons we hold a stewardship campaign.

We'll send out the link to the video, and we'll put it up on the website, but I promise it won't be "YouTube public" – that is, you'll need the link to be able to see it; random people won't be able to just

search for it on YouTube. I'm just going to let it run, and I'm not going to say anything else after we show it. I spent a lot of time on it, and I've seen it about a hundred times now, but I still come away inspired – not by my work, but by the work of the church and the people of the church which it showcases. I hope you feel the same, and that you give some thought and prayer to the message you are receiving from it.

I've chosen one of my favorite songs to use in the video, first because I love it and second because I thought it tied in really well with the idea of stewardship. It's called "Multiply" by Needtobreathe. The chorus says, "May this offering stretch across the skies and these hallelujahs be multiplied." I thought this was appropriate because that's exactly what we're doing – we're taking our offerings, no matter how small, and through the church God is multiplying them to do amazing things. Each one of us may only have five loaves and two fish, but if put them all together and offer what we have to God, he can perform miracles.