

Board of Stewardship Presented during Worship on March 26, 2017

Dear People of God,

I'm Lance Bentley, out-going member of the Stewardship Board, here by invitation of Matt Flowers, chair of the Stewardship Board, to speak on their behalf. First, a big thank you, to Matt and the Board members for the hard work put in this year as the congregation authorized a financial campaign to increase our previous year's budget by 30%. That goal was a giant leap of faith. Because of your generosity, that goal has been 95% achieved. Incredible. Thank you, people of God.

Four years ago, the Stewardship Board initiated the "Because of your generosity" moments in worship, and this congregation has witnessed moving and informed statements from lay members during these moments. I know that on a number of occasions, I have had tears in my eyes and, at others, tears running down my cheeks, when members gave voice as to why they joined this church, why they believe in supporting it with their financial means and why they work for its causes. I have found these moments to be a treasured glimpse into another's soul.

A couple of years ago, Cheryl (my wife) spoke about the wonderful sense of acceptance she has found here - and has seen others receive here. Twenty-four years ago this congregation took a bold and brave step to become Open and Affirming. Can you imagine where this church would be if it did not welcome lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and questioning people of God? And that is a rhetorical question only, because, for us, one's sexuality has long - for 24 years - not been a question.

The acceptance that is found here was Cheryl's reason. A good one. There are any number of other reasons, today I lift up this reason:

It is the truly wonderful people I have met in this church, here, in worship - and in my years on the Stewardship Board, the Executive Council and the Church Foundation as well as participating in a scatter plot of church activities. I don't think I have to tell you that this is an incredible group of people who come together for the cause of good. I support this church because it is a means by which people of God come together to work for good: which is to care for our brothers and sisters, to lift all people up, to work for peace, for justice, for love - and, as we were reminded a couple of weeks ago, for righteousness - for rightness of relationship.

The Stewardship Board has the challenge and responsibility to help channel a portion of your financial resources into sustaining the church's health and well-being in order to work on these causes. I invite interested members to speak up and volunteer to serve on this board - or on any of our sibling boards and committees. I invite you for this reason: It is when I got involved in the various "official" church structures that I fell into the blessing I have known here - which is to come into closer contact and get to know many of the wonderful people in this church who work for the causes we espouse.

A brief addendum: Today is One Great Hour of Sharing. It is an opportunity to join in with people of good will throughout this denomination - as well as other denominations, to join in support of what is good and right on behalf of all God's people. It's an extra-special opportunity to support the causes we believe in. It is because of you that we move forward into the world God wishes for us. Thank you for your generosity.