

## Stand Firm, Step Up, Reach Out

PASTOR JERRY MORRIS

I heard a story last month from Dan Dick of the conference staff. He was waiting to buy a drink; and the man in front of him put a dollar in the vending machine, pushed a button, and waited. Nothing happened. The man put another dollar in the machine. Nothing happened. So the man reached into his pocket and pulled out a third dollar, at which time Dan said, "Um . . . I think it isn't working."

Now we're all thinking, "How dim can a person be?" If you see no results from your money, don't keep throwing it away! Right? Then Dan said: "And that's how people often feel during our annual stewardship campaigns." Ouch. But it's true, isn't it? We come to you each year asking to pledge your money to us, blindly trusting us to use it well. If you ask to see how the money is spent, we hand you a copy of our annual budget – nine pages of small print. Any questions?

That's not enough. We need to see what our money actually does. Let us remember this past year. This year our church began reaching beyond our walls in new ways. The Community Book Fair gave around 5000 books away to the people of Wausau, just in time for summer reading. Our Personal Needs Closet opened with a wealth of donated supplies; and after only two months has touched the lives of more than 70 families. Through our Welcome Fund, we have distributed over \$6,000 dollars' worth of food and gas cards to unemployed and underemployed people.

Meanwhile, people have been growing in faith and worship here. We've formed several new small groups to nourish body and soul. New leaders, most of them new members, have stepped into place to lead those groups as well as to guide our Confirmation Class. We have held at least three lock-ins or retreats for youth. Our choir has almost outgrown our choir loft. Special worship services, such as the Easter cantata and our Celebration of Worship in honor of June Paul, lifted our souls in praise.

These things are not just a budget; they are growth and ministry. But here's what you need to remember. None of these things could have taken place without our budget pledges. Because we have a building, we can support a Book Fair and a Personal Needs Closet. Because your pledged giving pays your staff, every penny donated to our Welcome Fund is given away. So here's my challenge as you consider your pledge for 2011: picture how your gifts are changing lives. Then pledge to our general fund. This money makes possible everything we do. Then, for those who are especially inspired by particular ministries, consider a designated pledge to one of these areas: worship, faith formation, outreach, or facilities. See what we have done and are doing, then imagine with us what more we could do.