

## Stewardship Sunday introduction by Carrie Pericola

April 29, 2012

Many hands, many stories, one church is this year's Stewardship theme. Over the last seven weeks we have been hearing many stories about why Centre Church is important to us. For a few weeks now my husband and I have been discussing society and how to bring up our daughter in a society with so many issues and dangers. My response to him has been Centre Church. I look at the young adults and youth who come to this church and know it is a special place.

Having been a high school teacher, I know what the troubles a teenager can get into, but I see the teenagers here making good decisions all the time--and having helped with the youth group, rotation sensation and having several of them as babysitters, I can say I have gotten to see them in different places and situations. I know that the influences here at Centre Church have had a positive effect on them and the people they are and will be.

To me one of the most important jobs of any community is to help the next generation learn from the past and succeed in the future. Centre Church does this by teaching its children about God and Christ and strengthening the relationship we each have with God and with one another.

This year we are doing our Stewardship Campaign a bit differently. We have not given you your pledge card until today because we hoped the sharing of the stories would get you thinking about what is important to you in Centre Church. I hope you have enjoyed hearing the stories and that it has helped you think about yours as well. I know for me heading this campaign has been among the most meaningful things I have ever done. It has helped me solidify my own beliefs and feel good about my relationship with God. I know I pray each day for God's help to make me more generous and a better follower of Christ. I hope you will use this time to as well.

Now we are passing out the pledge cards. We ask that you take time to pray for God's guidance and fill them in and then when you are done you may bring them up and put them in the box. Dennis will bless you and give you a hand to symbolize our many hands that make our church. You may hang the hand on string with a clothespin. As the pledges come in over the next week, we will add more hands so we can see the many hands of our church. If you prefer you may place your filled in pledge card into the offering plate later in the service.

As a reminder the pledges will be used to help make this coming fiscal year's budget. As we know the past few years we have had to do extra fundraising to make ends meet in our Operating Budget. We still have \_\_\_\_\_ to raise for this fiscal year. We hope you will help us fill the gap, so next year the fundraising can go to other things besides our Operating Budget.

Several years ago the budget was cut to the necessities, so we are not sure where else we can cut. We do not have a specific amount we ask you to pledge however, some recommendations I have heard are: 10% of your annual income or 5% to the church and 5% to charity doing God's work. Having researched some numbers on-line I can say that using the median household income in Lynnfield, if each family gave 5% we would more than cover our budget for the fiscal year with money left over to do some of the much needed maintenance work on our building.

On our pledge cards we still have the separation of the amount you would like to go to the Operating Budget of Centre Church and how much to the Outreach Ministries. The United Church of Christ recommends 10% of your pledge to go to Outreach Ministries. The amount you designate, though, is really up to you.

Please take the time now to pray for guidance from God on this important offering. Please fill in your pledge cards and bring them forward and enjoy the beautiful music played by Douglas.

And if you prefer you may return your pledge card in the offering plate as well. And after the service we will be serving a thank you lunch to conclude our Stewardship Celebration and hope you will join us in Richards Hall.