



St. Paul's United Methodist Church

The Ministry of Finance

January 2011

MESSAGE FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? See Psalm 27:

Thus begins a lovely psalm – a prayer, a song – of God's everlasting love and salvation. The person who prayed and sang this song did so with a deep sense of the realities of life - tragedy and difficulties, successes and failures, bad things that have happened to good people; and yet, the person lives a faith that seeks God's face.

Financial matters can frustrate many people, churches and other non-profits, businesses. Many sleepless nights are caused by ends that do not meet. Psalm 27 addresses all challenges in life, including finances, by prayer to keep all matters of life in the perspective of faith.

Over the last several years, St. Paul's has offered Financial Peace University to anyone who desires to sleep better knowing that financial difficulties do not need to control a person's life. FPU is practical. It helps us know that money is a tool, not a master, and that our lives can be free to be so much more than a "consumer." A new class started on January 20. New classes will start in the future, especially if you call asking for the next class. I know that people are often very private about money. Be assured that if you request information about Financial Peace, we will treat your inquiry with respect.

I believe that the sound financial and Bible teachings contained in Financial Peace University are appropriate for the financial ministry of the church. By example, the ministry of finance committee appropriately set aside reserve/emergency funds for capital and daily ministries. These two reserve funds are maintained month by month and year by year to sustain the ministry of Jesus through St. Paul's. We also do not mix capital funds and day to day ministry operations funds so that neither the capital nor day to day ministries drain each other and hurt the ministries of the church. Your generous offerings to God through the church are used only as you intend them to be used; and all the finances of the church are annually audited by the independent firm Kopenhagen and Associates, PC.

The challenges in our personal finances are not much different than the financial challenges of the church; however, when we work together to understand how money is a tool that God has given us so that we can live personally and together as the church to spread the salvation of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ we can also know that God keeps us in eternal care both here on this earth and in the life to come. Of whom shall we be afraid? No one, not even our own selves will make us fearful because God is at the center of our lives. God's face is turned toward us.

Dear friends in Christ, begin this New Year with faith. Let yourself be led by God. Learn together. Pray together. Reach out together. For no matter what the future holds, God is eternally faithful.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Harlan Gillespie

The Match – On Fire for God

Two hundred and forty three households gave \$112,393.17 to The Match by the end of December 31, 2010. On January 4 this was reported to the anonymous donors of the \$75,000 challenge match. Since that time there has been conversation with the donors' lawyer who has stated that the donors will be getting back to us in the near future after their time away. We give many thanks to God and to everyone who participated in The Match for the daily ministry (general ministry budget) of 2010 for St. Paul's. When the donors' check arrives, this will mean a strong finish to the ministry of 2010 and a great beginning for 2011!

Preliminary 2010 Year End and Beginning 2011 Financials

The closing of the 2010 financial books will not be complete until the end of January, but there are significant things that can be reported at this point.

First, because of the generous giving of The Match by members and friends of St. Paul's UMC, \$100,000 of additional Apportionment payment was made on Thursday, January 6. This means that a total of \$141,419 (58%) of the 2010 \$242,434 Apportionments have been paid. When the check from the anonymous donors is received, we will pay additional 2010 Apportionments – perhaps another \$75,000 or more! – as per the donors' request and the Church Council's December action. This means that St. Paul's has faithfully attempted to pay 2010 Apportionments and has significantly strengthened the ministry of Jesus in Iowa and around the world. We may never know personally what this means, but we can be just as sure that Jesus is real and that this significant gift of Apportionments will bring healing and hope and the salvation of the Gospel to others not yet reached!

Second, we will begin the year of 2011 with fully funded reserves for both the general ministries (day to day) of the church \$141,000 and for the capital needs of the church \$118,500. Additionally, the Centennial Fund that was given as part of the \$1 million dollar gift from the anonymous donors has grown to \$389,900. The Centennial Fund is specifically for the future significant capital improvements for ministry. The Facilities Study Committee has been collecting data and interviewing ministry areas in the later part of 2010 and will continue their work to report to the congregation later this spring. Be looking for more information in the month ahead.

Third, the Church Council at their December meeting addressed the 2011 Ministry Budget shortfall of \$230,000. Much praise was given to God for a very generous gift from a member of St. Paul's of \$33,000 additional giving for 2011, lowering the projected deficit to \$200,000! Along with other work to fully fund the 2011 ministry budget, the Council formed a task force called "Faith Factor" to develop other various sources of ministry income. We are targeting sources of income that can be annual sources. In addition, all ministry areas were asked to review their 2011 ministry budgets to find ways to accomplish the ministry of Jesus in ways other than money.

With everyone praying and working together, 2011 will be a wonderful year of God's grace fully poured out upon everyone and upon the communities that surround us all.

Special Mission Offerings

Upcoming opportunities for giving from the heart include:

Jan. 29/30 - **Pastor's Youth Lunches**, sharing food and Christ with over 400 youth each week from Kennedy and Washington High Schools.

Feb. 5/6 - **Food Bank & Souper Bowl Day of Caring**, both supporting local food resources for hungry neighbors.

Feb. 19/20 - **SPRINT Program**, a St. Paul's summertime neighborhood ministry for children

Feb. & March – **Network of Faith for the Interreligious Council**, collection of toiletries for local shelters.

Unbind Your Heart – Lenten Study

Each year we say that this year's Congregational Lenten Study is more important than the last; and this is true. ***Unbinding Your Heart: 40 Days of Prayer and Faith Sharing*** will be not just a study but a significant 40 days of prayer that will renew our personal faith and our congregation. Be in prayer and plan to participate – either as a leader or member of a small group. For more information on how to be a leader contact Pastors Sherrie Ilg, Harlan Gillespie, Allison Warren, Phil Rogers, or Ron Bunch, Kris Yahn, Charles Edwards, or Jim Steggall.