

Love in the Heart of Durham: *Whoever welcomes YOU, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes ME, welcomes the ONE who set me.*

I'm Cris Rivera, and it has been a pleasure serving as your Stewardship Co-chair, along with co-chair George Bernhardt, Mindy, and our wonderful committee: Miriam Morey, Celia Dickerson, Sharon Hirsch, Lesley Curtis, Pat Dillon, Cherrie Henry, and staff Tom Bloom and Valerie McMillian. Also thanks again to all the folks who put on this lunch, setting up and cleaning up, and for all those serving as home visitors to bring pledge packets to those who weren't able to join us today.

This is George and my second year in these co-chair roles, and we have been fortunate to have opportunity to expand our own ideas of what it means to be stewardship leaders. For us, stewardship for us goes beyond looking at the annual operating budget and time and talent cards. Stewardship is a lived theology founded on the claim that all resources begin with and belong to God. It's how we as individuals and as a community respond to God's generosity. It's how are caretakers of all of our resources, be it our finances, our bodies, our planet, our lives.

*Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.* When I first visited First Presbyterian in 2004, I'll admit I was skeptical. I had come from a faith tradition that at the time seemed to reject me without even taking the time to know me. And I was still skeptical when I came with Beth to First Presbyterian Church of Durham, I was greeted warmly and repeatedly by an almost too enthusiastic bunch in the back right corner... where we still sit to this day. It is this same kindness, hospitality, and relational generosity

that I see every Sunday that makes Passing the Peace my favorite time of the service. It is this neighborliness, that I also see extended by this church's mission and ministries, the walk-in-ministry, prison ministry, tutoring at Igelsia Emanuel, advocacy with Durham CAN and most especially the First Presbyterian Day School. A light of love in the heart of Durham.

The gifts of this congregation have made it possible to do all of these things, but we know the need just keeps growing. Our neighbors are hurting in so many ways. This year we have set two goals for the Stewardship Campaign – one financial, one in time and talent.

Goal #1 - to increase the Service and Mission operating budget. We, with the congregation's help, would like to increase the Service and Mission budget for benevolences by \$20,000 – we have been able to do this as a body in the past through special fundraising and match gifts, but we'd like to see this in the operating budget, where the committee can plan and depend on it. The general operating budget, that includes salaries and regular maintenance of our century old property, literally keeps on this light in the heart of Durham. This year, using time study and square footage information, we allocated both the salaries and property costs into what we consider the functions of the church – I feel very good about this picture.

In order to make our financial goal, we are asking pledge increases of between 4-6%. Overall the goal is a 5% increase in pledges, or approximately \$50K.

Goal #2 – We would like a measurable increase in service and mission participation to grow the capacity of mission projects. While there are many ministries of the church, Service and Mission has identified

several areas where they will ask for specific increased numbers of participants and hours. By tracking, we may be able to measure the impact of your gifts of time.

Over the course of the month, you will hear Minutes of Stewardship like the powerful one the McDows had today. Please read the stories in the packet. We all have stories of generosity. We have learned to both give and receive as members of this congregation. Please prayerfully consider the ways you can help increase our mission and ministries this year. Your pledge packets have your previous year pledges as well as space to indicate new participation with Service and Mission. Please send by mail, go online, or bring these back by Dedication Sunday at the end of October. If you are not a pledger, please consider pledging or making a planned contribution as these allow the session to forecast, plan and approve the budget with as much information as possible at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Again thank you for making this a welcoming space for so many people.

And thanks to John Weicher for helping us with the social media pieces.

Tyler Momson-Hudson will now say a few words from the Service and Mission committee.