

WORTH not cost
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James 1:1, 17-27
October 26, 2014

The pastor stood before the congregation and said "I have bad news, I have good news, and I have more bad news." The congregation got quiet. "The bad news is: the church needs a new roof!" The congregation groaned. "The good news is: we have enough money for the new roof." A sigh of relief was heard rippling through the gathered group. "The bad news is: it's still in your pockets."

This is our stewardship message. The dreaded tithing/money sermon. You might be expecting me to tell you how important tithing is, that everyone should give... and give more, or for me to speak of the biblical expectation of giving 10%. Though all that is true, I am not going to speak of any of that.

Frist, let's look at why people give. People give because:

Fear- of other's opinions or of God

Duty- you were taught to do so- so you do

Obligation- you feel you must give

Thanksgiving- for what God has done

Blessing- giving back what God has given to you

Line item- you want church to be in the black

Mission and ministry- to continue the mission and ministry of Brodhead United Methodist Church

Our stewardship campaign, and any financial campaign if it is done right, is not about fear, duty, or obligation. It incorporates thanksgiving and blessing. Mostly it's about mission and ministry.

It costs \$237,472 to run this church and its missions and ministries. Wow! That's a big number! It takes \$237,472 to keep the heat and lights on, to pay staff and apportionments, to go on mission trips and hold Sunday School, to vacuum, plow snow, print bulletins, make coffee, etc. It costs \$237,472 to run this church. But what are the mission and ministries of this church WORTH to you?

Don Hill, part of a financial development ministry in Cleveland writes, "We're so consumed with maintenance we forget what our mission is," Hill says. "If all we are asked is to give to maintain the building and keep the lights on, then we have to ask, 'Maintain the building and keep the lights on for what?' To the extent that we can or can't answer that question, we define our success."

We are asking you this year to give. Not to give to the maintenance and lights, but to the church... to the church's work in the community, country, and world. We are asking you to give to the missions and ministries of this church.

The theme of our Stewardship Campaign this year is WORTH not cost. According to the dictionary, the definition of cost is "An amount paid or required in payment for a purchase; a price." The definition of worth is "The quality that renders something desirable, useful, or valuable." Here at Brodhead United Methodist Church, we know the cost of things. (light bulbs, snow removal, staff, heat, hymnals, and so on) But what is the worth of them? Cost has a precise amount, but worth change depending on you.

This is part of the poem The Old Violin: The Touch of the Master's Hand by Myra Brooks Welch.

'Twas battered and scarred,
And the auctioneer thought it
hardly worth his while
To waste his time on the old violin,
but he held it up with a smile.

He played a melody, pure and sweet
As sweet as the angel sings.

The music ceased and the auctioneer
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said "What now am I bid for this old violin?"
As he held it aloft with its' bow.

"What am I bid, good people", he cried,
"Who starts the bidding for me?"
"One dollar, one dollar, Do I hear two?"
"Two dollars, who makes it three?"
"Three dollars once, three dollars twice, going
for three,"

"One thousand, one thousand, Do I hear two?"
"Two thousand, Who makes it three?"
"Three thousand once, three thousand twice,
Going and gone", said he.

But, No,
From the room far back a gray bearded man
Came forward and picked up the bow,
Then wiping the dust from the old violin
And tightening up the strings,

The audience cheered,
But some of them cried,
"We just don't understand."
"What changed its' worth?"
Swift came the reply.
"The Touch of the Masters Hand."

Worth is not how much something costs, how something looks, or something works. Worth is what something does for you, to you, and with you. Our Stewardship Campaign broke our missions and ministries down into four categories: Serving, Teaching, Caring, and Worshipping.

So let's start by looking at the worth of the category called serving. Serving costs \$76,952. That's what it costs, but what is it worth to you?

What is it worth to you to know that our youth serve and know Christ thru service? What is worth to you that already have youth excited about next summer's mission trip? If faith is words in action, what is it worth to you that many of our congregation members have taken their faith out of this building and are volunteering at the clothes closet, food pantry, or working in the schools? Or that we regularly host Family Promise?

The next category is teaching. Teaching costs \$51,208. That's what it costs, but what is it worth to you?

What is it worth to you that our children and youth are learning about Christ? What is worth to you that our children want to come to church?! That on the first day of Sunday School we had 30 children and now we have 42! OR that we have 14 children/youth on Wednesday nights? Or that we had (hoping for 30... will know after this is printed) last Wednesday as we led an Ecumenical Youth event? What is that worth to you?

It touched my heart one day when a child told me, "you make being a pastor seem fun!" What is that worth to you? And to me? What is it worth to you that we offer Sunday School and midweek youth program called JC Kids, God Squad, and J Crew? What is it worth to you that this fall we launched 3 adult classes and are about to launch 2 more?

The Caring category cost \$53,445. That's what it costs, but what is it worth to you?

What is it worth to you that we visit the shut-in members of our congregation? What is it worth to you to know that when a member of our congregation, or community, passes, that we as a church are there to minister to them. To provide comfort and support, a funeral, and a luncheon? There have been a few times when a member's spouse, uncle, or friend was in the hospital and the member was in distress. A pastor offered to go see

them. The member almost always responds with, “But they’re not a member, will you really go see them?” Yes! What is it worth to you to know that the staff and members of this congregation care for each other and those in the community?

Worship costs \$55,866. That’s what it costs, but what is it worth to you?

What is it worth to you that we can meet in this worship space every week? Have you all seen the board in the back? It has worship and Sunday school numbers as well as financial numbers. Did you see that for the first time since I’ve been here our worship numbers went above 140! What is that worth to you? Or to me? What is it worth to you that when you arrive here on a Sunday morning that this worship space is vacuumed and heated, with lights on, flowers on the worship table, pencils and Bibles and hymnals in the pews, with a sound system and other media in place. What is all that worth to you? Or how about the enthusiasm and beautiful sound coming from our choir? Besides touching your heart, what is that worth to you??

I like the old story about the guy who came to church with his family. As they were driving home afterwards he was complaining about everything. He said, “The music was too loud. The sermon was too long. The announcements were unclear. The building was hot. The people were unfriendly.” He went on and on, complaining about virtually everything. Finally, his very observant son said, “Dad, you’ve got to admit it wasn’t a bad show for just a dollar.”

Every day, week, month, and year we get together for this thing called church. We worship together, learn, play, and volunteer together. We know how much it costs, but what is it WORTH to you??? What are the missions and ministries of Brodhead United Methodist Church worth to you? Amen.