



# Toward a Theology of Stewardship

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TENS: The Episcopal Network for  
Stewardship

# Learning Objectives

- ▶ Why have a theology of stewardship?
- ▶ How does our spirituality impact our ability to be generous?
- ▶ The Journey of Generosity
- ▶ Reversing the Giving Trends

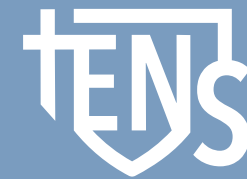


*Introduction*

# Why have a theology of Stewardship?

- ▶ Giving and generosity are integral to the Christian life, yet it can be hard to talk about
- ▶ We have a lot of dysfunction in our culture and the church around money, how much we make, perceived scarcity, consumption, etc.
- ▶ Gives us a spiritual foundation from which we can talk about money and ask for it in a ways that are inspiring and integral to our faith journey.

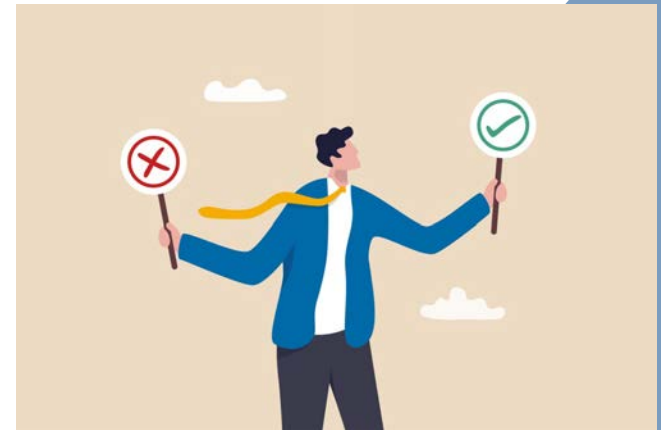
*A Theology of Stewardship*



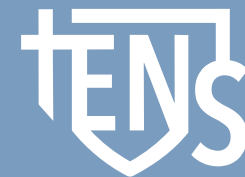
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# Why have a theology of Stewardship?

- ▶ Done Well:
  - ▶ Invites people into deeper relationship with God and one another and can be transformative in their life
  - ▶ It is fun, spiritually enriching, and something a congregation looks forward to
- ▶ Done Badly:
  - ▶ “God talk” around giving can feel manipulative, turn people off to church, and lead to an ineffective campaign.
  - ▶ And leave people trapped in cultural norms around scarcity, and cause people to miss out on a life of true ‘abundance.’



*A Theology of Stewardship*



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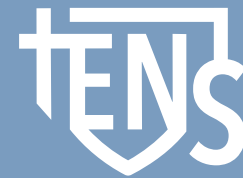
# A perfectly fine stewardship approach ...

“For Christians who follow in the way of Jesus, we recognize that God is the origin of all life, the giver of everything that we have and are, the source of our freedom and giftedness, and so the healthy person responds by thanking God through prayer, by serving God and God's people, and by sharing our financial resources with those in need.”

**OR**

“Good stewardship begins with the recognition that God is the true owner of all things, and that we are mere temporary caretakers (or stewards) of all that we have been given, and that we should be moved out of a sense of gratitude to God, and give back a portion to those in need.”

*Spirituality & Generosity*



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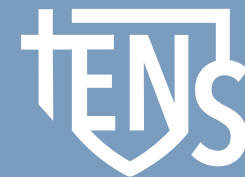
# Duty & obligation

“For Christians who follow in the way of Jesus, we recognize that God is the origin of all life, the giver of everything that we have and are, the source of our freedom and giftedness, and so the healthy person responds by thanking God through prayer, by serving God and God's people, and by sharing our financial resources with those in need.”

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*Spirituality & Generosity*

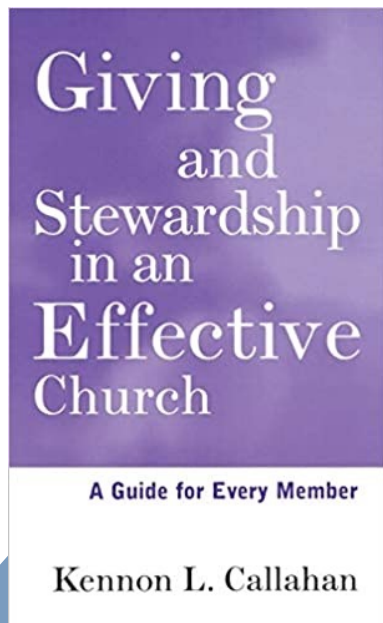


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## Limitations of obligation

- ▶ Callahan argues that duty & obligation, as well as appeals to “loyalty” and “commitment” have limited effectiveness
- ▶ Reflected in our language: “Commitment Sunday” “Loyalty Campaign” “Stewardship”
- ▶ No effort to convert: *“you know the drill...”*

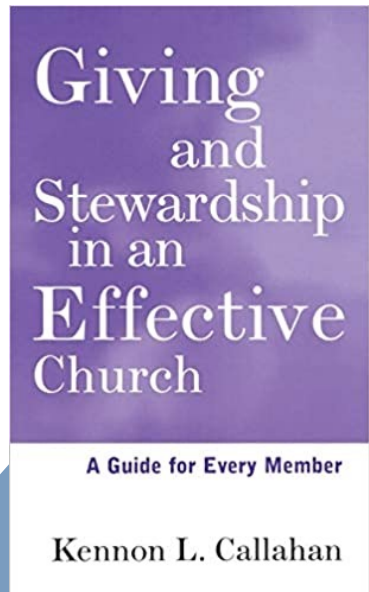
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## Limitations of obligation

- ▶ Emphasis on institutional maintenance/ budget funding: “...so we can keep things going around there.”
- ▶ Disconnected from our faith: “...so we can get back to spiritual matters.”
- ▶ It can turn people off with shame: “*It’s our DUTY AND DELIGHT!*”
- ▶ Can cause “Motivational Mismatch”

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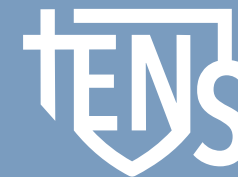
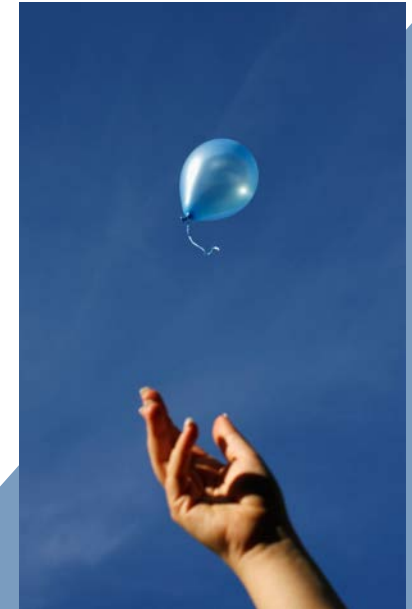
# Spiritual Maturity

“For Christians who follow in the way of Jesus, we recognize that God is the origin of all life, the giver of everything that we have and are, the source of our freedom and giftedness, and so the healthy person responds by thanking God through prayer, by serving God and God's people, and by sharing our financial resources with those in need.”

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## ➔ The “Journey of Generosity” ➔

When I come or Nothing	Fair share or Dues Paying	Conversion	Tithers or % givers	Joyful Givers
Customers	Patrons		Partners	Family
External Factors Control Giving			Internal Factors Control Giving	

### CUSTOMERS

- **Give Nothing** (10-20% of the congregation) For the most part just aren't connected. They don't see the offering plate as pertaining to them. When asked, about half will reply, "Nobody ever asked me."
- **When They Attend:** (15-25% of the congregation) These folks are not terribly engaged, but know people are watching! They are the folks putting the \$5, \$10 and \$20 bills in the plate when they visit.

### PATRONS

- **Dues Payers:** (15-30% of the membership) Pledges tend to be in the range of \$150 to \$600 per year. They see the church as 'home' but more as a religious/civic/social institution.
- **Fair Share Givers:** (15-20% of the membership) Fair share gifts will range from \$600 - \$1,500 per year. Believe in the mission, want to support the church, more intentional about their giving.

## ➔ The “Journey of Generosity” ➔

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### PARTNERS

- **Percentage Givers and Tithers** – Consider themselves “partners with Christ” in the mission of the Church, see giving as a spiritual practice.

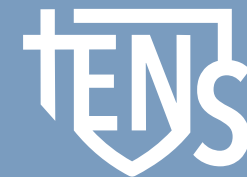
### FAMILY

- **Joyful Givers** are those who give as “family.”

These last two groups make up 5-10% of the Episcopal Church but 65 - 75% of the Church's income.

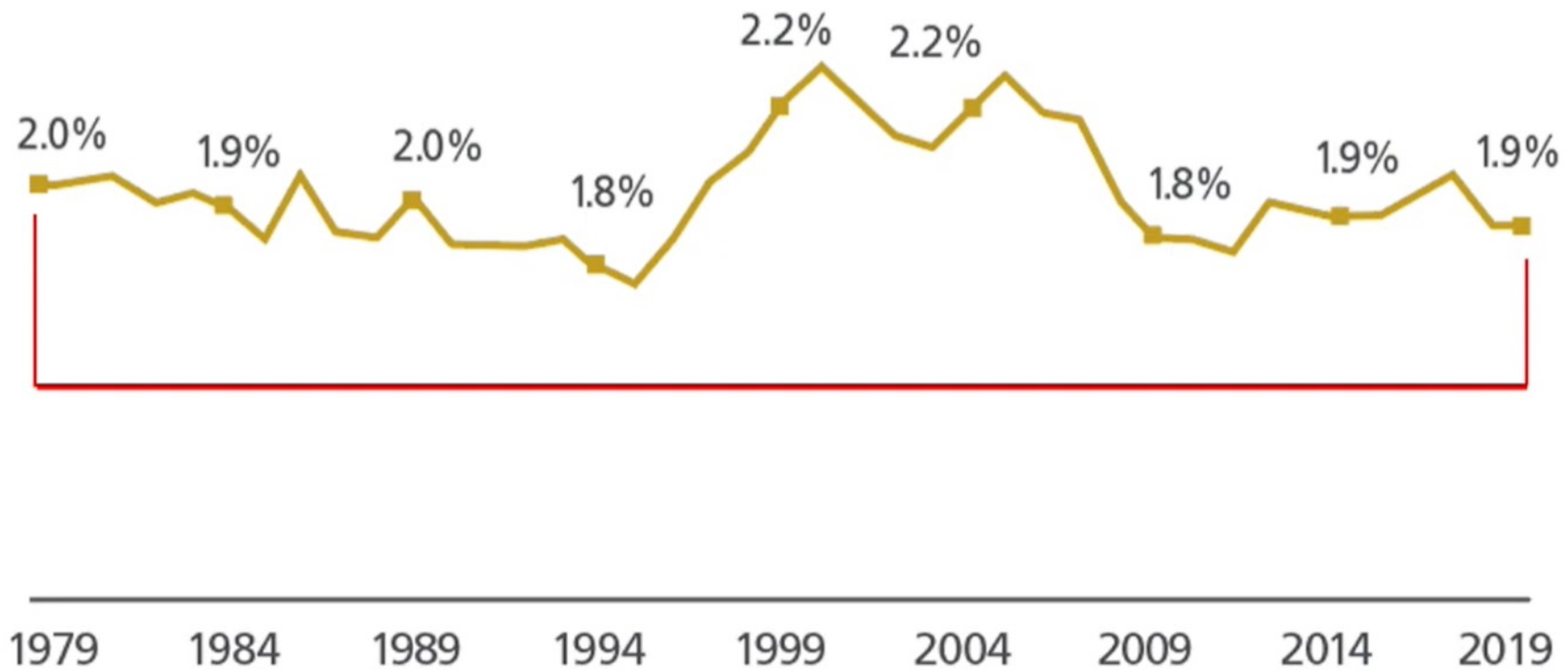
# Sobering Stats

- ▶ We do not have to look hard to see that our giving statistics have changed in the last thirty years.
- ▶ On Average, Christians give 2.5% of their income to their church or religious affiliates
- ▶ Between 3-5% of Christians tithe 10% or more of income to their church or religious affiliates



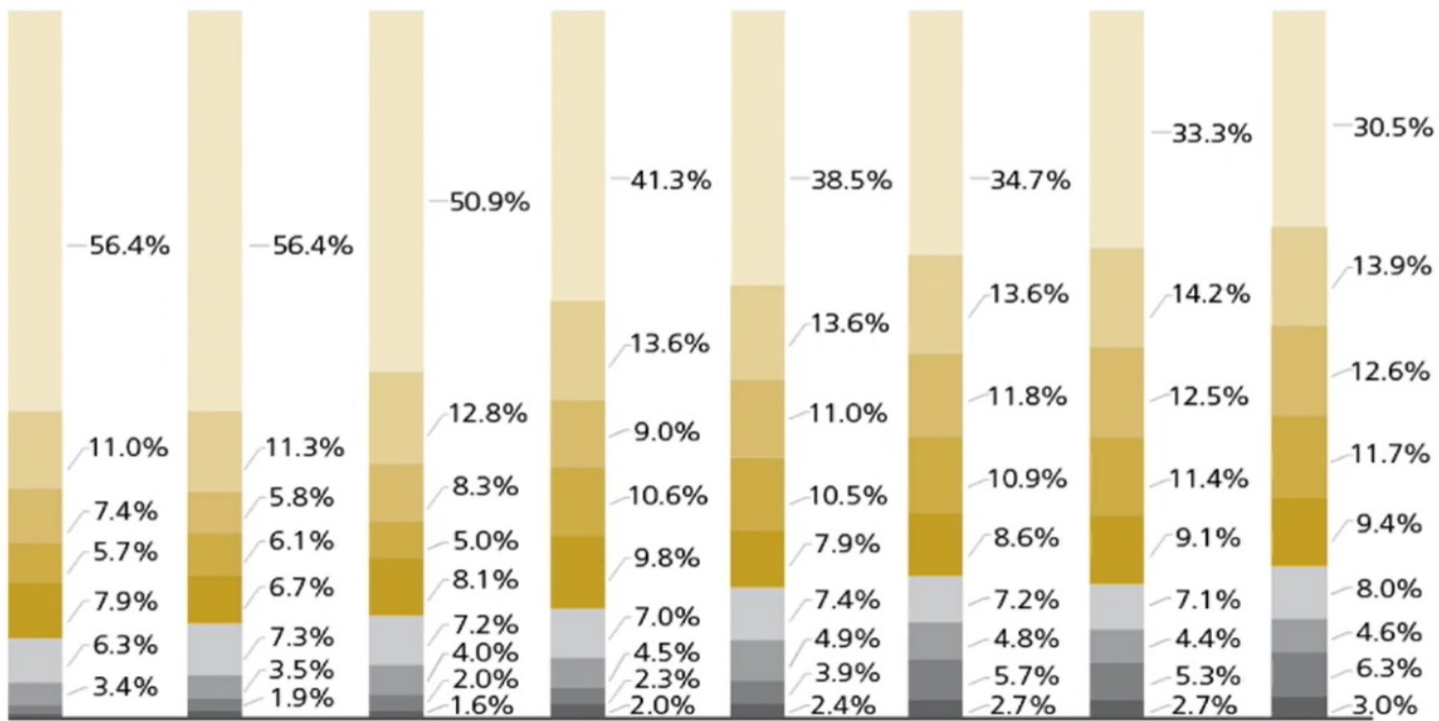
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*Journey of Generosity*



**ALL AMERICANS: Charitable Giving as a Percentage of Disposable Income** (adjusted for inflation)

**SOURCE: GivingUSA Foundation | GIVING USA 2020**



**SOURCE:**  
**GivingUSA**  
**Foundation |**  
**GIVING USA**  
**2020**

# How can we change this trend?

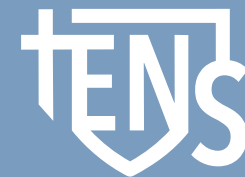
## *Impact*

Program is the heart of your church

- ▶ Report on ministries or programs
  - ▶ Testimonials
  - ▶ Videos
- ▶ **Members love to hear stories**  
directly from staff, volunteers, or, if appropriate, clients
- ▶ Helps us understand the reality and realization of our gifts



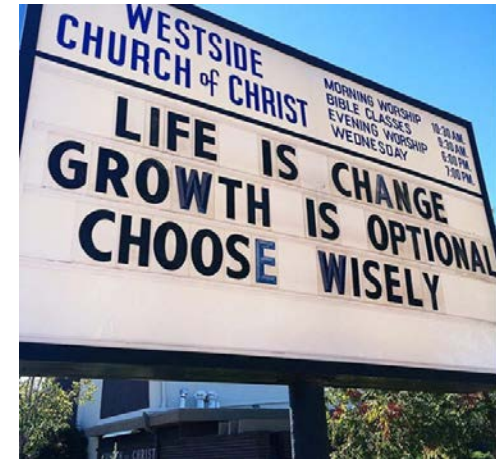
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# How can we change this trend?

- ▶ Impact
- ▶ Teaching
- ▶ Recognizing Gratitude
- ▶ Donor-centric Fundraising
- ▶ Promote Personal Connection



*Reversing the Trend*



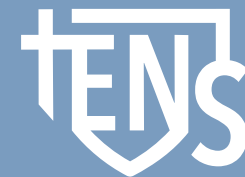
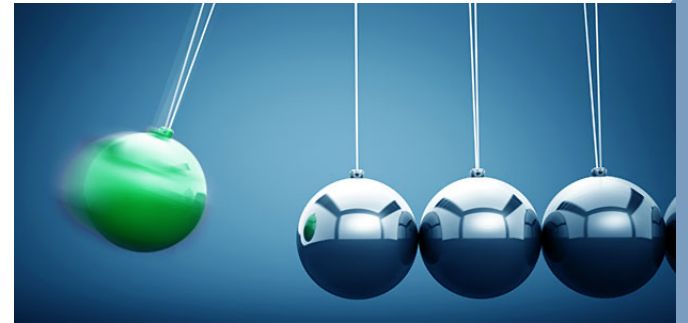
# How can we change this trend?

## *Impact*

Impact is more important than budget

- ▶ Tell the story of your ministry
  - ▶ How many users
    - ▶ individuals served or visitors logged
  - ▶ How much use
    - ▶ number of meals served, kids tutored, backpacks assembled
  - ▶ Community response
    - ▶ Articles in local newspaper
    - ▶ Visits by city, county, neighborhood leaders

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# How can we change this trend?

## *Impact*

- ▶ What is your church's mission? What is the *hope* you offer?
- ▶ What are you known for?
- ▶ If your church were to close...?



*Reversing the Trend*

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# How can we change this trend?

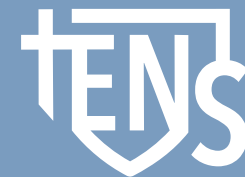
## *Teaching*

Formation is the cornerstone of discipleship

- ▶ Normalize conversations about money and faith
  - ▶ Jesus talked about money a lot!
    - ▶ 16 of 40 parables – 40%!
- ▶ Conversations about money are pastoral
- ▶ Preach and teach about money



*Reversing the Trend*



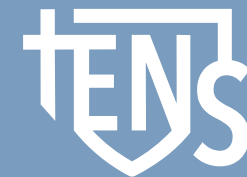
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# How can we change this trend?

## *Teaching*

- ▶ God loved and so God gave; Giving is Love in Action - *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.* (John 3:16)
- ▶ *Giving is how we love God and our neighbor* – i.e., The Great Commandment is not an affectionate state of mind. It's about rolling up our sleeves and taking some action to connect and bringing people together. It's how we make a difference, and build the Kingdom of God.

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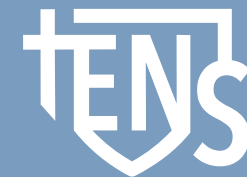
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# How can we change this trend?

## *Recognize Gratitude*

Our Giving is a reflection of our gratitude

- ▶ Not transactional
  - ▶ Avoid “giving back” language – manipulative
  - ▶ Instead recognize the gifts we’ve been given and be motivated to give
- ▶ Teach and preach about gratitude often
  - ▶ Don’t overlook thanksgivings in your prayers of the people



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# How can we change this trend?

## *Meet Givers where they are*

Adopt many methods for giving to appeal to a wide audience

- ▶ Signals that we're paying attention to the needs of our members
  - ▶ Online Tools
  - ▶ Do we really need pledge forms?
  - ▶ How to give through retirement accounts, donor advised funds, and securities

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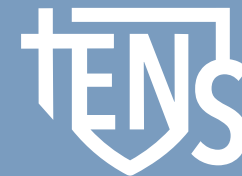
Check out Previous Webinars:

Virtual Giving:

<https://www.tens.org/webinars-events/tens-webinars/virtual-stewardship-201/>

Motivations for Intergenerational Giving:

<https://www.tens.org/webinars-events/tens-webinars/motivations-for-intergenerational-giving/>



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# How can we change this trend?

## *Enable Personal Connection*

- ▶ Small Group, Gathering Events (virtual or in-person)
- ▶ Focus on *friendraising*, not fundraising
- ▶ Invitation to help in the kitchen, garden, pageant, etc
- ▶ Opportunity to share stories – to share their story
- ▶ Ask about *their* gifts, passions, talents, wisdom, life experience
- ▶ Target emails and letter that focus on the language of belonging and invitation
- ▶ Messaging about giving is not about the amount, *rather participation*

*Reversing the Trend*

Word cloud graphic with a red banner reading "WHERE OUR HEARTS ARE...". The words in the cloud include: GENEROSITY, LOVE, GRATITUDE, SISTER, STEWARDSHIP, HOMELESS, KINDNESS, MANAGE, CARE, BROTHER, HOPE, SHARE, LEARN, WORSHIP, JUSTICE, PRAISE, GLADNESS, CONNECT, PATIENCE, STEWARDSHIP, CARE, BELIEVE, THANKS, HOSPITALITY, TRUST, ORPHAN, GRATITUDE, PATIENCE, LEARN.

Word cloud graphic with "GENEROSITY" as the central word. Other words include: JOIN, GRATITUDE, BLESSINGS, JOY, FORGIVE, WIDOW, PEACE, IMMIGRANT, HOPE, WELCOME, LEARN, ABUNDANCE, HUMBLE, CARE, LEARN, CONNECT, STEWARDSHIP, POOR, STRANGER, BLESSINGS, GRATITUDE, WIDOW, PEACE, IMMIGRANT, HOPE, GIVE, WORSHIP, CARE, LEARN, CONNECT, WIDOW, PEACE, IMMIGRANT, HOPE, CREATION, ACCEPT, CONNECT, LITTLE ONES, GIVE, LEARN, CARE, CONNECT, WORSHIP, STEWARDSHIP, GENEROSITY, CONNECT, JOY.

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# TENS Theme for 2023

The central act of Christianity is one of hospitality – invitation to abundant garden, the offering of that nourishment to all, and the reconciliation that comes by sharing a common act of love. Planted in such a garden of gratitude, we are Rooted in Abundance.

We are grounded in abundance, generosity, and welcome, and we share our gifts of wealth, works, and wisdom with the world in gratitude for having the opportunity to steward them.

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*They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. **Jeremiah 17:8, NRSV***

*TENS Theme for 2023*







Thank you!

For more information, resources, and videos,  
find us at [www.tens.org](http://www.tens.org)

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