



The Federated Church of Hyannis

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Weekly Message from the Pastor and Sermon Notes for October 17, 2021

This week the Church starts a new series on Stewardship. As we prepare for Stewardship Sunday, we ask all members and friends of the church to prayerfully discern how to support the wider ministry of the Federated Church. The focus is to grow as a community of faith. Jesus describes the Church as a harvest - we sow, we tend, and we share the fold of the harvest with God. It is a communal act of faith. Like a harvest, there are cycles to it. Are you a sower, a tender, or a sharer of the harvest?

Sermon: “Make Me A Steward of Your Treasure, Part 1” *Rev. Derek L. White*

Scripture: Malachi 3:10

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Church is to invest in people that will enrich the community. Rev. Dr. Sarah Dixon shared this vision here at The Federated Church over a 100 years ago. Rev. Dr. Carl Ferring Schultz shared this vision over 50 years ago at The Federated Church. Many Pastors since have shared in this vision. It goes to the heart of the question that started with Rev. Dr. Sarah Dixon - what does the Church produce? It is hard to measure the value of the spiritual and religious life of a person, but the manifestation of such faith can be seen in the good works of building and growing communities with schools, hospitals, and businesses that provide good wages. When God uses the Church to invest in people, communities grow and are enriched.

PART 1: A Church is Required to be a Town

In the 1600 and 1700 hundreds a town could not be incorporated in America unless it had three required things; 1.) A Church, 2.) A Meeting House, 3.) A Cemetery. This goes to the belief that God dispenses prosperity to the community through the Church as an instrument of Stewardship. Small governments would be limited in their ability to grow and develop towns. Where government would be limited, the Church could carry out and fund works too challenging for local governments. For example, a Church could be a schoolhouse that operated at a fraction of the cost of a public-school building. A network of Churches could build and operate a hospital in the community at the fraction of the cost of what it would cost the government. A Church could run social clubs, charities, and fellowship events for the community at a fraction of the cost of local governments. A church could provide greater benefits to the community than a local government. And so, it was seen that a Church was necessary for any town being formed to grow. The seeds planted by the church in the community would bless the growth of the town.

PART 2: The Storehouse Principle

I've worked in government, and I have seen how a government budget works. There is no surplus to invest. Government at its very best might be able to operate on a balanced budget, but the only way to invest in development is to borrow against a projected return. There is no surplus unless there is financial gain from war. Churches, on the other hand, can use the Storehouse Principle. Churches can invest in funds like endowments to draw from to supplement budgets, or they can store windfall blessings in unrestricted funds to invest in special programs and projects. They can fund mission projects, support the needs of the local community, and invest in people who will enrich the community.

CONCLUSION

The concept of the Storehouse Principle can be seen in Malachi 3:10. When the people of God trust God and godly people placed in trust of the churches, God seeing the needs of the community blesses and increases the tithe to be poured back out on the community. **If there is nothing to invest, there is nothing to bless.**

A hard reality I have seen over several decades is the desire of churches to have a balanced budget like governments. A government budget is for the purpose of not defaulting on legally authorized financial commitments. It is a budget for maintaining government services. A church budget should be for investing in growth, ie. a harvest. God has given us the seed, the tending needed to grow it, and the storehouse to share a tithe of the harvest to bless the wider community.

Biblical Stewardship: Plant the seeds, tend the fields, and share the harvest.