

from the shepherds

January 2011

Brothers and Sisters,

Earlier this month, we, your shepherds, confessed that we have not been doing a good job of leading this congregation, and we committed to doing better in 2011.

(If you missed the letter that Rich read, it is reprinted on the back of this note.)

One of the things we want to improve is communication, so you can expect to hear from us more frequently.

Last week, I shared with you some of our goals for outreach in 2011 and the challenges we face in reaching them. Based on our weekly giving in 2010, our

Finance team has had to cut our budget to the core. **Many of our outreach**

ministries are at risk in 2011. What does this mean?

- People who come to us for help with groceries, rent or gas have to be referred elsewhere.
- We can't help individuals and families who need counseling.
- We have committed to supporting the Carters' mission work in Panama, but we don't have the money in the budget.
- We want to do more in 2011 to support Pedro and Nila and our Hispanic congregation, but we're currently unable.
- We cannot support Matthew's Hope financially (though we will continue to make our facilities available).
- We would like to start a recovery program to help members and those in the community who struggle with addictions, but we don't have the funding.

These budget issues aren't due to the building expansion (our mortgage payments in 2011 will be \$20,000 less than they were in 2005) nor are salaries the cause (salaries in 2005 were more than \$25,000 higher than they will be in 2011). Our primary problem is that weekly giving has declined by more than 23% since 2005. We realize that this decline is partially due to the economy, but we believe God expects us to do more and that **we can do more if our hearts and priorities are in the right place.**

The shepherds are committing to fund these programs based on our faith that our giving will increase if the congregation understands the need. You have been very supportive in the past when needs have been brought before you.


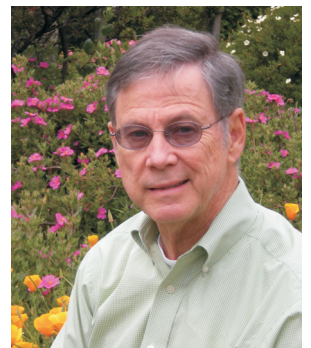
We need at least a \$61,000 increase in total giving for 2011 to fund our outreach ministries. This may sound like a big number, but it isn't when you consider that we can easily reach that goal with **an increase in weekly giving per household of \$5.50.** That's less than a Big Mac Meal at McDonald's; less than a coffee and danish at Starbucks; less than a movie ticket.

For a small number of our families, job loss or fixed income may make a \$5.50 increase impossible. But for the majority of us, God continues to bless us financially and many could give not only an additional \$5.50, but potentially more to stand in the gap for those who truly cannot. **We pray that you will give generously of your money and your time so the West Orange family can be the light that God wants us to be.**

Your brother in Christ,



Mike Cliburn



If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

James 1:26-27

Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you. Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone."

Luke 11:39-42

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:1-2