

## Stewardship

Our Stewardship program is now in its 6th month in September. I hope you are enjoying the Stewardship Seconds each week, as presented by various church leaders/members. Take the time to look at the budget tree and notice all the flowers (budget areas) where our offerings are put to use. As the weeks go by, the tree becomes much more colorful, and begins to show the life of our varied ministries. Each week, the Stewardship Seconds provide an opportunity to hear about some aspect of the life and ministry of First Church using the resources that we provide in our regular offerings to the unified budget. As you will continue to hear each Sunday, FUMC has great plans (and needs) for our offerings, above and beyond your “regular” giving levels. Our total year estimated unified budget shortfall for 2015 continues to be about \$50-60,000 (about 5-6%). If we can make-up this deficit during 2015, we can continue to provide (or expand) these important church ministries and missions. If we cannot make up this deficit, we may be forced to eliminate or reduce some of these important programs, ministries, missions, and/or staffing that we have heard about each week in the Stewardship Seconds.

Have you ever had to sacrifice and/or give up something that you really treasured? Some of us “give up something” for Lent to represent in a small way the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross for us. I remember the day that I had to give up playing competitive basketball and softball. Ever since I was young, I was athletic and when I played sports, I played hard and to the maximum of my ability. Then one day I realized that my back and an older body just couldn’t do it anymore. I had responsibilities that I could no longer risk, to keep playing competitive sports. So I hung up my glove and my sneakers. That was a BIG sacrifice for me, and it hurt. That’s when I learned that something is not really a sacrifice unless you feel it.

In the 8th Chapter of 2nd Corinthians, Paul discusses the rich generosity of the Macedonian churches. Even in the midst of very severe trials and extreme poverty, the people gave sacrificially. In verse 3 he states “For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability – entirely on their own....” And then in the 21st chapter of Luke’s gospel, is the story of the Widow’s offering. “As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. Truly I tell you...this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put all she had to live on.” Both the Macedonian churches and the poor widow gave sacrificially, and I’m sure they felt it. SACRIFICE FILLS OUR LIVES WITH FAITH – AND MOVES THE HEART OF GOD.

During September’s “Stewardship Seconds”, our emphasis will be on the Children’s Department budget. Our children are involved in many wonderful ministries. From Wonderful Wednesday and the Passion Play to Vacation Bible school and our Sunday School program. The Little Friends Nursery School is also a wonderful ministry and Christian based educational program that the church supports. During the church services in September, you will hear about these and many other Children’s department activities. During September, be sure to listen and watch as we water and nourish the “Children’s Department Root”. If we have roots “Grounded in Faith”, we will be able to “Grow to Serve”.

