

## Enews for 8/2/2023

In my first few years at my previous congregation, I discovered that the church owned a vacant lot on the edge of town. When I asked the Treasurer about it, he explained that a church member had left it to the church in her will twenty years before. Early on the church had explored uses for it—maybe it would be the site for a new manse, donated to Habitat for Humanity, or sold and the money used for some other purpose. However, nothing had ever been done. In fact, at one point the church even forgot that they owned it until there was a problem in the neighborhood and people dug into the court records to see who was responsible! With no vision for the property and some costs to maintain it over the years, I encouraged the session to try and sell it, which we did. Within an hour of the sign going up on the property, we had an offer from a neighbor who wanted to buy it and build a house for his daughter! In the meantime, the HVAC unit in the church's fellowship hall went out. The repairman told us that it was time to replace it and the price tag was going to be... almost exactly what the offer was on that vacant lot we were selling!

All of that began decades before when the pastor and ruling elders of the church had a conversation about stewardship that led that member to leave a piece of property to the church in her will. Her gift was an investment into the future of the church—a future she would not see. Nonetheless, she was an important part of that future as her gift enabled us to replace the HVAC unit and go on to use that fellowship hall to host theatre camps, Vacation Bible Schools, funeral receptions, disaster relief efforts, and the community Thanksgiving Dinner. I made sure that we used that space for something else too: conversations about stewardship that would hopefully lead others to make the same kind of investment into the church's future. Churches can often be shy when talking about money; however, that timidity is to our own detriment. Stewardship is an essential spiritual discipline for our members and money is an important tool for carrying out our mission.

That is why the Presbyterian Foundation provides not only investment services to congregations but also stewardship education that helps church leaders become more comfortable and competent at talking about money including:

- [A Church Financial Leadership Coaching Program](#)
- [Scholarships for pastors to attend Stewardship Conferences](#)
- [Online Training Opportunities like those coming up on August 23](#)
- [Resources for congregations to talk about wills and estate planning](#)

There are many more resources available at the [Presbyterian Foundation's Website](#). You can also reach out to our region's [Ministry Relations Officer, Stephen Keizer](#), for further assistance. The leaders who came before me at my previous church did not know how that conversation about stewardship would one day lead us to have a piece of property to sell at the right time. Who knows how God's providence might be worked out through you?

May the Peace of Christ be with you,  
Barry