



STEWARDSHIP CONNECTIONS

An Informational Newsletter For Financial Connections

Stewardship

CONNECTIONS WITH INTEGRITY *by Richie Lauer*



Stewardship *Connections with Integrity* serves as the common motto for Anabaptist Financial and Anabaptist Foundation. It is carefully designed to define who we are, why we exist, and how we should operate—and we intend it to be more than just an attractive sounding platitude; we intend it to be a practical standard and a measure of our organizational vitality and success.

Stewardship Connections with Integrity

As conservative Anabaptists, we hold to a biblical view of stewardship. *God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Owner of all that is, and, in His goodness, God entrusts us with a relationship with Him and use of His things.* He calls us to an intimate Master-servant relationship and provides us with resources, principles to follow, unlimited amounts of one-on-one conversation, and freedom to “exercise dominion” in making decisions.

I find it quite humbling to personalize God’s trust in me: He has entrusted me with knowledge of His Word, the gift of salvation, Christian parents and parents-in-law, a wife who is truly a “help meet for me,” three teenage boys who have given their hearts to Christ, a healthy body, a sound mind, a church brotherhood, the opportunity to live in a country with religious freedom, and friends who care enough to challenge me. Isn’t that wonderfully generous on God’s part? Isn’t that enough? He also allows me to have a job, property, some money in savings, and material possessions. All of the above gifts fit into the concept of

stewardship. I find joy in trying to honor God’s trust by exercising dominion and stewardship in all the aspects of my life, including but not limited to finances. This involves taking a hands-on and mind-active approach to managing all of the resources entrusted to me.

Anabaptist Foundation and Anabaptist Financial exist to offer stewards financial counsel consistent with Anabaptist values. You too are a steward. What has God entrusted to you?

Stewardship Connections with Integrity

As conservative Anabaptists, we do not attend “Sunday morning only” churches. Our concept of church and brotherhood involves far more than a 1-2 hour service once each week. Instead, we attempt to exercise our Christianity on a daily basis as we live, work, and relax in community. We value belonging to each other in ways that are tangible, visible, and practical, and maintain relationships that run far deeper than just public worship. We bear the extra costs of maintaining our own schools, we support youth groups so our teens are surrounded by peers of similar faith and practice, we rub shoulders with each other in the workplace, and we share each other’s medical costs. The connections that we have to each other have demonstrated themselves in our practices of brotherhood and mutual aid, and are part of the basis for creating both Anabaptist Foundation and Anabaptist Financial. Even though we are keenly aware of our differences in the application and practice of certain Bibli-

cal principles, we recognize the fact that we jointly, as conservative Anabaptists, support each other in preserving Biblical teachings that are, at best, neglected in many other Christian settings. Do you attend a “Sunday morning only” church or do you belong to a brotherhood with deeper connections?

Stewardship Connections With Integrity

Another important theme in our understanding of connections is recognition that finances and possessions powerfully affect the way we belong to each other. The way that we interact with things and people matters and impacts our exercise of Christianity.

The current economic troubles are rooted, at least in part, in a lack of integrity and responsibility within financial institutions by both investors and borrowers, who pursued personal financial advantages at the expense of Scriptural principles. This can happen in “Christian” circles, because many people who call themselves Christians divide their lives into two distinct parts. They consider their spiritual life to involve Sunday morning worship and, perhaps, a personal walk with God. The rest of their life is somehow different, disconnected, and secular. We feel it is unscriptural to believe or practice this “disconnect.” If biblical principles are not lived, it is fair to question if they are really believed.

We welcome input from others that is designed to help us prevent error, avoid sorrow, improve testimony, and

Continued on page 4 »

GIVING IN THE USA

Americans made gifts of over \$307 billion in 2008, but only 35% of that amount was classified as gifts to “religion”.¹

The median annual gift in the USA was only \$224.00. About 60% of all charitable giving is done by the top 5% of donors. **About 20% of those who classified themselves as “Christians” gave nothing at all to churches or charities in 2008.**²

God appreciates every gift offered by a surrendered heart, whether that gift is small or great in dollars. As has been said many times, God is probably less interested in what you gave than He is in what you had left over after your gift. There is a reward for those who, like the poor widow, give sacrificially regardless of their income level, but a “Christian” who gives “nothing at all” . . . reflect on that for a while. Is such a situation even possible?

CHARITABLE GIFT FUND UPDATE

During our 2008–2009 fiscal year, which ended on June 30th, donors used the Charitable Gift Fund Program to make 160 gifts to churches, charities, and schools, in amounts totaling \$877,468.46. This included 39 gifts to 25 different churches or church district alms funds.

INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT (IMA) PROGRAM

Another milestone was reached recently when the Foundation’s IMA program grew to just over \$9.6 million. We ap-

preciate the 57 churches, schools, and nonprofit organizations that have chosen to participate and are glad to provide an option for investing funds within conservative Anabaptist circles. The current rate for church or nonprofit funds (committed for one year) is 3.75%. Shorter term accounts are also available. Following is a chart detailing the growth of the IMA program:

Investment Management Agreement Program		
Growth of the IMA Program		
Fall 2006	\$1,365,000.00	11 accounts
Fall 2007	\$2,900,000.00	32 accounts
Fall 2008	\$4,124,000.00	41 accounts
Fall 2009	\$9,679,000.00	56 accounts

OPEN HANDS FUND

Lyndon Swarey arrived in Haiti on October 13 to begin his 3 year term as AF’s Open Hands Fund coordinator and is living in the guest quarters behind the church at Cadiac. Special thanks to SLM Ministries for graciously allowing us to use this lodging and for giving Lyndon access to the SLM mission house facilities. The first two Haitian facilitators or group leaders, Johnson Jeudy and Walcus Vital, have been hired. Johnson is a member of the Cadiac church, and Walcus works part-time for Christian Aid Ministries as a school inspector. Please pray for Lyndon as he begins tutoring in the Creole language and laying the groundwork for the program. Also pray for Johnson and Walcus as they begin speaking to pastors and churches about the savings program and recruit individual participants.

The initial \$50,000.00 that the Foundation contributed for micro-loans in Haiti has now entered its second 6-month cycle. At least 96% of the funds

loaned out in the first 6-month cycle were repaid by the Haitian borrowers. This is a small start, but we are grateful for this success and believe it is evidence that this program of accountability, financial teaching, and small business loans is a key to helping Haitians break out of dependence on outside aid.

To date, donors have contributed just over \$51,000.00 of the \$55,000.00

needed to operate the next stage of the Open Hands Fund work in Haiti.

MEETING WITH YOU

Meeting with people is by far one of the most enjoyable aspects of my job at Anabaptist Foundation. I regularly have the opportunity to visit with businessmen in their offices and families in their homes. Some very good friendships have grown out of those interactions. The Foundation exists to be a service organization, with programs designed to address the needs of individual donors, churches, schools, and nonprofit organizations. If you have a goal related to charitable giving or a question related to a nonprofit organization, please feel free to contact me (800-653-9817, ext. 709 or richielauer@afweb.org). In addition to meeting with individuals and families, the Foundation schedules presentations for churches and nonprofit organizations. Ω



Richie Lauer
Foundation Officer

¹Giving USA Foundation, 2009

²Richard Klopp/Lake Institute on Faith & Giving at Indiana University

by Richard Shank

Sometimes during my phone conversations, individuals inquire about the state of things at Anabaptist Financial. Are you growing? How is the current economy affecting the investment and loans pool? The purpose of these periodic operational reports is to keep you informed of how things are progressing at Anabaptist Financial. Our goal is to openly disclose to you, our clients and constituents, the current trends and fiscal status of our organization.

Currently we are managing \$41.6 million of investment funds. On December 31, 2008, that number was \$27.6 million; year-to-date growth has been nearly \$14 million, about \$1.4 million per month. We have opened 237 new investment accounts in 2009, averaging 1.2 per business day. The answers to the above questions are—yes, Anabaptist Financial continues a positive growth

trend, and the current economy has not adversely affected our overall growth rate.

As you may surmise, the above growth rate necessitates a steady stream of loan originations. Anabaptist Financial has a Loan Review Committee consisting of three individuals, who closely review and approve each loan that we fund. We are thankful that we have had an adequate amount of qualified borrowers to loan the above funds to. So far this year, Anabaptist Financial has funded \$11.5 million in 62 loans.

Here at the AF office, we have daily contacts from people within our conservative Anabaptist communities spread all across our country. It is a joy and privilege to serve financial needs within this brotherhood network of “those of like-minded faith.” Ω

“If Only . . .”

The following story is a composite of several situations. Names, locations, and other facts have been changed to illustrate and simplify the case.

Ronda had just left my home, leaving me, her church deacon, with a perplexing dilemma. When Ronda’s husband Kevin succumbed to cancer last month, our entire church was devastated.

Soon after the funeral, I felt it was my responsibility to check on Ronda’s financial situation. I was pleased to learn Ronda thought the income from Kevin’s partnership business would be adequate to support her family of six children. That fact was a relief, since money was a really scarce commodity in our small congregation.

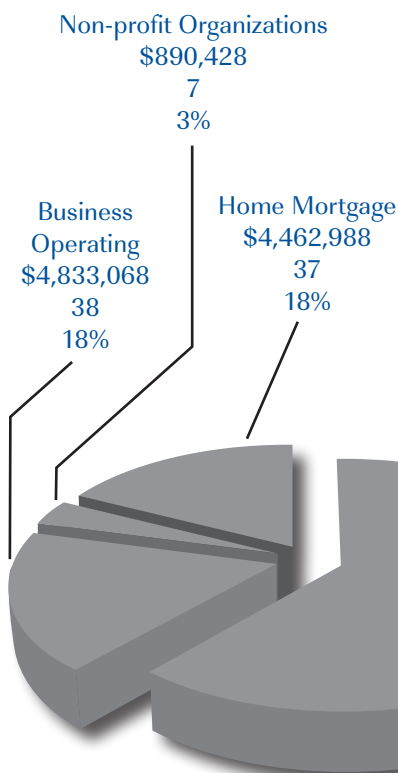
But today Ronda was in tears. It seems Kevin’s former partners planned to buy Kevin’s share of the business, and they were only planning to pay her \$38,500 for Kevin’s share. Why, his annual earnings were almost that amount. They said their partnership agreement gave them the right to buy Kevin’s share. But surely the business was worth more than that! There must be a mistake.

But when I spoke to the other partners, they insisted they were offering what was right, and they had no intention of paying Ronda a greater amount. They had families to support, too. By the next Sunday smoke seemed to be rising from all corners of the church building. Six families felt Ronda was being mistreated. Three strongly defended the partners.

And I was in the middle of what was rapidly beginning to tear our church apart. I confess that my sympathies were with Ronda and her now fatherless brood. But the partners had brought in an accountant and a lawyer who supported their payment amount. As the deacon, I attempted to pour the proverbial oil on

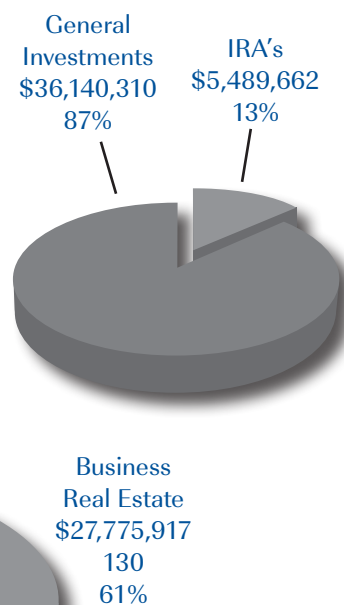
Continued on page 4 »

Loans by Type



Assets Managed

Total Investments: \$41,629,972



Continued from page 1 »

grow spiritually. Within the bounds of confidentiality and prudence, both Anabaptist Foundation and Anabaptist Financial wish to be accountable to our conservative Anabaptist constituency. We have an intentionally diverse board of directors and advisory group so that we can receive counsel from the breadth of conservative churches. Our independently audited financial statements are available upon request.

Stewardship Connections with Integrity

This is much more than a slogan: it is a sincere attempt to define who we are, why we exist, and how we should operate. How are we measuring up? We would be glad to hear from you because your input matters. Ω

Continued from page 3 »

the troubled waters, but I forgot that oil can quickly add fuel to the fire. My efforts seem to make the situation worse.

The following Tuesday I stopped at the local hardware store for a few repair parts. The owner and several customers accosted me. They had already heard parts of the story. Some agreed with Ronda, and some with the partners. It was obvious that even the community people were becoming involved with what should have been a private affair between Christian brethren.

The next day I visited a mature Christian businessman. After hearing the story, he sadly shook his head. If only the partners had prepared and signed a good Buy-Sell Agreement, in which a long-term provision had been made for their wives. If only they had decided on a written formula to establish the value of the business if any of them needed to leave; because of choice or otherwise.

If only they had not thought that as friends they would always easily agree on solutions for all future problems.

How much better it would be today if they would have sought the assistance of a Christian business advisor to help them develop this simple agreement when the business started—an agreement which would have also addressed things like payment terms, restrictions on a partner selling his share to those outside of the company, and future issues such as bringing their children into the company.

But that all happened a year ago. When you drive by the church house today, the windows are boarded shut. Weeds and brush choke the yard, and broken tree limbs block the driveway. If only . . . Ω


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