

Centretown United Stewardship Moment - Sunday, October 3, 2011

- Betty Gross -

Do you every wonder why you save things? Well, I know why I have saved this little bank – it reminds me of happy days of childhood and also a life lesson. When I was about five my parents started to give me an allowance – 10 or 25 cents a week. As it was given to me my Mother or Father would often say, “Don’t forget your tithe.” What an old-fashioned idea! But those wee long-ago days! My sister and I were taught that one-tenth of what we had belonged to God and I knew that my parents gave their tithe to the Church and, in the depression, shared it with friends and relatives.

And so I put my allowance in this little bank and, on Sunday, put my tithe in the Sunday School envelope. But I was no saint! On occasion I borrowed from God, fully intending to return His – or Her – portion when I received the next allowance.

Tithing is still a tenet of the United Church but, because a portion of our taxes are allocated to social service and charitable needs, the suggested tithe is roughly five percent of one’s taxable income. And the tithe doesn’t just apply to money but also to our time and talents. We all know people in this community who give their tithe of time doubly and more in service to others. Above all, we are encouraged in Corinthians to “Give from the heart and not the law” because God loves a cheerful giver.

Centretown United Stewardship Moment - Sunday, October 9, 2011

- Barbara Potter-Angus -

The theme of today’s Stewardship Moment is “**Giving to Make a Difference**”.

Outreach to those in our community in need of immediate assistance is an integral part of who we are at Centretown United. This is done through your support of the Dalhousie Food Cupboard, The Centretown Emergency Food Centre, Centre 507, the Laundry Co-op and our Christmas Hamper Project. It is often a private and individual act of caring from so many of you here in this congregation.

The Advocacy work at the Laundry Co-op, at Centre 507, and to some extent at our two food cupboards, is on-going and tremendously important in improving the lives of the folks who frequent these Centres.

Another initiative that our church supports is the Artistic Expressions Project whose vision it is to provide a safe and supportive environment for budding artists from our community who would otherwise not have the space or supplies to pursue their artist abilities. It is hoped that some day some of these artists will be able to become successful and self-sufficient members of the cities artistic communities.

2011 has been a busy year here at CUC. We have also been involved in, and have hosted a series called “Faith and Public Life” held right here at our church.

- We heard then NDP MP Tony Martin speaking on “Eradicating Poverty in Canada (Bill C545)
- We hosted an evening with M.P. Charlie Angus who spoke about Shannen’s Dream, an initiative of a young native girl who dreamed of a time when all First Nations children had a proper school and a quality education.
- A week or so after learning about Shannen’s Dream some of us from this congregation walked to Parliament Hill, with many other children and adults from our city, to support and learn more about this initiative.
- last March we welcomed Bill Blaikie, then Manitoba Minister of Conservation and a United Church Minister to discuss Faith and Public Life. Rev Blaikie also spoke during our worship service the following day.
- And just two weeks ago, on the Saturday of our Anniversary weekend, we were all invited to attend a ”Sustainable Living Workshop” held here in our church Dining Hall. We heard ideas on how to make a difference to the earth with environmentally sound choices.
- And the next day, Anniversary Sunday, our guest speaker, Joe Gunn, tied the biblical message for the day to the priority of welcoming and caring for some of the most hurting and excluded people in our community.

So...while Outreach often deals with more immediate needs, social justice addresses long-term conditions promoting social change in institutions, policies and systems.

By supporting outreach and social justice initiatives through your Stewardship givings, we can move closer to equality for all.

We recognize that every one of us deserves to be all that we can be and your support does make a difference.

Centretown United Stewardship Moment - Sunday, October 16, 2011

- Lenore Porter -

Various members of the Centretown Stewardship Committee have been getting up here for the past few Sundays to talk about stewardship which really is a form of fund raising. But don't dismiss us. None of us is getting paid a six figure salary which is pretty standard nowadays for some fund raisers. And we sure as heck won't be phoning you at suppertime to ask you to give more.

I was watching daytime T.V. the other day—funny how no one admits to watching T.V. yet who buys all those enormous flat screen jobs? I can think of better ways to decorate your house. Anyway on TV this psychologist said there are 4 words that are best eliminated from conversations you might be having with a friend or loved one or even with yourself. Apologies to David for my examples.

1. NEVER—as in “David, you never wear a long a white robe with a bejewelled cross”
2. ALWAYS—as in “David, the minister at Status Quo United always wears a long white robe with a bejewelled cross”.
3. WHY—as in “David, why do you not wear a long white robe with a bejewelled cross?”
4. Lastly there is the word SHOULD. “David, you should wear that long white robe”. All these words put the poor guy on the defensive. Before you know it he will feel he has to wear that long white robe on the golf course.

This kind of relates to my approach to stewardship. It is not why I should always give money to the church and never fail. It is the reasons I give to

the Centretown. My guilt list is so endless that one more item on the list isn't going to make much difference. Besides weren't we taught that guilt can be forgiven? For example, be like the Greek government and sit back. Your loan will be forgiven.

Do I give in order to get a ticket to heaven? Not likely since my concept of God is not that of a record -keeping deity sitting before a ledger or a computer screen.

Do I give to look good to others? Alas that can't be the reason. My mother told me to always turn the envelope over so no one sees how much you give. Being the rather concrete thinker that I am, I give because it costs money to run this place. We are exposed to wonderful music in this church. I have often been far more moved by the beautiful music I listen to here than a 3 hour concert where I have to keep kicking Allan to keep him awake. It costs at least 50 dollars to go and hear Stewart McLean's clever stories but David does much the same minus the sentimentality with a concern for individual and social justice. Whether you like to share friendly meals together or share diverse ideas with a group of people, this place can't be beat. Many of you give a tremendous amount in terms of time and talent. But David Boal doesn't fix furnaces and Linda Pollock doesn't do roofs. I don't want to sit in a cold building with things falling from the roof. That costs money. Most of you probably have more esoteric reasons for giving. Sometimes I don't think I learned much in Sunday school but I always remember that verse, "God loves a cheerful giver" and if nothing else works for you it's nice to be loved.

Stewardship Moment – Sunday, October 23, 2011

- David Boal -

The theme of today's Stewardship Moment is **"Ways to Give"**

As practicing Christians, we constantly strive to follow Christ's teaching to love one another. Using the gifts that God has given us wisely, faithfully and as good stewards reflects our love. We can give as individuals and as faith communities or congregations.

Stewardship is about using gifts in faithful ways, **every day**. It's about making decisions, including money decisions in line with our faith and our

values. We find guidance in the second section of the Ten Commandments, (Exodus 20) and in Jesus' descriptions of the kingdom of God. (Matt. 18)

The apostle Paul advised each of the believers in Corinth to “put aside **every Sunday**, some money, in proportion to what he/she has earned.”

Many of our members find it more convenient and more economical to write a cheque to the church once a month. Others prefer to be on PAR. PAR makes year-round support of The United Church of Canada even easier and most convenient. It involves less paperwork for you and provides more stability for the church and the programs and ministries we support. Some of those ministries were mentioned by Barbara on Thanksgiving Sunday.

When you join the Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) program, the amount you choose to give will automatically be deducted from your bank account or credit card each month. You can place a PAR card on the offering plate. We will be providing you with more details about joining PAR next week.

Gifts to the United Church can also be made online through the secure web site, or by mail through the UCC Direct Giving Program, or by phone – just call Jason in the Philanthropy Office at 1-800-268-3781.

If you are considering including a gift to the church in your will, you can reach Doug Flanders, Director, Major and Planned Gifts at the above number, ext. 2027. Such legacy gifts may be made to a local congregation or to the national United Church. By the way, the word “philanthropy” is from the Greek and means “love of humanity”

Every practicing Christian, therefore, is a philanthropist. You do not have to be rich!

Centretown United Stewardship Moment - Sunday, October 30, 2011

- Karen Fee -

I recently finished reading the book “Outliers” by Malcolm Gladwell, the Washington Post's former business and science reporter. Malcolm Gladwell enjoys exploring the ways we think about the world, and in this book, he examines the way we understand success.

One of the main ideas in the book is that no one – not even the most industrious, talented, attractive or courageous person is successful on his or her own. Although we love to hold up in admiration the “self-made individual”, such a person does not exist – not really. Everyone is the product of many factors including genes, personality, education, and opportunity – but, more importantly, we are the product of our significant relationships: family, friends, and community.

Gladwell’s book makes for fascinating reading and I would recommend it. But, he is not the first to notice how relationships can make a difference to both the individual and to what is accomplished. Do these words sound familiar to you?

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good ...” (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

This is part of the same reading given earlier. The verses are from 1 Corinthians and were written almost 2000 years ago by St. Paul. This well-known passage speaks to the importance of working together for the well-being of both the believer and the church as a whole. Paul goes on to say that just as the foot cannot make it on its own, neither can the hand, or the ear, or the eye. The individual parts are nothing on their own, and the body needs the individual body parts to survive. It is no different here at Centretown United – we are at our best when we work together. When we work together, we are able to accomplish much more than any one of us could do on his or her own and we create and sustain a living body of faith.

In earlier Stewardship Moments, we spoke about the importance of giving our money – our treasure – for the work of this place. Today I want to emphasize the importance of sharing our talents and time with one another. It is essential to have the financial resources to continue maintaining this building and the many programs we have here. Equally important is having the human resources to carry out the work we are called to do. We need commitments of both money and effort - one without the other will just not work.

Ways to share your time and energy here at Centretown United are numerous and varied, and I want to remind you again of just some of the

possibilities. There is committee work that covers pastoral care and membership, property, faith formation, mission and outreach, worship and music, ministry and personnel, and administration and finance. Any of these committees would welcome your participation – I would make special mention of the Admin and Finance Committee. If you have an interest in financial matters and a skill set which is particularly needed in ways both big and small, please let us know. In addition to the work of committees, there is participation in the UCW, the Ark M Club, or perhaps the fledgling Prayer Shawl group. There is involvement with one of our many outreach ministries such as Centre 507, the Emergency Food Centre, the Dalhousie Food Cupboard, the Community Laundry Co-operative, or the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee. You can lend your elbow grease to helping to renovate the Inner Room, your voice to the choir, or your hands to the bells. No job is too small.

St. Paul said it first and Malcolm Gladwell echoes the message in today's literature - Centretown United's "Story of Success" will be dependent on our industriousness, courage, and resilience and - just as importantly - the sharing of our talents and time with one another. Stewardship is what you do – all the choices you make involving your time, talents, and treasure - after you say "I believe". We hope you consider the life and work of Centretown United in your choices this year.

When you go downstairs today, in addition to the light lunch that is being provided by the Stewardship Committee, you will receive from David and Keith your Stewardship envelope. Inside are several things: a covering letter from the committee which explains why we hope you will continue to support this church and information about the different funds of the church. Included is further information about Pre-Authorized Remittance or PAR and an authorization form for automatic withdrawal – this is a safe, convenient way to guarantee your monthly offering to the church, and we hope more of you will choose this method of giving. And there are two commitment cards – the white one for your financial commitment and the yellow one for your volunteer commitment. You are invited to take the material home with you, prayerfully consider your commitments, and then return the cards in the envelope provided either by mail or by placing it on the offering plate on any of the next four Sundays. The dedication of our commitments will take place on Sunday, November 27th, the first Sunday in Advent.

To conclude, I offer these words of inspiration and hope attributed to Archbishop Oscar Romero – most suitable, I think, as we each contemplate the commitments we are called to make in this time and place:

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.
It may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.
This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation
in realizing that. This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well.
Amen.*