



Saint Boniface Episcopal Church

transforming  *generosity*

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Lay Witness

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In 1987 I was asked to chair the Annual Appeal here at St. Boniface. My rationale in accepting the role was that maybe I could balance using my TIME and my TALENT to offset the shortfall in my giving of my TREASURE. I can still recall the evening friends from St. Mark's Venice came over and I shared my stewardship undertaking at St. Boniface. I was asked ...

"Do you tithe?" Defensively, I responded "You know I am recently divorced, making a mortgage payment, a car payment, setting aside money for taxes and insurance....plus my other expenses... I can't tithe." Knowing the lingo, I added, "I am striving to tithe." My friend responded "How can you ask others to give if you yourself are not giving freely to God."

That stung. I had to assess my own stewardship. That exercise made me realize when I got my paycheck, I wrote out all my bills, went to the grocery store, filled the car up with gas and before dashing out the door on Sunday morning I would glance at my checking account balance to see how much (or how little) my check would be for the offertory. Not the cheerful giver God loves. God was last ... definitely not my first priority.

Soon after I accepted the role as Annual Appeal Chair my employer informed me I was going to Miami for two months of training. The months of September and October . . . the two busiest months for the Annual Appeal. The training was just what I needed to continue advancing with the bank and it was decided that with the assistance of Fr. Reid Farrell and the stewardship team stepping up I could do both.

During my absence from St. Boniface I had notes of support and phone calls from parishioners. Though I was absent, I was still part of this Body of Christ, connected by faith and in love. This was the start of my transformation.

While in Miami, I discovered one of my classmates regularly attended Christ Church, Bradenton. We made a pact to attend Sunday services at St. Andrews in Miami. We were welcomed by that congregation on Sundays in Christian love and fellowship. Once again I realized that I was a part of that Body of Christ. Every Sunday it seemed the number of our classmates joining us

grew. The final Sunday we were in Miami, of the 15 out of towners in the class, nine were in church with us.

That became the second transforming factor.

I came back to St. Boniface with a stronger sense of faith... not because of St. Andrews but because I realized that no matter where I was... no matter what I faced ...through all my joys and sorrows, despite my sinfulness....God was always with me. He would not abandon me.

The real transformation came when I truly realized that my checkbook should show my new commitment to generosity. I started then and still do now. Upon receiving my paycheck I write my check to St. Boniface FIRST. Okay truth be told... in the beginning I thought, "If I write my check and things get tight I don't have to put the check in the plate." However with my transformed generosity that has never happened.

Giving is freeing. Generosity is transforming. And I do find that as the giver I feel more blessed!! I know that as this Body of Christ we are transforming God's creation! As you read your insert today reflect on the line "when you surrender to your Godward path, God's generosity abounds by letting you see where you are to go".

I invite you to ask yourselves, "Am I sharing in God's mission, with gladness, generosity and a grateful heart?"