

Stewardship

Stewardship Retreat

Cory Shaw, lay member from Wisconsin Rapids UMC, attended the Stewardship Retreat at Pine Lake Camp last summer, along with her Pastor, Marty Williams. The event, sponsored by the Foundation and the Board of Camp and Retreat Ministries, was a 24 hour event for clergy and laity to work together to develop a 3-5 year stewardship plan. Cory wrote the article below for her church newsletter.

Next summer's retreat will be **August 18-19** at Pine Lake, beginning with lunch on Wednesday at noon and ending with an early dinner served at 5:00 pm Thursday. The focus for this retreat will be to develop a 3-5 year stewardship plan. Come by yourself or bring a committee. Samples of over 25 financial stewardship campaigns will be available for review and sample 3-5 year templates will be available. Register through the Camping Office by calling 1-877-947-2267.

I was always under the impression that the term "stewardship" was just a fancy name for church fundraising. With that belief and the fact that our church and church community are dealing with financial difficulties, I decided to attend a stewardship retreat this past August led by the Foundation. I thought I would learn about and bring back a bunch of nifty fundraising ideas. Imagine my surprise when I found out how off-base my thinking was! I learned so much during that retreat that my mind was numb.

It is always a humbling experience to find out that you really don't know as much as you think you do! I knew that the Bible speaks of tithing and offerings. However, I did not know that the term stewardship originally did not have anything to do with the exchange of money, and that the meaning has evolved over time. I learned that being a good steward is a way of life, a verb, not limited to a stewardship campaign time frame. Being a good steward can be an act as simple as not letting the water run while you brush your teeth, to volunteering to teach Sunday School without being asked, to sharing your monetary abundance to fund a special project. Any time we share from our heart whether it be our

time, talent, or treasure—we are being good stewards.

I was also very surprised to learn that as a church, we should not set our budget according to the stewardship campaign results. Instead, we should inform the congregation of our goals as a church in regard to various ministries and projects for the upcoming year—before the stewardship campaign. This allows the congregation time to be prayerful and to give consideration to the church's goals.

I could go on and on, but suffice it to say that it was a very informative and enlightening retreat. Even though I was one of only a few laity in attendance, the group of clergy in attendance and the members of the Foundation were welcoming and friendly. I would highly recommend this retreat to anyone interested in learning more about stewardship. I'd like to close with a Nigerian proverb that was shared at the retreat that really changed my view of stewardship. "It is the heart that gives; the fingers just let go."

Cory Shaw, Wisconsin Rapids UMC

