

## 2010-2011 Stewardship Newsletter

Thank you in advance for the contribution you're considering for the church this coming year. Our church has always been and will continue to be an open and collaborative effort. Hopefully the following highlights will be informative about the financial and operational needs of our church community and facilities. As always, please feel free to reach out to any one of us with questions.

### Your Contributions

As a complement to our thoughtful Sunday worship, here are examples of how your input and support continue to shape activities for our congregation and the broader community.

- Junior Acolyte Program
- Estate Planning Seminar
- Kitchen Cabinets for Apartments at Wellspring House
- Spring Fundraising Auction
- Music in Masconomo Park
- Summer Youth Group
- Youth Jazz Band

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### 2010 Budget Analysis

Since our church does not receive funding from the UCC, we are responsible for our own financial health. So we succeed in that, church operations and finances are open to you. 2009 Actual Expenses were \$275,500 (e.g. salaries, facilities and activities) versus Total Income of \$284,400 (e.g. pledges, plate offerings, and rent.) For 2010, our goal is to operate the church so that income from pledges, plate collections, events, and other contributions cover this year's expenses of \$287,380. We will keep you informed as the year-end financial results are published.

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### Pledge Guidelines

New members of the church, and sometimes long-standing members, at times ask for perspective about the level of financial support to the church that would be appropriate for them. They often simply have no starting point or little prior experience. Understandably, though, there is no right way to determine what's "appropriate" for an individual or a family.

We discussed this subject at length at the 2009 Annual Meeting. After much debate, the congregation concluded that 1% to 5% of household income would be a helpful and constructive guideline for our collective efforts to fund the church's annual budget. More information is on our website or feel free to contact anyone on the Stewardship committee.

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### Electronic Giving

To make it simple and convenient, we set up an electronic contribution program. It's an automatic transfer of pledge funds that is fast, safe and easy. And, it will cost you nothing and help us reduce the church's administration costs. Here's an overview of how it works:

1. Authorize specific amount for transfer
2. Choose timing: 1st or the 15th of each month.
3. Cancel or make changes at any time
4. Re-usable "I give electronically" cards in pew
5. Periodic statements to track donations

### Planned Giving

We recently hosted a Retirement & Estate Planning seminar for our congregation and the broader community. Bridget Murray, a First Parish member and local estate planning attorney, led this open conversation to help create awareness of First Parish's planned giving options. Anyone considering a gift to the church as part of their estate plan, for instance, may do so through our *Annual Fund*, *Memorial Fund* or *Endowment Fund*. Details are available through the church office, Reverend Hughes, our committee or on the website.

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### Capital Giving

In many ways we are lucky that First Parish essentially owns the church, chapel and parsonage buildings. The downside is that we have to take care of them. Although we allocate operational funds in the budget for their maintenance, the age of the buildings and frequent use sometimes necessitate repairs more costly than what our annual budget can support. Because of that, we periodically raise funds for specific capital projects.

For instance, two generous members of the church recently offered a match for every dollar given by the congregation to reach \$30,000 needed for important foundation repairs. We ended up exceeding our goal by more than 10% thanks to the generosity of these church members and everyone that responded to their offer.

Our intent is to plan for capital expenditures such as this example so that urgent fundraising to keep the facilities in good shape remain a rarity. If you're interested in supporting this particular long-term financial need of the church, we'd be happy to share all that we know and include you in our discussions with the Board of Trustees.

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### Other Fundraising

Our church community gives itself in many more ways than the annual pledge. You can feel it whenever you attend a Sunday Service. One outcome is that our various committees do seek support at different times throughout the year. Stewardship works with those committees so we always try to balance our shared passion for doing good with not becoming overwhelming in our fundraising activities.

Sometimes we succeed. And at other times, those urgent calls for help come in at the same time. Whether you give an hour of your time, cook a warm meal for a homebound individual or give \$5 towards blankets for a shelter, the spirit of your gift will always greatly surpass its size in importance and value to our church.