

INTERIM THOUGHTS: *The Bible and Stewardship*

Dr. Richard Weis, Professor of Old Testament at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities (a UCC institution), suggests that many understandings of stewardship are too limited. The Bible's perspective teaches that stewardship is about household management, not just the money we might give to the church. The household is not just our home and not just the church; it is all creation. We are called to serve as manager/stewards of this world-household, entrusted with the care of what Someone Else owns.

Stewardship is the mission of managing the planet for the benefit of all who live on it. Big job. Much bigger job than motivating members and friends to give dollars to the church. A Biblical word that summarizes God's vision for humanity and creation is *shalom*. This Hebrew word from the Old Testament means "wellbeing" – profoundly spiritual, relational, social, and personal wellbeing.

God gave creation an ordered sense of arrangement called "justice" that is to maintain this *shalom*. God entrusts this ordered arrangement to us. We are to manage the "enough" that God's creation provides so that all can partake equitably and none be left out of God's "enough," neither spiritually nor materially.

This is where the Church comes in; its role is to live this condition of *shalom* for which it has been redeemed. Weis says, "The Church is to be both the agent and the place of experiencing the emerging restoration of creation to God's intended *shalom*." The Hebrew phrase, *tiqqun 'olam* (tik-koon o-lahm) – repair of the world – describes this assignment.

We know instinctively that our own individual wellbeing does not satisfy if our family is not well materially and spiritually. Our family's wellbeing does not satisfy if our neighbors are starving, or terrified by domestic abuse, or unable to learn at school because of hungry stomachs and deadened minds dispirited by material deprivation. We know that our own nation's wellbeing does not satisfy fully while other nations harbor immeasurable suffering. It's no fun living behind barred doors and windows in barricaded affluence while neighbors here and abroad live in want and while nations and radical groups conclude that their only hope is shocking and terrifying violence. It is also not terribly satisfying to feel that it's necessary to kill more effectively and in higher numbers than others can do to us in order to sustain a way of life.

Clearly, the stewardship call, the call to contribute constructively to managing the world household and repairing its *shalom*, is a challenging and noble undertaking. How can we withhold from this high calling anything that is ours to share – intellectual capacities, powers of imagination, hard-won skills, hard-earned money, unique gifts of personality, purposeful energies, and whatever else God has blessed us with?

Making the financial commitments to sustain the church's involvement in this great mission of God is simple compared to the global scope of this divine/human work – We do so by giving what the Lord lays it upon our heart to give. Giving an additional \$5-\$25 a week to continue growing the church's witness to God's love is peanuts to what we are called to give to repairing God's world household in body, mind, and spirit. But it's a place to start.

Friedens (Peace), along with all the other churches and faith groups, has a tall order in "repairing the world." Members and friends have been faithful to sustain Friedens (Peace) in its mission, and we pray God's continued blessing as you continue to meet this challenge.

Again we pray, Let this mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus...(Phil. 25-11)

Pastor Jerry