

## I Can't Imagine Not Tithing

late 90s, the college started another capital campaign. This time the requested gift was much larger than I ever could have imagined; over the course of five years, they asked me to give the equivalent of one year's salary! Being quick at math, I realized that it was the same ratio as my checks from Grandma Brown. I didn't know how I was going to do it but I did know that I wanted to do it. I agreed to the challenge and my income increased multiple times over three of those four years thanks to the dot com business.

Today the endowment's market value is \$320,000. My favorite evening of the year is writing out that check or transferring the stock. I skip from my mailbox when the thank-you notes arrive from the young woman thanking me for my gift and telling me that they couldn't be at this college if it wasn't for my financial help and others help. Through this experience, I truly learned about stewardship and the experience ignited my interest in serving on stewardship committees and being comfortable talking about money in church. God provides!

I now live on income from my investments. God has blessed me tremendously! I have time for volunteer work. I walk 10,000 steps almost every day. My current tithing struggle is figuring out what tithing of time looks like. I simply can't imagine not tithing.

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- Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary
- Luther Seminary
- Pacific Lutheran University
- Campus Ministry - 8 sites
- Lutheran Community Services Northwest
- Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
- Consultation to Clergy
- Lutheran Education Network Support (LENS)

### Oregon Synod Ministries

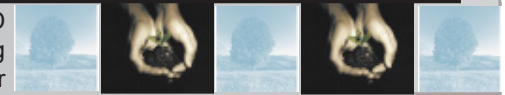
- Synod Mission Initiatives
- Mission Strategy
- Candidacy Committee
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- Outreach Committee
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- Stewardship Committee
- Endowment Fund

#### *We Are Gifted*

is a stewardship publication of the Oregon Synod.

# WE ARE GIFTED...

OREGON SYNOD  
Quarterly Stewardship Mailing  
2008 Spring/Summer



## We Are So Rich! What Are We Doing About It?

*Submitted by Rev. Ron Nitz, Synod Stewardship Committee*

Speaking April 12<sup>th</sup> to over sixty Lutherans from around the Oregon Synod at Creator Lutheran Church, Clackamas, Rev. Meier, Stewardship Specialist with the ELCA, sketched in four basic behaviors common to all Christians:

### Common Christians Behaviors

- (1) Worshiping God;
  - (2) Placing everything in God's hands;
  - (3) Managing God's gifts; and
  - (4) Giving generously in response.
- The first two required little explanation, so time was devoted to the last two.

### Management of God's Gift's

Most Christians need and appreciate guidance in the areas of giving, saving, spending, debt reduction, proper reception of gifts, and – in general – financial life management. This is a ministry that should start a very early age, but many come to adulthood without a clue of what the "best behavior" is for them in each of these areas. This is a genuine ministry need in the church!

### Giving Generously

Most people think that generous giving is an activity reserved for the world's

"wealthiest" people. Most Americans' vision of what is "wealthy" is skewed by living in one of the wealthiest countries of the world. "Wealth" becomes relative!

### Nearly 70% of the world's population would be classified as "Poor".

People who keep track of wealth worldwide have a different set of categories that they work with. The world's "Poorest" are those who do not even have a place to die! These are the kind of people that Mother Theresa devoted her ministry to in Calcutta, and they make up a sizable minority among the world's population. Nearly 70% of the world's population would be classified as "Poor". Not even the poorest people in America on welfare fall into this category, because they still have some income they can count on.

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## What Happened to “The Middle Class”?

When Rev. Meier identified the next highest class as “Wealthy”, there was some consternation as to what happened to what we call “the middle class”! But from the perspective of the distribution of wealth in the world, there is no such thing. Perhaps 10-15% of the world’s population fall into the category of “Wealthy,” because they have some sort of reasonable prospect of always being able to have a roof over their heads, clothes on their back, and food to eat – a privilege not enjoyed by the vast majority of people in the world today.

## The World’s Wealthiest

Finally, the smallest group – the “Wealthiest” – are distinguished by being able to plan to retire some day, and not have to work to earn a living as long as they live! While that might seem to be in jeopardy in recent months, the truth is that the vast majority of people in America today fall into this class of “the world’s wealthiest”. When we see how we measure up against the vast majority of people in the rest of the world, it is clear that we *are* the people who are best prepared by God to give generously!

## The Deadliest Sin

### -- Fear

The day concluded with video clips, one of which was entitled “Rich” (found on-line at [www.nooma.com](http://www.nooma.com)). The video took us on a tour of common items and ideas in our American life that make us “rich” in the eyes of the world. Proverbs 6:16-19 and Galatians 5:19-21 were



cited as a couple of lists of “deadly sins” in the Bible, but the deadliest sin for all Christians is fear, because it keeps us from doing that which we know God has called us to do.

As we closed for the day insight on Christian “tithers” (those who give 10% of their income) was discussed. Surprisingly, Lutherans only give about an average of 2% - 2.5% of their income and a congregation considered to be “mission-minded” giving is at 3.5%.

Clearly, we have a long ways to go in developing and/or sharing our stewardship behaviors! Two books on this subject that were recommended for further reading were “Ask, Thank, Tell” by Charles “Chick” Lane, and “Giving to God” by Mark Allen Powell.

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## I Can’t Imagine Not Tithing

I can’t remember not tithing. When I was very young, my grandmother would give my brother and me a check for Christmas each year. It wasn’t a large amount but it was generous for her fixed income. Our mom would take our checks to the bank and bring home the cash. The check amount was usually \$5 and we would put a crisp \$1 bill in the offering plate the next Sunday. I hadn’t learned fractions at school yet so I didn’t realize that I was super sizing my tithe.



When I was a teenager, I did a lot of babysitting. I read many stories, put together a lot of puzzles, and changed too many diapers for my hard earned wages. By then I knew what 10% was and in went the amount to the offering plate the next Sunday. My parents weren’t big spenders and I followed suit. I didn’t spend much of my money in high school and so had plenty (but not by today’s standards) of money for college incidentals like books and travel back home. Looking back at those years, I learned to be financially independent and generous at the same time.

Fast forward several decades. In the 1990s, I developed a friendship with the development officer that covered Oregon for my Lutheran alma mater. I had given financial gifts over the years and she thought that I had the potential for a much larger gift. She was right! I funded a scholarship endowment for young women that are majoring in math, chemistry, or physics. The original amount was for \$25,000. In the