

THE WELCOMER

"Welcoming our Neighbors to Jesus Christ and His Church"

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The Newsletter of the Trinity Presbyterian Church
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Editor

Dear Trinity members and friends,

Giving to the church can be a controversial subject or it can be one of the greatest blessings you will ever experience. Crown Financial Ministries tells us that 2,350 verses in the Bible talk about finances. I have a few observations about Trinity's finances. This letter is not a sermon, but just some personal reflections.

First of all, it seems to me that Trinity has a high proportion of designated giving compared with our General Fund giving. In 2005 over \$220,000 was given to the Lord through Trinity's ministry - \$160,000 was given to the General Fund and \$60,000 was given through designated offerings or sometimes called Special Offerings. In other words, 27% of all the Church's income was directed to a specific usage by the donor.

Is that bad? Well, no, not necessarily. It could be bad if it indicates a distrust by the donors of the people who handle the church's resources. I do not believe that is the case at Trinity. But I have heard of some churches where the members did not trust the officers and so they withheld their offerings or gave their offerings to a pet project so that the Church would have difficulty functioning on their regular budget.

Another possibly bad scenario might not have negative motives. But if people gave to their favorite fund(s), but not to the General Fund, the church might not be able to operate.

The ladies in my first pastorate held a bazaar at the Church. They spent months working on hand crafted items. I learned that some of them used their tithe money to pay for materials. It also appeared that more money was spent on the materials than was paid for the finished products at the bazaar. While the money was donated to a good cause, outside the Church, it seemed to me that it was not a wise or effective use of time and money.

I do believe in special offerings. But I hope we can keep things in balance. The following is what I believe the Scripture teaches about tithes and offerings.

The tithe is 10% of your income. It should come off the top of your income. Don't wait until the end of the month to see if you have 10% left and then give the "leftovers" to God. Give the tithe out of commitment and prioritizing your relationship to the Lord. And give it to the work of the Church unreservedly and unconditionally (to the General Fund).

If you are not currently tithing, step out in faith. A young man in my previous Church felt convicted when his young son asked him if he was tithing. Out of a feeling of guilt, he started tithing a full 10%. Amazed, he told me that he had more money left over at the end of the month. He had received an unexpected raise, but it wasn't 10%. He continues to tithe. God blessed his step of faith.

Special offerings (designated giving) are to be ABOVE the tithe. In the Bible when someone was especially blessed by God, he would bring a Thanksgiving offering which was above the tithe. We in America are so blessed with financial prosperity. Most people are able to give above their tithe. And often I am asked if there is a special need or ministry desire.

We have several special (designated) needs:

- 1) Faith Promise - Directly supports missionaries.
- 2) Building Fund - Over \$130,000 presently. The Building Committee is preparing a proposal for an addition to the current facility.
- 3) Chair Fund - To replace the chairs in the Fellowship Hall.
- 4) Other special offerings on special days of the year.

I have also enclosed (with his permission) a copy of an excellent article by Rev. Frank van Dalen, former Associate Pastor at Trinity and currently the Executive Director of the ARP World Witness. This article helps us prioritize our benevolent giving. Frank is always so balanced as well as challenging.

May the Lord bless you in your stewardship and as you think about how you contribute to the Lord's work. Remember: "The Lord loves a cheerful giver." (II Cor. 9: 7)

Yours in Christ,



John "Jac" Coad
Pastor

From the Executive Director

To Whom Should I Give?

by Frank van Dalen

I recently received a note from one of our supporters who is overwhelmed by the number of requests for financial support which she receives from several mission organizations. All of the requests are legitimate and compelling. They tug at her heart. But when the requests are combined, they ask for far more than she has. How can you know which requests should receive your support?

It's really a matter of priorities. Jesus reminds us that *"The poor you will always have with you . . ."* (Mark 14:7). In other words, you will always face overwhelming needs which call for your support. So, you have to make choices about which of those needs is your responsibility and calling. Here are a few basic principles to help you decide.

The first is: **Your local congregation, presbytery and denomination are your first priority.** The scriptures tell us that the local pastor should be well supported by his local congregation. *"The worker deserves his wages,"* (1 Timothy 5:18). If you have been "spiritually fed" by your pastor, you need to ensure that he does not worry about his physical needs. That same principle applies to

the presbytery and denomination to which you belong.

The second principle is: **You need to first support those ministries which are connected to and supported by your local church.** The basis for this principle is the fact that elders and deacons provide spiritual leadership for the church. They have the responsibility of prayerfully assessing the needs and opportunities for ministry and guiding the congregation in making priorities. The united effort of a congregation is often much more effective than the gifts of a single individual.

The third principle is: **Support only those ministries which you know are wise in the use of their funds.** Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 8:20 that *"We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift."* He is concerned about the reputation of the church and wants to be extra careful that there is not even the slightest hint of impropriety. You should share Paul's concern. Nowadays, there are so many organizations which say that they are using your funds for ministry but are later found out to be abusing your generosity. The only way you can guard against misuse is to personal-

ly know the people to whom you are giving and to have

confidence in their character and integrity.

The fourth principle is: **You are not responsible for all of the Lord's ministries, so do not carry a burden greater than you can bear.** Mission work is the Lord's work. Ultimately, He will provide for it. Your calling is to be generous with what you have, even sacrificially generous, but not to buy into the mentality that the Lord's work will "collapse" because you have not supported it. Write out a list of missions which are asking for your support. Prioritize that list according to the above principles beginning with the local, then the church-related, and finally those with which you can be personally connected. Then, focus upon those ministries and rejoice that the Lord has given you the privilege of participating in His work through your gifts.

May the Lord give you wisdom in making these choices.

