

HISTORICAL GIVING GLIMPSES

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

Year	Cong.	Comm.	Budget Receipts	Comm. Average	Synod Support
1973	58	15,877	\$208,751	\$13.15	\$ 50,000
2011	52	12,697	\$524,921	\$41.34	\$206,000

(For a complete, detailed report contact: www.selc.lcms.org - Stewardship - District/Synod Finances)



Former SELC Logo
by Rev. John Bajus

HUMBLE BUT VISIONARY BEGINNINGS

On Sept. 2-4, 1902, fifteen congregations organized “The Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the United States of America”. To insure the propagation of a Biblical Word and Sacrament Ministry, financial support was vital. Slovak immigrants for the most part were laborers earning low wages. Nevertheless, money was contributed to support pastors, build churches, maintain ministries and support the new synod. The synodical treasurer’s report in 1912 showed receipts of \$607.51 and expenditures of \$547.10. Receipts for the mission fund were \$90.48 and the student fund, \$2,246.92. In 1913, special projects supporting an orphanage, inner missions, foreign missions and seminary totaled \$838.18. In 1928, SELC biennial receipts grew to \$25,348.74.

(From “A History of the SELC, 1902-1927” by Dr. George Dolak)

CHRISTIAN LOVE IN ACTION

Holy Trinity, Cleveland, OH

Financial stewardship, motivated by love, was reflected in the Jan. 13, 1904, ledger of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Cleveland, OH, where President John Pankuch requested contributions for a new church building: “... in the hope that the Almighty will help us through kind hearted Christians, we undertook to build a church. We ask you, therefore, as lovers of God, to contribute donations for this purpose.” A new church was dedicated April 1, 1906, followed by a new eight grade school building in 1926.

The Lutheran Haven, Slavia, FL

In 1948, major funding for the establishment of a retirement home and orphanage was provided by the Duda family, St Luke’s Lutheran Church, Oviedo, FL, and congregations of the SELC. Continued loving financial support enabled the beautiful retirement community with assisted living and nursing home facilities today.

Sts. Peter & Paul, Lorain, OH

A money-miracle took place at Sts. Peter & Paul, Lorain. In 1958, an approved \$90,000 bank loan coupled with building fund assets moved the congregation to move forward with plans for a new church and educational facility. At the last moment the bank withdrew its loan. Members put love into action. Families lent

funds via promissory notes averaging \$1,500 to \$3,500 at 5% interest. Ultimately, most of the annual interest was waived and many loans cancelled. Christian love found a way to beat the compound interest banking system.

Holy Trinity, Yonkers, NY

In the sixties, Christian love went into action in Yonkers, NY. Holy Trinity, surrounded by deteriorating housing in a depressed neighborhood, purchased four three-story apartment buildings, refurbished them and offered low rent. Later, in the seventies, the congregation was instrumental in organizing an association consisting of three parishes - Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox. All three, within a block of each other and the name “Holy Trinity”, spearheaded community improvements by obtaining city, state and federal funds. Poor housing was demolished and replaced with senior citizens units, two fourteen story apartments for minorities, two community parks and an open air “Trinity Plaza”. Quality of life was improved through cooperative love.

STEWARDSHIP GROWTH RESOURCES

www.selc.lcms.org - Stewardship

Personal: “Love Stimulated Stewardship”

Poster: “Christ Centered Giving”

SELC HISTORICAL GIVING GLIMPSES

District Financial Support

In the early years of the SELC, when it was a separate synod known as “The Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church”, congregational contributions to the Slovak Synod’s budget were based on communicant member assessments. In the fifties & sixties, the annual assessment hovered at \$12.00 per member. For example, a congregation with 200 communicants was asked to remit \$2,400. In the seventies, the practice was abandoned. Suggested increases were then, as well as now, calculated on the basis of a percentage increase of a goal accepted by a congregation the previous year. Congregations were asked to contribute on the basis of their ability and willingness to give. Even though goals are no longer set on a communicant member basis, the calculated average per communicants in 1973 was \$13.73; in 2012, \$41.45. A sizable number of congregations exceeded the average.



Congregational Financial Support

In the early years of the SELC, congregations also assessed individual communicants with a set amount. Laymen were appointed as “Collectors” (“Kolektori” in Slovak) with the responsibility of collecting the assessed amounts (dues). Those who did not voluntarily contribute, were visited by the “Collectors” in their homes. Later, when the practice was abandoned and members were asked to voluntarily give what they could, another device was devised to spur giving - “The

Scandal Sheet”, which annually listed the names of members and amounts donated. This, too, eventually was abandoned in favor of “Biblical Giving” which encourages Gospel based giving motivated by love for Christ and involves:

- Proportionate (percentage of income)**
- Regular (every Sunday)**
- First-fruit (funding God first)**
- Cheerful & Willing Giving**

BIBLICAL GIVING GLIMPSES

Moses & Gifts for the Tabernacle

When Moses requested offerings for the building of the tabernacle, the response was overly generous. “... the people are bringing more than enough ... and so the people were restrained from bringing more.” (Ex. 36:4 & 6)

King David & Gifts for the Temple

King David’s generosity for the construction of the future temple inspired others. He happily said: “... everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand ... all these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.” (1 Chron. 29:14 & 17)

King Hezekiah & Temple Gifts

“Hezekiah gave orders to prepare storerooms in the temple of the Lord and this was done. Then they faithfully brought in the contributions, tithes and dedicated gifts.” (2 Chron. 31:11-12)

Widow’s Offering

Mark 12:41-44 recalls how many wealthy people contributed large sums and a poor widow only two small copper coins worth less than a penny. Jesus observed: “They gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on.” (Mark 12:44)

Generosity of Macedonian Christians

“Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity ... they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.” (2 Cor. 8:2 & 3)

Evaluate Your Giving

1. My motive for giving: _____
2. My percentage of annual income giving: _____
3. My attitude when giving: _____
4. My frequency of giving: _____
5. My priority in giving: _____

Compare your answers: (1) Eph. 5:1-2 (2) Mal. 3:8-10
(3) 2 Cor. 9:7 (4) 1 Cor. 16:2 (5) Prov. 3:9