

Barbara Italiano – Testimonial – Sunday – January 14, 2007

I would like to talk to you about my stewardship experience and how it has evolved. Prior to moving to Ramona I had no church home. I was baptized as an infant and did occasionally attend the Catholic Church, but was never a regular member of any church (Catholic or otherwise). I never knew Jesus Christ as my savior.

When we moved to Ramona, God had his hand on us and guided us to Ramona Lutheran School and Church. I know this both emotionally and intellectually. However, in the beginning we only attended church when Teresa was involved in a school program (as she was attending the preschool here). I saw in the teachers (Mrs. Hawk and Mrs. Mallen), something that I wanted in my life. They had a peace about them that I was missing. They were patient and kind and caring, not just to the children but to the parents as well.

Pastor Naegle also touched my heart and guided Brad and I in our journey to Christ. And you, the members of Ramona Lutheran, sealed the deal. You are all members of this family of Christ and I feel that you are my family – each and every one of you. You all have something that I need, that knowledge that God will take care of us and we will all be together through eternity.

So, my stewardship has evolved. I started, as many do, by dropping cash into the offering plate (whatever I had with me \$5, 10, 20), thinking this was good. Then Pastor Naegle encouraged me to become the head of Hospitality (another way of giving of myself). Brad began caring for the school grounds, and became a Trustee. All this was good, but then more time passed.

I then became a member of the Stewardship Board, and through that board I realized that much more is needed to keep a church going and I could do more. Brad is now on the School Board, and I am a Deaconess. So, over the years our stewardship has grown as our spiritual understanding has grown. Our monetary donations have increased as our understanding of what God has given us has increased. I recognize now that God has given me everything I have: my husband, my children, my job, all of my possessions. And He has given me this church body – all of you – to help me in my quest to know Him.

And back to Mrs. Hawk and Mrs. Mallen, I now have that peace and joy that I saw in them. I now know where it comes from and how they got it. They knew Christ and now I do to.

Now that I have that inner peace, I never want to lose it. I will continue to grow in my stewardship in order to maintain this church family. I cannot fathom my life now without Christ. I can only pray that I can be the kind of example that Mrs. Hawk and Mrs. Mallen were to me, for others who do not yet know Christ.

So, today when you walk outside, don't walk past the tables, but go to each one and decide what you can do today to help this church grow and help yourself to be a joyful giver with the gifts that He has given to you.

Thank you!