

Stewardship + Mission and Service = US!

Montreal and Ottawa Conference ~ Advent/Christmas Newsletter 2013



I have been reading Rick Warren's book "The Purpose of Christmas," as I start looking towards Advent and the journey to Bethlehem to meet the baby Jesus. Here are some passages from the book that got my attention.

"Christmas is a party. Specifically, it's a birthday party - for Jesus – and birthdays are meant to be celebrated. Ironically, at most Christmas parties the person whose birthday were supposed to be celebrating is completely ignored. He's never even mentioned. Although Jesus is the reason for the season, he's often overlooked or merely mentioned along with Rudolph, Frosty the Snowman, Santa Claus, the Grinch, elves, and a long list of celebrated fictional characters.

During the Christmas season, billions of people set aside their normal routines to decorate their homes, send out greeting cards, buy gifts, go to Christmas parties, attend church services, sing Christmas songs, watch Christmas TV specials, and travel long distances to be with their families. Christmas sights and sounds fill the air everywhere. There are stores, and even careers, that are exclusively dedicated to preparing for and celebrating this holiday. When Christmas comes, you can't miss it. It's everywhere.

If you stop to think about it, it is astounding that the simple, unassuming birth of a peasant boy born two thousand years ago in the Middle East has caused such commotion – his birthday even causes traffic jams today in places like New York City, Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro."

In his book Rick Warren also talked about a tradition they have had in his family since he was 3 years old, and now includes the grandchildren. As a toddler, He asked his mother, "why do we have Christmas?" His Mom explained that Christmas was a celebration of Jesus' birthday. In a burst of preschooler inspiration, he concluded with a child's logic, "Well then we should have a birthday party! We can have cake and Kool-Aid and sing happy birthday to Jesus!" It reminded me that we used to do that on Christmas Eve when my children were growing up, and quite a few times in the various Sunday School classes I have taught. Here is how the Warren family does it.

Birthday Party for Jesus

- √ Sing some Christmas carols.
- √ Read the Christmas story from the Bible, Luke 2: 1-20; Matthew 2: 1-12 (in our house my children used to dress up in costumes to act out the story.)
- √ Each person shares answers to two questions:
 1. What am I thankful to God for this year?
 2. What am I going to give Jesus for his birthday?
- √ Close by praying for one another.

Church Budget Time

Put YOUR Pictures in it! Picture Budgets

We all know a picture is worth a thousand words, so follow these guidelines to create your own picture budget instead of the usual litany of words.

2012 Annual Report of The United Church of Canada and the Foundation

This year's annual report for the United Church and the Foundation has the theme "Courage." In it you will find stories about our commitment to serve others, stories about how we engage in faith and community, and stories about how we ensure a vital, meaningful United Church presence in so many places and in so many ways.

The 2012 Annual Report is an excellent example of pictures telling the budget story. Your pastoral charge should have received their copy of this Annual Report. Have a look at it before you make your budget for next year. Copies of the 2012 Annual Report are also on-line and you can also order extra copies for your church.

Mission and Service at a Glance 2013

Mission and Service at a Glance 2013 that arrived at your pastoral charge with all the other Mission and Service resources in early September is another excellent example of using pictures to tell the budget story. They have also condensed the contents to a bulletin insert. This and Mission and Service at a Glance 2013 are available on-line if you do not have any copies in your church.

Suggestion from the United Church of Christ

Open with a friendly, personal letter from your Minister -- don't forget the Minister's picture!

- ▶ Keep your stories brief and joyful.
- ▶ Include scripture that captures your church's vision.
- ▶ Use the words "we" and "our."
- ▶ Group church spending into categories, like "Worship," "Community," "Outreach."
- ▶ Use active photos that show people's faces. Close-ups are good!
- ▶ Avoid pictures of people at meetings!
- ▶ Invite your congregation to prayerfully consider their pledge and to grow their giving each year.



Did you know that Paul Sales is the Financial Development Officer, Quebec and Eastern Ontario? I asked Paul to write an article for this newsletter so that people would know how he can help their congregation.

Paul Sales
Financial Development Officer, Quebec and Eastern Ontario

As I travel about, I am often asked questions about the kind of work I do, and from these questions I've become aware of some myths about my work. So here is a quick summary of a few myths and facts.

Myth The Financial Development Officer's only job is to raise money for the national Church.
Fact My job is to assist all United Church entities in their efforts to generate revenue.

Myth The Financial Development Officer only talks about legacy gifts.
Fact Yes, when I started this job in 2004, talking about legacy gifts was my only "gig". In the last two years, however, the scope of my work has broadened to include all areas of revenue generation.

So ... I am ready and willing to come and speak to your congregation about a broad range of issues, including:

- * Stewardship
- * Revenue generation "101"
- * Narrative budgets: Telling the story of your ministry
- * Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) program
- * Estate planning: The basics
- * Grants for your congregation and mission:
Finding and applying for the money "out there".

And, of course,

- * Legacy gifts (bequests in wills, gift annuities and life insurance policies)
- * Creating your congregation's own legacy gift program

Myth It will cost us money to ask the Financial Development Officer to help.
Fact It's free!! It costs nothing for congregations and donors to get my help. My expenses are covered by the Philanthropy Unit of The United Church of Canada.

Myth Sure, he can come and talk, but what else has he to offer?
Fact I have a wide array of resources to assist you with your revenue generation efforts, including (just a few examples) Launching a Legacy Giving Program in Your Congregation; the United Church of Canada Will Workbook; brochures and materials about Mission and Service and stewardship in general.

I also have the resources of the United Church's General Council Office to draw on, and the expertise of the other 8 regional Financial Development Officers from across the country.

Would you like more information? I am always glad to hear from you. Feel free to contact me by phone at 613-841-9291 or by email at psales@united-church.ca.

A date to mark on your calendar for next year!

Money, Values and Me

A Nathan Dungan event
sponsored by the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa
Friday June 6th and Saturday June 7th, 2014
Kemptville campus of the University of Guelph.
Workshops and Events for all ages.

Eileen Lavigne represents our conference on the planning committee

I will continue to share information with you as it becomes available.
I will circulate the registration forms to everyone as soon as I receive them.



Mission and Service Angel – Betty Gross

We know through the stories we hear about our Mission and Service partners that every day people are helping out in food banks, soup kitchens and shelters for the homeless or abused spreading their seeds of hope. We don't often wonder how these aid organizations started, we just know that we want to support them in their work. In September I had the privilege as Mission and Service Support person for Montreal and Ottawa Conference to attend the worship service at Centretown United Church in Ottawa to present a certificate to Betty Gross, who along with her husband Gordon and others, were instrumental in the development of Centre 507, one of our Mission and Service partners. Before Macleod Stewarton and Bell Street amalgamated Volunteers of the Emergency Food Centre located in the basement of MacLeod Stewarton noticed the reluctance of the people they were helping to leave the building; they preferred instead to stand around chatting. Many of their clients were dealing with homelessness, mental illness, addiction, health concerns, poverty, and most importantly loneliness. A strong desire for social justice being at the heart of the United Church, Betty and her husband Gordon, along with a group of willing volunteers brought in sofas, and refreshments thus creating a drop in center where people who had very little to call their own felt welcomed and supported. 30 years ago she saw a need, and didn't just shake her head and say that is too bad but made something happen that has changed lives of thousands of people.

The certificate I gave Betty Gross was to recognize her as a "Mission and Service Angel," Writer Joan Wester Anderson wrote this about people who are angels: "We can all be angels to one another. We can choose to obey the still small stirring within, the little whisper that says: Go. Ask. Reach out. Be an answer to some one's plea. You have a part to play, and the world will be a better place for it."



Stewardship and Mission & Service during Advent and Christmas

We often miss Advent's power because these December weeks are full of secular Christmas preparations and parties. Each year, the busyness of this season serves to distract us from having an Advent season that truly prepares us for the celebration of Christmas, with all its meaning.

As we await the coming of our Christ we should include in our preparations thoughts of bringing the basics of life to the most vulnerable. The Advent seasons is a perfect fit for giving to Mission and Service as we prepare to exchange gifts with friends and family, to share our thankfulness for God's gift of his Son to this world.

Prayers for Advent and Christmas

We thank you Jesus that you came to live an ordinary life, but showed us how to live our ordinary lives in an extraordinary way. We pray for your blessing on all Food banks that there will be enough food, so no one is turned away; that the staff and volunteers will maintain their compassion, wisdom and energy at this busy time. Be with those for whom this is a stressful time as they face a combination of economic and social disadvantages, and with those working in chaplaincies, drop in centers and shelters as they bring a little of the hope of Christmas to those whom society ignores. For ourselves, that we may remember to give you thanks at all times Amen.

Lord you came to enter our life journey completely and to become one with us. Thank you for your love and your mercy. Thank you for the many blessings you have bestowed upon me . Please let this simple gift to Mission and Service today lift someone else's burdens. As I reflect upon the smallness of your coming, as a baby born in poverty, let this small practice of generosity today become a symbol for my desire to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick – allowing our Mission and Service partners to continue their greater service for the least of my brothers and sisters. Amen

Dear God, we thank you that you call us into a relationship with yourself and with everyone in our community. Your generosity and mercy are always taking us by surprise. We praise you for your vision of inclusion, solidarity and compassion which opens our minds, widens our sympathies, and enlarges our hearts to the people in our community. We commend to your gracious care all those whom it would be easy for us to forget: the needy and the hungry, the addicted and the lost, the lonely and the abandoned and hurting children. We thank you for the imagination and generosity of those who minister to those who are most in need in our community. Amen.

Adapted from a prayer David Jebb, Project Leader, Church 2 Community Mission Project, Chesham, Buckinghamshire

Children and Youth

Advent is a great time to reach out to children and youth because they get excited about the holidays, easy to tie in lessons of generosity, thankfulness and thoughtfulness. Possibly a look at the Mission and Service *Gifts with Vision* catalogue will give them ideas as to where they want to put their energies. The *Gifts with Vision* catalogues should have arrived at your Pastoral Charge or look on line.

I will be creating some more resources for Advent and Christmas in the next little while.



The **Mission and Service Festival 2014** will be in March at Summerlea United Church in Lachine. I marked March 29th as the Saturday of choice since I will be speaking about Mission and Service at Greenfield Park on the Sunday the 30th as they celebrate their 100th Anniversary. I should know the correct date by the end of November.

Each One – Ask One

A Mission and Service Giving Campaign

Imagine you are camping with your family by a big lake. You've cooked dinner over the fire and now you are relaxing around the campfire roasting marshmallows and eating s'mores. There is no wind and the lake is perfectly still looking like a mirror reflecting a beautiful sunset. Everyone is captivated by the scene and you can not resist picking up a tiny pebble, throwing it into the air, spinning it over the water. It drops suddenly, making a silent splash. For several moments nothing happens. Then you see ripples coming towards the shore in ever increasing number. How could that tiny pebble cause all of these ripples? Then you notice the rest of the family is doing the same thing. Together, you are creating ripples of serious power and significance. That is the ripple effect you can have if each of you ask another to give to Mission and Service so that the vital work done by our partners everywhere can continue. Let us all become pebble tossers for Mission and Service.

There was a handy sheet on tips for planning how you are going to take part in this campaign in the Mission and Service package that was sent to all pastoral charges in early September.

Another suggestion is to develop our **Elevator talk** in asking others to give. That is getting down to one line to tell others why you support Mission and Service. Examples are: "Mission is what God is calling us to do and service is how we respond", "I support Mission and Service because it enables the church to do what I can't." There have been some one-liners gathered by the GC Philanthropy Unit from meetings and workshops and I sending them to you with this newsletter. These one-liners can be inserted into your weekly bulletins, church newsletters and bulletin boards etc.

Google or your search engine: **Mission and Service YouTube** and you will find lots of clips to use during worship service, meetings or Mission and Service fundraisers.

Clips on:

- Mission and Service 101
- Mission and Service Partners
- How we respond as a church to Natural disasters and other emergencies
- Global personnel
- Minutes for mission 2013 etc.

I am available to answer your questions, visit your church to speak about Mission and Service or Stewardship.

Carolyn Ruda Montreal and Ottawa Conference

Mission and Service Support and Chair Conference Stewardship

613 932-2415 gordonruda@sympatico.ca

