



**“Congregational
Stewardship”**
Apr. 20, 2008
Shawn Rose
Board Chairperson

It's my pleasure to speak today in order to wrap-up our celebration of stewardship that we've been observing this month. Although I have not been able to attend every service myself, I have kept up with what's happened each Sunday and I'm grateful for the heart that has been put into the messages. I would like to sincerely thank the members of the congregation that have served in some role in the preparation of the printed materials that we've seen and in the delivery of this series of messages.

Just briefly, I would like to review with you the narrative budget that was delivered to everyone a few weeks ago. It tells the story of what we're really doing here.

Here is where the investments are being made from your givings:

- **Worship – 25%** – we know that in people's busy lives it's important to set aside time to be with God. Worship happens here every week, 52 times a year with special services at Christmas and Easter and for other significant times -- the celebration of a wedding or when memorial services where we celebrate someone's life. We provide services at the High Country Lodge and Rising Sun extended care every five weeks.
- **Nurture & Support – 25%** - for example:
 - The Men's breakfast
 - The Women's breakfast
 - Individual pastoral care during times of crisis, life changes, sickness or death
- **Spiritual Development – 22%** - this consists of things like:
 - The Youth group beginning last January, meeting on Friday nights
 - The 'Spirituality of Parenting' resource is mailed to parents of babies and toddlers every second month
 - our regular Sunday School program
 - the Christianity 101 program for teens
 - the Creating with the Creator workshop
 - ongoing Book and film studies
 - Adult bible studies and explorations of faith
- **Outreach – 19%** - for example:
 - The Oilfields Food Bank
 - The Christmas Cheer program
 - Literacy for Life for young children
 - Acting as spiritual resource for the Scouting and Guiding programs
- **A Welcoming Community of Faith – 9%** - exemplified by:
 - The expanded nursery & toddler area
 - The hosting of various Youth groups (Beavers, Scouts, Guides)
 - Our new website and improved technology. I'm going to elaborate on this later.
 - Our ongoing efforts to ensure that our building is up-to-date and welcoming

Our board has determined that, in order to continue with our plan for continuing to keep up with the changes and programs that are necessary to support our congregational mission, a simple increase of \$5/week in givings from those members that are already regular contributors will allow us to accomplish our goals without the stress of the Christmas hat-in-hand approach. The \$20 stamp on the watering can is a representation of the additional \$20 per month, providing the life-giving essentials to the fruits of our efforts. This means a sandwich from the convenience store, or 2-3 cups of coffee... per week. If you feel that what we're doing here is important to you, your family, your community, then this is an easy thing to do, especially if you are on the PreAuthorized Remittance program. If you don't.... we all have things that are important to us. I challenge you to get involved in what we're doing here and influence our direction so that it does address more of those things that are important to you.

How many of you have recently experienced or are experiencing some sort of infrastructure refurbishing in your neighbourhood, or new construction or renovations? A few days ago, our back alley was torn up for its full length, and massive machinery is running up and down all day, every day, threatening to drive Marijane mad, but hopefully not homicidal... I'm too easy a target. They're replacing the sewer lines as part of a planned upgrading of utility infrastructure, with the intent of providing us with better services in the long run. We know that, we understand that, but we find the process of getting through it very uncomfortable.

In case you didn't realize it, we as a church are going through a similar process right now because there have been massive changes going on around us in our community for the past couple of years. The economy has been such that many people have chosen to take advantage of real estate appreciations and sell their homes to move 'home' or somewhere where property is less expensive to purchase. Many of our seniors are moving closer to, or choosing situations that allow them to be closer to, and spend more time with their children and grandchildren.

We are a church in transition, driving down that rough, gravelly stretch of a road that used to be nice and smooth, but is now being repaved. The bumps and potholes make us curse, wondering when it's all going to be finished and the road is smooth again, the way it used to be.

The world is changing around us and one of the strengths that I've admired in the United Church philosophy is the willingness to always consider changing to keep up with the times, not holding on to the "old ways" over the church's dead body just because "that's the way we've always done it". It's definitely not easy, but it's better than the alternative. There is a simple natural law that I learned in my Scouting efforts – you can't get a message across to anyone if they're not here to hear it.

Likewise, you can't get a message across if your methods of communication aren't in the manner that people like to be communicated with. This one is a tough one to deal with, but not insurmountable. We have a plan to improve our communications in such a way that the methods will appeal to young and not-so-young alike, and slow-but-steady progress is being made. I've personally taken this on as my #1 priority and it keeps me awake at night that we're not progressing as fast as I would like....

We are embracing the new societal norms for community and communication. Nowadays, it is as common (or more common, in many cases) to communicate by email as it is by telephone. Instant messaging is how many people under the age of 35 keep in touch with their friends and family. Information is found on the worldwide web more than it's found in the newspaper or phone book... now even the newspaper and phone book are on the web.

And so are we. We're now getting the message out about our little church to the people that we want to know about it, in the way that they prefer to know about it. Our website is being viewed by people across North America, from California to Quebec and Ontario. The lovely picture of our Food Bank ladies on our front page has been in particular demand.... better watch out, girls! Whenever anyone enters 'Turner Valley Churches', 'Black Diamond Churches', 'Calgary United Churches' or 'Okotoks Alberta Churches' into their Google search engine, we show up at or very near the top of the list. Younger newcomers to our community will be able to find us and get to know us on the Internet before they ever walk in our doors. We are now members of the global community, people are watching us and looking for us! We're just beginning to see the results of our efforts, there's a growing awareness of our presence here. There are plans brewing to improve our local presence in more conventional ways, including replacing old road signs with new, more dynamic ones.

Email is being used more effectively in communications between the church and the members of the congregation, allowing for faster communication, better environmental stewardship in the form of less waste of paper and resources, reduced costs for postage, and quite simply a more dynamic message. If anyone is struggling with the move to using email, please don't hesitate to ask for help.

In the near future, we'll continue to introduce some of the planned changes that will alleviate much of the discomfort that we've experienced within our worship sessions (ie. overhead projector). These changes will need to be experienced before they can be fully appreciated, even I was astounded at the potential for enhancing the worship experience here every week.

In closing, I want to reiterate what we were told by the Presbytery Oversight Team that visited with us a few months ago.

"It is our opinion that this is an effective small church with a workable organizational structure and a good pastoral relationship. The pastoral charge is to be commended for developing ministry that is open, honest and faithful. On behalf of Foothills Presbytery, we offer our appreciation and thanksgiving to all the folks at Diamond Valley Pastoral Charge for their ministry within the body of Christ"

When we're in the middle of 'it' and we're feeling frustrated and wondering if we're being effective, we just need to remember these words and know that we're part of the solution. God bless you all.

Yours in Christ's Service,

Shawn Rose

2008-2009 Board Chairperson