

OPEN FORUM

After digging in my garden, I grabbed a couple of magazines that had arrived in today's mail without even looking at them. Settled on my porch, I opened them up. One was the June issue of *Money* magazine. The other was the May/June/July issue of *Circuit Rider*, with the theme "Money." I laughed as I compared their similarities and differences.

In *CR*, Donald Shriver urges us to limit watching advertisements. *Money* cited research that says that people spend an extra \$200 per year for every hour per week that they watch TV. *Money* would occasionally remind people that volunteering and charitable giving have their rewards. In *CR*, Emmert, Ensminger, and Heart all get to the heart of why that is true. *Money* was mostly focused on how I could rebuild my retirement savings. In *CR*, Derek Jacobs reminds us that the economy is about all of us.

Of the two, I found *CR* more helpful in regaining my perspective and enabling me to figure out what I will do about this crisis. So, thanks. When are you going to start publishing your own financial magazine?

Roger Talbott

First UMC, Elyria, OH

I was disheartened to read the "Clergy Roundtable" in the May/June/July 2009 issue of *Circuit Rider*. I guess

there are no churches out there that are increasing their budget, offering their pastor more in salary, and taking on new staff. What a poor commentary on the Church when all we can focus on is the failure in stewardship. Our church is doing fine financially. Our giving continues to increase and our budget is going up to engage in ministry and mission!

George S Reynolds, Lead Pastor, Linglestown Life, A United Methodist Church

Harrisburg, PA

Bob McKibben's article, "Why Do We Pay Apportionments, Again?" (May/June/July) recalled the same issue I and many pastors have faced. I tried to meet that question in several ways, all to demonstrate how important the apportionments were to our local congregation:

I reminded the congregation of their stewardship to maintain a variety of ministries both within the parish and beyond.

I aimed to get as many of our youth to youth camps as possible, and our college bound youth in contact with campus ministries.

I invited representatives of the conference agencies to our pulpit to share in the ministry our apportionment actually provided, but also to tell their own story of responding to God's call to ministry

through that particular agency.

I included a paragraph in the annual budget explaining the uniqueness of these ministries in which they were jointly supporting: their share of a ministry beyond the parish.

I explained the simple mathematics of what a small part of the average pledge went beyond the local church.

The uniqueness of the United Methodist system is that the local congregation should feel a sense of joy in being participants in those ministries. With this emphasis it was most pleasing to see the positive response of the people.

Robert D. Simison, Retired

Kansas West Annual Conference

I greatly appreciated the Rev. Jodi McCullah's story about the church showing grace and focusing on repairing relationships when the church finds itself to be a victim of embezzlement (May/June/July 2009). Recently in our congregation we discovered that two of the young children had been taking money from the Sunday school offering. When confronted they were very ashamed and repentant. There were some adults who wanted them to be punished and made an example of, but we chose instead to tell them that while their behavior was unacceptable, we loved them and honored their willingness to own up to what they had done. These are the kinds of situations that show whether or not the church truly is a community of grace, and I thank Rev. McCullah for encouraging us to do so.

Anonymous

Pontius' Puddle

