

ALMSGIVING AT TRINITY COVENANT CHURCH

As part of our greater involvement in mercy ministry, Trinity Covenant Church will periodically incorporate almsgiving into the Lord's service.

What is almsgiving?

Almsgiving is a way to remember the poor in our corporate, liturgical life through tangible gifts. It was the regular practice of the early church and a distinctive of the churches of the reformation.

An offering is already part of our liturgy, as an act of worship (fulfilling the tribute offering of Lev. 2:1-3 & Num. 15:8-10) wherein we present our labors to God in thanksgiving for His provision (Deut. 26). However, God also commands us to render some of our income to the poor. In general, regular tithes fund the ministry of the church (Num. 18:21-24, 2 Chron. 31, Neh. 10:35-39, 1 Cor. 9:9-14), while alms are special gifts directed toward the needy (Lev. 23:22, Prov. 19:17, Matt. 6:2-4, Acts 6:1-3, 2 Cor. 8).

The Lord's Day is a fitting time to give alms, because it's an occasion not only for enjoying God's sabbath rest, but also giving sabbath rest to others. Jesus says acts of mercy are to characterize our sabbath (Matt. 12:9-14 and parallels, cf. Isa. 58, 1 Cor. 16:1-3); we imitate God's merciful giving of rest to us as we ease the burdens of others.

Jesus' description of kingdom life in the Sermon on the Mount centers on a triad of righteous deeds (Matt. 6:1-18): almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. We already practice prayer (during our weekly liturgy) and fasting (during Lent) in our corporate church life. It is time we incorporate almsgiving into our liturgical practice.

How often will there be almsgiving opportunities?

We have chosen four major, fairly evenly-spaced dates on the church calendar as almsgiving Sundays. This coincidence of almsgiving with significant events in the liturgical year is intentional, so that almsgiving is woven into our life and practice as a church (see Lev. 23:9-22 and Deut. 14:22-29, where in conjunction with Israel's yearly feasts and harvests, the produce of her land was both offered to God *and* reserved for the poor).

A regular offering will continue to occur during every service, and on almsgiving Sundays, special gifts will be collected immediately after the service, to underscore the missional result and goal of our worship. God draws us into His presence to serve us, then impels us out into the world to serve others as His kingdom ambassadors and agents.

An almsgiving Sunday will occur during these seasons of the church year: *Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Pentecost*. Almsgiving Sundays will be announced in the bulletin and before the service, and alms will be collected in a basket placed on the communion table.

How will the gifts be used?

The deacons will identify recipients of need in our city and the broader church toward which the gifts can be applied. Gifts of alms will be used specifically for mercy ministry, and will not be applied to regular church expenses like rent, supplies, etc. Usually, the gifts will be in the form of money, but occasionally items like food and clothing will be collected.