

Investing in Treasure!

Matthew 6:19-21

Clearly, Jesus taught us that our greatest treasures are not the temporal possessions we gather around us, but the eternal riches we store in heaven!

As stated in the NLT:

“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.” Matthew 6:19-21 NLT

Our mission at Christ Wesleyan is to keep the highest eternal treasures before you. It is our desire to make sure we are always investing in eternal treasures and thus, changing our world. We are also committed to equipping each of you with the knowledge and ability to make those personal choices that will have eternal impact whenever you are given those choices! So, the question for each of you is: “What are the eternal riches in which you are investing in your world?”

All that we are doing has the potential of storing up “treasures in heaven.” With this in mind, it becomes absolutely necessary to see that there are many ways to accomplish those goals and to use our gifts. No matter what our gifts, God calls us to use them enthusiastically as unto the Lord.

“So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.” 1 Corinthians 15:58

There are three listings of spiritual gifts in the New Testament: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. In Romans 12, we see the gifts of speaking, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leadership or administration, and showing kindness! If we use these seven gifts as a guideline for investing our treasures, we will keep on track to reaching our world, as well as maintaining eternal priorities. It is my belief that as long as we keep these priorities in the right order, God will continue to bless His church here at Christ Wesleyan.

Speaking –

It has been a joy for Sharon and I to serve together in ministry for the past 36 years. Initially, in 1981, those areas of service were in an Assistant Pastor role and the founding and administration of Meadowbrook Christian School. In 1989, I became the primary speaker and communicator, and have continued for the past 28 years. I have been so grateful for the incredible pastoral team God has provided over the years, who have been a strong support and gifted communicators as well.

Serving –

During the past year, there were 1,883 serving opportunities filled by you! Each of those opportunities represents a way where the body of Christ serves one another. Each department within our ministry needs those volunteers to help us function effectively. The more volunteers who serve or businesses that donate their time or resources, the more we can invest in ministry. Your investment in serving is an investment in building treasures in heaven! Please allow me to share just a few names of those outstanding servants during the past year who have been shared by our ministry leaders - Men like; Bill Resides, Bob Hamm, Jim Holdren, Perry Meadows, Jon Dimmick, and Rich Rhoades. Women like; AnnaBelle Deitrick, Shana

Reed, Jen Snyder, and Priscilla Keiser. Couples like: Jim and Carol Muchler, Gary and Sharon Hoffman, Kevin and Johanna Klinger, Chaese and Andrea Pickett, and Dave and Cora Long, and teens like: Troy Bittner, Tylor York, Ben Heintzelman, Ashton Slagenweit, and Abby Bell. All these servants and hundreds more have made this a successful year by investing their treasures. Thanks for using your gifts to impact the Kingdom.

“The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work.” 1 Corinthians 3:8

Encouraging –

We have been blessed by those who have used their gifts of encouragement to touch the lives of those within our church family. 813 contacts were made by our “On-Call Team”, with visits, phone calls, and various other communications - all ministering at critical times of need. Our Benevolence Fund has encouraged families in times of need amounting over \$23,000. Support groups have provided bonding times and encouragement to those who are struggling. Barnabas Ministry continues to send cards and other means of encouragement to those in need as well. Our counseling ministry has provided 657 sessions of support and direction to those within our fellowship and our community. All of these ministries have been a source of encouragement and have stored up treasures in heaven.

“And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.” Matthew 10:42

Giving –

Although our general budget income has decreased in the past two years, we have still been able to meet the needs of our staffing, facility, and ministries. This past year our giving in tithes and offerings reached \$3.02 million. I am especially grateful to each of you for your faithfulness in offering your first fruits to the Lord by supporting the local church. Our ability to minister, locally, nationally, and internationally, is facilitated by the generous hearts of those within our fellowship. Although our general giving has had a slight decrease, our missions giving has set a new record high with \$804,000. This figure represents the 9% from our tithes and offerings, special offerings, projects, mission team fundraising, child sponsorship, and Casa Materna (a maternity home to help reduce the infant mortality rate). Internationally, your giving has built a playground, served medical needs, and sponsored 53 children in Guatemala. It has served in disaster relief in Haiti and Peru. You have provided blankets for 100 Iraqi refugees needing shelter as well as helped support 14 missionary families in 11 countries. You have supported medical teams in Haiti and the beginnings of churches in Ethiopia. Locally, you have supported the Haven Ministry, Expectations Women’s Center, Meadowbrook, Oasis of Hope, and The Well Ministry. You have given \$25,000 in gift cards to individuals in our community, provided outreach opportunities to the community for children, families, business leaders, and future pastors. Your giving supports Pastor Immer and our Hispanic Ministry that is reaching Spanish populations in our area. \$44,000 was given to the Food Pantry this past year, equipping us with the ability to reach 2,447 distributions to families with over 210,000 pounds of food! All invested in treasures that only heaven will reveal.

“For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do.” Hebrews 6:10

Leadership or Administration –

Without the capable gifts of administration and leadership, our ministries could not function effectively, and reporting could not be responsibly communicated. Thankfully, each of our departments has administration that better informs us of how our ministries are functioning. Pastor Ken and his team lead the way in providing capable administration. Here are a few vital sign statistics that might encourage your heart: This past year, we set a new record high of 1,592 in worship attendance, a plus of 70 over last year. Our second highest number of those shipping out on short-term mission trips was 165. We reached over 5,000 people with our “I’ll Be Home For Christmas” project. Our website was accessed by people in all 50 states and 119 countries. Our youth ministry reached over 350 teens this past year with an average of over 200 attending on a weekly basis. Over 2,300 people participated in our largest KidzWay outreach, Trunk or Treat, with over 200 children attending Sunday mornings on a regular basis. Our Outreach ministries continue to be a front door to our community: The Well serving over 21,000 drinks and 8,000 different paying customers, over 1,600 participants in events for Well Fit, and over 3200 transactions at Well Read Bookstore, with 527 Bibles sold this year, and nearly 4,000 since 2012. Meadowbrook had a record high year with over 400 students from six counties and 19 school districts and still equipping their students to perform 250 points above the national norm in college boards and the student body as a whole scored in the 84th percentile nationally! All of these numbers may seem like just a bunch of numbers, until you realize the impact that is happening in our area and the treasures in heaven that are being stored! Our greatest treasure in heaven is the number of people who have made decisions for Jesus Christ and this year we hit another record high of 840! 410 of those were local with nearly half from the White Deer Run Ministry and 430 of those from the efforts of Global Missions through mission trips! I couldn’t be more excited about the impact that you are having locally and around the world!

*“Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.”
Colossians 3:23-24*

Showing Kindness –

Your compassion and care is seen in all that you do! Your kindness is evidenced in your generous hearts, the warm and welcoming spirit that reaches out to those who come through the doors, and the constant and diligent work of “Sharing the Light of Christ with our World!” Thank you for serving the family of Christ locally and throughout the community. Although many of you are serving within the local church, there are a number of you who have other service opportunities in para-church ministries and civic organizations, all adding up to making a difference in the lives that surround us - Your treasures in heaven are many!

Using your spiritual gift will help you serve the body of Christ. You must know what your gifts are and then seek for ways to use them if you are going to invest in treasures! As we look toward the future, I would encourage each of you to be focused on “Investing in Treasures” that are eternal! With 40% of our population unchurched, there are many more in our world to reach! We are always thinking seriously about how we can best store treasures in heaven...how will your year be different as you plan on investing more strategically in your world?

Once again, Sharon and I would like to thank you for the privilege of serving. Your compassion, care, and support to us and your spiritual leadership team are crucial to our being effective! For all of this, we are grateful.

Serving Him and you together,
Pastor Arlie