



by The Rev. Lisa Mason

Responding to Abundance

habits. Over the years, we began re-prioritizing our choices. We were active in our parish and were steady pledgers, but we realized that we were giving out of our abundance and not sacrificially, so we began to move in the direction of becoming better stewards.

One of the most life-changing gifts our family has ever received came as a result of a capital campaign asking at our church over 15 years ago. Yes, you read correctly -- a capital campaign asking was a gift. A friend from our parish called to see if she could visit with us one evening in our home about the upcoming capital campaign. Before she left, she asked us to pledge a hysterical amount as part of the advanced gift part of the campaign. Well, at least hysterical to us. My husband and I burst out laughing, sure that we had misheard the amount. She calmly asked us to pray about it and what it could mean for our family and our church, then went on her way.

We continued to be mystified that anyone could think we could pledge that much. Could the committee not see that we had a lovely big home, two new vehicles in the driveway, and all of the financial obligations that come with raising two children? However, we did take our friend's advice and prayed as we went to sleep about what amount we could give.

In the morning, we both awoke knowing that we had much more to discuss. The lifestyle we were living hit us right between the eyes. It was no wonder that the choices we were making led others to believe that we could give such an amount; we had some serious work to do.

We started by saying yes to the hysterical amount, and then gradually began looking at our spending

That decision helped us to realize that truly all we have, and all that any of us have, is a gift from God and ours to care for. That included our spouses, our children, our parents, our money, our vocations, and our possessions . . .wow, we had a lot to be thankful for and a lot to be responsible for!

Did we get it right from that moment on? No. Did it mean that our path became as clear as the yellow brick road? No. But it did mean that the joy that comes with giving from the heart began to grow and continues to grow. Believe me, there are plenty of times I find myself caught up in the fear of not having enough . . . especially during the years that followed leaving a successful career to answer God's call to go to seminary.

I firmly believe that if our eyes had not been opened at that time in our lives, we may not have been able to see God at work in the lives of our family. Would we have been able to let our oldest son go to Belarus as a long-term missionary? Would we have been able to hear and see God's call in our lives to change vocations and move to San Antonio? Would we be able to let our youngest son pursue his dream and go to Germany for a dressage apprenticeship right out of high school, deferring college for a few years? I do not believe we would have had the courage to let go of control and trust God to work in our lives.

So the gift that began as a capital campaign asking has led to many, many more gifts as a result of saying yes. We have discovered the truth that we need to give just as we need to breathe in order to experience the abundant life that God so desires for us. **t**



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