

Healthwatch: The More You Give, The Healthier You Get! **Ann Pinning, MSN, FNP-C, Parish Nurse**

As we consider renewing our Stewardship commitments to RLC in April, I'd like to remind you of the effect of giving on health and well being. **Generosity is good for your health.**

A study done at Cornell University revealed that volunteerism is beneficial to levels of energy, self-esteem, and sense of mastery over life. Another large study of volunteerism in men revealed that mortality rates of those who volunteered regularly were two and a half times lower than those who did not volunteer. Similar studies have discovered that the positive feelings from generosity can strengthen the immune system and lead to an increase in the release of endorphins in our brain. Endorphins are the body's natural mood stabilizers, tranquilizers, and pain killers.

So can we conclude that our generosity will be rewarded with long life and good health? Evidence shows that generosity may contribute to this end, but giving freely and generously is not always so simple for us humans. In order to freely give our time and talents, we must completely trust that God will be faithful to His promise to provide for all of our needs even when he asks us to give more than we feel we are able. The author, Anne Lamott, in response to a question about her struggle with money, was quoted as saying: "I know that if I feel any deprivation or fear [about money], the solution is to give....Giving is the way that we fill ourselves up....For me the way to fill up is through service and sharing and getting myself to give more than I feel comfortable giving." Eric Ryan in *The Giving Heart* states that he followed Anne's lead and decided to try to be generous beyond his comfort level. He felt his fear of "not having enough" was causing him to hoard his possessions. But he admits that the more he gave, the easier it became to let go of what he had. I know that the more freely I give of my time and possessions, the more I see God's blessings in my life. Our level of stewardship stems from our personal relationship with Him—the more we trust in Him and feel a part of the body of Christ—our Christian family, the more we give without fear or concern for our own well being.

Kurt Senske, in his book, *Personal Values*, states "God's game plan [which includes the Commandments and all aspects of God's law, including tithing] is not designed to do us harm; it is intended to keep us healthy in every way."

Martin Luther writes: *The Christian should be guided by this one thing alone that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, considering nothing except the need and the advantage of his neighbor... This is what makes caring for the body a Christian work, that through its health and comfort we may be able to work, to acquire and lay by funds with which to aid those who are in need, that in this way the stronger member may serve the weaker... This is a truly Christian life. Here faith is active in love.*

Consider that "It is more blessed to give than to receive," (Acts 20:35) and "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). We are blessed abundantly when we give generously with loving and faithful intent. God never promised us good health or a long earthly life, but through generous acts, we can grow closer to him, nurturing our health in the process.