



St. Paul's United Methodist Church

The Ministry of Stewardship and Finance

July 2011

Message From the Finance Committee

“So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the place Bethel.” Genesis 28:18-19a

Friends and co-workers with Christ,

One of the marvelous aspects of the Old Testament record of God and God's peoples is the way that meaning is found in almost every aspect of the most ordinary part of life.

Printed above is a short passage from the story of Jacob and God's recorded beginning at Genesis 25:19 through the end of the book.

Jacob fled from his brother Esau, from whom Jacob stole their father's blessing. He is sent to Laban, their mother's brother, in Haran. On the way Jacob laid his head on a rock as a pillow and slept. He dreamt of a ladder that stretched into heaven on which angels ascended and descended. Jacob heard the voice of the God of his grandfather and father giving him the same promise God had given them.

A common stone, used for a pillow. Jacob realized that this was a holy place. A place of his family, a place where he would come to know in the years ahead that announced his place within the purposes of God. With gratitude that was only fully known to him at the end of his long life he set this pillow stone up, anointed it with oil, and gave thanksgiving to God.

Every day, with every breath we take, we are indebted to God for God's presence and attention to us in Jesus Christ. Jacob first thought that he had stopped at random spot along his journey to Haran, only to find that this was no random, common spot. It was the very place of God. Each day, we too, are on our usual "journeys" doing the stuff that we believe we must do. Most times we probably do not think much of the places where we travel, work, rest, meet others, or have solitude as being special places of God's encounter with us. And yet, there is God in the common.

What is our thankfulness to God for such encounters? I have "dreamed" of God. Maybe you have, too. My dreams of God are not so much like Jacob's, but the dreams I have of God in despair and in joy are none the less dreams that make me more aware of the special nature of the time and the place in which I live. Maybe your dreams do the same.

When I dream of what seems to be God's silence or God's absence, I am still reminded all the more of the holy nature of the time, the place, and the company of you and others.

What is my response to God for all this? Do I take a few moments to "set up a stone" to mark the place, the time, the people, that I dream as being holy gifts from God? How

about you?

Our lives (like the wealth that God has given us through the talents and graces of our work and relationships) contain the dreams of God – the angels ascending and descending – **the very presence of God, the gift of God’s blessing upon our journeys, upon life itself.** The offering of our wealth to God – as **Jacob’s setting up of a stone and anointing it as holy** – is a sign of eternal gratitude to God who has made us, meets us in our dreams and journeys, and blesses us each day. I will set up a stone this week in worship with the **offering of myself and my wealth, such as it is.** How about you? Have you “set up a stone” lately?

Grace & Peace, Pastor Harlan Gillespie

Parking Lot Repairs

The parking lot repair schedule has been worked out with the contractor, Pate Asphalt, and the Trustees. Weather permitting: July 18 through 20 will be used for milling all large areas of all three parking lots, 2nd Ave at 14th St and the connecting lot on 2nd Ave SE, and the large lot behind the church on 2nd Ave SE. Replacing the asphalt will be done at that time. August 15 through 18 is scheduled for seal coating all of the lots, restriping, replacing the handicap signs and parking bumpers. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation during these times to make the parking lots safer for everyone. The City of Cedar Rapids has agreed to repair the alley approaches between 14th St and 13th St SE.

These repairs, estimated at \$48,000, have been funded by undesignated St. Paul’s Foundation proceeds set aside by the Church Council. Thanks be to God for those who have remembered the ministry and mission of the church for capital and ministry development **and improvement.** If you would like to join in the **Foundation’s legacy ministry for Jesus,** contact the Foundation office at 363-2058 and talk with either Connie Richardson or Clarence Burton.



Rejoice in 2011 VBS

Our Gifts: Recent Special Mission Offerings:

- Linn Comm. Food Bank : \$225 plus several bags of food items, helping feed local hungry families.
- Heifer Project International: \$906 Empowering communities to rise out of poverty, struggling for the basic necessities of food, income and education for a better life.

Special Mission Offerings in the near future:

- July 17 & 18, August 20 & 21 Ingathering Challenge: Be part of the Ingathering Challenge to raise \$3000 over the next 3 months! These funds will be added to the \$2800 we currently have, allowing us to create a generous number of School and Health Kits for worldwide care.
- August 6 & 7 Linn Community Food Bank: through your offerings.
- August 13 & 14 Golden Cross Sunday: Support the work of health and welfare ministries and institutions in the Iowa Annual Conference.

For a complete calendar of 2011 Special Offerings, pick up a wallet- **sized card at the St. Paul's Welcome Centers**

Sanctuary Sound System Improvements & the Armstrong Charitable Trust Grant

Again, we are very thankful to the Armstrong Charitable Trust Grant Board! The board recently awarded a \$70,000 grant for the purchase, installation, and training for new speakers and amplifiers in the sanctuary. Work will begin the week of July 18 and be completed for weekend worship on July 23-24!



Women at work making school and health kits

Our Gifts: The General Ministry Budget

June Income	Year to Date Income all sources	Five Year Average Income	June Expenses	Year to Date Expenses	Five Year Average Expenses
\$94,850	\$570,246	\$556,064	\$114,562	\$658,767	\$606,350

The above chart is a review of monthly and annual income year to date as compared with the five averages for income and expense. The income year to date is 2.6% above the average. Expenses are 3.1% below projected budget and 8.6% above the five year average.

Our total Apportionment commitment through June is \$115,179. We have paid \$46,250 of our commitment, leaving an unpaid balance to date of \$68,929. There will not be an apportionment payment made for the month of June based on our cash requirements.

Summer is here and many of you are still planning vacations. Have you considered making your contributions through automatic deduction? Even if you are out of town, we **receive your contribution. This greatly helps the church's cash flow during the summer months.** If you are interested in automatic deductions, contact the church finance office.

We are blessed by the many resources God has provided for us. Through your generous giving, we will continue to advance the mission of the church.

Blessings,

Kate Ulmer, Treasurer

Finance Contacts

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