

Stewardship Message – October 4, 2009

by Brian Hamilton

Good Morning

Another typical quiet morning at Rideau Park – a Baptism, World Communion and Stewardship 2010.

This is an opportunity to thank Linda and Rod Hagglund for assuming the leadership role as Co-chairs for the 2010 Stewardship Campaign. Their extensive involvement and commitment to Rideau Park's ministries and programs is recognized and welcomed by all. Theirs has been an ongoing participation in the life of our church community supported and enriched by the talents and gifts of their daughters, Andrea and Wendy. Thank you for setting the time aside to lead this important campaign.

Thanks also go to Reverend Elizabeth and Reverend Steve for their support of the campaign from the pulpit. We must recognize with gratitude the worker bees that provide the administrative support for this annual campaign. These include Erin O'Neill our Admin Assistant, Debi Brown the Church Administrator, and volunteers Chris Inrig, Doreen Hamilton, and Steve and Lise Shipley.

Today is our First Pledge Now Sunday and I am pleased to be able to provide some early results. Now they do not yet measure up to the lofty amounts Lauren Harper was able to announce last evening at the NAC Gala in support of Canada's next generation of performing artists. And my red tie sure can't match her red dress, but we have already received 50 pledges and we have raised \$122,500 – 22% of our combined objective. Mission and Service contributions included in this total are 33% of our objective.

This year there was a question about the amount of written material shared with the congregation. To some it will seem too much – and if you are a regular church attendee, knowledgeable about the programs and work of the congregation, you have a point – but the material is designed for everyone, including those who make it to church less often, whose knowledge about the congregation and the United Church of Canada is, to use a youthful word, best described as “sketchy”. It is also designed to put answers in your hand, to capture the breadth of our church community and to be as transparent about financial affairs as possible.

We dearly need the support of everyone and thus we have to work a little harder for some to make our case and gain their support.

Looking at the initial pledge results, I think the congregation has gained a good understanding of Rideau Park's needs. We need contributors to support our three key funds: the Rideau Park Ministries and Programs Fund (the old General Fund), the

United Church of Canada Mission and Service Fund, and the Rideau Park Property Renewal Fund.

We need contributors to increase their givings – a recommended minimum of \$120 or 5% for each contributor dependent upon where your pledge falls on the table provided on the back of your pledge form. Contributors who have not previously supported all of the three funds are asked to consider minimum contributions of \$10.00 per month for each of these funds. Many small gifts to these funds can make a big difference in our revenue base.

When you increase your givings you are strongly supported by your federal and provincial governments, with 45% of your contribution returned through your income tax filing. Consider a special occasion \$100 restaurant bill where it is increased by 13% for PST and GST and your gratuity is 15%. Your final cost is \$130. Comparatively the same \$100 given to Rideau Park will cost you just \$55 after tax credits. That is only 42% of the cost of the meal. If you gave \$200 you would still be ahead of the cost of the meal.

There is a Celtic saying that heaven and earth are only three feet apart, but in the thin places that distance is even smaller. A thin place is where the veil that separates heaven and earth is lifted and one is able to receive a glimpse of the glory of God. Some have experienced occasions at Rideau Park when they felt it was a spiritual thin place. If you have been here alone in the sanctuary after hours, there is often a sense of the presence of God; if you are around when Richard is practicing for the Sunday services or special occasions, there is a feeling of God's proximity and I think if you close your eyes at the end of our services and find yourself engulfed in the Amens of our wonderful choir, you can experience this sense of a thin place.

Our church community is special and it has been entrusted to all of us. Our collective stewardship allows us to share the flame of Rideau Park – to maintain Rideau Park as a beacon of light in our hearts and communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Pledging will be in the parlor and there will be delicious cake and coffee in Beecroft Hall.