

January 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#238 *To Give is ... to Obey Responsibly.* "...you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ." (2 Cor. 9:13)

Five-year-old Ryan asked, "How can Christmas be over?" After directing the choir for six worship services in two days plus hosting the entire extended family Christmas this year, his mother Anne was heaving a sigh of relief! She looked at him, trying desperately not to roll her eyes and resisting the temptation to scold him for wanting more presents, and simply asked, "Why do you say that, sweetie?"

"We had such a great time doing the Christmas program. You know, I was one of the shepherds and because I did such a good job, Miss Alice asked me to be the shepherd in the front of the live nativity. We rang the bells at Wal-Mart and everyone smiled at us. They said people put in a lot more money when I was there because I sang Christmas carols instead of just ringing the bell. And, then, best of all, this year Miss Irma let me help put the rolls on everybody's plate when they came to church for Christmas dinner. It was awesome! My new friend, Lois, told me she'd never had such a wonderful Christmas dinner. When it was my turn to eat, I sat next to her, remember, Mom? And, when I offered her my roll, she put a little slice of ham inside it and leaned over. I was afraid she was going to give me a big, yucky kiss but she told me thank you because this way she had a wonderful Christmas dinner and a great Christmas supper. Mommy, I think Jesus smiled when I gave her my roll."

"I'm sure he did, Ryan. What do you think we could do the rest of the year to help Jesus smile?" Ryan put his chin in his hand and closed his eyes tight for a moment. He opened them wide and exclaimed, "I know! I can keep singing in the children's choir, even though you told me I only had to do it through Christmas. We could ask if we can sign up right now to help with the Easter dinner. And, we can include my friend, Lois, in our prayers every day." His mother

said, "Ryan, I think you just gave Jesus lots of reasons to smile. Christmas isn't really over, is it?"

Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Biblical Stewardship Principle:

Giving is to Obey Responsibly

It's January - time to make, break, and remake our new year's resolutions. As we begin a new year it's time to renew our membership vows to support the church with our prayer, our presence, our gifts and our service. Taking our faith seriously means putting God first in our lives. Four ways to live these vows and to "obey responsibly" the gospel of Christ includes:

Prayers: I will start each day praying: "God, thank you for this day!"

Presence: I commit to Worship _____ time(s) per month.

When I eat bread, I will remind myself that Christ is present with me.

Gifts: I will write the first check, following each paycheck, back to God.

Service: I will do service for God before I take vacation time this year.

-Jeffrey L. Nicholas

Or, send us your ideas on how you might put God first.

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February 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#239 *To give means to sacrifice proportionately. "...they gave voluntarily according to their means, and even beyond their means."*
(2 Corinthians 8:3 - NRSV)

"What are you called to give up for Lent this year?" Pastor Carolyn asked in her sermon and acknowledged, "I know I just asked you a month ago about your New Year's resolutions. Are the two connected?"

Steve thought about it. His New Year's resolution was to lose weight and almost every year he gave up chocolate for Lent. The two were somewhat connected. Pastor Carolyn went on to say that while giving up something for Lent might seem trivial to some, it is a start. She said, "As followers of Christ, we are each called to give according to our means. Christians of all ages give voluntarily of everything they have for the common good. We may start by giving up something trivial, like chocolate; and later be led to give a portion of our income and, ultimately, our lives to the ministry of Jesus Christ."

You might consider adding something to your life during the six weeks of Lent instead of giving something up. Add something that helps you focus on Christ. Try setting a specific time each day for prayer and Bible Study or adding exercise to your daily routine. If you don't already tithe, you might try tithing or giving a regular percentage of your income during Lent. If you make it to Easter, you can decide whether you're going to continue it for the rest of the year.

How much is God calling you to give this year? Are you starting with chocolate? Are you moving to giving a regular percentage of your income: 2%, 5%, 7%, 10% or more? No matter how much we are called to give, may we do it as a means of loving God first, and our neighbors as ourselves as we grow in faith.

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair
Biblical Stewardship Principle:

To give means to sacrifice proportionately.

"We are called to share generously from what we already have, so that all may have enough. Don't worry about giving what you don't have. Give generously and willingly of what you do have, and all will be blest."

*-Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin
Your Money or Your Life*

"Imagine the President of the United States and the committee on Ways and Means sending out jugs, mugs, boxes, barrels, eggs, and buttons with their pictures on them to catch pennies to meet the fiscal needs of the great government of the United States! Imagine the different States and counties holding fairs, festivals, concerns, ice cream socials, with women cooking, sewing, and acting, that each community may meet its apportionment! This would disgrace any earthly government in its own and the eyes of the nations. Yet this is what Christians are doing year by year to finance the Kingdom of God!"

-from Gems of Thought on Tithing, published 1911

The early Hebrews mentioned only crops and herds in their base for a tithe. Later, when the people settled and started raising olives and grapes, products such as oil and wine were included in the base. A generation or two ago, people could not conceive of anything but cash as the base for a tithe. But with more people investing in the stock market, real estate, and so forth, people can now consider tithing other assets as well.

For more information on giving with assets other than cash, visit our website at www.wumf.org or contact us at:

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March 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#240 To give is to Respond Gratefully.

"...they gave themselves first to the Lord." 2 Cor 8:5b (NRSV)

"Imagine yourself giving to others everything you own, picking and choosing just what to give each individual or group you want to include. Enjoy the philanthropic feeling of such generosity - how good it feels to give with abandon. Writing a Will allows you to try on that kind of giving, but without having to let go of anything you have. The feelings of compassion, creative giving, innovative selection, even reconciliation are possible in writing a Will that witnesses to your Christian lifestyle.

If you do not have a Will at the time of your death, the laws of your state of residence will govern the distribution of all you own. No provisions for charity will be included. Only through a Will, can you intentionally practice stewardship."¹

A Will is our ultimate faith statement. Seventy percent of competent adults do NOT have a current, valid will in place at the time of their death. Do you want the state to determine your legacy? If not, take these simple steps to prepare a Will:

- **Collection** - make a list of your assets and special items of sentimental value. Consider this step as a treasure hunt.
- **Imagination** - imagine what your assets might become and who you can help experience the love of Christ - in your family, your church, the world.
- **Distribution** - This is a step of decision-making. Arriving at "what is given where and when" requires some careful time of discernment.
- **Liberation** - the final step. Are there assets you no longer need to hold? Are there any specific cases where doing the giving now rather than after death would be more joyful?

Once you have completed your Will, please review it and update it every 3-5 years. For more information on how to include the church or other ministries in your Will, contact the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 1-888-903-9863 or wumf@wumf.org

¹ From *The Abingdon Guide to Funding Ministry, Vol. 2* by Donald Joiner and Norma Wimberly, page 134, Copyright 1996 by Abingdon Press

Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Biblical Stewardship Principle:

To give is to Respond Gratefully.

My dad would sit down at the kitchen table on Saturday evenings. Writing a check. Putting it in the envelope. Setting it on the corner of the kitchen counter next to his car keys. That's it. He never said anything to my brother and me about stewardship, about giving to God, about the importance of sharing. He just did it. He never missed. He still does it, every Saturday night. It's a powerful memory, and it goes on.

I did not inherit my dad's organizational skills nor, more honestly, his faithfulness. I have been known to search my purse for a pen while the ushers were coming down the aisle, or to fill out my check for the offering while the pastor was recapping the Gospel lesson. If by some chance the plate went by before I finished - more times than I care to admit - that week's offering never made it anywhere.

But I still remember that envelope sitting by the car keys. And some weeks, I lay my own witness on the kitchen counter for my kids to see. I might even write a bigger check to "catch up." It's not a have-to. It's a want-to - something from my past that allows me to be faithful.

- Barbara DeGrote

From *The Abingdon Guide to Funding Ministry, Vol. 3* by Donald Joiner and Norma Wimberly, page 170.
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April 2008

A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#241 *Give Willingly.* "...all that is mine is yours." Luke 15:31b

We can't wait to file our taxes so that we can get our rebates this year. What will we do with it when we receive it? One blogger on the internet asked others: "If and when tax rebates are sent do you plan to 1) spend it; 2) save it; or 3) pay an existing debt?" The first person to reply said, "*Maybe we'll create a 4th option. Gift it.*"

Will sharing our tax rebates by making a charitable gift stimulate the economy the way the rebates are intended? They could. By providing additional charitable gifts to our churches, our camps, and our United Methodist mission projects throughout the state, you know these dollars will be put to good use. Imagine if the average person in our congregations received a \$600 rebate. If everyone tithed their rebate, we could expect our churches to receive \$60 per member. For every 50 members, we might expect to receive an additional \$3000 this year for mission and ministry.

One church I talked with recently indicated that their snow plowing bills alone were \$1000/month this year. We want and need our church parking lots to be as clear of snow and ice as possible so we can enter safely to worship and grow in our faith. Imagine what an extra \$3,000 would do to help this congregation meet their goals. What ministries could your congregation enhance or begin with an additional \$3,000 or more this year?

For every 50 members who might give 50%, or \$300 of their \$600 rebate to the ministry of Christ and the church, we would anticipate an additional \$15,000 for mission and ministry!

In the parable of the lost son, we have two sons and their father who struggle with a stewardship challenge. The father says to the younger son, "all that is mine is yours." God tells us the same thing. Will we use God's gifts wisely?

-Jean Ehnert Nicholas

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair
Biblical Stewardship Principle:

How much do you feel called to return to God to say "thank you" for the blessings you've received? In reviewing your finances and taxes for the year ahead, we invite you to consider the following creative options for meeting your charitable giving goals. If we can help you make any of these gifts, please call us at 1-888-903-9863.

Your Gift	How to Make that Gift	Your Benefits
Appreciated stock, securities, or other assets	Donate shares of appreciated stock through the Foundation at no selling fee. 100% of the proceeds are given to the church or ministry you designate.	An income tax deduction and avoidance of capital gains tax. This allows you to make a larger gift than if you made it with cash.
Life Insurance	Transfer ownership of a secondary life insurance policy to the church or the Foundation. If there is a cash surrender value built up in the fund, the church or the Foundation may liquidate this gift and provide a special gift for you to a Building Project or new ministry fund.	By transferring ownership of the policy before surrendering it for its cash value, you avoid paying income taxes on this amount.
Deferred Gift from an IRA or another Retirement Plan	Name the church or another charity as a beneficiary of the remaining assets after your lifetime.	You'll be able to leave your less heavily taxed assets to family, and others that you love.
Real Estate	Donate property to the church through the Foundation.	Avoid capital gains taxes, receive an immediate charitable deduction, and possibly establish a life income trust.

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May 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#242 *To Give is to Share Abundantly* "Zaccheus said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor.'" (Luke 19:8a NRSV)

Don't miss your opportunity to get a great rate!

A year ago, Stan and Phyllis Strosahl established a Charitable Gift Annuity with the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation. Based on their ages at the time (87 and 85) Stan and Phyllis will receive a joint annuity payment of 8.1% of their gift every year for the rest of their lives.

Rates for Charitable Gift Annuities started after June 30, 2008 will be slightly lower. On July 1, 2008, the rate for a couple ages 87 and 85 will drop from 8.1% to 7.6%. If you would like a personalized illustration for a charitable gift annuity, be sure to call our office soon, toll-free at 1-888-903-9863. Either Bill Helwig or Jean Nicholas will take your personal information and help you see how you can take advantage of these great rates while they last.

A Charitable Gift Annuity is a form of charitable giving that gives donors the opportunity to make a gift to a particular ministry or local church and receive a fixed annuity payment for the rest of their lives.

The payment is a fixed percentage of your gift, based on your age at the time the gift annuity is established. You also receive a charitable deduction for a portion of your gift. Examples of the **single life** rates effective through June 30, 2008 are:

Age 55 - 5.5	Age 65 - 6.0	Age 75 - 7.1	Age 85 - 9.5
Age 60 - 5.7	Age 70 - 6.5	Age 80 - 8.0	Age 90+ - 11.3

A Charitable Gift Annuity may be established at the Foundation for \$2,000 or more. For more information at no obligation, including a personalized sample illustration, please call our office. Be prepared to share your birth date and your income tax bracket (10%, 15%, 25%, etc.), as well as whether your gift will be made with cash or appreciated stock. Call us today!

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

To give is to Share Abundantly.

Quotes for Bulletins/Newsletters:

Dare to Challenge

Jesus dared to challenge. He asked people to stretch. He pointed to a poor widow who gave "all that she had." We are not told what Jesus said to Zacchaeus. But when they concluded their conversation, Zacchaeus announced that he was giving away half of everything he had.

Jesus asked fisherman to leave their nets and follow him. Don't shrink from the challenge of asking people to share what is valuable to them. For most people in this society, money is a major symbol of value. It is not evil, but there is more to life than more money.

"Are we being challenged in ways that encourage our growth as disciples?" Once we are challenged to become givers, address the issue of where we can give funds to make a difference in the world, in the name of Jesus Christ.

"My main philosophy is that my money is a loan from God. I'm in charge of it. I'm responsible for giving some of it away, providing for my family, investing it, and protecting it."

-Orel Hershiser IV

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June 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#243 *Giving is a Form of Praise* "...Praise God's glorious name; bring an offering and come into his Temple." Psalm 96:8

A year ago we began the June 2007 newsletter item with the statement, "*with gas prices on the rise!*" Here we are in 2008 facing the same issue. With gas prices on the rise and food prices and health care costs, it's very tempting to go into the summer months and cut back on our commitments and offerings to the church. Vacations and special events call for extra travel and food and we may be wondering how we can be faithful stewards in these tough economic times. Each of us has to answer this question in our own way. What is God calling us to give?

If you're like me, if you wait to see how much is left at the end of every pay period, that amount easily becomes less and less. What I find I need to do to praise God's name through my offerings is to take the first fruits off the top and live with the rest. We have our offerings automatically deposited as the first debit to our checking account every week. If your church doesn't provide that method of giving, perhaps you can discipline yourself to have your offering become the first check you write every time you are paid.

It may be that for some folks you'll need to revise your commitment. As gas prices and other necessities rise, perhaps you'll need to cut back a bit for a while. That's okay - but choose an amount to dedicate in praise to God that allows you to feel at peace. Choose a regular amount of 2%, 4%, 6%, 8%, or 10% and offer that gift first, before you go to the gas pump or buy extra groceries for the family reunion this summer.

You might also find a way to spend vacation time closer to home with less driving and expense - picnics, exploring the state and county parks in your area, or visiting relatives and friends. Putting God first isn't hard, even in the midst of all the summer temptations. It isn't hard, but it does require us to remember the greatest commandment Christ gave us to love God - FIRST - and our neighbors as ourselves.

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Did you Know...

Time is running out to establish a Charitable Gift Annuity using the current rates. Rates will change on July 1, 2008. If you want to take advantage of the higher rates in effect through June 30th, call our office today and ask for a Charitable Gift Annuity Application.

A Charitable Gift Annuity is a form of charitable giving that gives donors the opportunity to make a gift to a particular ministry or local church and receive a fixed annuity payment for the rest of their lives. Call us today at 1-888-903-9863 for more information on how you can take advantage of this wonderful way of giving.

Vacations are great, but the prices are something else. What could possibly be left for the offering next Sunday?

It's a lot easier to send your offering to the church **before** you go on vacation than to come up with two Sundays' worth when you get back.

If you give it to God first to say "thank you" for the opportunity to go on vacation, you'll have a sense of the peace that comes from following the Great Commandment Jesus gave that we should love God FIRST - with all our hearts and souls and minds and strength - and our neighbors as ourselves.

It's been said, "After a week of vacation I felt like a first cousin to a cash register. It seemed that every hour I was walking up to one, looking in its eyes and listening to its beating heart as it scanned my debit card. It's nice to come to church and make an offering - to give willingly for the purposes of Christ, whose hand is on me for comfort, not reaching out to me for His own enrichment.

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July 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#244 Giving means living genuinely and putting our faith into action.
"I am testing the genuineness of your love against
the earnestness of others" *2 Corinthians 8:8b NRSV*

Discovering Life in Loss

Wisconsin has been a living laboratory of learning in recent days as flood waters inundated much of the state. We have seen individuals lose everything, as homes slide into a lake and float away. We have worshipped in churches with flooded basements. In a nation which prides itself on material possessions and often defines success on the quantity of "things" attained, losing everything is certainly traumatic. And yet it is refreshing to witness the way in which individuals and communities rise to the task and go on with life.

In fact, events like this can help us clarify what truly matters. In Matthew 4:4 we find Jesus in the wilderness responding to the tempter with these words... *"It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

Losing everything can actually be a defining moment in which we find everything we truly need to live! Stepping out of our material world frees us to consider a new level of generosity with all that we have received. And for those of us who did not lose everything, watching this event unfold should encourage us to also ask... *"Could I consider a more generous lifestyle as well?"*

Life is good! Share it whenever you can. It is more joyous to give than receive.

-Rev. William F. Helwig

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Giving means putting our faith into action.

FAST from judging others;
FEAST on Christ dwelling in them.

FAST from emphasis on differences;
FEAST on the unity of all life.

FAST from anger; FEAST on patience.

FAST from discontent; FEAST on gratitude.

FAST from pessimism; FEAST on optimism.

FAST from bitterness; FEAST on forgiveness.

FAST from self-concern; FEAST on compassion for others.

FAST from thoughts of illness; FEAST on the healing power of God.

FAST from words that pollute; FEAST on phrases that purify.

FAST from discouragement; FEAST on hope.

FAST from apathy; FEAST on enthusiasm.

FAST from suspicion; FEAST on truth.

FAST from idle gossip; FEAST on purposeful silence.

FAST from thoughts that weaken; FEAST on promises that inspire.

FAST from shadows of sorrow; FEAST on the sunlight of serenity.

FAST from problems that overwhelm;
FEAST on prayer that sustains.

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August 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#245 "Giving is Fun!"
"God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7b)

Blake was so tired one night in the middle of the mission trip that he fell asleep at the table during supper! When he got home he was sick for a week, became dehydrated and had to spend time in the Emergency Room.

Now that he's recovered, his pastor asked him, "If you had known ahead of time that you were going to get so sick, would you have gone anyway?" Blake quickly responded, "Of course! Those people have to live like that all the time. We only had to do it for one week. And, we were able to build some things to help make their lives a little better."

God gives us time, talents and treasures to use for God's glory. They are not gifts given to us to store in bigger barns for ourselves. They are like seeds, given to us to plant in good, rich soil so that they can bear the fruit of God's love for us to share with the world.

We often feel the temptation to use all the blessings that come to our own lives for our own benefit. Our Christian faith, however, invites us to live in community. Jesus calls us to TITHE, SHARE, and SACRIFICE from all our blessings.

How will you use your time, talents, and treasures to make a joyful difference for God this month?

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Stewardship begins when God is put first. Stewardship is both our gift from God and our response to God.

When people of the church become excited about the mission and ministry of the church, they want to be involved. Stewardship teaches that all we have and all we are is a gift from God.

We are stewards of God's gifts during our lifetime. They gifts we have been given – time, talent, and money – are to be used for God's purpose. One role of the church is to guide individuals to discern the mission for our lives and the use of all our resources in accomplishing God's purpose for our lives.

- Stewardship is putting faith into action.
- Stewardship is the demonstration of our love.
- Stewardship is the responsible, loving, accountable management of life.
- Stewardship is how we invest and expend our time, talent, and treasure.
- Stewardship is **everything** we do, after we say, "I believe."

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September 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#246 "You cannot serve God and Money." (Matt. 6:24)

10 Reasons I Love Giving to the United Methodist Church:

1. Because our church isn't just about believing in Christ, it's about following Jesus!
2. For just 3.4 cents out of every dollar I give, we are able to support people sharing the love of Christ in 165 countries throughout the world.
3. 100% of every dollar I give for disaster relief is able to be used for mission and ministry and meeting the needs of real people, not to meet overhead expenses.
4. Our mission work includes ministries like *The United Methodist China Program* that seeks to facilitate deeper understandings between China and other nations throughout God's world. It respects the autonomy of Protestant churches in China, where three new Protestant churches or meeting places open every two days!
5. We provide four different camps where over 1,230 different campers experienced the love of Christ this summer.
6. For just 12.5 cents out of every dollar I give, we help provide a safe haven for homeless families in Superior, hope for single moms and their children in Milwaukee, pensions and insurance for retired clergy, campus ministries on ten college or university campuses, and more!
7. Through our connectional giving, or apportionments, I'm always reminded that the church is about so much more than just my needs, it's about helping all of God's children know that Jesus loves them.
8. When we're at our best, we're asking the tough questions about how all of us can live together as God's people regardless of our differences.
9. An average of 83.5 cents of every dollar I give is used to support our local church operation and mission.
10. I can trust that my gifts will be used in a way that helps me to put God first in my life, and love my neighbor as myself.

-Jean Ehnert Nicholas

Why do you love to give to the United Methodist Church? Tell us and we will share your ideas with others. Please contact us at:

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Wisconsin Stewardship Stories

The following story is the first in a series of stewardship stories that we will share from individuals throughout the Wisconsin Annual Conference. If you have a stewardship story or idea to share, please send it to us today. All items submitted are done so with the understanding that permission is granted by the author to the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation for the purpose of sharing items in this forum with other United Methodist churches.

The Cost of an Ice Cream Cone

As a child, I took 5 pennies or a nickel to church every Sunday as my offering for Sunday School. That was the cost of an ice cream cone. Around this time, I became aware that my father, a farmer, put \$6 in his envelope each week. This was no small gift in those days.

When I had children of my own, an ice cream cone cost 50 cents, ten times what I gave as a child. My children took 2 quarters to Sunday School. To keep pace with my father's gift, I needed to give \$60 per week.

Today, an ice cream cone costs at least \$1.50. To keep up with my father's giving, I must give \$180 per week.

Who is your giving role model?

Kathleen Jones
Bethany-Calvary United Methodist Church
Wauwatosa

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October 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#247 Giving Is ... sharing. "God's gifts and God's call are irrevocable."
Romans 11:29 NIV

Everything we have is a gift from God.
What we do with it is our gift back to God.

We often hear, "You can't take it with you." Yet how many of us have included the church in our will? Every one of us will die one day, and many of us will be richer the day we die than we ever were while we were alive.

The day we die, the assets we had just the day before will still be ours. But we won't need them! Plus, we'll have the life insurance policies we've paid premiums on. God has given us all these treasures and God continues to call us to be faithful stewards of these gifts - in life, in death, and life beyond death.

In order to do so, we need a will. Either the court will decide the final disposition of our assets, or we can. If we prefer to decide what will happen to the many gifts God has given us, (including our children, money, property, and pets) all we need to do is write a will by ourselves or with the help of an attorney. In order to make this final, ultimate faith statement, include a very simple sentence that says, *"After all my bills are paid, I want 10 percent of my estate to go to the United Methodist Church where I hold my membership at the time of my death."*

Of course you can name a specific church (be sure to include the address) or ministry. Or your attorney can assist you with the proper language. You might also consider having a percentage of your estate sent to the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation to be distributed according to your most recent Letter of Instruction placed on file with the Foundation.

For more information on the importance of writing a will, including the church in your will, or utilizing a Letter of Instruction to distribute your charitable bequests, please contact us at:

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Giving Is ... sharing.
It is an acknowledgement that God owns everything.
We are simply stewards.

Getting ready for Halloween usually means finding a costume, the appropriate make-up, and the biggest goodie bag ever. Halloween celebrations can also be a time to teach children (and adults) about giving, when you invite them to Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF.

Most children tend to become very excited about this opportunity to help other children have clean water to drink, medicine, and warm blankets. Once they've been invited to turn the rather greedy tradition of trick-or-treating into a way to help "the least of these," children seem grateful for the chance to give. And those they visit tend to respond with enthusiasm and gratitude as well.

Let's not overlook the ways our children can be encouraged to be good stewards and leaders in living the gospel of Christ among us, throughout the upcoming holiday season.

In order to make Halloween count this year, visit the following website: <http://youth.unicefusa.org/trickortreat> to order collection boxes, or to print out a canister wrapper to create your own. Then go door-to-door on Halloween - or create your own fundraiser - and ask everyone to help you raise money for kids around the world!



Once you've collected the money, send it to UNICEF to help save kids lives. Print out a [donation form](#) off the website and then send it with a check or money order to:

Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF
125 Maiden Lane,
New York, NY 10038.

Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation
750 Windsor Street Ste 305, P.O. Box 620
Sun Prairie, WI 53590-0620
1-888-903-9863 or wumf@wumf.org

November 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#248 Giving is ... thankful stewardship.
"It is good to give thanks to the Lord" (Psalm 92:1)

"No More Barns" Read Luke 12: 13-21

Jesus cautions ... "Take Care! Be on you guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."

Our society has taught us to dream big. We are taught to accumulate, invest, and enjoy life to the maximum. Our slogan is, "Charity begins at home!" But I think Jesus would say...charity does not end there. Economic downturns have a way of reminding us how temporary life really is.

Perhaps the most important words of this parable occur in Luke 12:20 following God's announcement to the rich man that his life would end on the very night he was celebrating his abundant harvest. **"And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"**

Good stewardship means making plans to pass on all that we do not need. If you are ready to begin making plans, call the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation. We can help you make good plans.

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IRA Rollover Passes for 2008/2009!

Good News! The IRA Charitable Rollover Passed!

We have just received word that IRA owners age 70-1/2 and older may make gifts directly from their Traditional or Roth IRAs to charities, including their local United Methodist Churches, in 2008 and 2009. The specific legislation is listed below:

In "Division C -- the Tax Extenders and Alternative Minimum Tax Relief Act of 2008" of H.R. 1424, Congress extended an excellent charitable planning opportunity for both 2008 and 2009. This act permits an IRA owner age 70½ or older to make a direct transfer to charity. The transfer may be up to \$100,000 in one year and this IRA rollover will exist for year 2008 and year 2009. Sec. 408(d)(8)(A).

To transfer a gift to your church or another United Methodist Ministry, all you have to do is:

1. Contact your IRA Custodian.
2. Sign an application, which they provide. Or, send a letter requesting a transfer.*
3. Contact the church or ministry to notify them that they will be receiving a gift from your IRA.*
4. Be sure your church or selected ministry knows how you want your IRA gift to be used and that they prepare a proper receipt for IRS purposes.*

**For sample letters, call the Foundation toll-free at 1-888-903-9863.*

Remember, you may request that this gift to charity be counted as part of your required minimum distribution, if you have not already received it this year. Gifts made with this transfer from your IRA do not increase your federal taxable income nor would they impact Social Security payments you receive.

For further information, contact your tax advisor or contact us at:

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December 2008
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#249 Give to Grow Spiritually - "For a child has been born -- for us!... and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings." (Isaiah 9:6-7, *The Message*.)

The gift of Christmas and its services with music and lights and candles are experiences we all want to be able to pass on to our children and grandchildren. This gift is priceless. Perhaps one of the "good news" byproducts of the current economic recession is that we are being forced to re-evaluate our financial priorities. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt 6:21)

As you prepare for the holidays, how will you give testimony to your faith in the gifts you give?

- If you haven't already done so, consider giving those you love the gift of caring for your estate by writing a **will**. Include a statement that directs 10 percent or a portion of your estate at the time of your death to the church.
- If you have appreciated **stock or property** you no longer need or that might be used best this year by giving it away to benefit the ministry of your church or another ministry to those in need, call us. We can help you take care of that for no selling fee or commission!
- If you have a Certificate of Deposit or another asset you'd like to turn into a **Life Income Gift**, call us and we will provide you with a personalized illustration, with no obligation.
- Or, if you are 70 ½ or older and you'd like to make a gift from your **Traditional I.R.A. or Roth I.R.A.** to your church or another charity, call our office to find out how you can use this gift to meet your Required Minimum Distribution and avoid any income tax consequences.

Best wishes for a blessed Christmas. Please call us if we can assist you in making any of these gifts to your church. Call us today - it's our ministry!

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

The following resources are from the Wisconsin Conference Board of Church and Society, designed to help all of us support a non-commercial Christmas.



Educate about simplicity:

- Read *Hundred Dollar Holiday* by Bill McKibben
- Check out Alternatives for Simple Living at www.simpleliving.org
- As a group, study and discuss:
- A three-session Christmas study guide for small groups at: www.buynothingchristmas.org under "Resources"
- *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver
- The video *Simply Enough* by Shane Claiborne and Tony Campolo (www.simpleliving.org)

Consider a "Simple Home" Christmas:

Check out these sites:

- www.freepatterns.com for free craft patterns
- www.buynothingchristmas.org for coupons that give of yourself for future services like child care, desserts, or back massages!

If you're going to give a gift...

- Buy Fair Trade or purchase locally (www.transfairusa.org)
- Support companies that honor workers' rights
- Reduce gas in shipping; support the local economy
- Honor a loved one through a gift to Heifer International (www.heifer.org) or The Advance at (www.advancinghope.org)

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