

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

For Christ in the Heart of Charlotte

PNC Minute for Mission

November 13, 2011

I am Bryan Morris, husband of Rebecca and father of 14-year-old twins, Betsy and Marshall. I joined this Church in 1983 and am humbled by this request.

This year the stewardship campaign has focused not solely on the fundraising, but reminding us that Stewardship is our full response to God's grace. So the Stewardship committee's desire is not to continuously go back to people and ask for more money, but holding before the congregation that by joining this church we promised our energy, skills but yes, our good fortunes, to this mission. We are to become and create Lifelines.

Stewardship is defined as "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." As we close the campaign, I wish to share with you ways that I discovered God to be active in this place for me and my family

My journey to Stewardship is ordinary—no burning bush, or a "fall off the horse" moment, but, in fact, my arrival has been pedestrian and perhaps initially, slightly disingenuous.

- I joined because my girlfriend was a member
- I was uninvolved, uninterested, and self-absorbed, a fact of which I am cannot be proud.
- That relationship ended, and I did not enter this sanctuary for about seven years, except for a Christmas Service. I had no need to, because I had everything under control. Right?
- I met the young lady who was to become my wife; she too was a member here
- As single members, you could characterize our participation as "accidental or obligatory," but as a couple, we began to come to this home with regularity.

On a particular Sunday in November exactly 15 years ago, I was sitting right there, and Thold Gill was giving a Minute for Mission for the Stewardship Campaign. He said something that caught my attention and seized it. And it was this: "Whose money is it anyway?" My first reaction was to cynically give him due credit for a terrific tag line, but on the way home, that remaining day, then the next, and for now 15 years I have been agitated in the best possible sense. Thold put that thought in my head and it woke long dormant synapses that have been firing ever since.

That resonant moment 15 years ago began my imperfect journey from self-will to God's will. There will come a time in each of our lives, when we realize we cannot walk this earthly walk alone. When I reached that point, I turned to this community of faith, specifically you, and the rewards have been boundless.

Quoting from the late Reverend Forrest Church, (who's father was longtime Idaho Senator Frank Church).

"The most important thing to remember about lifelines are the two ends. To grasp one end, however tightly, avails us nothing unless the other end is secured. Unless we reach out to and for others, seeking meaning not in our own suffering but in our shared experience of the human condition, our lifelines will not hold".

The depth and breadth of stewardship opportunities at this church are stunning!: too numerous to list here, but serving can provide unbridled enrichment. In other words, If you give, you will receive. I have one vignette that sharpens my point;

The following is a true event that occurred in the past year. This fellow is not a member of this church nor any other, but was raised in a faith-based environment. Just about every aspect of his life had taken a crippling turn. In the heart of Charlotte at the Carillon Building across the street he sought work but to no avail. Imagine in your mind's eye this desperate moment: He looked across the street and saw this beautiful church, and he had a decision to make: He earnestly contemplated jumping from the building or calling a minister in our presence. The Lord guided him to the phone and he spoke to a pastor and uttered three of the hardest words know to most men: "I need help." And this Church grabbed his hand and held it for dear life. On this day we can report his life is currently in a state of reconstruction and he is living witness to the power of our presence right here for over 200 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Be Here. Be There; where ever "there" is. But Be a Lifeline. Just Be....as the undeserved, unearned, and unmerited favor of God's Grace commands us.

Thank you all for your lifelines past, current and future that bind us in this community of faith.

Thank you.

Bryan Morris