

**Michelle:** We are Michelle & Marvin Naiman. We have 4 children, and a son-in-law, all in their 20's. Amanda and her husband Russ, Ben, Joseph and Annemarie. We have been parishioners at Good Shepherd since June, 1979.

**Marvin:** Stewardship is a way of life that encompasses our time, talent and treasure. Last fall our parish focused on stewardship of Time and Talent beginning with the ministry fair and ending with Commitment Sunday. Each of the three areas are very important and we cannot substitute one for another. Today's focus is on stewardship of treasure, or more specifically, our ongoing journey towards it.

**Michelle:** In 2004, I attended a Diocesan conference on Stewardship. What a blessing these few days turned out to be, for the term "Stewardship" came alive for me as I listened to talks of people from many walks of life. "Stewardship", that word that I had heard about here at Good Shepherd, but had not let into my heart. I had thought it was another word for 'tithing'. My spirit and my heart embraced the real concept of stewardship, that everything I have, be it time, talent or treasure, is a gift from God. It is all His. All of it.

Throughout the 80's, I was a stay at home mom and money was always tight, so were my fists as they were tightly hanging on to our money, not releasing much to the Church, or any other cause. I was always afraid of not having 'enough' for us. We gave a small amount in the weekly envelopes. My focus was on giving out of obligation.

Through the 90's, my faith walk became closer aligned with a growing love of Jesus in the Eucharist, and the church, and giving became slightly easier. As I began working again and we had more income, we gradually increased our weekly giving. We took a couple of leaps of faith and began committing to sponsoring a boy in Guatemala, and a few years later, an aging woman in the Philippines, and pledging to the diocesan campaigns. I saw that amazingly enough, we still had enough for 'us'. I learned to see how God knows our needs and provides for us in all ways. My tightly clasped fists began opening as I learned that I needed open hands to receive His blessings.

**Marvin:** I was raised agnostic and I didn't expect to ever be anything other than agnostic. Being raised agnostic, I was taught that everything I had belonged to me without any consideration of God. Then, I met Michelle in 1972 at the Tallahassee Greyhound bus station and God began to reveal himself to me through her.

In the Gospel of John [3:3] Jesus tells Nicodemus "...unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." I've come to believe I have been tremendously blessed with being re-born three times.

Christmas day 1979 I was born spiritually. I went to Mass with Michelle in Maryland. I went in an agnostic wanting to believe in God. God touched my heart and I came out knowing my way to God was assured.

I consider I was in a way physically re-born on September 9, 2004. That's the day surgeons stopped my heart and then re-started it after they replaced my aortic valve.

I believe I was emotionally re-born on December 3, 2008 while being guided in prayer dealing with a painful childhood incident.

Do you remember that I said when I was agnostic I believed everything I had belonged to me and God was no where in ownership picture? Well with each re-birth, I have moved significantly away from this belief. I now believe EVERYTHING in my life is a gift from God. Only by the grace of God am I alive. Only by the grace of God I am no longer agnostic but Roman Catholic. My every breath is from Him and my ability to know and love Him is from Him. If my every breath is from Him, it is impossible for me to really own anything whatsoever. Instead, I must say God has graced me with the privilege of being His steward over the things He has placed in my custody. I believe God asks us to be stewards of time, talent and treasure as tools to be used in His behalf. I've come to believe these tools are to be used to build up my relationships with Him, Michelle, our kids, extended family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and everyone else He places on my path.

**Michelle:** We have come to realize that our treasure is not only our money. It is our belongings, those 'things' that we think we possess.

After the death of my dad in 2000, we added a large mother in law suite to our home in order for my mother to come and live with us. She moved in, only to die year and a half later. It was just after her death when I went to the stewardship conference that I had mentioned. While my mom's gift to us was the addition, our gift to God was to say, "Lord, this is your space. Do with it what you will, "and He has. He has brought many people to stay there, from a woman who needed a place for 4 months, to traveling missionaries, to extended family members of friends who were either grieving or celebrating. We view using this space for God's needs as being good stewards of our treasure.

Back to that word 'tithing'. Do we give 10% of our earnings to God? To be honest, I do not know. After hearing the stewardship of treasure talk last year, I wanted to see just where our donated money went, so I began writing on a list each time we donated. This didn't last very long, as I was stopped in my tracks one day by this thought, "What are you doing Michelle? God doesn't say to me, "Oops, Michelle has had her 10% of my graces, my mercy and my forgiveness for the day. Time to cut her off. Maybe more after payday." God's giving to me is uncountable, and so should mine be back to him.

**Marvin:** We give of our treasure in many of the same ways that you all do, from bringing food for the food pantry, to Christmas angels, Thanksgiving meals, supporting the youth of the parish, filling up baby bottles with change for the PHI center, buying roses from the Gabriel project, and hauling our 'stuff' to the Good Shepherd garage sales. These donations are all ways of being good stewards of our treasure. Just as you all have special causes near and dear to your hearts that you support, so do we. It is by God's grace that our eyes have been opened over the years on our journey to being better stewards of all He has given us.