

Stewardship

“Shifting Perspectives”

Dear Friends,

Our 2015 stewardship campaign has started. This year our theme is “Shifting Perspectives”. Upon reading Martha’s letter I was moved. The challenge she put to us, to consider other perspectives and to try to see the world through other people’s eyes and appreciate their situation, really resonated with me.

All of us struggle with this concept on a daily basis. Lack of information and lack of experience often make it very difficult to really appreciate different perspectives. It is often hard for us to understand tragedy, senseless violence, heartache, struggles with illness, substance abuse, and relationships if we have not had direct experience. And yet that struggle is an essential part of life.

On the broad world stage, there seem to be so many intractable problems exacerbated by too many people with intractable positions and points of view. These problems often seem remote and we feel somewhat powerless to do anything about them.

In our own community we feel pain when our friends struggle with many of life’s challenges and strive to understand what they are going through, knowing we will fail at the effort more times than not. Still it is the effort that is important.

Martha’s letter reminds us that we should expect to confront new “perspective challenges” everyday, and that we are challenged to respond as individuals and as a community.

In years passed, we have shared the testimonials of what FCC means to many members of our congregation and our community as part of the stewardship campaign. All of these stories have been heartfelt, moving and inspirational. They tell how the FCC community has been there so often for so many.

As the Stewardship Committee sat down to contemplate this year’s Stewardship theme “Shifting Perspectives” it occurred to us that we had missed out on telling the stories of some members of our congregation from a very different perspective. Our congregation and community are very blessed with a good number of “saints”. These are some very special people that dedicate vast amounts of time, energy and skill to the welfare of FCC. The question that occurred to us was “why?” With all of the other demands on people’s time and energy: Why do you often find Paul chopping wood alone in the corner of the parking lot, teaching and mentoring our youth, and setting up and cleaning up after about every event you can imagine? What drives Barbara to invest so much effort to make the Tag and Barn Sale the tremendous successes they are? What motivates Doreen to dedicate so much time to make so many things work so much better than anyone thought possible? There are of course many many other people that I am so inspired by that I could call out, and undoubtedly embarrass, since none of them do these things with the expectation or want of any recognition. I mention these 3 because I asked them the simple question: “Why do you do it?”

Their answers were all very similar. They all start with a shrug and a “because I enjoy it”. Then they get a little reflective. “I like the people, they are great people and I enjoy their company”. And then they, in my mind, hit the core issue: “I like being able to make a difference”. They all had some story to illustrate that point and explain what they meant. Those stories often involved someone smiling. These stories included the feeling they got when a light bulb goes off in some young person’s head as they came to terms with a complex idea they had been grappling with. They included the warmth and friendship and laughs shared over a meal, signing a Christmas Carol, and yes, even sitting in a committee meeting. They included the look of joy on the face of a young mother and her children as they left the church at the Tag Sale with a box of new clothes or Christmas presents they wouldn’t otherwise have afforded, and, the extra feeling of warmth they felt when they realized that some object in that box was a toy or piece of clothing that they had donated and that their own children had enjoyed years ago.

There was also some reflection about what I would call “positive leverage”. The idea that their small effort (their modest

words) helped a much larger organization function and prosper, and that that organization had a scale that could make a real difference in a way that few individuals can on their own. That it could explore common ideas and themes and differences with other faiths. That it could help shelter the homeless and improve the welfare of orphans in Africa. That it could enable a youth volunteer fair and help start a new generation down the path of contributing to society. That it could provide food and clothing for those less fortunate in our community. That it could be there with tangible help when one of our own is in need, or come together to grieve a loss or celebrate a milestone or achievement. All done within one organization: our church.

I was touched by the simplicity, elegance, and sincerity of these answers. It made me think about my own perspective and ask myself why I invest time and energy in FCC. I recognized the truth in all of their answers and in doing so I realized that a large part of my own motivation was being able to spend time with remarkable people like them.

Our members have demonstrated time and again a willingness and desire to help not only our Church but others in need. Our generosity has taken many forms including time volunteered for community projects, funds donated to worthy causes, and the good work done through our own Church.

Every year we reach out and ask you to pledge your support to our community. Of course we have tangible financial needs to pay our staff, operate our amazing facility, and engage in charity and outreach activities that better our society. Your generosity is essential for the continued prosperity of our Church. We would also ask that, if you have not yet done so, you consider pledging your time and talent. Our community benefits tremendously, and indeed, depends on the extraordinary energies and talents of the many people who donate their time selflessly and we are all so much richer as a result.

We would ask that you take this opportunity to reflect on the good fortune that we have all been blessed with. We ask that you take time and prayerfully think about our church community, what it means to you and to your family. We ask that you also think about its potential, and how you personally can and probably have already, made a difference, and what you have received back through being a part of our church community, like Paul and Doreen and Barbara. If you have the ability, we would like you to consider raising your pledge for 2016 so that we can continue to help those in need. Thanks for your continued support.

Please pledge generously.

Sincerely and God bless,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Douglas Heintzman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name of the signatory.

Doug Heintzman on behalf of your stewardship committee