

January / February 2010

The Pastor's Two Cents

On the first Sunday of Advent, at our November 29th Congregational meeting, the 2010 budget was passed. For all intent and purpose, the budget will not allow us to hire a "permanent" musician for our church. This means that we will continue to utilize "substitute" organists and pianist for the 2010 budget year. There will eventually be Sundays or even special services in which we have no organist or pianist to play. This is all happening at a crucial time in which our "laity" or non-clergy volunteers have stepped up and answered a call to service. Our choir sounds fantastic thanks to the volunteer efforts of its leaders and members. Unfortunately, they may not have anyone to play for them when they sing anthems.

You might be asking why this is happening. Is it the national financial crisis? Are we like so many other churches that are struggling due to a lack of members? Is our church dying? Are we paying our staff too much? The answers to those questions are emphatically--NO! We have adequate members, we even have people joining our church, our congregation, although affected, has not reported significant losses or requested financial help from the church this year, an obvious spiritual growth can be seen and felt in the church and ALL salaries are well below the Conference guidelines for appropriate compensation. So, what is the problem?

To help you better understand let me tell you a story of a 101 year old lady who whenever I would give her home communion, she handed me a stack of offering envelopes. She didn't miss a week and yet was living on a very restricted budget. In fact, even when she had to move out of her own house due to a reverse mortgage she left instructions to give whatever was left to her church. Helen Morgan lived the example of the biblical women who gave ALL that she had to the church, which was only 2 coins and was commended by Jesus. You see, Helen used her offering envelopes exactly the way they were intended. Even though she couldn't come to church she made sure she supported her church EVERY WEEK as long as she could.

How many of us make sure that we fill every offering envelope we receive? Most of you have just received your annual offering envelope and if you want to see Trinity continue to survive, let alone GROW then we need to support this family of faith that is part of our family tradition and spiritual lives by using our envelopes the way they were intended. Did you notice that I am not asking you for MORE!!! I am asking simply for consistency in giving. However, if you don't want to see Trinity remain a separate church or don't mind if we merge with another congregation and sell our assets, then we can continue to support the church in the same manner as this past year. These are NOT scare tactics or guilt laden strategies to increase the giving but rather simple common sense facts about the revenues and expenses that are required to keep a church building open.

As I have always said: "THIS IS YOUR CHURCH" and what you do with it is between you and God. In the last two years your decisions have been phenomenal. You have allowed me through the filling of the Holy Spirit to establish an identity of theology for your church through the positioning of the Bible, Baptismal Font and Communion table. You've supported weekly children's time, a vibrant greeting time, a different communion liturgy, lay worship leaders, a two-year confirmation program, a new Sunday school model, full laity empowerment and involvement, a discipleship class and a spiritual growth that can be seen and felt in the church. The potential is remarkable considering all of this and much more has been accomplished with a PART-TIME Pastor in less than two years. THIS CHURCH IS FAR FROM DEAD but it will never be discharged from the hospital with ONLY *part-time giving*.

So, let us during this time of Advent when we wait for Christ's return; realize that it is Jesus returning to our HEARTS that is what we really wait for and cherish as we worship together in a place called Trinity UCC of Coplay. Amen

Pastor Steve