

Comments from Church Members

Stewardship Remarks on October 8, 2017

I am the Chair of the Finance and Stewardship Committee. I am here to speak about Faith and Loyalty Sunday, which is on October 29th. Faith and Loyalty Sunday is the day when we will offer our estimate of giving cards to the church for 2018.

Each of your households should have received a mailing from the church this week. In that mailing was:

- a letter from me stressing the importance of submitting an estimate of giving card for 2018,
- a chart that shows the current levels of giving within our congregation,
- an estimate of giving card, and
- an envelope addressed to the church.

So why is it important for you to provide an estimate of giving card? There are perhaps several reasons why you should, but I want to stress two this morning:

-First, my committee needs this information to finalize the church's proposed 2018 budget. While we might have a general idea what church giving will be during a year, final decisions are actually made based on the estimate of giving cards received. Some adjustments were made last year based on the final results obtained from the estimate of giving cards.

-Second, submitting a card is way for you to demonstrate in a meaningful way this aspect of your stewardship.

Stewardship can be expressed in various ways. You don't have to look very hard to see stewardship in action at Ashland. Whether its folks who participate in the music ministry, folks who participate in Salkehatchie summer service and other outreach efforts, folks who work with the children and youth, folks who teach Sunday School and bible studies, folks who work behind the scenes to make our sanctuary look beautiful, the trustees who take care of our church buildings . . . I could go on and on.

One thing that almost all of these activities have in common is that they need resources. Those resources are purchased with the generous contributions that you make to Ashland.

I cannot tell you how much to estimate for your giving. That is a decision that you will make based on your financial situation and how you feel about Ashland. I simply ask that you use the next several weeks to think about your financial contribution and then make a commitment on Faith and Loyalty Sunday.

We look forward to receiving your estimate of giving card on October 29th. If you can't make it that Sunday, then we request that you put the card in the mail or drop it off at the church office. Thank you.

Jeff Barham

I'd like to share with you a scripture that resonates with me.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 NIV

¹²Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

You and I are part of the body of Christ, part of the body of the United Methodist Church, part of the body that is Ashland.

Rev. Dickie Knight led a devotion using this scripture a couple of years ago. He used a jigsaw puzzle to symbolize the body of Christ and each puzzle piece as the individuals who make up the body of Christ. The jigsaw puzzle was a picture of Jesus. You received a puzzle piece representing your place in the body of Christ. The pieces are different shapes and sizes and colors, but they fit into the picture, they fit into the body. Just like you and I fit into the body.

You're familiar with Nike's slogan “Just Do It. Here is today's “Just Do It” verse:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22

If you are a golfer, you can read and hear all the instruction about improving your golf game, (keep your head down and your eye on the ball, follow through) but you don't actually improve your golf game until you practice. You have to swing the club.

You have to practice the things you want to do well. You have to do it. Just Do It.

When Nike started its "Just Do It" advertising campaign, it was changing its featured athletes from professional to everyday athletes. One commercial has a young man using crutches as he walks onto a track. He lets the crutches fall to the ground, puts on his Nike running shoes, and he starts running around the track. No one is there to cheer him on, there is no finishing tape to run through with arms held high. But, he practices.

We are not perfect. We are not complete in our body and we are not complete as individuals. But, Ashland gives us so many opportunities to grow in our discipleship and our relationship with Jesus Christ. We have two worship services, Sunday school, Bible studies, mission and service projects, prayer requests...all kinds of opportunities to **practice being disciples**. To live out our promise to be faithful in our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

I am part of the body. I am part of Ashland. **This is where I practice.**

Beth Westbury