

STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT TESTIMONY

November 8, 2009

Dave Tolmie

First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest

Good morning. My name is Dave Tolmie. My wife Tracy and I and our 3 children have been members of First Pres for 14 years. Mission and Stewardship have always been important to our family, but I've never been asked to get up in front of the congregation to talk about it. But today I've been asked to do just that and since this is Commitment Sunday and, I hope you'll bear with me.

For the Tolmie family, we believe that we've been blessed by God with the opportunity to make a difference in the world. In fact, it's not just an opportunity, but a responsibility. Our approach is to prayerfully seek out what God is calling us to do and then to ask Him for the strength and commitment to respond to this calling. Our daughter Maddie, who is a sophomore in college, recently referred to this as "having the courage to move beyond good intentions to taking action". We've been called to take action in places ranging from Africa, to central Chicago to right here in Lake Forest.

I wish I could end my talk right here, and tell you that we do a great job of following through on good intentions. But, in truth, we too often fall short. Life's ups and downs can cloud our ability to respond to God's calling. Perhaps you experience the same challenges. There are times when we feel secure in our jobs, health, and relationships, but at other times, the stresses of life can make everything feel so uncertain. Particularly in challenging economic times like these, life can feel like we're struggling just to keep our balance. We're not sure if we're the ones able to help people in need or if we're actually the ones who need the help. It's *life on the edge* and it doesn't feel good.

For me and Tracy, we get off the edge by getting back here – to our Christian home with all of you. Through worship, learning, teaching, and serving, we get your hearts and minds back to hearing God's call more clearly. We are so grateful to our pastors, programs, friends and fellow members here at 1st Pres. For us, Commitment Sunday is an opportunity, a time to reaffirm all that 1st Presbyterian Church means and does for us.

Before I close, I've got one other thought I wanted to share. Tracy and I have been involved enough here over the past 14 years to realize that it's also a challenge for 1st Pres to be able to consistently respond to God's call. Through 150 years of ups and downs, our congregation has had its time *living on the edge* as well. Let me be more specific.

Our church has financial obligations and challenges, just as we do as individuals. The fixed costs for personnel, this beautiful facility, programs and mission require that each year our member

pledges meet the budget. Falling 10% short inevitably creates an environment where energy is focused on cost controls, salary caps and fund raising. We seem fixated on meeting our own needs which can get in the way of meeting the needs of others. When funding falls short, you can feel it in our staff and in our programs. If you think your financial pledge doesn't make a difference, think again. Without your commitment, our church's mission can get stuck on the edge. And that is NOT where God intends us to be.

But the mission to which God calls our congregation is much more than about money. It's about our personal commitment to making a difference in and through the work of 1st Pres. What does this personal commitment look like? It's being here regularly to worship, and bringing along your teenage child or a friend who hasn't been here in a long time. It's teaching a class or taking a class. It's being an active student of the Bible and a small group member. Or serving an evening shift at the homeless shelter. These are the commitments that will lead us to clearly hear God's call and to joining forces to make a difference.

So I'll end where I began. For the Tolmie family, we find our lives are lived to the fullest when we totally commit ourselves to hearing and answering God's call. On this Pledge Sunday, I hope you will join us in getting off the edge and commit yourselves to making a difference. And as we do, what an awesome, God-filled place our beloved 1st Pres will continue to be. Thank you and Amen.