

# “Edythe’s Gifts”

## (3 Skits for Stewardship)

by

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*These skits were first performed on October 4, 2006 at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Port Townsend, Washington, in an evening of dessert and entertainment called “Sweet and Hot at St. Paul’s.”*

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### **Cast:**

EDYTHE, a new member at St. Paul’s

ANGEL

HOWARD, church treasurer

BETSY, on the budget committee

THE REV. TED, retired clergy

*All three skits take place in Edythe’s living room. Minimum set contains two chairs and a small table or desk.*

*Costumes: Angel wings and halo, clerical collar.*

*Props: File folder, empty food container, pledge card, envelope, phone, calculator.*

## Edythe's First Gift

*(EDYTHER, a new member of St. Paul's, is sitting at her desk, waiting for the church treasurer to stop by.)*

EDYTHER

*(To herself, while checking her watch.)* Might as well do all these charities all at once, and get it over with. Let's see. Hospice Foundation. What did I do last year? Looks good. *(Mimes writing check.)* Red Cross. Same as last year. *(Mimes writing check.)* Marine Science Center, renew membership. Hmmm. It was great having little Edie stay here while she went to their day camp. She gave me her fish art. I guess we can kick that one up a level. *(Mimes writing check.)* And St. Paul's. Same as the Red Cross?

*(ANGEL enters, dressed like an angel.)*

ANGEL

Excuse me.

EDYTHER

Yikes! You're not St. Paul's treasurer. Are you?

ANGEL

I'm your guardian angel.

EDYTHER

Wow. Do I need a guardian angel?

ANGEL

Everyone needs a guardian angel. I'm here to help. Now, why do you give money to these groups?

EDYTHER

Umm ... Well, I think they do good work. I support their goals. Why, is there something wrong with this list?

ANGEL

No, it's fine. Do you support St. Paul's for the same reason you support the Red Cross?

EDYTHE

No. I've been pretty lucky and haven't needed the Red Cross for myself. Yet. But I didn't even know how much I needed St. Paul's until I started attending. The worship service, and the people. They took me in and put me to work. I like to be useful. I guess I support these other groups because they make the world better, but St. Paul's because it makes me better.

ANGEL

So... St. Paul's makes you better.

EDYTHE

Right. *(Thinks.)* Right! *(Makes out check. Very pleased with herself.)* Okay, then. They don't get a donation like that every day. Thanks!

*(ANGEL exits.)*

*(HOWARD the Treasurer enters, knocks on door.)*

EDYTHE

Come in!

HOWARD

Edythe? I'm Howard, from St. Paul's. Did you have some questions about your pledge?

EDYTHE

Have a seat, Howard. Thanks for coming over, but I think I've got it all worked out.

HOWARD

You have?

EDYTHE

Absolutely. Let me tell you what I'm giving to St. Paul's this year.

HOWARD

Well, Edythe, I don't need to know –

EDYTHE

Oh, that's okay. I want to tell you, because I just had a kind of epiphany about it. I was taking care of all my annual donations to charities and was going to make my pledge to St. Paul's pretty much the same as all the others, when I realized just how important the church is to me. St. Paul's has really helped me get closer to God.

HOWARD

I'm glad to hear it.

EDYTHE

So here it is. *(Shows him check.)* Three times my usual donation.

HOWARD

Why, thank you. Thank you very much. *(pause.)* And that's for the whole year?

EDYTHE

*(Slightly disappointed at his response.)*

Yes. A little more than your ordinary donation, I bet.

HOWARD

Well ... not really.

EDYTHE

It's not?

HOWARD

No. As Treasurer at St. Paul's, I can tell you that many people give in this range. Somewhere between two hundred and eight hundred dollars is a very common annual donation.

EDYTHE

Really? This is just average?

HOWARD

Oh, no. No, no, that's not anywhere near average.

EDYTHE

You said it was the very common.

HOWARD

Well, the top givers change the average quite a bit. And it's a good thing they do. We couldn't make it otherwise. More than 150 people gave to the church last year, but the top 30 givers paid more than half our bills.

EDYTHE

Really? So, what's the most anybody gives?

HOWARD

This past year, our top few donors, added together, gave more than \$25,000.

EDYTHE

*(Stunned.)* What? Holy manoli! Man, that's some commitment.

HOWARD

Yes, it is. But you have to understand, these people have strong ties to the church that have deepened over time. People who give at that level are likely to support St. Paul's in a variety of ways, time and talent as well as money. St. Paul's is their church.

EDYTHE

St. Paul's is my church.

HOWARD

Yes, absolutely. It's your church too. And we're blessed to have you here, blessed in every way, and grateful, too. So, are you ready to fill out your pledge card?

EDYTHE

Umm... No. I guess I need to think about it some more.

HOWARD

Well, bless you, Edythe. Let me know if I can answer any other questions. You'll bring that pledge card to Ingathering Sunday, won't you?

EDYTHE

Yes, I will. Thanks for coming over, Howard.

HOWARD

Goodbye, Edythe.

*(HOWARD exits.)*

*(ANGEL enters.)*

EDYTHE

Hello, again. You didn't exactly tell me everything I needed to know, did you?

ANGEL

*(Blessing Edythe with a kiss or touch.)* Under Christ's direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy, growing, and full of love.

*(ANGEL turns and addresses the audience, leaving EDYTHE working on her pledge.)*

And now you have seen what was done

By Edythe in year number one.

You have seen her first calculation

Of her annual St. Paul's donation.

What will she do in year two?

Stick around and we will show you!

*(ANGEL exits.)*

## Edythe's Second Gift

*(One year later. EDYTHE is again sitting at her desk. She's waiting for a visit from her friend Betsy, who is on the church Budget Committee.)*

EDYTHE

*(Studying a file folder in front of her.)* These numbers don't tell me how much I owe.

*(ANGEL enters.)*

ANGEL

Hello, Edythe.

EDYTHE

My guardian angel! You'll be proud of me this year. I'm going to pay my way. Can you help me figure out what it is?

ANGEL

I'd be happy to. What do you have?

EDYTHE

I haven't gotten anywhere. I was looking at last year's budget, but I don't know how much of that is mine to pay.

ANGEL

No, forget the budget. The budget doesn't matter. What do you have?

EDYTHE

I can tell you're an other-worldly being. I want to be practical this year. It costs money to run a church. I want to pay my way.

ANGEL

We're not talking about the yacht club, Edythe. Now, how much do you have?

EDYTHE

You're no help. Go away.

*(ANGEL exits.)*

*(BETSY enters, carrying an empty food container.)*

BETSY

*(Knocking.)* Hi, Edie!

EDYTHE

Hi Betsy, come on in and take a chair. Help me figure this out.

BETSY

Okay. Here's your container. Your pumpkin cookies are a big hit at 'Just Soup.'

EDYTHE

Oh, good.

BETSY

Whatcha figuring?

EDYTHE

How much it costs to be a member of St. Paul's. That'll be my pledge this year.

BETSY

How much it costs to be a member? No, that's not how we do it.

EDYTHE

It's how I'm doing it. Come on, Betsy. Just help me with my logic here. The last couple years, our total annual budget, including programs, property expenses, salaries, and everything else, was about \$250,000. Now, what's the total membership?

BETSY

Around 200, I guess.

EDYTHE

Okay. Two hundred into \$250,000 makes, umm, \$1,250 for the year.

BETSY

Wait a minute. I shouldn't let you suck me into this, but, if you have to do it this way, you ought to be clear about what you're doing.

EDYTHE

Good. I want to be clear.

BETSY

That membership number includes families and children. Are you saying that a family of four owes St. Paul's four times what you do?

EDYTHE

No. That doesn't make sense. Okay, so I'll divide by the number of families. What's that?

BETSY

I don't know offhand. How about the number of pledges? Last year, that was about 90.

EDYTHE

Hmmm. That makes a very different equation. Does every household pledge?

BETSY

Some do, some don't. Some don't pledge and still give quite generously. Some give very little money but might contribute in other ways.

EDYTHE

Gee, Betsy, this is hard to figure out. Okay. Well. I'm going to make the divider 100. That seems fairly accurate for total households, and it's easy to divide. So if I divide 100 into \$250,000, that comes to \$2,500. Gulp.

BETSY

Let's divide it into monthly and weekly payments, then see what it looks like. (*Figuring.*) It comes to about \$200 a month, or \$48 a week. Now, can you afford \$48 a week, Edie?

EDYTHE

I guess so.

BETSY

What would you have to give up to pay it? Anything you can't live without?

EDYTHE

No. Yes. I mean, if I kept that money, I'm sure I could put it to good use. And it's more than I give any other organization. But I could do this and still eat and pay my bills.

BETSY

Well, I'm asking, because I know other members of St. Paul's couldn't say the same. Some would have to make hard choices in order to pay that pledge.

EDYTHE

I suppose that's true.

BETSY

And some won't give that much, whether they can afford to or not. But we're all still members, right? We want a place where everyone is welcome, because we all bless each other. We find God's blessing in the whole body of Christ, not just the ones who pay a certain amount.

EDYTHE

Absolutely. I believe that with my whole heart.

BETSY

So that's why we don't do it this way. Do you really think membership at St. Paul's means paying for yourself alone?

EDYTHE

It sounded good.

BETSY

Instead of looking at what you owe, think about looking at what you *have*.

EDYTHE

What?

BETSY

After all, Edie, this is not the yacht club. Now, are you ready to make your pledge?

EDYTHE

No, I guess not. I guess I have to think about it some more.

BETSY

Okey-dokey. Be sure to bring your pledge card on Ingathering Sunday. Okay?

EDYTHE

Sure, Betsy.

BETSY

See you Sunday.

EDYTHE

See you Sunday.

*(BETSY exits.)*

*(ANGEL enters.)*

Hello again. You don't have to tell me, I get it. This is not the yacht club.

ANGEL

*(Blesses Edythe with a kiss or touch.)* Under Christ's direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy, growing, and full of love.

*(ANGEL turns and addresses the audience, leaving EDYTHE working on her pledge.)*

So Edythe thus chose what to do

For her pledge in year number two.

What will she do in year three?

Stick around a bit longer to see.

*(ANGEL exits.)*

## Edythe's Third Gift

*(One year later. EDYTHE is again sitting at her desk. It's shortly before the time set for a visit from Ted, a retired pastor who now comes to St. Paul's. She is talking on the phone to her friend Betsy.)*

EDYTHE

Betsy, that's good news. ... So when's your next radiation? ... Do you have a ride? ... Excellent. ... You get some rest now. ... It's our team for Altar Guild duty this week—are you up for it? You can always give me a call, you know. Okay, okay, see you Saturday then. ... Love you. 'Bye. *(Hangs up.)*

*(ANGEL enters, sits next to EDYTHE.)*

EDYTHE

*(Casually.)* Hi.

ANGEL

*(Casually.)* Hi.

EDYTHE

That was Betsy on the phone.

ANGEL

How's she doing?

EDYTHE

Better. Lab reports came back, all good.

ANGEL

Wonderful.

EDYTHE

No kidding. For awhile there, I was afraid we might lose her.

ANGEL

Oh, no. We won't lose Betsy.

EDYTHE

Really? That's good news. Since you're here, it must be money time again at St. Paul's.

ANGEL

It's all about love.

EDYTHE

You're still talking about Betsy. Yes, it is all about love. I pray for her every day. But now I have to work on my pledge to St. Paul's. I wish I didn't have to figure it out all over again every year. I wish I was one of those people who find this easy.

ANGEL

I don't know many people like that.

EDYTHE

You know, the ones who know what they're supposed to do. I wrestle with it every year.

ANGEL

Yes, it's all about love.

EDYTHE

What are you talking about? Money and love are two different animals. Just tell me, what's enough?

*(ANGEL shrugs and exits.)*

She is no help at all.

*(TED enters, knocking. He is wearing a clerical collar.)*

TED

Knock, knock.

EDYTHE

Come on in, Ted, and sit down. Thanks for coming over. You know, the last two years, I thought I knew what my pledge was going to be, and I ended up changing my mind both times. This year I'm starting out confused, so maybe that's progress.

TED

Tell me what's confusing.

EDYTHE

To be honest, I keep remembering a pledge drive at my family's church right before I left for college. The theme was Thankfulness. It was all about giving back to God out of thanksgiving for all that God gives to us.

TED

Okay.

EDYTHE

I was fed up with church back then, and the theme sounded self-serving to me. The idea that I'm supposed to figure out what I owe God, and then give it to my church? I care a great deal about St. Paul's, but it's not God.

TED

Besides which, you don't owe God anything.

EDYTHE

I don't?

TED

No. Everything we have, our lives, this amazing world we live in – it's all a gift from God. A gift of love.

EDYTHE

And in exchange, I'm supposed to ...

TED

No! There's no payback for a gift. You can't pay back God anyway, because you live in God's world. The gifts of God come to us in the form of a trust. We manage the trust, but we don't own it.

EDYTHE

“All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee.”

TED

Exactly. Now let me ask you something. What do you think the first St. Paul meant, when he referred to the church as the Body of Christ?

EDYTHE

Ummm... Just Paul being Paul?

TED

Stick with me here, Edythe. Is your body the same thing as “you”?

EDYTHER

It’s not all of me, no. My body’s how I do things. But I’m more than that.

TED

All right. The church grew out of the Incarnation – the recognition of God’s own child, alive and active and at work here on earth. One of us.

EDYTHER

Right.

TED

And the church is contained in the Incarnation today. We’re not just another social group. Unless we believe that God is personally involved here, we’ll never get where we need to go.

EDYTHER

That makes me think of when I took a turn filling in at the church office during the secretary’s vacation. We got a call from St. Vincent de Paul about a woman who needed help paying for a tooth extraction. She was having other troubles too, and—well, long story. Stuff happens.

TED

That it does.

EDYTHER

I referred the call to the deacon. We ended up helping to pay the woman’s dentist out of St. Paul’s discretionary fund. Then she sent us a letter. I copied some of it down, to keep with me. She said, “I can’t thank you enough for helping someone you didn’t even know.”

TED

I’m glad we were there to help.

EDYTHER

Me, too. She’s not a member here, but it didn’t matter. Stuff happens to anyone, stuff that can make you feel hopeless. Like all the doors are closed. What matters is hope. The chance. When that door cracks open, then yes, I think God is involved. Sometimes I wish I could just give all my pledge to the discretionary fund.

TED

But the discretionary fund is nothing by itself. Your moment of hope needs a place for that woman to come to – a place where she’s treated with respect. It needs a phone that works, and someone to answer the phone. In fact, it needs a whole community of people who practice their faith.

EDYTHE

That’s something I love about St. Paul’s—all the ways we get to practice. From fixing meals at the emergency shelter, to sending school supplies to kids in Haiti, to coming together every week and praising God. It’s like a giant river, and I get to be part of it.

TED

“The river of God is full of water.”

EDYTHE

No kidding. I like that river.

TED

I do think language that mixes up the identity of the church with God can be confusing. The church building is not God, and the rector is not God, and the whole Episcopal hierarchy is not God. But that moment of hope – that just might be God. All those other things give that moment shape. They’re what brings hope to life. And that is the Body of Christ.

EDYTHE

You know, I was just talking to Betsy on the phone.

TED

How’s she doing?

EDYTHE

Pretty good, overall. She told me how much it meant to have communion brought to her home, when she couldn’t come to the service. Made me think about what I’d want, if something happened to me.

TED

Me, too.

EDYTHE

Yeah. But it's not just for us. I want that kind of caring for anyone who needs it. The phones, the place, somebody on the job. And I want that job to be recognized and compensated.

TED

"The laborer deserves to be paid."

EDYTHE

Right. St. Paul's is here so that anyone can be welcomed into a world where they are loved and cared for. And this is how we do it: With a beautiful and welcoming physical space. With a staff who's there for us and for the whole community. With worship and programs that teach that way of life.

TED

Not that we always get it right. We're human too. And when the church gets it wrong, I don't think it gets much wrong-er.

EDYTHE

Even then, deep down, I have to believe it's part of the struggle toward love. Love is not always easy.

TED

No. It takes practice.

EDYTHE

So ... my pledge. How much? It always come down to that, and it's always a problem.

TED

That's why the church teaches proportional giving. It's fair, and it comes out of our abundance, great or small. My advice is to give a percentage of what you have.

EDYTHE

Right. The tithe. I'll tell you, Ted, giving 10% of my income to St. Paul's would be a big shock to the household budget.

TED

The principle is more important than the exact percentage. And, Edythe, do you know what? If each household gave just 4% of their annual income to St. Paul's – just 4% – we would have no money problems at all. The bills would be paid, our programs could blossom and grow, and we'd have energy and resources to work toward that world where all people are cared for and loved.

EDYTHE

You don't say. Well, my income next year will probably be pretty close to what it is this year. And I can do the math. (*Figures.*) In fact, I can do a little more than that. (*Fills out the card, puts it in an envelope.*) For once, I'm ready for Ingathering Sunday.

TED

I'll be there, with bells on. Bye now.

(*TED exits.*)

(*ANGEL enters.*)

ANGEL

So now that we've lived and breathed at St. Paul's,  
feasted and prayed and dusted the halls—

and laughed with each other and cried without shame,  
We find that "my" body is one and the same

with your body, his body, her body, God's!  
(Who knew this would happen? And against such high odds?!)

Our hearts have been altered by the voice of the dove,  
It's not about cash—

EDYTHE

No... it's all about love.

**The End**

Scripture references:

“Under Christ’s direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy, growing, and full of love.” Ephesians 4:16, *New Living Translation*, Tyndale.

“All things come of thee, O Lord; and of thine own have we given thee.” 1 Chronicles 29:14b, *KJV*.

“The laborer deserves to be paid,” Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:18, *NRSV*.

“The river of God is full of water.” Psalm 65:9b, *NRSV*.