

Can A Simple Gift Card Change a Life?

In January, PTCA teaching elder Dean Seal (on behalf of the Committee on Ethics) addressed the Presbytery with a simple challenge: collect a \$10 Cub gift card. Or twenty. For women in need.

Seal said, "Too often, single-moms, especially, are faced with terrible choices. To purchase food for hungry children often means there is nothing left for hygiene or other essential personal needs. It's these kind of unmet human necessities like food, basic toiletries and electricity for themselves and their families that will drive women into the street trade. Something as simple as a Cub card is one way we can help to begin to change that narrative."

For Lois Glewwe, chair of finance and the financial secretary for First Presbyterian Church in South Saint Paul, that challenge resonated: it was simple, straight-forward, and do-able, the kind of challenge to which, she said, "people will respond." And it would make a direct impact on the lives of people.

With the blessing of pastors Tom Watson and Katie Estes, Lois went to a local Cub Foods store and bought 25 Cub gift cards. During worship, she briefly told the story of the challenge she has heard at Presbytery and the potential impact of the gift cards, and asked for 25 persons to each buy one of the cards.

That morning, she sold 120!

In all, the South Saint Paul congregation collected more than \$2,000 in gift cards and cash. Edgecumbe Presbyterian Church in Saint Paul, where Lois also puts in a few hours a week, sold nearly as many cards as it has people in worship. And on the far western end of the Presbytery, an intentional push at Buffalo Presbyterian netted dozens of Cub cards as well.

In all, the people and churches of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area collected \$2,820 in Cub gift cards and another \$500 in cash.

And that's just the beginning of the story. Northside Women's Space, a ministry of the PTCA's Liberty Community Church in north Minneapolis, distributed the first of the cards this week to women with whom it ministers.

This is what Rev. Alika Galloway, director of Northside Women's Space, said of the impact of the cards: "Twenty women received the gift of \$100 each in Cub cards. Each was so grateful. One began to talk about how she could see a decent lunch with her children! Another said she didn't have to worry for once about how they were going to get dinner. Another woman had been incredibly worried about how she would make lunch for her children next week when they were not in school any longer. While summer is fun, it is also when free lunch ends. Here are 20 families who won't have to choose whether to spend money on food, or transportation back-and-forth to work, or rent, or electricity. That makes a huge difference. That's the impact."

It was a simple request Dean Seal made to Presbytery: Cub cards. Just \$10 each. Maybe that's part of the reason it worked: because it was easy and simple, to understand and to give. Through the generosity of First Presbyterian in South Saint Paul, and Edgecumbe Presbyterian, and Buffalo Presbyterian, and Westminster Presbyterian — churches large and small and in the middle — and scores of Presbytery commissioners at the May meeting, the people of the PTCA made a difference. Thanks to the work of people like Lois Glewwe, a simple gift card is changing lives.

A mission trip in April. Cub cards in May. Our eyes are on the future. What can we do next, do together, to make a difference?