

Madison Heights Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)  
149 Main Street  
Madison Heights, VA 24572



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## MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

No. 4

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### Enthusiastic Contribution

I was serving a small church many years ago that had a slopping sanctuary. The architecture of some of these older churches had sanctuaries that slopped forward so that the altar and pulpit are more visible. There was a young family in attendance, with a little girl about the age of 6 or so, sitting on the back pew of the church. When the morning offering was being received the little girl was excited for her chance to participate in the service by placing money in the offering plate. She was so excited that she dropped a coin. It fell to the floor with a loud clank and rolled all the way to the front of the sanctuary. The sound amplified on the wooden floor and echoed throughout the sanctuary. I could tell from her body language that she was very embarrassed as virtually everyone turned to look. I spoke up and proudly proclaimed, "Now I know why the sanctuary is slopping forward. If you drop your money it still comes forward for the offering." That was not only good for a laugh but it was also effective in diminishing her embarrassment. The thing is that she dropped her coin because she was so enthusiastic about her contribution.

I was reminded of this story while reading *The Secret Place* devotional on October 28. The author tells the story of a three year old girl who could barely contain her excitement. She bobbed up and down on the pew, waving for her father's attention. He handed the family's offering into her outstretched hand. She chirped with glee as she deposited it in the offering plate. It turns out to be a lesson on stewardship because the money that she put into the plate actually came from her father. She was excited to give that which came from her father. This connects us to where we are in contemporary society. Everything that we have comes to us from God. When we truly realize this then we can't help but to be thankful. We are thankful for the smallest and simplest of things. We are thankful for the big surprises that come along once in a while. We are thankful for the essence of life. God gives us life and a promise of eternity. God provides the air and the water and the plants and the animals. God provides everything that we have. Knowing that God provides everything, and having appreciation for this provision, we can't help but enthusiastically give an offering to God.

Think of it as a loan. It all belongs to God but we are allowed to use it on a temporary basis. This means we have a due diligent responsibility to look after God's belongings. As God has done so much for us, as God has given so much to us, we can't help but express thanks. Our enthusiastic contribution comes natural because our appreciation is great because we place a prime value on everything the Lord has done for us. We love to give to God because God has given such great love to us.

Now that we are in the season of Lent we are especially reminded of this. Lent is a time of repentance, fasting, and preparation for the coming of the Lord's resurrection. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. It is a time for Christians to focus on their relationship with God. Many people will make it a practice to give up something, or offer themselves as a gift of themselves in charitable service for the benefit of others. I encourage you to continue the practice but instead of giving up something for Lent, which would be temporary, make it permanent. As we examine ourselves, we reflect on our relationships with God, Jesus, and humanity. We reflect on the teachings of Jesus and any disparity that may exist between the way Jesus teaches us to live and the way we actually live out our lives. We also reflect upon the way Jesus commands us to love one another and any disparity between our actual attitudes towards others. For Lent make it a goal to reconcile the difference between the life you actually live and the way you are taught to live through the teachings of Jesus.

George