

Giving

Giving to the church is one important part of our common ministry.

As I order my giving, a memory comes to mind.

One fall it was time to put manure on my garden. A farmer who lived a few plots away from the Vermont church I served, heard about my need and got right to it.

With his tractor and manure spreader he rattled down the road to my home.

When the job was done, I flicked my check book to write a check right there on the tractor's fender.

"Hold it", the farmer objected in true Vermont fashion. "I aint taken no money from no minista."

"Well", I persisted. "you gave me something here, and I want to repay you."

"No, no", he waved his hand, "I may need the church one day, then you can remember that you owe me." How could I respond without hurting his feelings. I needed to try.

"Tell you what, I am going to make a contribution to the church in your name.

How about that?" Wow, what a concept. I could see this idea grinding through the windings of his brain. "If you want", he snapped and putt-putt-putted out the door yard.

Notions about giving shine through in this story. May I share with you my ways of giving to the church?

I make a pledge at the start of the year for my budget and for the church to know what income we can count on.

I like to give weekly to integrate my offering into the other parts of worship, rather than waiting for that inspirational moment or pleasant encounter to motivate me.

I want our pastor to know that my contribution is a sign of my delight with our ministry, but I would never withhold my pledge, when or if I might not be pleased.

I tend not to speculate on some personal benefit to my gift, rather I give because I love the church and because I want us to do well. Some see giving as a sacrifice. To me it should not be giving until it hurts, rather giving until you feel good about your gift.

I prefer that the congregation agrees on a budget item amount to be designated to outreach and mission, a certain percentage of church income, rather than directing personally and individually a part of my pledge to missions.

You have your ways of giving, and you do give as generously as you can through annual contributions, giving a lump sum or a weekly offering.

You donate items and work for fund raising events, you host church meals and after worship refreshments, you teach our children, decorate the sanctuary, paint the class rooms, you visit the sick, home bound and nursing homes residents, you take on leadership roles. Each gift, treasure, time and talent is much appreciated and seen as coming from a deep love for the church. Your love and support has helped our church remain healthy, vibrant, and active.

You might observe, that I say these things from the perspective of a former pastor. That is only partly true. I speak here as one giver among many and sincerely consider this being musings from the pew.

Back to my Vermont Farmer: I got manure that day, and I wonder what my farmer friend took away from my garden.

Maybe a fertile thought?

For the love of Christ's Body, the Church,

Heidi Hoskin

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