

Giving Project Speaker Ginna Witte

Good morning, everyone. For those who I haven't met yet, My name is Ginna Witte and I'm a member of this year's Giving Project Team. For each of the Sundays in October and November, you're going to hear briefly from a member of our congregation about why they choose to support St. James (through their funds, their time, their talents, or all of the above). I have the pleasure of going first.

Last night I was at Frisch's with Linnea and I came across a sign that made me think about what God asks of us. The sign was one of those trifolds sitting next to the napkins and it was covered with photos of cakes and ice cream and pie and at the top, it said, "I think what you meant to say was "yes". I assume implying that maybe the server had asked if you wanted dessert and you being the healthy person that you are, you said "no" even though maybe you really did want it.

This phrase, "I think what you meant to say was 'yes'" made me wonder if that's what God is thinking each time he asks something of us and we don't step out in faith and follow through.

I've been at St. James for about a year now. I couldn't be happier to have found this church and all of you. And yet, I am very aware that God had to poke and prod me over and over again to get me through your front door. So 3 or 4 years ago, I saw a Facebook post from a friend who was at Pride with her Episcopalian church and I thought I should look into that. But I didn't.

2 or 3 years ago I was walking in Westwood and saw that St. James had the blue, green, & orange "No Matter where you're from, we're glad you're our neighbor " sign and I thought hmm, we probably care about some of the same things, I should check them out. But I didn't.

About a year and a half ago, I was looking for a place to get Joey baptized and I was reading through church websites for area churches and I saw that Mary and I graduated from the same college, Kenyon. And I thought, maybe this is the right one. But new people are scary and I like sleeping in. So I didn't.

Looking back on this, I wonder if after each of these pokes, God was lovingly (or sarcastically) looking down on me saying "I think what you meant to say was "yes". He knew what an abundance of blessings he had in store for me and my family once I would step out in faith and walk into St. James. And yet, he had keep pushing me along to trust him and to listen and to finally follow through.

In case you're wondering, it was John Eby's Giving Project speech last year that finally got me through the door. I watched it on Facebook and based on his speech, I decided toughen up and try St. James. You've been stuck with me ever since.

This year I'll be supporting St James and the Giving Project because I'm finally starting to learn that when I step out in faith, good things happen. God has blessed me with membership in this congregation and I am very aware that St. James only exists because of the incredible generosity of its past and current parishioners.

As you read in the Giving Project letter that you hopefully received in the mail this week, the church receives around \$80,000 a year from one large bequest in an endowment. This benefactor never met me or my family but his financial generosity helped make sure St. James would be here when I was finally brave enough to show up. I don't have 80 grand a year to contribute, but I want to do what I can to make sure St. James will be here for me, for my kids, for all of you, and for everyone else who hasn't walked through our door yet.

On behalf of the Giving Project team, we want to thank everyone who has contributed financial resources, or time or talent in the current year. We hope you'll each have an opportunity to pray and think about how God is calling you to Step out in Faith for our community in 2020. If you feel led to do so, we'd love to receive a pledge for 2020, preferably by November 10th. If you have questions, please feel free to speak to Paul Schneider, the treasurer of St. James or any other member of the Giving Team. Thank you.