

WE TAKE THE WORRY OUT OF RAISING FUNDS

A Stewardship Message from the President

C. Eugene Musser, President

Kirby-Smith Associates, Inc. has been providing a vital stewardship ministry since 1938. We are a company of Christian individuals who help build Christian community within the churches that we serve. We do this through a stewardship approach to fund-raising. We communicate a message of time, talent, and treasure. Stewardship is a ministry that my experience has shown many “good” Christians do not understand.

Jesus talked about money in 16 out of 38 parables, and one out of every ten gospel verses presents a stewardship message. The Bible has approximately 500 verses on prayer, 500 on faith, and 2,000 on money and possessions. Money and possessions define us today, and I would suspect, more so than when our Lord walked the earth. Why did our Lord speak on the subject regularly, and why does the Bible teach over and over again a stewardship message? I contend it is because Christians find stewardship a hard lesson to follow. True stewardship is a journey of faith.

To successfully present your stewardship message as a community of faith, we, first and foremost, must practice good stewardship in our own lives. Living and practicing stewardship in all we do communicates a powerful example to those around us. We must not be afraid to share with others these same principles that guide our own behavior.

(continued on page 2)

Managing Much or Little

José De Jesús, Executive Vice President

Think how the flowers grow; they never have to spin or weave; yet, I assure you, not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of them. Now if that is how God clothes a flower which is growing wild today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will be look after you, who have so little faith! But you must not set your hearts on things to eat and things to drink; nor must you worry. It is the gentiles of this world who set their hearts on all these things. Your Father well knows you need them. No; set your hearts on His kingdom, and these other things will be given you as well. There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. Luke 12: 27-32

If you were to ask what are people’s biggest preoccupation these days, probably among the top 2 or 3 would be their future. Their financial future. Their moral future. Their future as a parish, a community, as a family, as a society—and the list goes on. Are you worried about your future? That of your family? Your job?

Linda is a single mother of two who works with Maria at the nearby hospital. Both women are nurses. Whenever Maria talks about trying to save for college using mutual funds, retirement plans, and insurance, Linda cringes. Linda is lucky if she can afford school clothing for her two kids. She feels guilty that she can’t afford to give her kids what the other kids in their classes have: Nintendo video games, cable television, cell phones, Nike sneakers. Linda attended

(continued on page 2)

Stewardship Message from the President *(continued from page 1)*

When Mother Teresa passed away, she was arguably the most respected woman in the world at that time, by people of all faiths. Her respect was borne out of a simple practice of stewardship, of sharing her gifts with the poorest of the poor. In spite of a lifetime of good works, she was not without her critics. Sometimes she was criticized for not using her considerable influence to attack systemic evils, such as the arms race or organized exploitation and injustice. She simply responded that was not her mission. A favorite motto that Mother Teresa lived by was “Do small things with great love.” A truly great person, she recognized how important a simple message was to the people to whom she ministered.

Your ministry may never bring the international recognition of a Mother Teresa, but sharing your gifts with others is no less important. Recognize the simple and the important ministry you provide as a community of faith in how you share your gifts for your church and the community-at-large.

Our Lord’s message is one of sharing our gifts. The Easter season is an excellent time to reinforce the message of stewardship. Recognize that you must make every effort to present a message that is personal, relevant, and filled with joy. Present the message of vision and hope, along with the possibility for a brighter future, as we share our gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Sharing stewardship is not about the financial picture, but the bigger picture of being our brother’s keeper. Your message of sharing one’s blessings and those who are helped through those gifts may be new to the listener. Be patient and recognize we are all on a journey, and your members are not all at the same place in that journey.

Through Christ, all things are possible. Christ’s message to all of us during Easter is joyous, and hopefully, shared in the same spirit of stewardship.

During the Easter season, we share a message of joy and renewal, not one of despair, in spite of the underlying fact that Our Lord was crucified. Our Lord shared all and through His gift, we are given salvation and eternal life. Have a blessed Easter.

Managing Much or Little *(continued from page 1)*

an Easter party at Maria’s house and was later embarrassed to invite Maria to her apartment for coffee. Linda doesn’t think about retirement; she hopes she could stay healthy enough to work until she dies. While this might sound a bit extreme, in reality, Linda is too proud to have her kids take care of her when she gets old. She doesn’t want to be a burden.

Although the circumstances of both women are very different, one is a single parent and the other is not, both face similar decisions on a daily bases. Both women have been given much to manage on God’s behalf. In the end, it all belongs to God.

If we believe that God is the source of all we are and all we have, what does that say about our own personal dignity and how we ought to feel about ourselves and

others? If we believe that we are God’s highest creation and “good” in the eyes of God, why are so many of us embarrassed about what we look like, what we wear, or what others will think of us? If we believe that Jesus died for our sins once and for all, then why do we worry about what tomorrow will bring? In fact, don’t we believe that the best is yet to come? Yet, in all of these things we must strive to move away from simply believing but to “knowing” them to be true.

Have you ever had an experience of “knowing God,” where you felt God’s presence close to you? What did that feel like? How did you “know” it was God? Where were your problems then? How would your view of your life change if you “knew” who you really were in the eyes of God and lived only from that paradigm?

Easter Sunday Brings a Hope That Is Certain

Jeff Knauer, Executive Vice President

Easter Sunday is the time when Christians celebrate Christ's resurrection, His **victory** over death and the grave. We recall how Jesus became alive again, left the tomb, and was seen by many of His followers. Those memories stir us on Easter Sunday. They raise our hopes. But how do we allow the astounding truths of Easter to affect us the other 364 days of the year?

First, consider how the **hope** associated with Easter can affect our **attitude** toward life. It certainly made a difference in those who followed Jesus back then. Take Peter, for example; denying his association with Christ out of fear, then returning to his nets to fish; later, transformed into a man of courage and boldness after having witnessed his Savior risen from the dead. No matter how bleak life's circumstances may become, Jesus' example can keep us from ever losing hope and giving up.

Second, the **hope** of Easter can affect your outlook towards the **future**. The news of the present day can be quite depressing if that is where we fix our complete attention. But God's word has something else for us to hear.

In Rev. 21, John writes: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. . . I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem . . . and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away . . .'"

Those who **embrace** the **hope** of Easter can look forward to the future of which the apostle John wrote. The apostle Paul reinforced this principle by encouraging the Romans, "if indeed we share in His sufferings . . . we may also share in His glory." Summing up his own outlook, Paul said, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Whenever Paul encountered trouble (and he met more than his share of trials), he chose to think about Christ's promises of what lay ahead of him. A bright future with Jesus raised Paul's hopes and kept him true to his call.

Noted author, Hal Lindsay, wrote, "Man can live 40 days without food, about 3 days without water, 8 minutes without air, but only 1 second without hope." One verse of an old hymn goes like this:

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

It is a perfect time to reflect anew upon the **hope** that Easter brings, a **hope** that is certain in Christ. But let us remember for more than just one day. Allow the **hope** of Easter to affect our **attitudes** and our outlook towards the **future** all year long. May **your** Easter be filled with **hope** anew.

Stewardship Options

As you may be aware, Kirby-Smith Associates has served more than 10,000 churches across the country since our founding in 1938. An integral part of our work is stewardship education, and it would be an honor for Kirby-Smith Associates to assist with your church Stewardship Program. To do nothing in these difficult economic times in churches is to invite a free fall in offertory.

We can tailor a program specifically for your church at a cost of \$1,500 or less per church. By grouping churches, a substantial program can be provided at limited cost. Any less expensive program would be mail-only, which is not usually successful. The program we are offering is comprehensive, cost effective, and successful. Please call to discuss the details of how we can assist your church.

Building stewardship along with bricks and mortar...

Building and renovating church facilities can be a daunting process—difficult to know just where to begin and to figure out what all has to be considered. Are you prepared? Do you have the resources and people on-board ready for the task?

Kirby-Smith Associates has developed a way to help through the church building seminar, one of our most valuable services to faith communities. This educational evening offers pastors, lay leaders, and committees a place to begin, a chance to ask questions, and lay the groundwork for working through the process.

Kirby-Smith Associates partners with area experts from construction companies, design/architects, and banks that are familiar with the construction process for church communities. In a little more than 2 hours, our presenters provide an evening of new ideas, information, and innovative ways to think about the building process.

Learn the importance of developing your vision, determining what you can afford, planning your facility, and emphasizing stewardship during the building experience. It is an opportunity to join with other pastors and lay leaders going through the same process, and to get answers from the experts.

This May, several seminars will be held in the eastern Pennsylvania region (Mechanicsburg, Lititz, and Bethlehem). For more information or to register, go to www.kirbysmith.com/seminars. This is a service we can provide in your local area. If an evening seminar is something that would be of benefit to your church, or we could hold a similar seminar in your vicinity, call 800-762-3996.

Services offered by Kirby-Smith Associates, Inc.

- Capital Campaigns
- Increased Offertory Campaigns
- Stewardship Appeals and Training
- Consultation Services
- Feasibility Studies
- Vision Development
- Christian School Campaigns
- Annual Appeals
- Diocese, Synod, District, and Conference-wide Campaigns
- Workshops/Seminars
- Development Officer Training