

Pastor's Stewardship Newsletter

July 2008, Issue #64

Produced by the North American Division Stewardship Department

G. Edward Reid, Stewardship Director

Lori Bryan, Editor

Ed.Reid@nad.adventist.org

Lori.Bryan@nad.adventist.org

12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904 ▪ 301-680-6433 Ph. ▪ 301-680-8953 Fax ▪ www.adventiststewardship.org

Serving the Local Church and Community

By G Edward Reid

The local church, as a service organization to its members and the community at large, needs money to function properly. When we follow the Biblical model of church finance, this need is met primarily by our offerings as church members. As we have discussed in previous newsletters, the tithe is used for salaries of church workers with emphasis on the gospel ministry. Other local needs such as operation and outreach are supported by our free-will offerings to God.

Our offerings are different from tithe in a very important way. Both are returned to the Lord and are ultimately His. However, the use of the tithe is very specific and is non-discretionary on our part. God does not appeal to our gratitude or generosity in regard to the tithe. He simply states that it is holy and belongs to Him (Lev. 27:30). He asks no input from us in regard to its use. Offerings, on the other hand, are given to express our gratitude for experienced grace and the provision of God on our behalf. The amount, rather than a percent, is based on our ability and how God has prospered us (Deut. 16:17; 1 Cor. 16:2). With our offerings, God allows us to use our discretion in where we choose to apply them. Though failure to return offerings is robbery (Mal. 3:8), God allows us to use our own judgment in distributing our offerings. God does suggest two major areas of our support for offerings – the support of His work at all levels (Acts 1:8) and the needs of others, especially the poor, the fatherless, and widows.

When the Local Church Needs More Money

When a local church finds that there is a shortfall in funds needed for local projects, there is an almost

desperate search for more money. Some local church leaders are tempted to use the tithe for local projects. To them it appears that the relatively large portion of tithe funds that pass through the church for worker salaries could be better utilized by the local church and then the money problems would be solved.

It should be easy for any Biblically literate person to see the serious ethical problem with using God's tithe for church expenses. It is quite selfish of us to contemplate using God's money for projects that He has asked us to cover with our offerings. Around the turn of the last century church leaders asked Ellen White about the use of tithe for local needs. She answered, "The tithe is not to be consumed in incidental expenses. That belongs to the work of the church members. They are to support their church by their gifts and offerings. When this matter is seen and realized in all its bearings, there will be no questions on this subject" (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 184).

What is Our Motivation for Giving?

With such pressing needs for funding at the local church level what can be done to motivate our members to be more generous? The answer to this financial question is heart change on our part. The apostle Paul expressed it this way. "For the love of Christ constrains [controls, urges, impels] us." 2 Cor. 5:14. In other words, when we love Christ and His Holy Spirit is with us, we will actually want to be supportive of His work in the world. With the love of Christ urging us, the senses and emotions will be Spirit inspired, and appropriate actions will be the result.

A simple and practical method for managing well and teaching stewardship is by way of the Personal Giving Plan. We have explained this material previously. Churches that operate with a good, well-planned budget and encourage the members to support it in a systematic way have very few problems financially.

Building Fund Suggestions

Many churches are involved in capital campaigns that include such things as a new sanctuary, a family life center, a school building, etc. Experience suggests that it is best to keep the building fund separate from the regular church operating budget which provides for church maintenance.

Strange as it may seem, a person will give \$50 to the church operating budget and \$50 to the building fund will not give \$100 if they are combined.

We pray that God will give you wisdom as you work with your local church leaders in developing your budget and in educating the church family to be financially faithful.

Quote for the Church Bulletin

This nation has a real concern for helping others. It is part of the heritage of the citizenry. Not only do we

donate millions each year to help others, but we volunteer millions of hours of service. We give wholeheartedly of ourselves. – Jerome Holland

Thought from the Spirit of Prophecy

Ministers should not do the work which belongs to the church, thus wearying themselves, and preventing others from performing their duty. They should teach the members how to labor in the church and in the community.

Historical Sketches, p. 291.

Month At-A-Glance Offering Schedule

05 Local Church Budget

12 Women's Ministries

19 Local Church Budget

26 Local Conference Advance

Helpful Tip

Negotiate your hospital bill if you are uninsured, and you may save as much as 60%. When pressed, hospitals often offer payment plans or discounts. Contact the office of patient accounts or the financial assistance office. If that doesn't yield results, try an advocacy group, such as Medical Billing Advocates of America (540-387-5870, www.billadvocates.com).

Testimony Time

My Business Partner

By Linnie Pohan

Prior to starting my beauty therapist business, I prayed for God's leading, which He did in so many ways. He supplied the finance and location, for which I am very thankful.

The first thing I did before opening the business was to place some advertising in the newspaper. I decided to put a small advertisement in five local newspapers, because that is all I could afford. I had to put it in the paper for at least six weeks to get the discount, which I did.

I opened for business after Easter, expecting the newspaper advertisements to come out the next day. But checking the paper for the advertising, I could not find my ad.

So I rang the paper. They apologized and promised that it would appear the next week. This went on for four weeks, with still no advertising in the newspaper.

Of course by this time I started to panic, thinking God had forsaken me and I would be left with all the bills, unable to pay.

I told the editor my situation. He was so apologetic and wanted to make amends. That week, he sent out his reporter with a photographer and put half-page advertisements in all five newspapers. God knew that my little ad would be too small to really launch a new business.

I had that business in Ringwood, Victoria, for 20 years – before seven years ago – I sold it and moved to New South Wales to be near our daughter.

It was hard at the time and I did doubt God, thinking that He had answered all my pre-planning prayers and wondering why He would let me down now. Today, my faith in Him only grows with each problem that comes my way.

Many miracles happened during my 20 years in business. My thanks goes to Him who provided all my needs. God never failed to come through for me.
