

KCC Question of the Week

16 September 2011

I've noticed that during the collection of the offering during worship on Sundays the Co-pastors don't put anything in the offering plate. Can you explain this?

Here's an attempt at an answer:

As one of the Co-pastors I've felt odd about this myself. In fact, I've played with the idea of putting in an envelope with a few dollars in it just to give something to God within the context of worship and also avoid things looking odd.

The way pastors are paid by congregations in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a little bit strange. In essence, the congregation comes to the pastor, or in our case pastors, and says, "Here is the total budgeted amount we have allocated for your position(s)."

From that pot of however much money comes everything – salary, housing, professional expenses, all taxes (including the full 15% for social security), health care, etc.

Mindy and I take 10% of the pre-tax money from that pot allotted to income (salary and housing) and ask the church to keep it. We call it a voluntary income reduction. This is our tithe, our base gift. In addition, we also put extra money in our expense accounts in part so that we can gift money to seed some ministries in the congregation. All of these numbers are public record and available to anyone who wants to see them.

Specifically in regards to the question above, our tithe never is actually paid to us, so we don't have it to put in the offering plate. There are all sorts of things I like about this practice – it's automatic, for one thing. I suppose it's a little like setting up a regular gift to the congregation through Paypal on the website. About the only thing I don't like about the practice is we don't have anything physical to put in the plate as an act of worship.

One thing I've noticed is that, for better or worse, Mindy and I hardly use checks anymore. I daresay that this is common, especially for people our age and younger. As time moves forward, it probably would make sense for the congregation to look at the possibility of doing some sort of direct draw for members who want the regularity we experience. This might be cost-prohibitive, however.

Anyway, I'm sure this was an exciting read (sarcasm intended), but, nonetheless, thanks for the question.

Peace in Christ,

Robert