

A Challenging Budget – Are We up to the Challenge?

We are good givers. Last month we raised over \$1,600 for Christmas families in the church and in the community, including a family who lost their home in a fire. Our youth gave time and a lot of thought into what to buy for each member of those families. I was so proud to be with our youth that afternoon. I watched teenage boys have serious discussions about whether to buy a pink or purple or blue nightgown for one mother, and whether the tea party set or birthday party set would be better for one little girl. When teenage boys are excited about buying a tea party set for a girl's talking baby doll, it is easy to see that the Holy Spirit is hard at work!

That is the way to need to look at the budget too. We are not giving to a boring budget. We are giving toward a plan for ministry. Every line item represents our strong desire to *do ministry*: to help others, introduce others to Jesus, or both.

- We give to World Hunger, Weekday Religious Education (WRE), Mt. Sidney Meals, and we budget discretionary money to help needy individuals, because Jesus asks us to give to the needy.
- We pay a pastor because someone has to have the authority and the responsibility for administering the **Word** and **Sacrament** in this place (not to mention visitation, confirmation, administration, etc.).
- We pay others to open the door, print bulletins, and provide for music so that we are encouraged to worship God better.
- We pay to maintain our building, and to heat it and light it, because people cannot experience a **Word** and **Sacrament** relationship with Jesus in a cold, dark, rundown building.
- We pay our benevolence to the Synod because the biblical model of giving is to start by giving away a tithe, and even

though we fail to obey that command as individuals we will not fail to do it as a group.

- We also pay our benevolence to Synod because they help us make **Word** and **Sacrament** ministry possible by training pastors, providing quality Youth events for spiritual formation, and in so many other ways.

You get the idea, every line item on our budget helps make **Word** and **Sacrament** available for those who need it each week.

I received a card from someone who described our 2007 budget as “challenging.” And I think that is a great word for it! Our budget ought to challenge us to greater giving – not for the sake of meeting a budget, but for the sake of ministry.

It is so easy to see “not meeting the budget” as a negative, but I see it as a positive! If we were giving above our budget, it would say to me that we had set our sights too low.

Instead, we know that we are givers. We have experienced the joy of giving an intentional weekly amount of money. We have experienced the joy of giving beyond our means, whether that means giving more money than we could afford, giving time when we had no time, or giving talents that we may not have even known that we had – like the ability to pick the right party set for a talking baby doll.

Our giving is important. When people **see** our giving, they begin to believe that there just could be a generous God who would give himself up for us. We become a part of God's mission and ministry for the world, clearing the pathways, leveling the valleys, preparing a way for them to meet the Lord.

If you have not become an intentional, committed giver, I invite you to experience the joy of becoming one.

Peace,
Pastor Chris