

advancing stewardship

estate planning and other news

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Fall 2004

Reflections on Thanksgiving

Henry Eygenraam, Executive Director

It is the season to celebrate Thanksgiving in Canada: October 11th, and in the USA: Nov. 25th.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “*Always giving thanks for all things to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” [Eph.5: 20]

I don't think Paul was making an idle suggestion on behalf of the Lord!
No! It is a command that has impact on our lives.

There is an expectation that we will do as he “suggests” in the context of our relationship with the Lord. In this newsletter we reflect on the “gift” of God's son and his many other gifts to us. Thankfulness is an expected response to complete the cycle of the gifts given.

The challenge for us is that we do not always experience the events of our lives as a blessing. There are times and situations when the natural response is anything but thankful! In those dark times when we are faced with mountains to climb we need a personal relationship with God, and the community of his people to surround us.

Only then can we echo the words of Psalm 23: “*When I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me*”, and experience knowing that as in Psalm 30: “*Weeping may endure through the night, but joy comes in the morning*”.

It is in a faith relationship with the Lord that we can experience the wholeness of thanksgiving. In a community of prayerful supporters we can experience love and encouragement. It is about God's faithfulness, and in our imitation of His example we achieve some of what it is to be made in the image of God.

In the family of CSS we see this in operation. Early in September Greta Luimes sought relief from the acute pain she was enduring. She underwent exploratory surgery that revealed a cancerous growth.

The first reports were terrifying. A call went out far and wide for prayer. A host of people committed to pray for her. Prayers were offered in the belief that they are heard and will be answered. Now we understand the prognosis for Greta is much brighter than first feared, and for that we are truly thankful. The prayers of the community have buoyed her as well as many others. We will expectantly continue to hold her up to God for a complete restoration through her time of treatment.

From a broader perspective we have had “a summer that wasn't”. While that might have inconvenienced some of us at vacation time it was a greater concern for farmers who worried and prayed over their crops. Cold and wet times threatened the crops and the harvest process. Then we were blessed with a wonderful September and October which encouraged the maturing of crops and the bringing in of a bountiful harvest. A community of prayers answered by a faithful God!?!

At CSS we continue to be blessed through challenging times of transition. Anita moves on to create a new outreach ministry: “Simple Fitness”; we are thankful for the contribution that she has made to the development of CSS, and for the relationships she has blessed. To fill the position of Executive Assistant, Jill Jones has joined us and is enthusiastically taking up the task.

Bruce Bishop, our part time Alberta representative, found he needed full time work so he has taken up a fulltime position in the financial service field. We have been blessed with a number of quality candidates to fill the position, and expect that by the time you read this the selection process will be complete.

These are a few examples of God's faithfulness in our world of challenges; each one who reads this can likely share your own experiences as well. The stories do not always have positive endings; however, together in community we help each other respond to the expectation of Thankfulness that Paul spoke about.

Gratitude

James VanderLaan, Western Ontario Representative

A teacher asked her students to list what they thought were the present Seven Wonders of the World.

The students cast the most votes for:

1. *Egypt's Great Pyramids*
2. *Taj Mahal*
3. *Grand Canyon*
4. *Panama Canal*
5. *Empire State Building*
6. *St. Peter's Basilica*
7. *China's Great Wall*

Gathering the votes, the teacher saw that one girl was having trouble. The little girl said: "I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many."

Here's what she wrote:

"I think the Seven Wonders of the World are:

1. *to see*
2. *to hear*
3. *to touch*
4. *to taste*
5. *to feel*
6. *to laugh*
7. *to love"*

What came to your mind as you finished reading what the little girl came up with? For me, it was "That's cute" and "Wow, she gets it." Gratitude takes nothing for granted. The little girl had trouble making up her mind because there were so many "wonders". Gratitude recognizes every gift regardless of the size or value of the gift. Many of us can think of times when we received something that was extremely special like cherished item from a grandparent. When I was ten, my grandmother painted me a picture of a little boy on a horse. It now hangs in our daughter's room. My wife, Lara, and I just came in from taking a walk with our 2 year old daughter, Amy. The weather was very warm for an October afternoon and the leaves were changing to a radiant red. God is present even in the small, everyday things.

In his book: "Space for God" Don Postema writes that gratitude is when we not only recognize that a gift has been given, but that gratitude calls us to respond to that gift. In many cases, we may give an expression of gratitude for a gift via a hug or a thank you note. Postema writes, "a gesture of gratitude completes the exchange, closes the circle, lets the love flow back to the giver" and that, "the exchange is more like a spiral than a circle – a spiral in which the giver gets thanked and so becomes the receiver, and the joy of giving and receiving rises higher and higher."

What are you grateful for? Have you recently connected the "spiral" and thanked someone for their gift of goods or service? Is our gratitude causing us to respond? Beginning each day by remembering the gifts God has given us will cause us to respond in an expression of gratitude by giving back to God and by serving others. God is so good. May your gratitude overflow and reach those around you.

Morning has broken

Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them springing fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dewfall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness where His feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning
Born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's re-creation of the new day!

- Eleanor Farjeon, 1881-1965

Profile a Partner

*Beginnings Counseling and
Adoption Services*

In the conviction that all life is a gift from God, Beginnings provides supportive services to women who choose to keep their babies and a licensed private adoption agency for those who need it. The agency began with an office in Hamilton, and now has affiliate offices in Guelph, Woodstock and Cobourg, offering support and help. Beginnings seek Christian couples who wish to adopt, and arrange 10 to 15 such adoptions each year. They also offer prenatal and postnatal counseling, post abortion counseling, 24 hour emergency telephone service, temporary foster care, and post adoptive counseling.

In a new outreach initiative, Beginnings has formed a strong connection with the Hamilton Centre: "The Living Rock" which offers ministry and services to street youth. Trained volunteers from Beginnings regularly provide help to young women there, reaching out to them in places where they go to seek help.

**Meet our new Administrative Assistant:
Jill Jones**

Jill comes to us from the Anglican Church, where she was working before she joined CSS. As anyone who has spoken to her already knows, she is from England, but has spent the last thirteen years in Toronto.

Jill has a Library Science background, and ran a home daycare for years whilst raising her two boys who are now 14 and 19.

Jill is active in her church, St. Saviour's Anglican in Toronto, where she sings in the worship team, is Outreach Committee Chair, and a member of the Altar Guild. She likes to travel and visit cottages in the summer; she still is not too sure about the Canadian winters. Playing badminton, swimming, reading, and walking are other passions.



**God Gave and Gives
and Gives...**

Rick deGraaf

Abel gave the first fruits from his flock and God was pleased with his offering from the heart!

Giving. It's something we need to do from the heart – not out of obligation. Our giving may start out as a duty – but it must not stay there and won't when we discover God's heart.

Why give? Because God modeled giving – big time! In fact the Bible is all about a giving God. God created this world and He created man and gave him a garden to care for. He gave man a helpmate. God gave mankind hope when man went his own way – spurning God's gift. The biblical record repeats and repeats this – through the patriarchs, the prophets, the kings, the exiles and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and then through Jesus, the disciples and the apostles. It culminated in God giving His own son to pay the price that His own justice demanded – the penalty for our rebellion.

God gave and through His own son – forgave!

God is waiting for you. He is standing there watching with open arms – ready to embrace His son or daughter who is coming home – ready to give up on self. Giving is God's way to be like him and to respond in gratitude to Him. It's not that He needs our giving, after all He created it all – no – it's that we need to give ourselves to Him as direct evidence of our dying to self and our devotion to Him. We do that by giving our heart and our lives. We willingly share of the resources we have been entrusted by God, just as God by His example, so willingly gave and still does for us. It is through our giving that we are not only drawn closer to Him but we also are enabled. God enables us, so that we may be used to bring others closer to the Him – through our use of our time, talents, treasures and our effective use of creation and its resources.

Even though scripture indicates that our giving lays up treasures for us in heaven, it is not the primary motive (like a reward)! Yes, it is a benefit to be sure, but rather our giving is worship. We honour our God in thanksgiving with a heart full of thanks for all that we have been given and especially the salvation of our souls! Our hearts are drawn closer to Him as we are willing to commit more – to give more of ourselves to Him and others in His name.

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Year End Giving

Greta Luimes, Representative, Ontario East and the Maritimes

It might be the holiday spirit, the deficit budget at church, or just thoughts about next spring's income tax bill that cause many people to begin feeling charitable as the end of the year approaches. If you want to add to your donations for 2004, start planning now and at the same time, put in place a process for next year that will eliminate this struggle each year end.

Here are some tips to assist with your year end giving decisions:

Look at your stock portfolio to determine if now is the time to gift an appreciated stock. Remember that in doing so, you will enjoy a significant savings on your capital gains and you'll receive a donation receipt for the value of the stock the day to give it to charity.

Review your life insurance policies to see if there are those you no longer require that could be given over to charity. You would receive a receipt for any cash value included in the policy.

Determine your actual income over the year 2004 and give away what you feel the Lord is asking you to give. Perhaps you've worked more overtime than you thought, or your harvest has brought in more proceeds than calculated, or maybe you were given a promotion. Did your additional unexpected income change your giving patterns over the year or is it time to catch up?

Take some time to pray and reflect on where the gifts will go. Kingdom work has many facets and there are so many opportunities for support. What's closest to your heart?

If, as Christians, we truly subscribe to the biblical teaching of always giving our **FIRSTFRUITS** to the Lord, then we shouldn't find ourselves in this year end giving dilemma, should we? **Why not set aside a percentage of your income all year long into a separate Giving Account?** It would then be available to those ministries and charities that are close to your heart when they need it most. You could write a generous cheque to the student who asks to be supported in a summer ministry program. Your family could help the one that is struggling to make ends meet. A special offering for disaster relief could benefit from the funds accumulated in your Giving Account.

Bring your regular, pre-determined monthly gifts to your church and other causes, but set aside the whole tithe at every pay cheque for the work of all the ministries you feel called to support. The amount (percentage) of the tithe is between you and the Lord, and you may feel challenged to increase that to a greater percentage year after year.

Your year end giving issue may then not be 'where will we find the money to help with the church deficit?' but rather, 'what ministries will receive the additional funds we have set aside?'

A nice problem to have!

Request for Information:

mail or fax to:

Christian Stewardship Services 600 Alden Road, Suite 315 Markham, Ontario L3R 0E7 Fax: (905) 947-9263

Please provide the following:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> More information on the work of CSS | <input type="checkbox"/> Information on RRSP/RRIF Gifts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information on making a Will | <input type="checkbox"/> Information the CSS Endowment Plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Call me to arrange a visit / presentation | <input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship Education Information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information on Charitable Gift Annuities | |

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