



St. Paul's United Methodist Church

The Ministry of Stewardship and Finance

November 2011

Message From the Finance Committee

November, 2011 – Extravagant Thanksgiving

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:6-9

Friends in Christ,

1) ***We reap what we sow.*** Thirty years ago a teaching colleague of mine who was a math teacher and taught computers when they were big, awkward, noisy machines often quoted the phrase “garbage in, garbage out.” It is still true today with much smaller, faster, quieter computers. My families have farming heritages. Farmers and gardeners know the same is true, that what we put into the fields will greatly influence what we harvest from the field. If we cultivate a life of thanksgiving and generosity, then we will much more likely receive a life of thanksgiving and generosity.

2) ***Each one must make up their own mind.*** We cannot force anyone to live a life of thanksgiving and generosity. The same is true of the whole of the Christian faith. No one can be forced to believe something, let alone believe in the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We can only witness to the effect of the Gospel upon our own lives and the thanksgiving and generosity that comes from the Gospel. I witness to that wonderful and profound Gospel in my life and how it has transformed my life into thanksgiving and generosity, and sing to you as the Chapel Choir did last Sunday in worship, “I wish for you, my friend, this happiness that I’ve found...”

3) ***God is able to provide all that we need.*** This truth of a life of thanksgiving and generosity runs counter to the prevailing culture of consumerism. The world teaches us that we were made to consume. God teaches us **that we were made to give. God’s image is imprinted upon us in Jesus Christ, an image of generosity and thanksgiving.** God is able, more than able, to hear our prayers, to give us peace that is well beyond any peace that material possessions can give us, to provide the love and forgiveness that we all desire in our lives – and more. Consumerism teaches that there are limited supplies, so buy now, be happy today and let the bills of tomorrow pile up. **Thanksgiving and generosity of the Gospel teaches us that God’s love is unlimited, Jesus’ grace is sure, and the Spirit’s presence with guide us through today into the future.**

Extravagant Generosity was the theme for the past six weeks in our worship and in our stewardship teaching. But it is much more than a theme for six weeks. It is a way of living the Gospel of Jesus Christ for a lifetime. We each begin where we are and, day by day, grow in the Gospel when we have a mindset and encouragement from others in the faith to do so. God has, is and will always provide what is necessary for us to live each day with a deep and abiding peace, if we turn our hearts, minds, and the work of our hands over to God each day.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Harlan Gillespie

Christmas Eve Mission Offering

As followers of Jesus Christ we know very well that Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birthday. For several years various authors have been reminding us of that. The most recent author is Rev. Michael Slaughter, senior pastor of the Ginghamburg United Methodist Church in Tip City, Ohio, with his book ***It's Not Your Birthday***. His congregation has made it their aim for a number of years to live out the fact that Christmas is Jesus' birthday, not our birthday, by intentionally lessening the number of Christmas gifts they get for themselves and increasing their mission giving as gifts to Jesus.

The Sending to Serve Committee and the pastor and lay leadership of St. Paul's invites and challenges us as church to do the same. To that end, the special mission offering for Advent and Christmas is for Apportionments – our basic mission giving of the church. To date we have paid \$59,950 of our Apportionments for 2011 that total \$230,358. The reason that the Sending to Serve Committee has refocused our Christmas Eve mission offering to Apportionments is that the Apportionment missions are central to all other mission giving. These basic missions provide the foundation for missions of other natures to happen.

Apportionments include:

- A world wide structure and support team to accomplish missions and share the Gospel world-wide.
- Partnership missions and ministries with all many other Christian churches who share the same goals and passion for Jesus Christ with us.
- Support for Historic Black, United Methodist Related Colleges
- Campus ministries at UMC colleges in Iowa, UNI, UI, and ISU
- Africa University
- World Service Funds
- Pastoral Care and Counseling for pastors and their families
- Youth and young adult ministries
- UM camping ministries
- Missions of the Field Outreach Ministers, Superintendents, the Bishop, and support staff that enable us to do missions and ministries at St. Paul's every day.

When I was in South Africa at the World Methodist Conference, I witnessed firsthand the positive influence upon the world that the missions and mission structure of Apportionments does with our support and the support of other UMC's. In worship I have told the story of the Tumbleweed Methodist Church located near Howick, South Africa. It is a church that was built by donations from the Brentwood UMC of Nashville, TN, and the connections we, as St. Paul's, have to that church because of Methodism. The congregation is changing and saving lives in an area that has meager material resources but is doing much because of their connection to us and other UMC's through our connection that is our mission through Apportionments. I saw the enthusiasm of the pastor and the congregation for the Lord; and even with their meager material resources, they were training and supporting student pastors to be sent out to other places of Africa.

I witnessed the greatest success story and most positive influence on the continent of Africa at Africa University in Zimbabwe (africau.edu). Founded less than twenty years ago on a vision that was seen by Bishop Joseph Crane Hartzell many years before as he prayed upon a mountain overlooking the valley of Mutare. Bishop Crane was born in Moline, IL, on June 1, 1842. He was a pastor in Illinois and Louisiana and then elected a Bishop to Africa in 1896. Today, Africa University educates students from all over Africa in BA and MA programs in agriculture, health, education, business, governance, and theology. Iowa has strong ties to AU, including educating many of the agriculture department faculty at ISU.

The stories of Apportionment missions are deep and rich, powerful, and life-changing for the world. It will take a miracle of sorts, but let's push ourselves to meet this year's and next year's Apportionment missions!

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Harlan Gillespie

Our Gifts: Recent Special Mission Offerings:

Linn Comm. Food Bank: \$245 plus 332 lbs of food items, helping feed local hungry families. THANK YOU

Family Promise; \$1182, THANK YOU

World Wide Communion; \$236, THANK YOU

Special Mission Offerings in the near future:

November 19 & 20 Emergency Assistance Fund. Especially at this time of year, we invite your generous offerings for this ministry of hope and encouragement to those who find themselves in need of short-term emergency assistance.

November 26-27 United Methodist Student Day. A special offering for scholarships and loan funds for United Methodist students attending United Methodist colleges.

December 3-4 Food Bank Special Offering. Bring boxed/canned goods or make a financial contribution for the Linn Community Food Bank.

Kids' Mission Club Christmas Collection The Kids' Mission Club, as part of TGIW activities, is again collecting items for gift bags to give out to children and youth who attend the Christmas dinner and to the children in FOCUS. ***Please bring items to the church by December 4.*** If you have any questions call Pastor Allison at 363-2058 or refer to the Outlook for more information.

Christmas Trees in Mission, Christmas Card Tree, Mitten Tree, Angel Tree - Stop by our trees throughout St. Paul's!

An Exciting Announcement - 2012 Increase Match!

Once again St. Paul's UMC is blessed with the faithfulness and *extravagant generosity* of the anonymous donor who has already given much to our church. Last week we received notice from the donor via correspondence from their attorney, stating ***"the donors will for one more year match dollar for dollar on the basis of increased pledges for 2012 over what was pledged and paid in 2011"***. Thanks be to God!

We studied together this last month the text "Practicing Extravagant Generosity." It has in part been in preparation for consecration weekend when we placed our estimate of giving cards for 2012 on the Lord's Table. It is for the ministry within our church, in our neighborhood, and around the world as we help all to know and follow Christ.

As you know, if we fall short of fully funding our financial plan, it is often our apportionment giving that has not been completed. The letter states clearly the donor's desire we fulfill this obligation by saying, ***"the match is made in hopes of encouraging the congregation to pay the first obligation of a connectional church. The purposes of the apportionment are important to the day-to-day ministries of St. Paul's and its missions. The donors recognize and appreciate the congregation's directions towards making St. Paul's mission relevant to the future. They wish the congregation well in challenging themselves to step up to increases of 2 or 3 fold so that the vision for St. Paul's future will not be hampered by finances."***

Let's take up this challenge, to each give according to our means – generously – all to the glory of God!

You can be a part of God's extravagant generosity. If you have not yet returned your estimate of giving for 2012, please do so as soon as possible by mail to the church (1340 – 3rd Av SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403) or during worship. Join with others in expressing the image of God that God generously impresses upon your heart so that the ministry of Jesus Christ can transform the world around us for the goodness of all!

Lorna Barnes, Council Chair; Ron Bunch, Council Vice-Chair

Dannie Keck, Finance Chair; Dave Mather, Finance Vice-Chair

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

END OF YEAR DONATIONS

In order for donations to qualify as a charitable contribution deduction for 2011, the donation must be received or postmarked no later than December 31, 2011. Checks received in 2012, even if predated to 2011, will be recorded as a 2012 donation, unless delivered by mail bearing a 2011 postmark. This is in compliance with Internal Revenue statutes.

If you have any questions, please call Kate Ulmer at the church office, 363-2058.

Our Gifts: The General Ministry Budget

October Income	Year to Date Income all sources	Five Year Average Income	October Expenses	Year to Date Expenses	Five Year Average Expenses
\$99,527	\$929,428	\$916,808	\$121,010	\$1,101,860	\$1,005,677

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 1.4% above the average. Expenses are 9.6% above the five year average. A portion of the increase in expenses continues to be unexpected but warranted building repairs.

Our total Apportionments commitment through October is \$191,965. The total amount paid is \$59,950. An apportionment payment was not made in the month of October. We are prayerful that with your generosity we will make additional apportionment payments through the end of the year.

I recently read an article on stewardship that I feel reflects this 2012 stewardship time. "We know that God is a good and generous God, and that everything we are and have belongs to God. Because of this we live as generous and responsible caretakers of all the resources God give us. In response to God's abundant giving, we increasingly submit our resources to Christ's Lordship, displaying a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness in supporting the work of the church."

Blessings,

Kate Ulmer, Treasurer

Finance Contacts St. Paul's United Methodist Church 1340 Third Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403 319-363-2058 Kate Ulmer, <i>Treasurer</i> Shirley Morrow, <i>Finance Secretary</i> kulmer@stpaulsumc.org smorrow@stpaulsumc.org	
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