

Park Ridge Community Church
2010 Stewardship and Giving Campaign
Bruce Webster, Chair of the Congregation
October 25, 2009

I'd like to open with a prayer, please pray with me. Lord you have brought us here to be together, to be called as your people. God, please take our hands and lead us down your path for us and Lord, give us the courage and dedication to follow you always. Amen.

You know, several years ago, when Brett and Liz approached me about serving as Vice Chair and ultimately Chair of the Congregation, I declined. I had convinced myself that the commitment was too much and the thought of Stewardship, of owning it and asking our membership to pledge their gifts was not one of my personal talents. This is now my fourth year of participation in Stewardship and to be honest, it has become one of my favorite times of year. I look forward to it each year. This is a time of acknowledgement, appreciation and thanks.

So here we are.....Consecration Sunday.

What is different for you right now?

The economy?

Your outlook for the future?

The value of your home?

What is different at PRCC? We've taken a look inside, inside our Church and at our members.

We've reached out further.

We've touched more people, more lives.

We've opened our eyes to our ministries.

Everyone is thinking about the world around us right now. There is so much uncertainty. There are so many questions. We, the members of this church, know something for certain and it's unshakable.

Faith Matters

It always has, but this year we've stepped back and really examined it and realized just how much Faith Matters to this church.

Brett reminded us that collectively we've invested over 41,000 hours this year in service to our church. 41,000 hours..... 5 years of equivalent time, 24/7, talk about "on call"! Actually, this is the equivalent of a full time, 8 hour a day staff of 20 working all year long.

This is what PRCC is about. It's not the building, it's not the kitchen, and it's not the property we own, its service to others, loving others. These material things serve only to facilitate service.

Nets for Africa

Solid Rock houses in the Gulf

Kindred Spirits Cafe

St. Paul of the Cross meals

The church is not this building, or the grounds or the steeple. Sure it's a beautiful place of worship, but the church is all of us. The church is its people! In Ephesians 1: 22-23, Paul tells us "God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself". Jesus taught us that we are His body, His Church. We collectively are the heart and soul of PRCC. The building houses us.....it gives us a place for the "stuff" we need for ministry! PRCC, the building, is our launching pad!

Watch this building during a week – what do you see? Constant activity, constant coming and going. Worshipers, meeting-attendees, groups, planners, musicians, bakers, youth, you name it. The faithful come in and the faithful go forward with new ministries, new plans, and new people to serve. This church is not the building.....it's us and those we touch!

How many of you have been to Bethel New Life at Christmas time to deliver the gifts and meals for families? When I first went there I saw a tired old building in a tired old neighborhood. What took me a few years to realize is that Bethel New Life exemplifies men and women as the church. They put just enough into the building to keep it going, not too much, and all of the rest

of their resources go to help others, to serve others, to serve Christ! These people live in the heart of need, its visible all around them. They have established their priorities and embrace those in need. They have committed themselves to those they serve as have we. In a different way, no less important, no less loving, we reach out everyday from PRCC. There are people all around us here too, who need us, to whom we can minister.

Faith Matters. Peter tells us, in 1 Peter 2: 21, “For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps”. We are called to act, as servants, to reach out and touch the least and the poorest. This was Jesus’ life. As a servant, he reached out to the children, the poor, the weak, the sick, the homeless. The life of Jesus centered around the needy. We too, rally around those in need. As a church think of what we’ve done.....

Yoga with uncountable blessings to local charities and amazing community engagement.
Choir and musical inspiration to thousands from here at home to the world.
Our seniors engaging young and old as inspirations through service and outreach!

I’ve started to look at outreach as a giant Faith Circle. How many people do we really touch? It’s a great big wonderful and growing circle of service that inspires service as it grows and grows. Think of the circle....

- We provide the starting point; the gathering place, sometimes the faithful people and perhaps a little bit of money to a program or activity or seed an idea...
- That activity touches those who need help, like the Lending Closet and the Stephen Ministers.
- We reach out to those people specifically in need, but equally as important, we touch, and teach, and walk faith for our children, neighbors, friends and strangers who see and appreciate and understand what we do, and, perhaps, inspire them to service.
- Inspired, maybe one or two of these people put Faith Forward.....and we continue to feed the ranks of the faithful.

- To keep the circle going, we fuel it with our time, our prayers and our resources and it all starts again, but this time with one or two more. We send out our faithful, maybe plus 1 or plus 2, we serve and inspire, others join us and we do it again, and again and again.

Do you know why it works? We don't tire of seeing the results of our service. Is it a hug from a struggling homeowner in Appalachia that makes your week in service worthwhile AND brings you back year after year? Is it the joy of a child sharing love with you on a remote Indian Reservation in Montana? Is it the unspoken appreciation in the eyes of the man to whom you've just served a meal? It is all of these things and so much more. Philippians 2: 13, "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." Paul ends in verse 18 with "...I will share your joy." We share our joy with God when we serve Him!

I didn't realize all that we do here until we started putting the volunteer hours together. We are a church of worshipping, giving, sharing disciples. We are changing the world one person at a time....but it's not just one of us, it's all of us....one more, one more, one more.....The Multiplier Effect.

Six or eight people prepare and serve a meal at the Lincoln Park Shelter and serve 25 or 30 men – we touch their lives. We inspire others to serve, we now have many people from outside PRCC who join in, and who have been inspired. Is the impact 25 or 50 or 100 people?

How many people at the truck stop in Indiana stop and ask our kids, on the way home from KY, in matching tee shirts, where they are going and what they are doing and pause, and think about their service to others? Thirty-five kids inspiring perhaps one more person? Every time we stop? Or someone from school, once they hear our story and decide to come serve next time? This is part of PRCC life, it's happening all the time, even when we're not thinking about it. What about the Pumpkin Patch, Knight Ministries, Breakthrough Ministries, Habitat for Humanity? We touch so many around us.

It matters what we do. Years ago when I first got involved with PRCC and the budget, while we had an outreach category, it seemed to me that those dollars represented a relatively small

amount of total spending. I didn't get it. As I learned about each group and their activities, my eyes were opened. I learned of the many ways we "outreach" all around our church. When we open our doors and people come in, or we send our faithful out, we, in fact, are reaching out and embracing those among us. With this reality in mind, think about what really goes on here. What is your experience? How do we end up giving 41,000 hours in a year to the community or world at large? How many do we touch? How have you been touched?

We committed this year to do more outreach and I believe we have really done it. It's all about the multiplier.

What is our return? What do we get from these activities? All of these commitments change peoples lives gives them hope, inspires them. As the Appalachian Service Project people remind us, our mission is to put Faith Forward, to create a living experience that is very basic, or as ASP puts it: warmer, safer, drier. Is there anything more fulfilling than the smile and thank you from those to whom we serve a warm meal, the joy shared at the Kindred Spirits Café, the camaraderie of the Men's Prayer Breakfast.

I know times are challenging for all of us, even those who live comfortably have sacrificed. I promise you, in good times or in difficult times, there is no better place to dedicate your resources than right here to this church and to all that we do. Think about it; think about the result of our work, our efforts. I believe we might just be in the process of changing the world one life at time, thousands and thousands of times over again—inspiring, touching, transforming.

It's time to pledge. We thank you for all that you give, and now encourage you to grow in your giving, giving as much as you can to the work of God in this remarkable place. Next year we would like to do all that we did this year, and more. As noted on the pledge card, an additional \$9.00 per week from everyone will balance our anticipated 2010 budget. \$20.00 per week will significantly multiply our opportunities to reach and serve God's people near and far. This is an investment in faith, in people, in your relationship with the church, the Body of Christ. There are two opportunities to pledge on your form. If you have been inspired during this Stewardship Campaign, if you have learned something about PRCC this morning that you didn't know before,

please take a moment now to add \$9 or \$20 or \$?? Per week to your pledge. It's not about the building, it's not about the facilities, it's about what goes out our doors and into to the hearts of people every day of the year. There is no better way to use your personal gifts than here at PRCC.

As I close, I'd like to share the appreciation of what you do and for what you give from the Board and Executive Committee. Your generous giving is what keeps us going. Thank you. We have also included a form in your package to sign up for automatic account transfers. Using this service assures you that your pledge is always current and it benefits PRCC by maximizing our funds available for service each month. Kathy and I have been on the program for a year and it's wonderful not to have to think about it each week or month.

Thank you for being part of this amazing congregation, thank you for your generous pledge and remember.....Faith Matters!