

HOPE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
TINTON FALLS, NEW JERSEY



NOTES OF HOPE



A monthly publication to keep us informed.

November 2008

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Our Mission Statement

We believe that God has gathered this congregation and staff at this time and place in order to:

Introduce people to the enduring love of Jesus found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Invite them to become part of the family of God

Instruct them in the scriptures, God's word to us

Involve them in the ministry of the church, according to their gifts

Inspire them to go into the world, making disciples of others

Stewardship

Stewardship Quote of the month - "The only investment I ever made which has paid consistently increasing dividends is the money I have given to the Lord." — **James L. Kraft** (1874-1953), Kraft-Phoenix Cheese Corp. chairman

The following is taken from MacPhail's Manuscripts – A sermon by the Rev. Bryn MacPhail. This sermon seems very appropriate to share as we face uncertain financial times in our economy.

A Generous Church 2Corinthians 9:6-15

The great Reformer, Martin Luther, once wrote that "there are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, the conversion of the mind, and the conversion of the *purse*." Of these three, it may well be that we find the conversion of the purse to be the most difficult. Charles Spurgeon writes, "With some (Christians) the last part of their nature that ever gets sanctified is their pockets."

I once heard it reported that, in a church that was undertaking a huge building project, the minister stood up one Sunday and said to the congregation, "I've got some good news and some bad news. The good news is that the church has all the money it needs to complete this project. The bad news is that it's still in your wallets."

Now that some of you have braced yourselves for a sermon about giving money to the church, let me loosen you up a little by saying, first of all, "Well done." Every year for the past 4 years has been a record year, in terms of money given to the church. There is no question that this congregation is progressing in the area of becoming a generous church. Every year for the past 4 years has been a record year, in terms of giving money away to local charities and mission projects. Each and every year, we have seen significant improvements to the church building and to the church manse. "Well done, St. Andrew's / Fraser Presbyterian Church."

The text I would like us to examine today will help us greatly as we endeavor to grow in our generosity. In 2Corinthians 8, Paul tells the Corinthians about the generosity of the Macedonian Churches. We will touch on this briefly before turning our attention to chapter 9, where we will continue to learn HOW GOD WANTS US TO GIVE, and also THE BENEFITS OF GIVING MONEY TO CHURCH MINISTRY.

Let's have a look at the Macedonian Churches. In the first two verses of chapter 8 we learn that the Macedonian Church is a struggling Church. Paul says that they are "**in a great ordeal of affliction**" and are experiencing "**deep poverty**". And then, in the very next breath, we learn that the Macedonians have continued to provide financial support for other churches in need. Verse 3 says that they "**gave according to their means, and even beyond their means.**"

The first thing we learn about giving is that *giving is to be proportionate to our means*. God does not expect you all to give the same amount of money towards church ministry. But He does expect you to give according to your means.

The implication of this is that it gives every individual and every church the opportunity to be generous. Since generosity has less to do with quantity, and more to do with proportion, even poor churches like the Macedonian Churches can be praised for their generosity. And this is what Paul does.

The poverty of the Macedonian Churches did not extinguish their generosity. The Macedonians understood the value, and the necessity, of giving generously, and so they refused to let their humble position keep them from helping others. In Paul's view, they gave "**beyond their means**"--that is, they gave sacrificially.

The second principle of giving we see at work here is that *giving is to be done eagerly*. In verse 4 we read that the Macedonians were literally "**begging**" Paul to let them participate in his ministry with financial contributions. Can you imagine this? Can you imagine someone pleading with our treasurer or with our board of managers--"Please, allow me to give more money!" Surely, this eagerness to give is commendable.

The issue of eager giving is also taken up by Paul in chapter 9, beginning at verse 6, "**he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.**"

In Paul's example here, there is giving. However, we see in this contrast that not all kinds of giving are equally commendable. As Calvin writes, "liberality is estimated by God, not so much from the sum, as from the disposition."

If the right way to give is to give eagerly, the wrong way to give is to give sparingly. Look at the word "**sparingly**", for example--If I say, "Spare no effort!" I mean, hold back no effort. Give all the effort you possibly can! When the Bible says that, "**God did not spare His only Son**", it means that God did not hold Him back. God didn't keep His Son in heaven for Himself, but He shared Him.

So then, to give sparingly is to give from a heart that, deep inside, wants to hold back (Piper). Instead of assessing how much we can possibly give, we often begin our thinking with how much we can keep, how much we can hold back. This is not how the Christian is supposed to give.

So please, if you put more money into the offering plate next week, don't do it because I convinced you to with today's sermon. I pray that as you give more money to the church it is because you have become more eager to do so.

Closely connected to the idea of giving eagerly is the exhortation to give cheerfully. This is what Paul writes, "**Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly, or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**"

Paul's language is so plain and clear that we are left with no other conclusion than that *giving must be done cheerfully*. We must not be reluctant, giving money as if wishing we could avoid it. And we must not give money to the church because we feel socially compelled to do so. Giving, Paul insists, must be done cheerfully.

A qualifying statement is necessary: Surely there are some who give cheerfully because they have given so little that it has been no sacrifice to them. And surely there are others give cheerfully because they fully understand their giving as an act of worship to the God they love.

The Macedonian Churches gave in this way. It was no easy thing for them to give out of their "**deep poverty**", and yet they literally "**begged**" Paul to let them support the other churches financially. And Paul points to their motivation in chapter 8, verse 5, when he writes, "**they first gave themselves to the Lord**". This is a critical point. The Lord does not ultimately want your check book, He wants you.

I suspect that God delights in a cheerful giver because, in such a Christian, He sees the work of His Spirit. For *our God is not a Taker, but a Giver*. I wonder if the reason why some of us are reluctant to give is because we view God wrongly--we view God is a Taker instead of a Giver.

Examine the Scriptures closely and you will see that this is a mistake. Not only is God a Giver, but He is the most generous Giver in the universe. God has not held back the most valuable thing in the universe--Himself. God did not hold back His Son, but He gave Him to us and we benefit from His righteousness. God did not hold back His Spirit, but He has given His Spirit to every believer.

And when God gives, He does not give reluctantly, or under compulsion. No, God is a cheerful Giver. He is the most cheerful Giver in the universe.

Up to this point, we have witnessed the generosity of the Macedonian Churches, and we have learned how to glorify God with our giving. We glorify God by giving proportionally, by giving according to the means we have. We glorify God by giving eagerly and by giving cheerfully to the church.

But friends, remember, God is not a Taker, but a Giver. It is not as if we are doing God a favor by giving to His church, because God is the One who enabled us to give in the first place! If God did not first give to us, we would be unable to give to His Church.

After explaining to the Corinthians how they are to give money, Paul goes on to explain *the benefits of giving money to church ministry*. We see, as early as chapter 9, verse 6, that the one who sows, also reaps. Giving money to church ministry is like sowing seed, and so Paul promises us a harvest. Paul reminds us in verse 8 that **"God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work."** The same sentiment is given in verse 10, **"He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness."**

The benefit of giving to God's ministry is that he repays you. And, not only does God repay you with enough for your own sustenance, but He gives you enough to offer relief to others.

We see this principle elsewhere in Scripture--Proverbs 11:25 says, **"The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered."** And Proverbs 19:17, **"He who is gracious to the poor lends to the Lord, and the Lord will repay him for his good deed."**

Frankly, I do not think that the topic of giving money to the church should be as controversial a topic as it has been made out to be. Because what we find in Scripture is that the benefits of giving greatly outweigh the sacrifice of giving.

At the heart of this issue, we must correct any false notions we might have about God's character. God is the Supreme Giver--He is not a Taker.

God has so wondrously ordained it that as we advance in our generosity, God promises to multiply our benefits and to maximize His glory as the Supreme Giver.

Let us, therefore, give eagerly and cheerfully to the work of God's kingdom. And let us expect, in faith, God's blessings overflowing. Amen.

FAITH REFLECTION

— *how much is enough?*

How do the people of God define ‘the good life’ and compare it to our dominant culture’s definition?

How much is enough for each of us so that all inhabitants of this good earth may share in the abundance God offers?

G.K. Chesterton, the nineteenth century British author, suggested that there are two ways to have enough: one is to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less. Graceful living is about finding an answer to the question, ‘How much is enough?’ The answer grows out of our love for God, neighbor and for all of God’s creation. It means letting our faith and the values derived from that faith drive our consumption patterns—not advertising or the spread of global capitalism that seem to put the dream of ‘the good life’—measured by material possessions and social status—within easy reach.

While most of us will continue to experience the tension created by living in a consumer society while trying to live as the people of God, it is possible to deal with that tension and resolve it to a large extent in the decisions we make about our lifestyles. How we spend, save or give away our money, our time and our God-given gifts reflects our faith and values.

Graceful living begins with an alternative vision of how you’d like to live. Now is the time to dream a dream of your own. What is ‘the good life’ for you and your loved ones? How much of what you want for yourselves is part of the American Dream and how much is related to the Dream of God?

What would it be like to opt out of excessive materialism and develop a lifestyle that reflects the core values of your faith?

To help in your ongoing search for a lifestyle consistent with your faith and values, I want to suggest seven key graceful living concepts that grow out of faith in a gracious God. These concepts are abundance, frugality, simplicity, generosity, sustainability, justice and Sabbath. Creating a lifestyle based on these core values challenges our culture’s most basic assumptions about what constitutes a life well lived, and yet taken together, they are consistent with God’s dream that all shall have enough.



Excerpted from *Graceful Living: Your Faith, Values, and Money in Changing Times* by the Rev. Laura Dunham, Certified Financial Planner. Published by RCA Distribution, Inc., 2002. Order at 800-968-7221. More information at www.gracefulliving.com



November 16th – **Gratitude Sunday**

Please join the Stewardship Task Force for a special Brunch immediately following the service in the John Calvin Room where we can join together in thanksgiving for God's abundance in our lives.

How's are Pledging???

As of September 30th we are still quite short in our giving. Please be in prayer for the ministries in this church that we do not have too much more of a shortfall.

Operational Fund -\$ 9130

Building Fund -\$ 5944

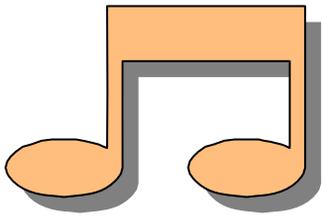
Recycling 4 Cash

We can earn \$\$\$ collecting empty inkjets, laser toners and cell phones!!

Bring in cartridges from home, family and friends or ask to place a box at work.

We have set up the collection box downstairs by the copier
Help save the environment one cartridge at a time!!!

Date: November 8, 2008



★ Time: 7:00 PM -9:30PM

Silent Auction Party & Sing a' Long



Hope Presbyterian Church
1189 Hope Rd, Tinton Falls

*Enjoy horsd'oeuvres,
soft drinks, coffee, tea and
dessert while bidding on
the many items in our
Silent Auction!!!*

Adults—————\$8.00
Seniors————--\$6.00
Children under 12——\$5.00
Under 3—————FREE

Contact person: 732-571-3378

Nancy Oliviero



Christmas Pageant 2008

We hope you've saved the date, Sunday, Dec. 14 at 6:30, for our pageant "God Made a Way in a Manger." It's a delightful look at the dress rehearsal for a Christmas pageant managed by a frazzled director as she attempts to coordinate all the usual nativity characters and accompanying distractions. We know you'll appreciate how amidst the chaos of the rehearsal, the true meaning of the birth of Jesus Christ emerges. Once again, we'll have an intergenerational cast with an age span of many decades to amaze you with their talents. A dessert reception provided by the Deacons will follow the performance. Please invite your friends and relatives for this joyful Advent event.

Sunday School News

Sunday School kids, permission slips to participate in our pageant, "A Way in a Manger" have been handed out at church or mailed to you, so please get them back to Becky Harris Flynn or Kathy Heller. If you need a new one, let us know. We're in the process of casting and have started learning songs in Sunday School. There are speaking roles available and we need to know if you're interested, so please get those forms back to us.

Remember to save Dec. 13 for our big dress rehearsal. We will let you know about other scheduled rehearsals shortly. It would help us out if the children participating in school concerts could give us those dates ASAP, so we can work around them.

Parents, we could use your help, too. Mary Harris, Judy McGuire, and Carol Jeanne Turk have volunteered to work on costumes and the Shepard family will help provide refreshments at a rehearsal. Please check where you'd like to assist on the permission form. We appreciate your help.

Operation Christmas Child

Can a shoebox change a child's life? If it's filled with an outpouring of God's love it can. We will again be collecting shoeboxes or plastic containers filled with goodies for children in need around the world. Operation Christmas Child, an outreach of Samaritan's purse, delivers these boxes and the message of Jesus Christ to children of all ages in various parts of the world. The collection of these boxes will take place on November 16, 2008. Please follow the instructions given in the pamphlet and remember, no liquids and no chocolates. You must also place the label which designates the recommended sex and age of your recipient on the outside of the box so it is easy to make sure your gift gets into the right hands. These labels are found on the information pamphlet. You may also make copies of the labels to hand out to friends, family, co-workers, etc. Let's see how many people we can get involved in this worthwhile project. Previous years have shown that a little church can make a big difference!

From the Deacons

The leaves are changing colors, the temperature is getting brisk, and Thanksgiving is quickly approaching. Our 'giving tree', adorned with fall decorations and food items for the Thanksgiving feasts that we provide for our friends in need, will be on display in the Narthex Sunday, November 2.

Please take a football or two and return the items purchased on Sunday, November 23. The Deacons will assemble and deliver the food items on the 23rd.

We are again joining our efforts with our giving friends at ILEX on Industrial Way, and together we will be providing for our own church families and outreaching to our community families that we continue to support. This holiday we will be helping 11 families!

God bless you all for sharing His gifts.

November Birthday's

2	Doris Godfrey	15	Max Schmardel	21	Micah Patrick Cotton
8	Steven Buckley	16	Jessica Cotton	27	Tammy Weiss
8	Arlene DePolo	18	Daniel Buckley	27	Charlie Carson
12	Jennifer Van Bavel	18	Rose Leadbeater	29	Nancy Oliviero
13	Ricky Crutchley	20	Ginny Catenaro	30	Bianca Marie Boker
15	Paul Baker	21	Ernest Watts		