

WHEN OUR Giving BECOMES Receiving

A LETTER TO THE SHALLOWFORD



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“The compassionate life is a grateful life, and actions born out of gratefulness are not compulsive but free, not somber, but joyful, not fanatical but liberating. When gratitude is the source of our actions, our giving becomes receiving and those to whom we minister become our ministers.” There’s so much to see in Henri Nouwen’s words on living a compassionate life that I almost missed it. *Did you see it?* Those four words slipped right in the middle -- “...our giving becomes receiving...” Is he just being clever with some word play, or is there something to his antonymous rendering where he succinctly describes this reciprocal return on our investment “when gratitude is the source of our actions.”

A vital aspect of stewardship is our giving to Christ’s work in the world. Through the generosity of the Shallowford congregation’s stewardship, the list of “those to whom we minister” spans several significant ministries throughout the world. Habitat, LaAmistad, La Gonave, Food pantry, Youth Mission trip, and many others. The same can be said about serving our church --- teaching Sunday School via Zoom, singing in a virtual choir, serving meals, prayer network, prayer shawls, and many others.

So, I have a question for you. Do you give to Christ’s work in the world because you are compelled to do so

or free to do so? If you’re like me, you’ve experienced that actions born out of compulsion tend to come with some sort of coercive strings attached whereas actions freely given yield a liberating effect, often bearing out gratitude beyond measure. I’ve spoken with Shallowford members as I’m sure you have and there’s a constant, reliable refrain spoken as a result of one’s ministry contribution --- “I got more out of this than I put into it” or as Nouwen aptly says it “our giving becomes receiving and those to whom we minister become our ministers.”

Through Shallowford 365, along with regular financial updates, you’ll hear testimonials throughout the year about the difference your gifts and pledges make in our community and how our giving becomes receiving.

I find myself filled with gratitude, Shallowford, for how you freely give to myriad ministries that embody Christ’s work in the world. Shallowford, you raised roughly \$16,000 for our Pentecost offering to benefit our mission partners. Your intentional and purposeful contributions of time, money, and ability express a faithful way of life that promotes gratitude, nurtures sharing, and simply put, embodies Shallowford 365. Such amazing grace.

Terry O’Toole
Stewardship Committee Co-Chair