

# First Fruits

By Pastor Nancy Larson

ELCA Director for Evangelical Mission

When we talk about Biblical stewardship with regard to our financial resources, we can identify two important components; they are tithe (proportionate share) and first fruits. This month I'd like to reflect a bit on the concept of first fruits.



---

*Off the top • The first step • From the beginning • Top priority  
Of greatest importance • Financial triage • The essential*

---

The phrases above define first fruits. It is the story that our checkbook or credit cards will tell. They reveal what we value most in life and what will receive only the leftovers.

As a seminary student, a good friend of mine would go to the grocery store with a limited budget. At the checkout line the clerk would be told to stop at a specific amount. That meant that my friend would have to be sure to put the essential items at the front of the conveyor belt—milk first, potato chips last; bread at the front of the line, cookies at the end.

When we consider our financial giving within the life of the church, God invites us into just this kind of action. Giving off the top, at the beginning, as a first step—it is a real sign of our obedience to God and our commitment to God's mission in the world. It makes clear what is or is not of great value in our life.

Yes, we do need to feed our families, it's important to put a roof over our heads, it is good to have a means of transportation and garments to clothe and protect our bodies. I also know that my home is larger than I need it to be, I have more stuff than I should, and one look at me will tell you that I have eaten more than my fair share of food.

In the midst of this abundance, it is important—actually, it is essential—for a healthy relationship with God and God's church, to look beyond myself and consider what it is to trust and obey God. What is at the front of the conveyor belt of my life and what should be at the end of the line or not be there at all?

The lyrics to "As Saints of Old," written by Frank von Christiernson, are a poetic rendering of this truth. They can be sung to the tune of "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" as well as LBW 404.

To download this article or for more stewardship and mission support resources, visit [www.neiasynod.org/synod\\_resources/Stewardship-MissionSupport.asp](http://www.neiasynod.org/synod_resources/Stewardship-MissionSupport.asp).

## As Saints of Old

(LBW 404)

### Stanza 1

*As saints of old their first-fruits brought  
Of orchard, flock, and field  
To God the giver of all good,  
The source of bounteous yield;  
So we today first-fruits would bring,  
The wealth of this good land,  
Of farm and market, shop and home,  
Of mind and heart and hand.*

### Stanza 2

*A world in need now summons us  
To labor, love, and give;  
To make our life an offering  
To God, that all may live.  
The Church of Christ is calling us  
To make the dream come true:  
A world redeemed by Christ-like love;  
All life in Christ make new.*

### Stanza 3

*In gratitude and humble trust  
We bring our best today  
To serve your cause and share your love  
With all along life's way  
O God, who gave yourself to us  
In Jesus Christ your Son,  
Teach us to give ourselves each day  
Until life's work is done.*