Stewardship Moment

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your generous gifts this past year to maintain the ministry of Chepachet Union Church.

The Apostle Paul said, “For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has- not according to what one does not have” (2 Corinthians 8:12).

As we prepare to worship our Lord through giving, today and in future days, let us display our eagerness in response to how the Lord has blessed us. Let us eagerly present our tithes and offerings, as we work to support the building of God’s kingdom.

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, the mystical body of Jesus Christ is a unity of interdependent members. We depend on the presence of every member of our community. And we depend on the diversity of gifts that each member brings to reflect God’s kingdom. Only when all of our unique gifts are offered do we journey forward together in transformational ministries.

Through your support and through the abundant leadership of our many members, we connect people within our church, within our neighborhood - and indeed around the globe - more deeply to each other and more deeply to God.

We read to “strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you still a more excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31). Our ministries in the church serve only a narrow path through God’s kingdom if they are not wholly supported by each member. As you consider your commitments of work, wealth, and wisdom, do strive for the greater gifts, so that the many neighbors and members of our church will walk a more excellent way together - connected in the kingdom.
The apostle Paul said, “On the first day of every week each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2). In this verse he informs believers that their offering is more than an occasional gift; it is worship. Today, we also present our regular offering as a part of worshipping God. As God has blessed you, may you respond to God’s blessing in your worship through giving.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus taught that we are to invest and not hoard what we have been entrusted with in building up God’s kingdom. If we use what God has invested in us, God will multiply it into life-transforming blessings. As stewards, God wants us to invest our talents and financial resources for God’s disciple-making enterprise. Let us give faithfully to honor the Lord for the many blessings showered upon us.

Would we ever hesitate to tell our children about the love of God, to assure a grieving member of our hope in Christ, to pronounce pardon for the penitent, or healing for the sick? Would we ever withhold communion from those who lift their hands to receive it? I pray not. Why then do we hesitate to teach stewardship, to teach it to each other, to form a steward’s heart in our children? It is as much a part of faithful living as those other practices. In fact, it may be more than that, for how can we recognize God’s love, pardon and grace without gratitude? When we don’t teach stewardship, we fail to build the foundation for all the rest of Christian life. Without gratitude, we are blind to all God’s blessings.

- Written by Rev. Stephen Carlsen
Many people have problems with giving money, yet most of them enjoy investing. Investing offers a promise of return: we experience excitement at the possibility our money will grow. We invest in the things that are important to us: our marriage, other meaningful relationships, our children’s education, national and personal security, our homes and neighborhoods. Some of us invest in the arts, or in cancer research, or in animal protection, because these things are dear to us. When the church asks us to give, we are really being asked to invest, to invest in ministries and programs that change people’s lives. Often these are programs that have changed or enhanced our own lives: meaningful worship, education, mission in places close by and far off. Our investment enables us to reduce the suffering of the poor and marginalized, open new options for the downtrodden, and offer new hope for those who feel lost. It is hard not to feel good about such investments. Who could resist?

Written by Rev. Robert W. Ihloff

God’s people were created to be generous. The story of the offering in Jerusalem (2 Cor.:8-9) is pivotal. In the midst of extreme poverty and persecution, the Macedonians were examples of generosity and joy. On the other hand, while rich with resources, the Corinthian church was not described as generous or joyful. What does that mean for us? Might it be that there is a connection between Holy Spirit joy and Holy Spirit generosity? If so, then we can see that giving really is “between me and God”, in the sense that when our relationship with God is healthy and we are full of love for God, then our giving will be a joyous reflection. Our giving will be at a level that reflects gratitude that comes from the heart. Thus, it really is a spiritual matter.
We live in a consumeristic society. In fact, our economy is basically based on our consuming the things we desire more than need, and also those things consuming us. A spiritual exercise for a Christian living in this society has to be asking questions about not only what we consume, but how our possessions and desires consume us. The wisdom of Jesus, throughout the Gospel, is that we must consume to live, but we can never be fully alive if we don’t give in equal measure. This world that we live in is based on the concept that we will be happy once we possess all that we desire. The wisdom of the Gospel is the exact opposite. The wisdom of Jesus is this: it is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich.