



November 20, 2009

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Enclosed you will find your stewardship information packet and 2010 Pledge Cards for use on Commitment Sunday, November 29, 2009. It includes helpful information about the principles of Christian Stewardship as well as our ministry highlights for 2009 and the pledge card you will need to fill out to make a pledge to this year's stewardship campaign.

Our clear goal for this year's campaign is to focus on increasing our Annual Operating Fund giving and to maintain our giving to the Annual Building Fund (for regular Mortgage Payments) in order to enable us to plan better for 2010.

Our message to families who pledged for 2009 giving: Thank you, Thank you and Thank you! Because of your faithful stewardship, we have substantially reduced our mortgage principal and supported our thriving ministries. We are asking you to maintain your pledges for the Operating Fund, Mortgage Payments and your pledges for the three year "Whack the Mortgage" debt reduction payments. **Most importantly, we are asking that any growth in your pledges to Rejoice be directed to grow our Annual Operating Fund in order to better support the day to day operations of Rejoice.** Your pledges now for 2010 will help prevent any cuts in programming or staff. We know you are faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to you and that God will provide us with all we need to support our ministries!

Our message to those who have not pledged but who give offerings regularly to Rejoice: We need you to prayerfully consider and commit to a pledge to Rejoice on Commitment Sunday, November 29th so that we are better able to plan for the coming year. **Your pledges should be directed exclusively to our Annual Operating Fund so that we can help fill in the shortfall we are experiencing now.** We don't need you to pledge for the Building Fund (Mortgage Payments) or the three year Whack the Mortgage Fund because our existing pledges should meet those needs. We do need you to step up and be counted as faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to you.

Our message to new members or members who have not previously pledged or given offerings to Rejoice: We would like to offer you the opportunity to become faithful stewards. **All new pledges should be prayerfully directed to a pledge to the Annual Operating Fund so that we can help fill in the shortfall we are experiencing now.** We don't need you to pledge for the Building Fund (Mortgage Payments) or the three year Whack the Mortgage Fund because our existing pledges should meet those needs. Again, we need you to step up and be counted as faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to you.

In conclusion, all increases in pledges for 2010 to Rejoice should be prayerfully directed towards growth in our Annual Operating Fund in order to more faithfully support our thriving ministries. We touch many lives with our efforts and, in some cases, even save lives. We want to continue these efforts in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Thanks be to God for His Enduring Faithfulness and Love!

Yours in Christ,

Mike Stanch

Mike Stanch
Stewardship Minister



Rejoice 2009 Ministry Highlights

Your faithful service and financial support of Rejoice has made it possible for us to carry out ministry in significant ways this past year. Some highlights of what God has done this year in and through our congregation:

Our primary ministry at Rejoice is **Worship**; this central act of hearing God's Word, celebrating the Sacrament, and responding with love, joy, energy, gratitude and service defines our particular community. All that we do flows out of this! To make each service happen we called upon the gifts of singers, musicians, worship leaders, communion assistants, greeters, liturgical artists, set up helpers, bulletin folders, ushers, preachers, snow shovellers and others, all of whom served with love and energy!

The Rejoice **Worship Ensemble** shared the joy and blessing of leading worship throughout 2009. This group of 30 song leaders and instrumentalists passionately returned their gifts in worship every week. This year the group introduced current and relevant worship music by a number of contemporary Christian artists.

The **Junior High ministry** at Rejoice exists to help students know, live, own and share their faith in Jesus Christ. Each week students learned from God's word in a way that was designed specifically for them, experienced community in small groups, connected personally with God in a guided prayer time called Sabbath, and hung out with their adult mentors on "Mentor Nights." Our **Matrix Mentor Crew** is the heartbeat of Matrix and consists of a team of adults and high school students who shepherd and personally invest in our Junior High students' spiritual formation.

You all know and love our Summit Crew, our **high school student group**. These students have a thirst for the word of God and for knowing Him. This year we created House Groups, where the students gathered in one another's homes, opened the bible, and learned from each other through discussion and asking questions. Although this is student led, our amazing **Summit Mentors** meet with these students at House Group and at our weekly gatherings on Sunday evenings to invest in the lives of our kids and help them navigate the "faith maze."

Jake Fry, our Youth and Family Director, witnessed an **explosion of spiritual growth**. "I have watched these students rally around one another when life gets tough," explains Jake. "I listened to them pray for each other. I saw them hand a lunch they made with their own hands to the homeless of Los Angeles. I sat across a table from them at Starbucks after school and listened as they processed what it means to live their faith. I felt the energy of over 60 anxious students ready to cover all of Mill Creek to collect food for the hungry families in the Gulf Coast." He goes on to share that "the things that occur within the walls of this church and (most importantly) outside the walls through our Youth Ministry will have an eternal impact on the world. I am so proud of them, and I know their Heavenly Father is as well. Thank you, Rejoice, for valuing our youth, for being willing to teach them, mentor them, invest in them, and love them."

Our **Children's Ministry** continues to have about 50 happy, excited children attend our Midweek Program on Tuesday evenings. Rejoice kids and their friends in grades one through five got together to actively learn all about what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus.

Rejoice's 5th grade youth group, **Justice League**, became champions of justice and gained greater awareness of world-wide issues such as poverty, fair trade, hunger, the environment, clean water and many more. They raised enough money to buy a fruit tree, baby chicks and a pig through the ELCA Good Gifts program, as well as fighting for fair trade practices by reverse trick-or-treating with their own fair trade chocolate, hosting a food drive for the Salvation Army Tri City Corps food shelves in St. Charles, and donating items for the homeless dogs and cats at the Andersen Animal Shelter.

2009 Ministry Highlights, con't . . .

For the past two years Rejoice designed and wrote our own **Vacation Bible School** curriculums. Last summer our theme, "Jesus Recycles Our Hearts," centered on the environment as we hosted over 100 children from Rejoice and our surrounding neighborhood.

Every Sunday morning children excitedly descended the stairs for "**Kids for Christ**" to learn great stories from the Bible while their parents listened intently to the sermon! While the little ones were gently cared for in our **nursery**, the older children engaged in hands-on activities, discussions and crafts that helped them discover how they can apply the lessons taught each week to their own lives.

In early November, following months of preparation by a gifted leadership team, we completed our second women's "**Christ Renews His Parish**" (**CHRP**) **retreat**. This ministry is a beautiful way to make new friends, grow in our faith, and engage more deeply in the life of ministry here. Our men's CRHP group continues to meet and has served our ministries in countless ways throughout the year.

Mission is core to who we are in Christ and one way we live out faithful stewardship. **Moms in the Mission** gathered women from Rejoice and from the community each month to serve with creative and innovative projects. These amazing women invested in each other and cared for people who were struggling, both locally and globally.

Rejoice equipped and sent 25 missionaries, ages 16 to 73, on a **domestic mission trip to Biloxi, Mississippi**, where we partnered with Thrivent Financial and Habitat for Humanity in their ongoing effort to rebuild the gulf coast after Hurricane Katrina. Our team made *great progress on 2 houses* as we labored through rain, heat and humidity! God also used our congregation to gather and transport over *7000 pounds of food* for a local Biloxi food pantry, identified by the local churches as their greatest need. Congregation members collected food from their neighbors, and our Matrix students and mentors went to what seemed like every house in Mill Creek, bringing back an incredible amount of food that they later helped pack and load up on the truck.

Ron and Becky Hubbard, a long-time Rejoice family, made a second trip to **Africa** to work among the children there, and our own Inga Theeke is on another building project in **Thailand**. As a congregation, Rejoice continued our ongoing commitment to share in financial support of the Davis Team, a Chicago area family who is connecting teenagers with Christ in **Spain**.

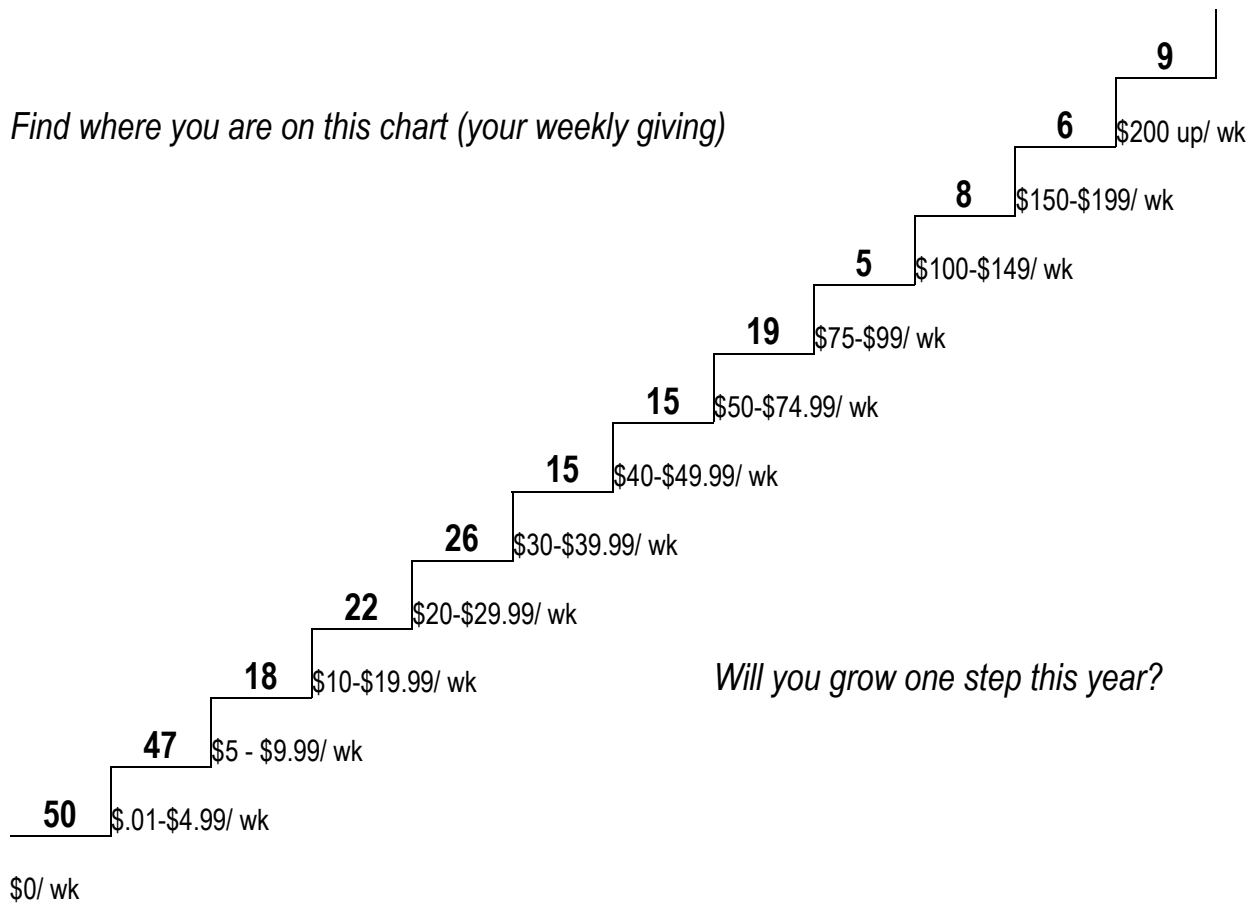
Closer to home, dozens of Rejoice members teamed up every other month to serve our homeless neighbors at **Hesed House** in Aurora by preparing food, bringing supplies, and staffing the shelter overnight. We partnered with Bethlehem and Hosanna Lutheran churches to host life-saving **blood drives** several times. In our Mill Creek neighborhood we were blessed to be able to help sponsor the annual **Run of the Mill race** to benefit a local cancer resource center, and we hosted neighboring kids for "**Trunk or Treat-ing**" on Halloween!

This year Rejoice gathered around **Nick Gaultile**, a young man in our congregation who suffers from a chronic illness that limits his mobility. We hosted a spaghetti supper that raised funds, partially matched by Thrivent Financial, to complete modifications to Nick's home that will accommodate his needs, then worked alongside the Gaultilles to finish the building and landscaping chores.

A vital aspect of our community life is **pastoral care**, where we were blessed to serve those who experienced difficulty or illness through care, prayer, music, meals, hospitality and love! We were honored to care for several families who lost precious loved ones. Our **Prayer Shawl ministry** team created shawls as gifts for people who were struggling to remind them of God's presence and grace, and they prayed as they knitted over the person who received each one. As a congregation we intentionally set aside funds in a **benevolence account** that was used to help families in financial crisis. The support of the congregation in their donations and service makes all of this possible.



A BREAKDOWN OF OUR CONGREGATION'S GIVING PATTERNS



This chart shows the numbers of "giving units" at Rejoice and what each is giving through October, 2009. We ask that each of our families consider moving up one step from where they are now so that we can increase our giving for our annual budget. Please prayerfully consider moving up one step for 2010!

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the thriving and important ministries of Rejoice Lutheran Church!



With gratitude to God, my/our faithful, proportional giving plan for 2010, in support of the Operating Budget and Mortgage Payments is as follows:

Operating Budget: Per week: \$ _____ Per month: \$ _____ Per year \$ _____

Mortgage Payments: Per week: \$ _____ Per month: \$ _____ Per year \$ _____

Any increase in you pledge for 2010 should be directed towards the Operating Budget!!! *If you made a 3-year pledge toward the "Whack the Mortgage" principal reduction, that will remain the same unless you notify us otherwise. 2010 is the final year of our 3 year commitment period.*

Name(s) (please print) _____

(It is understood that this giving plan may be changed by notifying the church office.)

If you wish information about electronic giving, please check here: