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Asking For Money

In September a number of Mennonite Church Canada staff climbed onto bicycles and became part of the Ride for Refugee movement. It was a cold September morning, chilling our fingers and giving us plenty of reason to ride hard enough to work up a sweat.

I was thrilled by the initiative. Staff were taking a Saturday and raising money for the work of Mennonite Church Canada. This is no small matter. Many staff already volunteer evenings and weekends in support of their regular ministry work, in their congregations, and for other worthy causes.

When the initiative was first raised there was some hesitation. Some felt uncomfortable asking friends and family for what felt like financial support for their jobs. It is a common dilemma in the work of the church.

For much of the church how we engage our relative wealth is a touchy subject. Many pastors try to get someone else to preach about that topic because of the perceived conflict of interest. For pastors it can feel like they are preaching for their own salary.

Yet asking people to give financially is as critical as asking them to worship or pray. It is an important spiritual discipline, especially in such a market driven world that idolizes individual want and desire. Consumerism is given religious value. It offers fulfillment. The more you purchase, the better you will feel about yourself.

Followers of Jesus Christ are more aware of such incorrect assertions. They know that ultimate fulfillment is discovered when persons leave the entrapment of individualism and align their lives for the glory of God and the blessing of others. That is why generosity is an important spiritual discipline. It holds back the subtle influence of consumerism. It reinforces the intent to remain unattached to the lure of materialism. When followers of Christ give, it is an act of solidarity to the way of Jesus. To extend an invitation to others for such activity is a delight, not something for which to feel embarrassed.

So, it was a delight to be part of the staff group raising money for the work of Mennonite Church Canada. We began to realize that as paid workers of the church, we were not asking money for ourselves. We were asking for financial support for a movement that we love and are working hard to support. A pastor preaching about stewardship is not seeking personal financial gain. Rather it is an invitation to develop patterns and habits that reflect the commitments and yearning of the heart – to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind; and to love our neighbours as ourselves. This is a good thing to support.

So, when you receive an invitation to give, receive it as an invitation to express worship – even if the one extending the invitation is paid by the very work they support.