

BUILDING OUR FUTURE
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STEWARDSHIP – 2012
SEPTMEBER 25, 2011

Today marks the start of the annual stewardship emphasis at First Presbyterian Church. This year, the campaign, whose theme is “Building Our Future”, is being conducted at the same time as the capital campaign, which is seeking pledges over a 5 year period. For the next four weeks, you will have the opportunity to learn more about both of these efforts, and how vitally important they are to the future of this church. As chairman of the stewardship and budget committee, I will be kicking things off this morning. There will be an additional presentation at the congregational meeting after the second service.

For 2012, the committee and the Session are asking members of the congregation to increase their giving by 10% while we are aware that this kind of increase will require many to sacrifice, we also felt that this is a request which has to be made. For years, this church longed for stability, and thanks to our entire staff, we now have achieved that. However, a thin live separates stability from stagnation.

Consider these facts;

1. Over the past eight (8) years, the annual budgets of this church have been essentially flat when inflation is considered, despite the increasing demands and needs which FPC faces.
2. In good conscience, we cannot continue to cut mission funding, as we have been forced to do recently, nor can we ask our pastoral staff to shoulder hourly burdens which are impossible to meet.
3. While Abby’s work last year as intern produced much good fruit, we simply lacked the money this year to fund a similar position.

In short, merely standing still will actually be moving backwards, for God has called us to reach out with the good news of Jesus Christ to Lawrence and to the larger world.

In making your decision on how to support this church for the coming year, I hope you will make a considered effort to put God first in your finances. If you pledge, consider increasing your pledge so that you come closer to the 10% level which the Bible refers to as a “tithe”. If you do not currently pledge, consider starting, for pledging is a spiritual discipline just as is worship or prayer. I wish I could tell you that pledging is always easy, but sometimes it is not. However, I believe that pledging is what God calls us to do.

On a personal note, in December I will be completing six years as an elder on the Session. While 2011 has been a challenging year, the historian in me wonders how things were in this church in other Decembers, such as 1891, when the rural economy in Kansas was collapsing, or 1931, when the depression was deepening, or 1941, when America was at war, or 1971, when Lawrence was torn by civil unrest, or 1991, when pastoral changes left this church in turmoil, or 2001, when this country found itself under attack again. As a church which is in this world, but not of this world, every year in the past 150 has brought challenges to FPC. But, for that same 150 years, God’s people at FPC have risen to meet them.

I am confident that we will rise to the challenge for 2012, and that, through both our faith and our actions, it will be a year to remember in the life of this church.

Thank you.