

### **“Take a look. It’s in a book”™**

--an occasional article from the Generosity Task Force sharing wisdom from the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Years ago, when we were passing offering plates in church on a regular basis, the offering in worship may have been introduced simply by saying, “Will the ushers come forward?” Even now, little may be said to present the offering in worship. But what’s really happening during the offering? Whether dropping an envelope in the offering plate during the gathered time of worship on Sunday morning, mailing a check to the church or contributing online, we are invited to give. Whether every week, once a month or another interval, we are invited to give. Whether as a regular offering or in response to a special outreach, we are invited to give. The Directory for Worship in the Book of Order describes the offering this way:

***“The offering of material goods in worship is an expression of our self-offering, as an act of gratitude for God’s grace. We give our lives to God through Jesus Christ, who gave his life for us. The practice of offering also reflects our stewardship of God’s good creation. Mindful that the earth and everything in it belong to God, we present tithes and offerings for use in Christ’s mission and ministry.”*** (W-1.0204)

During the offering liturgy in worship, we give in response to what God has first given us. We give as partners in the care of God’s creation. We give to support the work of the church. Gratitude is a suitable response. We cannot outgive God. Our response to God’s generosity is expressed through our own generosity. God has shared with us. We then share with others. Lest we get distracted, the offering in worship serves as a reminder not only of all God has given us but also of the ways God calls us to service. Think of the offering liturgy as a weekly refresher course on how to live generous lives.

So that’s why there’s a stewardship message during the offering! God has asked us to be partners in taking care of creation. Everything we have, everything period, belongs to God. We have been invited as partners to care for God’s creation.

Another way we are invited to be God’s partners is through the ministry and outreach of our congregation. From supporting local mission projects to ministry that reaches around the world, we accomplish more when we work together. Each offering in worship is a reminder of what happens when we give. It’s called impact. And, as we partner in these areas with God, we see that God accepts what we offer and makes it amazing.