



**HAWAII
CONFERENCE**

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Ka Wai 'Ola Living Water

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OCWM/Stewardship Workshop



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Discussion Outline

- Biblical Imperatives to Giving
- On Being Transformed
- Individual Tithing
- Becoming a Tithing Church
- Relationship of Individual Tithing and Church Giving to Our Church's Wider Mission



Why Do We Raise Money

- Why? Money is an essential tool for doing God's work in the world: Funding Mission
- How? Money is a critical teaching topic in spiritual formation
- How? Stewardship is a spiritual discipline that contradicts cultural norms



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Context:

Scripture





Context:

Old Testament Scripture

- First fruits, first mention (Ex 22:29-30)
- Ex 19:4-6 Whole earth is God's
- Psalm 104 Mighty works of God
- Psalm 8:3-6 God created; mindful of humans
- Psalm 24:1-2 The earth is the Lord's



Context:

Old Testament Scripture

- Christopher & Mather: other observations
 - Amos (4:4-5) – Tithe not a way to wipe away evil deeds; motivation more important than calculation
 - Malachi (3:6-12) – Tithe: blessing not cause & effect, but a symbol of the relationship with God. Msg: a nation that tithes will be a nation where the #1 issue is its relationship with God.



Context:

New Testament Scripture

- Joiner in Creating a Climate for Giving
 - Tithing not a major topic because it was a cultural norm, unlike our world today
 - NT message: Give . . .
 - Regularly (1 Cor 16:2)
 - Sacrificially (Luke 21:3-4)
 - Joyfully (2 Cor 9:7)
 - Wesley – Earn all you can; Save ~; Give ~!
- Legalistic tithing condemned when it separates people instead of helping to celebrate community -- Christopher & Mather: Holy Smoke!



Context:

New Testament Scripture

- More from Holy Smoke!
- For people today:
 - Spiritual formation theory: close relationship with God starts with a specific discipline:
 - Fix a time and pattern for prayer; add maturity: leads to “prayer without ceasing”
 - Tithing + maturity leads to generosity
 - Warning: “Contentment in any discipline is an alarm bell for repentance rather than an excuse for pride”



Context:

New Testament Scripture

- What NT verses, stories, or parables come to mind regarding money?
- Jesus and money
 - 1 of every 7 verses in Luke is about money
 - 11 of 39 parables
 - Talked more about money than any topic except Kingdom of God (more than 2000 times!)
 - Talked more about money than about heaven and hell combined



Context:

Western Society & Money

- Powerful thoughts, ideas, emotions
- Lead to distress, jealousy, anger, depression, fear, destroyed relationships, and violent acts
- We must deal with the topic several times a day
- Many believe it can bring great happiness
- 4-Letter word exercise



Context:

Western Society & Money

- 5-letter word surrounded by 4-letter words: love, hate, hope, fear, **MINE**
- Many church members believe pastor shouldn't preach about it.
- Is money a spiritual problem?
- Rich young man, Mt 19:16-22
- Spiritual problem, requires spiritual solutions



Context:

Western Society & Money

- What are some of our attitudes about money?
- Why? (ownership, greed, instant gratification)
- Newspaper illustration
 - TV ad density?
 - Radio, billboards?
 - What else?



Context:

Western Society & Money

- So what?
 - Possession vs. Generosity
 - Who's in charge?
 - What are the God-relationship implications?
- Most important – How do these attitudes affect your “conversation” with your congregation?



Context:

Western Society & Money

- Recommended reading:
 - Living from the Center: Spirituality in an Age of Consumerism, by Jay McDaniel, pub Chalice Press, St. Louis, MO.
 - Discusses Consumerism, sustainable life, and the relationship of Consumerism to Christianity and Buddhism



Context:

Summary

- Our audience's frame of reference (western society) filters and colors all the messages they hear.
- “Interpretation” is critical
 - Clear, consistent interpretation
 - Repetition – throughout year
 - Multiple media



Context:

Summary

- Our challenge:

*to reform social and economic
thought within our faith community!*



Four Questions:

- ✓ What does the Bible say about stewardship and tithing?
2. What are the real life benefits of tithing?
3. How can a person look upon tithing as a joyful process rather than an obligation?
4. What are the various methods to reach the tithing level?



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On Being Transformed



“Transformed”

- What scripture(s) come to mind?
 - Romans 12:2 “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is pp God’s good, pleasing and perfect will.” (NIV)



On Being Transformed: **Abundance**

- Creation stories
- Wine for wedding at Cana
- Feeding the 5,000
- Manna in wilderness



On Being Transformed: **Abundance**

- Abundance – just a Sunday word if it contradicts perception and experience



On Being Transformed: **Abundance**

- What is society's message?
 - We need more stuff
 - Buy this and you'll be happy
 - Buy now, pay later
 - Be the same as your neighbor
 - Peer pressure, envy, greed
 - Actually advertising and financial services industries influencing society



Children's Sermon Example

- Jimmy wants a new baseball glove
- He needs \$2 more to be able to purchase it
- Decides to do some extra chores
- Leaves a note for Mom at dinner



Jimmy's Note to Mom

- Mom Owes Jimmy
 - Emptied trash -- 50¢
 - Cleaned room -- 75¢
 - Set table -- 25¢
 - Walked the dog -- 50¢
 - Total \$2.00



Mom's Response

- Mom leaves \$2 at Jimmy's place at breakfast, along with this note



Mom's Note to Jimmy

- Jimmy owes Mom
 - 3 meals every day – nothing
 - Clean clothes, towels, sheets – nothing
 - Rides to school & friends house – nothing
 - Comfort when you're sick – nothing
 - Hugs any time – nothing
 - All my love – nothing



Our Note to God

- What does God owe us?
- What have we done to earn gifts from God?
- What should God give us for our daily “chores”?



God's Note to Us

- Creation of heaven and earth – no charge
- Dominion over all of creation – no charge
- Endless grace – no charge
- Jesus' execution on a cross – no charge
- Forgiveness of our sins – no charge
- A covenant: "I will be your God and you will be my people."



On Being Transformed: **Source of Gifts**

- What has God given us?
- List gifts we have that didn't come from God
- What does the “self-made success” have that isn't from God



Examples of God's Gifts

- Who do you think of as a wealthy, successful person?
- What are that person's gifts that led to wealth, success, or fame?
- Where did those gifts come from?
- The willpower and discipline to use the gifts are also gifts from God!



Individual Tithing:

The Foundation

- God is the owner of everything
- We are stewards of God's creation
- Biblical use of "steward"
 - Manager of household
 - Often a slave
 - Joseph as Pharaoh's manager



Individual Tithing:

Antithesis of the Foundation

- Consumerism
 - Accumulate things
 - Large carbon footprint
 - Planned obsolescence



Individual Tithing:

The Foundation

- Hymn lyrics from 1858
 - We give Thee but Thine own,
What-e'er the gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.

-- William Walsham How



Individual Tithing: **First Fruits**

- What did First Fruits mean in Hebrew Bible?
- What does First Fruits mean today?
 - Tithing of gross income rather than net
 - Giving to God first, then paying other bills



Individual Tithing:

10/10/80

- Does not mean October 10, 1980 (or 2080)
- 10% to God (First Fruits)
- 10% to savings
- 80% to use as God's partner
 - Avoiding wanton consumerism
 - Living/spending responsibly
 - Caring for creation



Individual Tithing:

Giving as Worship Ritual

- Share every time you worship
- Monthly gift? Make token, ritual, gift at each worship occasion
- Automated gift from bank account? Make token gift or use card system
- My experience: Worship isn't worship if I don't share my blessings



Individual Tithing:

Thanks vs. Praise

- Hebrew, Greek, German languages have no first-level formation of verb “to thank”. It is derived from other words.
- “To thank” implies that the receiver of the gift can discern what is a good gift vs. a poor gift
- Psalms are full of praise, not thanks
- Practice turning “thank you phrases” into praises; sense the different feeling



Individual Tithing:

Getting from 2% to 10%

- Grow One
 - Increase 1% of gross income per year
 - Increase 1% of gross income each 6 months
- Tithing “Trial Period”
 - Determine to tithe for some period
 - At least one month or more
 - What did you have to change to tithe?
 - Try this as a spiritual practice during Lent



Individual Tithing:

Getting from 2% to 10%

- Complementary spiritual practices
 - Prayer (individual and in Prayer & Share Triads)
 - Regular attendance at worship
 - Praise
 - Sharing hospitality or other blessings
 - Bible study/reading/memorization



Individual Tithing:

Benefits of Tithing

- Freedom
- Confidence
- Flexibility
- Less stress
- Illustration: Longer life span of gift annuitants



Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

How Do I Love Thee? (Sonnet 43)

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints.
I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.



Individual Tithing:

Joy of Tithing (vs. obligation of)

- When you love someone that much, how can you stop from saying, “I love you.”?
- Do you only say “I love you” to a beloved child when the child asks you to express your love?



Individual Tithing:

Joy of Tithing (vs. obligation of)

- When you fully see God as the giver of all blessings and owner of everything, sharing comes from love as an act of praise
- You're not "giving up" anything; you never owned anything in the first place
- Have you ever experienced the phenomenon of "being more blessed in the giving than the receiving"?



Four Questions from Trinity

- ✓ What are the real life benefits of tithing?
- ✓ How can a person look upon tithing as a joyful process rather than an obligation?
- ✓ What are the various methods to reach the tithing level?



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Becoming a Tithing Church



What is a Tithing Church?

- One-third of membership tithes
- Leaders lead in setting the example, being the first to commit, and sharing their experience with others (teaching)
- Money is another gift from God rather than a topic of heightened secrecy



What is a Tithing Church?

- Expectation of tithing or progression toward tithing is clearly expressed
- Assistance toward tithing is provided as part of church's ministry
 - Money management courses & resources
 - Encouragement, celebration of progress
 - Mentoring
 - Small groups for support
- All done with no judgmental expressions



What is a Tithing Church?

- Different outlook on life in the faith community
- Different sense of partnership with God
- Pleasant by-product: 50% to 150% additional resources for mission!



A Tithing Church:

Year-'Round Stewardship Emphasis

- Stewards in the Household of God
 - “Stewardship is everything I do after I say ‘I believe.’” -- Francis of Assisi
 - Monthly emphasis, ideas, resource list
- Handout – Stewardship and Mission Planning Chart
- Stewardship ≠ Church Finance



A Tithing Church:

Leadership: Pastor & Laity

- Neither can do it alone
- Both must be visible in leadership
- Visible, but not prideful or ego-driven
- Visible year-'round, not just during annual fund campaign



A Tithing Church:

Leadership: Pastor & Laity

- Leaders tithe or are on a committed, progressive path toward tithing
- Leaders share their stories and teach others
- Leaders express expectations of other members
- Leaders encourage and support others without being judgmental



A Tithing Church:

Leadership

- Pastor should know how much people give to the church
- If trust is an issue, you have bigger problems than this topic
- A doctor can't treat you without knowing symptoms; your giving level is a symptom of your spiritual health around materialism and sharing your blessings



A Tithing Church:

How Long to Get There

- My estimate: 5-7 years
- Consistent support and leadership needed over entire span
- Recognize and celebrate incremental progress
- Recognize leaders who make a difference



A Tithing Church:

What are We Up Against?

- Mainline Protestant denominations
 - 1.5% to 3.5% of income
 - 5% - 6% of members tithe
 - Less trust of institutions
 - Want to see use of gift
 - Grain Elevator handout



A Tithing Church:

I Dream of A Tithing Church

I dream of a **tithing church!**

Not because the church's leaders want more money, but
Because **God** commands that God be foremost in our lives.

As **children** of God, you and I **need** God to be first in our lives.

Not **excessive materialism**, but God.

Not **extreme consumption**, but God.

Paul encouraged us to be **transformed**,
to **know** and do the will of God,
not **conformed** to our culture.



A Tithing Church:

I Dream of A Tithing Church

God gives us countless gifts,
But we choose **many** uses for those gifts before we stop and think
about even expressing our **gratitude**,
let alone **sharing** those gifts **generously**.

I dream of **tithing congregations**,
where **one third** of the members tithe,
and where the congregation shares 10% or more with Our
Church's Wider Mission.

I dream of pastors, diaconate, trustees, and other **leaders** of
congregations who **lead** ---
by example, through teaching and by encouragement ---
to make the United Church of Christ a **tithing church**.



Relationship between Individual Tithing and OCWM

- A tithing church is:
 - Outward focused
 - Filled with joy
 - Engaged in Mission
 - In tune with God's abundance



- Therefore, a Tithing Church also understands the mission of the wider church
- Wants to be connected to that mission
- Shares stories and participates in ministry/mission of the Association and Conference
- Is UCC Connected!