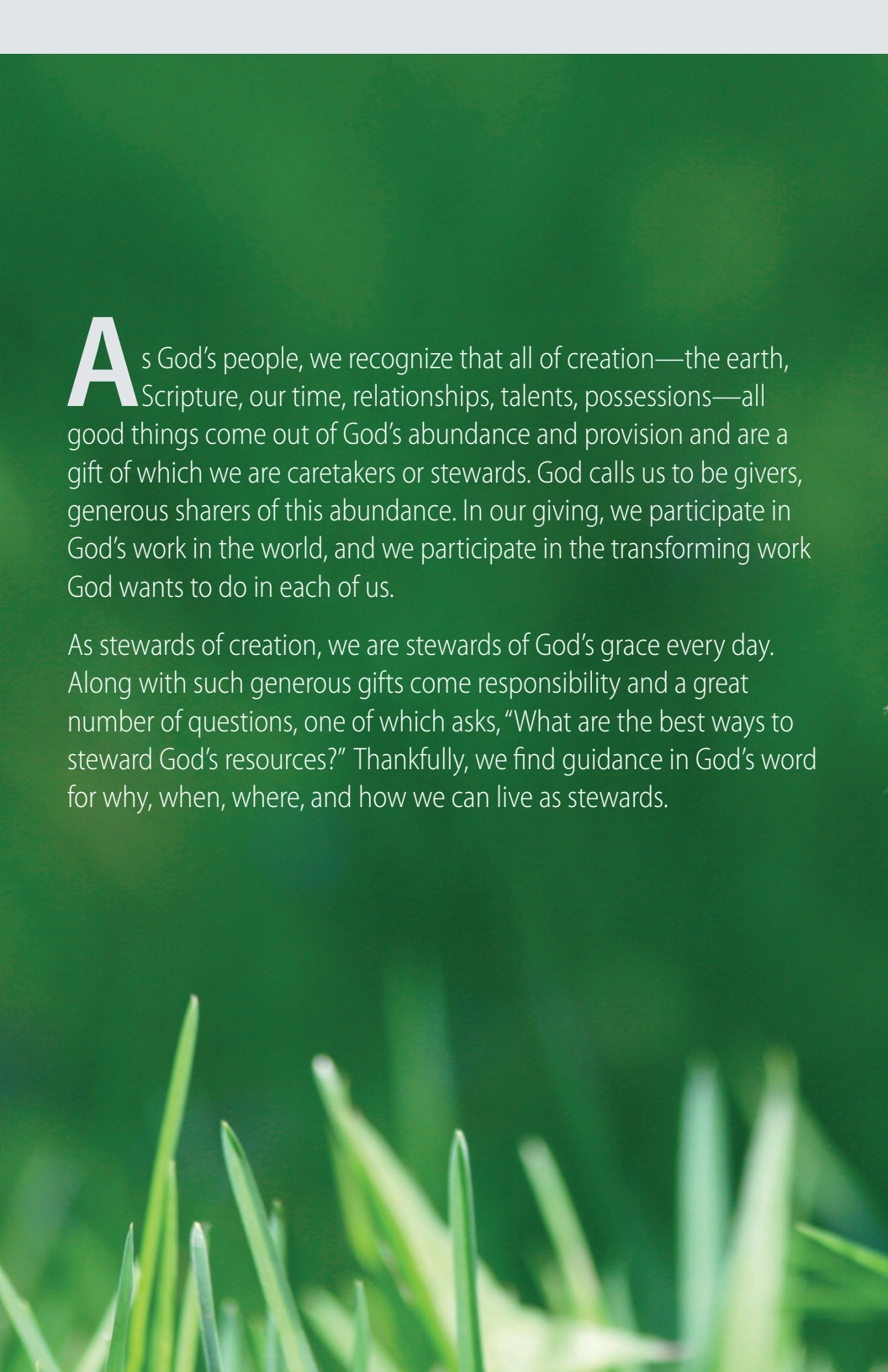


THE STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION OF  The Evangelical Covenant Church

Loving & Giving

A Stewardship & Generosity Resource





As God's people, we recognize that all of creation—the earth, Scripture, our time, relationships, talents, possessions—all good things come out of God's abundance and provision and are a gift of which we are caretakers or stewards. God calls us to be givers, generous sharers of this abundance. In our giving, we participate in God's work in the world, and we participate in the transforming work God wants to do in each of us.

As stewards of creation, we are stewards of God's grace every day. Along with such generous gifts come responsibility and a great number of questions, one of which asks, "What are the best ways to steward God's resources?" Thankfully, we find guidance in God's word for why, when, where, and how we can live as stewards.

Why We Give

To Reveal God's Likeness in Us

God so loved that God gave. God gives us the Holy Spirit who moves us to give with glad hearts, to give just as God gives. When we give we allow the Holy Spirit to transform us from within to help us take on the very nature of Christ. Through us, God reveals the reality of himself to the world—loving by giving.

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children (Ephesians 5:1).

To Grow in Our Dependence on God

God promises to care for us more than the birds of the air or the lilies of the field (Matthew 6:28-34).—When we stretch our faith through giving, we experience his care for us and our faith grows stronger. We learn that our dependence is not on ourselves or our ability to produce, but our dependence is upon our God.

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8).

To Join Jesus in the Work He Is Doing in the World through the Church

The body of Christ makes it possible for the many to do what individuals cannot do alone. In covenant with the Lord and with one another, we commit gifts and invest resources for God's work in the world. As

Covenanters we pledge ourselves to the Evangelical Covenant Church as our primary ministry arm of mission in the world.

To equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:12).

To Share the Giving Love of a Living Savior

Giving and loving are never separate in the Bible. Nor are they separated in the life of a disciple of Christ. Behind every act of Christ is an act of giving. This consistent and giving love is a testimony to the reality of Christ's resurrection and life-changing presence, and it continues to be the basis for our mission and ministry efforts everywhere.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:35).

To Grow in Our Understanding That We Are Stewards and Not Owners

God is the source of everything we receive, and all our abilities, including our ability to produce wealth. As stewards of God's abundance and grace, we become a channel through which others can share in this abundance. The act of giving breaks the toxic powers of greed and pride in our lives and more deeply connects us with God, the source of every good gift.

You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth (Deuteronomy 8:17-18).

How We Give

Cheerfully

It was God's good pleasure to create an abundant world. We give in gratitude and joyfully participate in being part of God's plan. This is a command, but it is also an invitation. Our gracious, giving God invites us into the joy and adventure of participating in the distribution of his good gifts in our world. When the Apostle Paul writes, "Each of you should give what you have decided," he means that our giving is a choice. We are not forced or coerced into sharing; so, our strong, consistent, and generous giving can bring enormous joy. By giving, we participate in and reflect God's own joy in giving.

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7, TNIV).

Regularly

God's love for the world and its people is steadfast, and we demonstrate our faithful stewardship through steadfast and regular giving. Consistency in our commitments creates a healthy community and healthy ministry; life becomes fragile when we have fragile commitments. Faithful giving is another reflection of God's character in us. It is doing God's work as he himself does it—faithfully.

On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income... [for the tithe] (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Proportionately

Our giving is a reflection of God's abundance. Since all of life, everything, is a gift, it is very important that there is a clear connection between what we receive or earn and what we return to God. When we give in proportion to what we receive, we intuit a deep connection between our receiving and God's giving, and the Holy Spirit is able to work deeply in our lives.

Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you (Deuteronomy 16:17).

Sacrificially

God's gift of his only son was the costliest sacrifice ever made. As the beneficiaries of that sacrifice, we, too, give sacrificially. For many of us, this means giving well beyond the tithe. We know that God receives our gifts, not according to their size but according to our hearts. God's economy is a radical departure from the economies of this world.

"Truly I tell you," [Jesus] said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on" (Luke 21:3-4).

What We Give

Time

Our willingness to serve God through our church, our community, and the world demonstrates good management of life's gifts...our "tithe" of the hours and days we live. "Redeeming the time" (Ephesians 5:15-16, KJV) by offering it to our Redeemer is another mark of a disciple. Sabbath keeping is also an important gift of time. When we live in a rhythm that includes Sabbath rest, it reinforces our dependence on God. When we receive a Sabbath rest, we are reminded that for God, time is not empty, but full. It is full of God's presence and promise and providence.

Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12).

Talents

The body of Christ functions fully only as its members exercise their God-given gifts in service. Our individual spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities are intended to complement those of other members of the body.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms (1 Peter 4:10).

Testimonies

By giving each of us a "faith story," God has made us stewards of a gift that is able to lead others "out of darkness, into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9, NAS). What an honor to be entrusted with a gift no other person but you can give. God doesn't say our testimonies must be eloquent—just real and ready (1 Peter 3:15).

This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed (1 Corinthians 4:1).

Treasure

As Christians, we struggle with trusting in God's ability to meet our every need, often substituting trust in God with our own efforts to provide for ourselves. Our fear of scarcity can create the very shortage it anticipates: "whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly" (2 Corinthians 9:6). In giving proportionately and sacrificially from the good we receive, we advance God's kingdom in our world.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Luke 12:34).



Where We Give

To Our Church

From the tabernacle Moses built in the wilderness to the house churches Paul nurtured in his journeys, God has urged his people to participate in a worshiping, local fellowship, and then to regular tithing through that fellowship. God has given us all the resources we need to impact the world God has called us to reach—but only as we respond together in that reach strengthened and lengthened.

In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability (2 Corinthians 8:2-3).

To Spirit-Revealed Opportunities

God gives each of us unique opportunities to demonstrate his love to others through our use of time, talents, testimonies, and tithes. This openness to human need is one of the

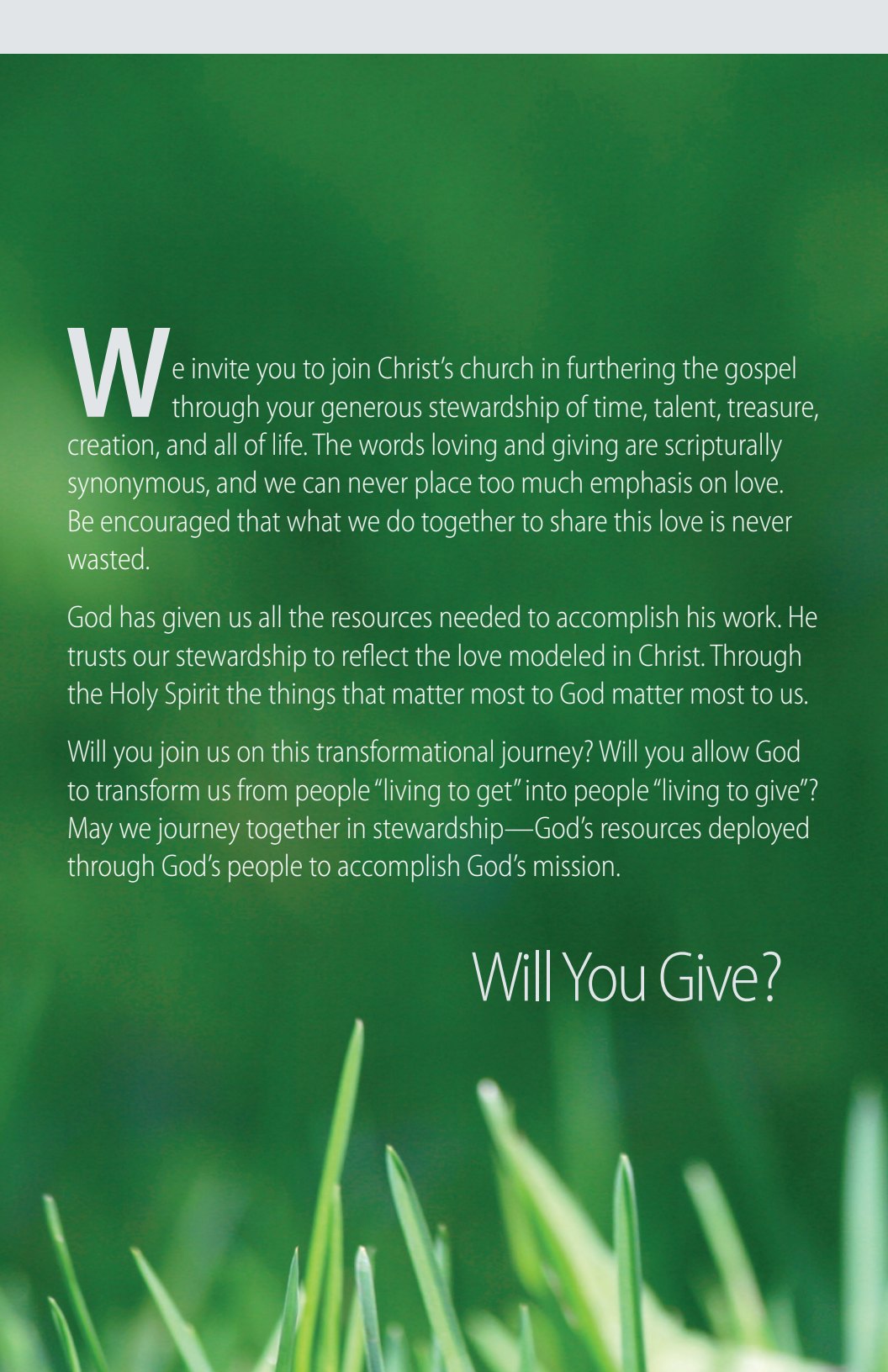
highest forms of witnessing and is a gift from God. When we reach out to others, we are responding to the word as the hands and feet of Christ.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:10).

To the Preservation of God's Creation

All of creation is a gift from God. Christians are the people God has called to care for it. Through our lifestyles and thoughtfulness, we care for that creation until Christ comes again and all things are made new (Revelation 21:5).

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the waters (Psalm 24:1-2).



We invite you to join Christ's church in furthering the gospel through your generous stewardship of time, talent, treasure, creation, and all of life. The words loving and giving are scripturally synonymous, and we can never place too much emphasis on love. Be encouraged that what we do together to share this love is never wasted.

God has given us all the resources needed to accomplish his work. He trusts our stewardship to reflect the love modeled in Christ. Through the Holy Spirit the things that matter most to God matter most to us.

Will you join us on this transformational journey? Will you allow God to transform us from people "living to get" into people "living to give"? May we journey together in stewardship—God's resources deployed through God's people to accomplish God's mission.

Will You Give?

Visit **CovChurch.org/stewardship** for tools to help you get started with...

- Stewardship of the earth
- Financial stewardship
- Life stewardship



The Evangelical Covenant Church
STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION