



# Bethany Stewardship News

## September 2015

### First Fruits

“First fruits” is a complicated biblical concept that has many interpretations which have been used in many circumstances. For example, often fall stewardship campaigns use it to remind congregations that we should “give from our abundance first” as opposed to waiting to give to God what is left once we pay our bills. This is not really the point. I am not a biblical scholar nor do I profess to have insights into the meaning of “first fruits” or even “stewardship” for that matter. What I do know is that both giving “First fruits” and being a good steward of God’s earthly kingdom are far more than giving money to the church and arguably help define us as Christians.

James 1:17-18 gets as close to my understanding as I can find:

*“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, as from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the world of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.”*

While the meaning of this passage might be obtuse, what it means to me is very simple: First “...with every perfect gift...” means to me that God has bestowed on us many gifts, all of which are perfect and cannot be corrupted. Some are rich, some can sing, some are homeless but reverent to the Glory of God. All of these gifts are the first fruits of Christ meant to be shared, nurtured such that they prosper and grow—shining the light on the glory of God always. As “...first fruits of his creatures” to me means that we are the leaders...showing the way...letting our gifts shine as an example to all that the Glory of God will set you free.

As we enter the stewardship campaign, reflect on your “first fruits” both as steward and as offspring of the Lord. Consider what “perfect gift” you have that you can share with the Church. Only through a strong commitment to doing the work of God can we hope to be truly free until we see the final Kingdom! What are your “first fruits” and “perfect gift”? Jon Twing

### Our Ministries

Hope Chest  
Food Pantry  
Quilters  
Domestic Violence Intervention program  
Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI)  
Good Samaritan Fund  
UI Lutheran Campus Ministry  
UI Hospital Chaplaincy  
Riverside Bible Camp  
Shelter House  
Angel Tree  
Mbakweni, Tanzania  
WBARC  
Wartburg Seminary  
Vacation Bible School  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Free Meal  
Eyeglasses Recycling  
Printer Cartridge Recycling  
Sunday School

### Ongoing Needs

#### Hope Chest

Now accepting: **Fall and Winter Clothes**, especially children’s; monetary donations to purchase clothes.

#### Food Pantry

Please pick up the latest list as you come in the door from the parking lot

*God’s Work,  
Our Hands!*

## Thank You!

To everyone that donated money to purchase school supplies.

To everyone that helped make Vacation Bible School a success this year; volunteers, parents, grandparents, leaders, and children.

To everyone that participated in God's Work, Our Hands Sunday. 30 people helped out with numerous projects.

To everyone that ministers to others daily in their various callings and vocations.

To everyone as you prayerfully consider how to use your time, talent, and treasure for God, Christ, church, and family in the upcoming year.

## Did You Know...

In the past three months:

- we've delivered 41 bags of food to the Food Pantry.
- the Hope Chest has helped 19 people.
- the Community Free Meal has served 95 people from our community. In addition to a "regular" group of people that come every month, this ministry continues to bring new people into our midst to enjoy food and fellowship.

## Stewardship Meditation

**Luke 12:13-21**

**"One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions"**

What should I do with my abundance? The rich man in this parable asks a powerful question even though he does not arrive at the right answer. Good stewards are not greedy with their possessions. Rather, they realize that everything belongs to God and God has called them to share their abundance with the needy.

## Ministry Highlight

### Angel Tree Ministry

Many of the ministries we support are local, or nearby to West Branch. The Angel Tree ministry helps families in our community each Christmas. We can minister to families and children by providing them with some presents to have under their trees at Christmas. We give so that those with less can provide a little more for their families at this special time of the year.

Prayerfully consider giving presents, or money for purchasing presents as you plan for the upcoming holidays. Also, if you can assist the dedicated volunteers that lead this ministry in any way, please consider doing so. Giving of your time, talent, or treasure to help others is part of our calling to be good Stewards and followers of Christ. All of us can reach out to serve others, or care for others as we live out Christ's words in Matthew 25.

### *Stewardship Committee*

#### **Chair:**

Greg Lipes

#### **Members:**

Nancy Bruns  
Jon Twing  
Laura Twing  
Kent Kaufman  
Neil Korsmo  
Chris Korsmo  
George McCrory