

Stewardship in Action

Rocky Mountain Conference, UMC

Resources for November 2008

The Conference Treasurer's Office, in cooperation with the Conference Board of Discipleship Stewardship designee, Rev. Keith Watson, is working to provide stewardship resources throughout the Conference. Through this monthly email, we hope to assist local churches and clergy to make stewardship an active part of their congregational life.

[If you have ideas, resources or a short stewardship story from your local church or other experiences that you would like to share, please email them to Laurie Day, Asst. Treasurer and Donor Services, at laurie@rmcumc.com.]

STEWARDSHIP WORKSHOP

Friday, October 24th the Rocky Mountain Conference sponsored a stewardship workshop at St. Andrew United Methodist Church, "It's Not Your Parents' Offering Plate" by J. Clif Christopher. Over 170 people attended and heard inspiring stories and ideas about the changes that churches can make to enliven their stewardship culture. We know that several people were unable to attend because of scheduling or distance. The Conference office is committed to finding ways to share with the whole Conference some of what we learned.

Practical Ideas

Numerous [Practical Ideas to Help Increase Stewardship](#) were presented during the workshop. Some ideas include:

- Pastor must tithe, at a minimum, and testify specifically about it.
- Have high expectations and require them to be met for membership. Jesus loves a lot and expects a lot.
- Have at least 10% of your membership involved in 'hands on' missions.
- Start saying thanks! Send 10 personal thank-you notes each week to individuals in your congregation.

A more complete list is available on the RMCUMC website, www.rmcumc.org → Resources → Church Tithe/Finances.

Additionally, a list of [How to Decrease Funding](#) was also presented as examples of things to avoid doing, including:

- Put giving statistics in the bulletin and/or newsletter each week.
- Believe that giving is between the giver and God.
- Keep giving records secret from the pastor or and lay leaders.
- Put financial people in charge of controlling the funds to keep the church solvent.

A more complete list is also available on the RMCUMC website, www.rmcumc.org → Resources → Church Tithe/Finances.

Book

[Not Your Parent's Offering Plate by J. Clif Christopher](#), Abingdon Press, 2008, contains the majority of information presented in the workshop. It is a straightforward, easy to read book that will help the pastor and church leadership gain a better understanding of stewardship today. The book is filled with examples, stories, and practical ideas that can be implemented in any church. Consider reading this book with the pastor and church leadership.

Articles

["Why People Give" by J. Clif Christopher](#)

“When I first started working with nonprofits other than churches, I noticed one glaring difference. Nonprofits understood why people give. Not only did they understand why people give, but they structured all of their methods and appeals around such knowledge. Before I started working with them, I had only my church experience behind me, and I realized that neither I nor the churches had any idea how donors think or why they act the way they do....”

The rest of the article outlines that people give because of **belief in the mission, regard for leadership, and responsibility of the institution**. The full article can be found in *Leading Ideas* at the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, www.churchleadership.com.

“Why Pastors Should Know Who Gives” by J. Clif Christopher

“In every nonprofit with which I have ever worked, at the top of the job description for their executive director is fund-raiser. This is true in all colleges, hospitals, youth groups, children's groups, and other social service agencies. They know if they cannot raise funds, they cannot perform their mission. All nonprofits know this except the church....”

The article details that when pastors do not know what their members are giving they are, 1) **unable to choose good stewards** to be in leadership, 2) **prevented from extending a personal thank-you** to those who have given generously, and 3) **denied insight into what is happening within a person's soul**. The full article can be found in *Leading Ideas* at the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, www.churchleadership.com.

TRAINING

Turning Connectional Living into Connectional Giving an online course offered by United Methodist Communications. This is a free online course about how to turn our connectional living as United Methodists into connectional giving that supports the shared ministry and mission of The United Methodist Church. It is a four-part exploration of why we give, the connectional nature of the church, the Apportioned and Designated funds of the church, and how you can make a difference in the world. The next session will be November 5-December 17, 2008. For more information, visit United Methodist Communications' online training web page, www.training.umcom.org.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENTS

UMCGiving.org has “[Mission Moments and More](#),” a section providing resources including a **Mission Moment**, **Offertory Prayer**, and **Newsletter Nuggets** focusing around one central theme each week. These are great ways to share the life, mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church.

Witness to the ministry happening in your own church

Use stewardship moments to enliven your offering time. Each week, ask one person to share a one-minute stewardship-witness about how the church is transforming lives and that they are thankful for the opportunities to be in ministry that the church provides. This could be a church school teacher's story, a youth worker's story, or an older adult whose life has been changed by something that has happened in the church. Be creative in sharing the personal stories of the great work you church is doing.

OFFERTORY PRAYERS

Weekly offertory prayers following the lectionary can be found under the Stewardship section on the General Board of Discipleship website, www.gbod.org/stewardship

Offertory Prayer

Along with that which we place in the offering plate, we give ourselves to you, O God. We give you our time, talent and treasure. We give you our heart, soul, mind and strength. We give you our hopes, our dreams and our imagination. We give these gifts with our hearts full of joy and thanksgiving for we know

that because we give, lives are changed, including our own. Take all we offer, O God, and bless it to our place in your church your work in the world. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen. (www.UMCGiving.org)

UPCOMING SPECIAL SUNDAY

United Methodist Student Day is Sunday, November 23.

One of the six churchwide Special Sundays, United Methodist Student Day, will be observed November 23. United Methodist Student Day gives Christians an opportunity to assist students achieve their educational goals.

Every year, we hear: "Tuition costs are increasing." For many United Methodist students, the continuous increase places an enormous financial burden that many cannot assume. However, through the United Methodist Student Day offering, we can prepare students to unite faith with knowledge. Each year, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry awards scholarships and loans to students attending United Methodist and other accredited colleges and universities through the United Methodist Student Day offering. In addition, a portion of the United Methodist Student Day offering is returned to annual conferences for merit scholarship awards to students of their choosing. For many students, this financial assistance is critical to attaining higher education. Each year the number of applicants continues to rise – furthering the need for more financial assistance. Imagine being able to provide assistance for everyone. That is the goal of United Methodist Student Day. Invest in the future of our church through the United Methodist Student Day offering. We can help students unite faith with knowledge.

UMCGiving.org has numerous resources and support materials to help educate your congregation about United Methodist Student Day, including children's sermons, talking points, graphics and stories. Free printed resources can be ordered [online](#) or if you would rather call and order resources, call toll free 1-888-346-3862. Music and worship resources are available at www.gbod.org/worship.

A MOMENT FOR MISSION

"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, . . . that you may know what is the hope to which you have been called." --Ephesians 1: 16, 18b, An Inclusive-Language Lectionary

"The summer after my junior year of high school," recalls Gift of Hope Scholar Nicholas Brooks, "I attended a summer scholars program at Washington University in St. Louis. That was one of the best experiences in my life!"

Brooks graduated from high school in 2006, entered Washington University and hopes to receive his bachelor's degree in 2010. Financial aid, he asserts, "made a huge difference" in his life.

"It allowed me to go to my first choice of school. Because of the scholarship, my parents don't have to struggle to pay for my tuition, and it prevents me from having a high loan debt."

This young man, who wants either to work for a Fortune 500 company or to teach math in middle or high school, has a double major: mathematics and finance.

"At a public school, I tutor students in math. I am an executive board member of our Campus YMCA's Field Day Program. We bring about 200 public school students to campus for a day of academic and athletic challenges and activities."

In Brooks' hometown—Atlanta—he attends Central United Methodist Church.

Your gifts on United Methodist Student Day, the last Sunday in November, provide loans and scholarships to deserving United Methodists like Nicholas Brooks. "Every penny donated can help a student advance his or her educational goals," he says. "Thank you!"

OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of wisdom, enlighten our hearts so we will recognize—and respond to—the blueprints you have designed for our lives. Open our minds that we might learn, not only the things we plan to study, but life lessons that will enrich us. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.

NEWSLETTER NUGGET

Despite the challenges of tackling two tough subjects—finance and math, college junior Nicholas Brooks says, “I’m putting forth my best effort. With the finance double major, I get to glance at the business world, and I find it exciting learning about corporations.

“On campus, I am a resident advisor (RA), responsible for advising about 45 students living in a residential hall. I also am a member of a junior class honorary, Chimes Junior Honorary, where I serve as the community service chair. I am involved with the Harambee Christian Ministries, a Christian fellowship group. I also attend worship on Wednesdays, and help with community service.”

He has fond memories of being involved with his home church’s youth group and the youth choir and serving on the youth usher board. He also volunteered for the congregation’s Youth Enrichment Program sponsored, mentoring and tutoring elementary school kids.

“You never know how far the money donated on United Methodist Student Day can go,” Brooks adds. “I have many doorways open to me.”

SERMON STARTERS

Need an idea for a sermon on giving? Here's a sermon starter!

Matthew 25:31-46: “The Fine Line Between Sheep and Goats” (Lectionary text for November 23)

Cell phone carriers, in stiff competition for business, devise plans to attract us to sign their contract and use their service. T-Mobile offers “My Faves,” five people to whom you will be allowed unlimited calls. The company, in its TV ads, plays on the affirmation of being selected for one of those honored spots on someone’s “Five Faves.”

Jesus shares the imagery of the Final Judgment with his first-century audience, but he also speaks across time to a world that increasingly reduces the circle of our “Faves.” The distinction between sheep and goats really is about the size of the circle of our compassion. Today as in Jesus’ day, it’s hard to tell the two groups apart until we explore the width of that compassion circle for each individual.

For the rest of this sermon starter and additional resources, for this week or any other, visit www.umcgiving.org → clergy → support materials.