

“CONCERNING THE COLLECTION”

Gary McDade

Paul began his correspondence to the Corinthians by telling them that he taught the same thing everywhere in all the churches (I Cor. 4:17). As he wrote “concerning the collection,” that point is again brought to the forefront as he said, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (I Cor. 16:1-2). As the churches in Galatia had been instructed concerning the collection, even so Paul instructed the Corinthian congregation. A number of churches of Christ today do not see the connection between this inspired teaching of the apostles in the New Testament and appropriately applying the apostles’ teaching to the functioning of the church in general and to the financing of the work of the church in particular. The rejection of the New Testament as the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice for the church today by these brethren is yielding man-made organizational systems that unlike the Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas, persist in holding on to the scriptural designation “churches of Christ.”

In a discussion of “The Church Is Distinctive,” Wendell Winkler included how the church is distinctive in regard to its funding. Under the heading “Entertaining Projects To Raise Money for the Congregation’s Work Are Not Employed” he wrote,

Such activities are without divine authority. And, Bible authority must be respected (II Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). Accordingly, pie suppers, auctions and rummage sales are not practiced. Instead, the Lord’s church is supported in her work by the liberal, free will offerings of its members, with instructions for such outlined in I Corinthians 16:1-4 and II Corinthians 8 and 9.¹

The same edition of *The Spiritual Sword* included an article by Hugh Fulford on “Financing the Work.” In the heart of his article under the subheading of “Financing the Lord’s Work Today,” he summarized,

These scriptural principles of “church finances” are simply stated and are not difficult to understand. They constitute a “commonsense” approach to funding the work of the church. In God’s plan there is no place for bingo

games, car washes, cake and pie suppers, or garage/yard sales. Since the church is divine, and since its mission is divine, let us stick with the divine plan for financing its work!²

The timely admonitions of these highly respected brethren deserve a solemn hearing within the church today.

In Memphis, founders and supporters of the community church movement have opened a store, the proceeds from which help finance one of the churches in their system. This is viewed as good news by Leon Sanderson who wrote under the heading “Still Some More Good News From City Missions!”

For some, downtown is a place to work, for others it is a place to visit. For many, it is at least fifteen miles to the west and only to be read about in the paper. However, through City Missions, we are involved with the Downtown Church of Christ (DTC) and this church is alive and well. I want to relate some of their activities from the last quarterly report by their minister, Jeff Matthews. Jeff’s greeting: DTC is moving forward with some new ministries to encourage members, strengthen relationships and reach out to our community and offer needed service to the community while generating funds to support ministry needs. DTC Thrift Store: This is open every Monday and Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with bargain sales of used appliances, furniture, house wares, toys and clothing. All proceeds go to fund DTC benevolence and much needed maintenance and repair for DTC Outreach Building. All donations are accepted.³

Dave Phillips has in his church bulletin,

MUM/HOPEWORKS
CHRISTMAS STORE

The MUM/Hopeworks Christmas Store reminds us that children need and want effective parents more than toys for Christmas. Please help us make that easier for the families we serve in the inner city by donating toys to the store. Parents get to select toys for their own children by paying 25 cents on the dollar. The children receive what their own parents provide. Funds from the store are used to purchase additional toys for the store. Toys should cost between \$8-\$20, for ages up to 16. Please bring toys to

the Fellowship Hall by Dec. 7. Leave price tags on and do not wrap the toys.⁴

A recent HopeWorks graduation consisting of women preaching, testifying, and singing solos was held in a building owned by the church of Christ and was declared to be a worship service. The next graduation will be held December 11, 2003, at the Frayser Assembly of God.⁵

In summary, the example of the apostles of Christ was to teach the same thing in every church. Efforts currently are being made to persuade members of the church to return to the “apostles’ doctrine.” Examples of taking liberties with God’s divine will in regard to the financing of the work of the church present real reason for concern, and these local exposures can create conversations within these congregations “concerning the collection.”

ENDNOTES

¹Wendell Winkler, “The Church Is Distinctive,” *The Spiritual Sword*, Alan E. Highers, ed., 35:1 (October 2003), p. 46.

²Hugh Fulford, “Financing the Work,” *The Spiritual Sword*, Alan E. Highers, ed., 35:1 (October 2003), p. 39.

³Leon Sanderson, “To Serve with Love,” *Server, A Weekly Publication of the Church of Christ at White Station, Memphis, Tennessee*, 50:45 (November 12, 2003), p. 2.

⁴*Family Talk, The Lord’s Family in Germantown*, Dave Phillips ed., 36:46 (Nov. 23, 2003), p. 5.

⁵Steve Holt, “Family Matters,” *Server*, 50:46 (November 19, 2003), p. 2.