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## **PRESIDENT'S LETTER - AUGUST 07**

"We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit."

- Colossians 1:3-8

Colossians was written to believers in Colosse by the Apostle Paul from a Roman jail. This congregation had probably been founded when Paul had preached the Gospel in Ephesus. The Gospel had produced remarkable results in this region of Asia Minor. These "holy and faithful" brothers in Christ were under attack by false teachers who were saying that if you kept the Jewish ceremonial laws and listened to the Greek philosophers your life would be better. This is the same message in different guise of many of the TV evangelists and mega-church preachers and the church growth movement of today.

The Apostle Paul even though he had never personally met these faithful Christians saw what these believers really were in Christ. The Apostle thanked God because of their faith and love. Every true Christian pastor is heartened to see this same faith and hope in the members he serves. I also thank God because of what God has done in the hearts and lives of all of you and your flocks. Through your faithful witness and love, the Gospel is bearing fruit throughout the world. Check out what is happening in India this month on the CLC website. In these last days, the Gospel continues to grow and bear fruit.

Thank God for the power of Christ. It is a miracle of the Holy Spirit that the Gospel has produced a living faith and love in the hearts of your hearers. Isaiah promised that the Word of God would not return unto Him void, but that it would accomplish God's holy purposes. The Colossian Christians had heard this Gospel through Epaphras, Paul's companion. Paul continued to pray that God "would fill their hearts with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding." The lives of God's people revolve around the Word of God.

As pastors we sometimes miss the “small and insignificant” miracles of faith and love in the lives of our members. We become discouraged and disheartened because things do not go the way we think they should. The Christian life is a journey of becoming what God has already made us. Paul in chapter 2 encourages the Colosse brethren and us, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *continue to walk* in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” (Colossians 2:6-7) I wish all of us could better communicate with our people the joyful recognition of what God has done for us in the CLC. We have been rooted and built up in Christ. We have been established in the faith just as we have been faithfully taught. How can we help but abound in this faith and overflow with gratitude to our Savior-God?

This past fiscal year the Lord did what the Co-ordinating Council thought humanly impossible (very difficult). The CLC General Budget ended up in the black! The decline in enrollment (ten students) at ILC put a serious strain on our budget.

1. Congregational offerings were \$850,000 - an unprecedented increase of 10% over the previous year. The General Fund part of the operating budget ended the year with a balance of \$103,000.
2. ILC began the year with a deficit of \$60,000. ILC underspent its budget by \$35,000. Therefore ILC ended the year with a deficit of \$16,000.
3. We will be able to put money into the Reserve Fund as anticipated by the new budgeting model.

It is important that you realize and communicate to our people the continuing financial challenges which face the CLC. We are facing another decline in enrollment at ILC. We pray that this year’s offerings continue to increase as God blesses His people. The present (FY08) budget anticipates a spending deficit of \$57,000. I believe that if we are going to maintain ILC in its present form, we need to continue to fund it at the present budgetary level regardless of enrollment revenues.

What is more important is that we do not evaluate our member’s faith and love by the budgets we set. The fact that the CLC made its budget does not necessarily mean that God’s people are giving more than they are able. I am sure that in this materialistic society with its emphasis on instant gratification, our people and we are not giving to God the first-fruits of what God has entrusted to us. God alone is able to look into the hearts of people and evaluate the motivation for giving. God alone is able to motivate Christ-centered giving in the hearts of people by the Gospel.

Please communicate to your people your joyful thanksgiving for their faith and love. Pray for your flock!

With joyful thanksgiving and prayers for your faithful ministries,



John Schierenbeck