

How Do You Tithe a Building?

As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, the Building Committee will be presenting revised building plans after worship on the four Sundays in June. They listened to your input and incorporated this into the revised design. I believe it is a better plan and a more achievable plan as a result.

From the beginning the committee and I have discussed the need to stay focused on mission outside the congregation even as we focus energy on a physical structure for mission inside the congregation. Some of you expressed similar concerns in small group and/or congregational meetings. For example, someone posed the question at one congregational meeting, “How can we think about spending so much money on a building when there are people who are hungry?”

This is a good question. We could ask it of ourselves, too. “Do I really need that new pair of shoes/video game/concert tickets? Or should I give that money away?”

The question is a reminder that God calls us to be good stewards of 100% of the resources we are given. If we are buying dozens of pairs of shoes a year, we are likely wasting God’s money. If we are buying a few pairs that we need, we are likely doing all right.

However, the best and most definitive way to answer the question is to look at God’s command to tithe. A tithe is a ten percent gift of our money, time, and resources right off the top and right back to God. It is also called a firstfruits gift because we give it first.

Everything else in our budget falls after that. A tithe is very freeing because we need not feel guilty for spending a little on ourselves for a concert ticket, and extra pair of shoes, or a

“splurge” item now and again. We have given God our offering already.

Beyond that, if we have money left over at the end of the month we may want to save it, or spend a little extra.

Certainly, sometimes we will decide to give that little bit extra to someone in need. This secondary gift is called almsgiving and is given out of our abundance (the left overs). It is different from our tithe. God commands us to do both, but if we have no abundance it is all right for almsgiving to be less. In contrast, it is not all right to lower our tithe. Ten percent is ten percent, regardless of the price of gas or milk or soccer uniforms.

As a congregation we can use the same model. How do you tithe a building? We have already begun to answer that question. Last year we gave time and money to support a Thriven Builds project in Staunton. We will have the opportunity to do that again this year.

We also have the new opportunity to give of our time at the Verona Community Food Pantry. Salem Lutheran Church will be responsible for running the food pantry starting one Tuesday in June. If you want to volunteer, it is never too late. See Kitty Cook or me for more information.

In these ways we stay focused on Christ’s mission outside of our building even as we look at the mission needs that exist inside our congregation. How else might we tithe a building? It is a good question for us to ask each other, regardless of whether or not we decide to expand our building.

Peace,

Pastor Chris