



December 1, 2017

Stewardship 2018: Forward In Faith

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Having taken a few weeks to celebrate the successful completion of The Time Has Come capital campaign, it's time to refocus on the daily work of our church. Your generous capital campaign pledges do not replace the need to fund our annual budget. Stewardship is a critical component to fulfilling our ongoing operations, mission, and vision. However, we realized that successive fundraising campaigns this fall might distract our staff and officers from other key ministries.

First Presbyterian Church of Spartanburg is strong and vibrant. Worship is expanding, missions are thriving, and our finances are sound. Your staff and officers have confidence in God's plans for our congregation, so much so that we have faith that we can fulfill our 2018 budget without a formal stewardship campaign. Instead, we are going Forward In Faith.

What?! No Stewardship?! Are we crazy?! No, we don't think so. There is a growing trend among churches to have faith-based budgets. And those that do, find it liberating, inspiring, and oh yes, they actually raise enough money. In fact, our Budget and Finance Committee has recommended budgets for years based at least partly on faith. Pledges alone have never met our entire budget. There has always been some faith in gifts beyond what is pledged.

A traditional stewardship campaign also takes a lot of work. While this effort has long been appreciated, it's hard to say if it's made much difference. In fact, over the last 15 years, the number of pledges we have received has fallen by 32% even as the dollars pledged has risen by 5% and our budget has grown by 14%. Times are changing and younger generations are simply less inclined to make a pledge.

We believe that stewardship should be a year-long process where the congregation is reminded regularly of the importance and impact of giving. Giving should be inspired by the Holy Spirit at work among us, not compelled by a pledge card. Our goal is for the positive message of stewardship to be a welcome one, emanating from our ministries throughout the year. Stewardship at First Pres is not going away, it's evolving.

Its undeniable that we have a very generous church with a history of faithful giving. We also have prudent officers who would not approve a budget that we do not believe we can achieve. They are very comfortable embracing a new future of stewardship and their excitement and optimism are palpable.

Rest assured, not everything will change. You may still request offering envelopes and Lynise Clarke, Church Financial Officer, will continue to send giving updates throughout the year. You may submit a pledge to Lynise if you wish, but the Stewardship Committee will not be following-up to ask for it. Your pledge is and will continue to ultimately be between your heart and God.

Our committee will still be encouraging every church member to pray about their financial responsibility to the church and their commitment to giving generously. We have faith that our congregation will continue to fulfill our ministries and appreciate your support of our new approach to Stewardship as we go Forward In Faith.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bert Barre".

Bert Barre
Chair, Stewardship Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Evans".

Tom Evans
Senior Pastor