

(Invite Biff Staples to share testimony.)

Good morning.

I remember the first time Sandee and I saw Baker church we were moving to St. Charles from Michigan. It was so prominent as we drove into town. We were looking for a church to settle into, and quite honestly we were looking for a Presbyterian church. In the beginning it was a combination of the building attraction and friends of our two youngest daughters that helped influence our decision to join Baker.

Our decision to attend Baker 9 years ago has been very rewarding. Our oldest daughter Stephanie was married at Baker and we now have two wonderful grandsons. Our second oldest daughter Sarah attended an ASP trip and taught Sunday school with her best friend in high school and our youngest daughter Emily was baptized here at Baker. All of our daughters have become Christians and are active in their respective churches where they live. We have been blessed with a wonderful family and have that same feeling about our membership and time spent at Baker Memorial.

My personal journey with my faith and growth at Baker has been and continues to be a work in progress. I have missed my share of church on Sunday to play golf and have ducked on responsibility when the call goes out for volunteers for church work. I have over time struggled with what it takes to become a Christian. I have always felt that being a Christian meant that you have to read the bible and always understand what you read, attend adult Sunday school classes and verbally express your faith. But that has not been my style and commitment to God at this time.

I think the biggest influence in my Christian journey has been the ministry of growing together and being apart of something and working with some great people. By joining or being asked to join committees and service groups that I felt comfortable with, and had experience in, has made the transition of my religious journey easier and more full filling for me.

I started out in a small way with a membership in one committee. That has led to subsequent memberships on other committees where I am able to interact with many members from diverse backgrounds. And I am able to blend in my experience in the business world to better understand the workings of Baker and specifically the financial side. I have learned that running a church is not like running a business. It requires many dedicated volunteers, limited staff and a lot of prayer and hope.

I also have had the opportunity to be on two service teams supporting the third Sunday church service. First is working with the very experienced usher team with Don Johnson, Orv Jones and Rick House. These are special guys who have made significant contributions over the years to Baker and I think their efforts and beliefs are beginning to rub off on me. After ushering, my next two hours are spent with Jim Emmett counting the day's offering. I look forward to those two hours of "money counting" as a chance to discuss many interesting topics as diverse as religion, politics, pets and sports, even watching the British Open on EunBae's black and white TV.

These two groups offer a glimpse of all the efforts that go into preparing for a service. I have taken a particular affinity in appreciating those efforts and feel that all those people are helping me in my faith journey.

Having now been apart of something bigger than what I had first thought, with my involvement at Baker and my faith journey is the understanding of what God calls for us to support with our time, talent and wealth. Our family started out pledging around 2% of our base income. Because I believe we are called to live our mission in loving God, serving others and growing together we will continue to pledge 5% of our base income to the ministries of the Baker church. We will also increase our giving by 50% the balance of 2009.

In my particular field of business, the automotive world and the current economy, this seems like a large amount of giving. But what's important is how it makes us feel about our faith and needs of our church and community. I believe that we all need to look inward and consider what we can afford and make the commitment.

Thank you.