



Money Matters

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Weekly insights into generosity, Conference finances, and being stronger together.

This week's Offering - The Parable of the French Fry

By Matt Laney, is the Senior Pastor of Virginia Highland Church UCC in Atlanta, GA.

Abraham apportioned one-tenth of everything. – Hebrews 7:2a (NRSV)

A few years ago, I took my then-nine-year-old son to McDonald's for a snack of french fries. As we sat down, I did what all fathers do after buying fries for their kid: I reached over to take one. For that, my hand was slapped. "Dad!" my son griped. "Those are mine!"

"Oh really?" I said. "Who drove you here? Who paid for the car and the gas? Who placed the order and forked over the cash? I bought those fries so technically they belong to me." At that point he begrudgingly handed over a few measly little fries he didn't want anyway.

Guilt tripped or not, I suspect that most of us fall into the trap of giving leftovers to God. After we pay for everything else: mortgage, utilities, food, transportation, insurance, cable, internet, cellphone, gym, kids activities, pets, vacation, college fund, investments, debt, taxes, frivolities, then (maybe) we'll give to God from whatever is left.

Faithful stewardship, as I understand it, encourages the reverse. It's about giving to the church and other places we care about, first, and structuring the rest of life around that. I'm still working on that.

When the biblical baseline of 10% feels like too much for me, it helps to recall that Jesus asked his disciples to give away everything. In any case, God deserves more than my leftovers.

Prayer

Great Giver, every dollar and possession I believe I have, actually belongs to You. Grant me the joy of returning what is Yours.

About the Author

A version of this devotional by Matt Laney also appears in *On Giving: Reflections & Resources for Pre-Generous Parishioners*, a collection of practical prompts for talking about money in church. [Order On Giving here.](#)

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And we Celebrate!!!

[Refugee family from Congo reunites in Chicago after 5 years apart](#)

Five years ago, the family was forced to separate. While Mweniame and her son were allowed into the U.S., her husband was not, so he stayed behind in a refugee camp in Tanzania. See their reunion that took place May 26, and First Congregational Church of Western Springs very own Clare Kralovec telling the story of First Congo's role in helping our Refugee One family.

The announcement above was originally shared on [First Congregational Church of Western Springs](#) (Facebook Page)



Video credit: [ABC 7 Chicago](#) (YouTube Page)

RefugeeOne will be our Guest Speaker on our Stronger Together Chat on July 14.



Who we are

The Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ is made up of all of the churches, members, clergy and covenant partners affiliated with the United Church of Christ in the northern half of Illinois. The shared work of the Conference is funded primarily

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