

Shepherding Our Resources

The congregation of Second UP in Wilkinsburg is finding ways to be better stewards not just of financial resources, but of the gifts and time of its members.

The church building is old and large. When the boilers gave out this year, replacing them with new modulated furnaces was expensive. But the congregation was able to raise the money with an eye to the future. Second UP wants to remain a faithful witness in a changing neighborhood for years to come. The new furnaces have already saved thousands of dollars in heating bills when compared with previous years.

In seeking to be an active participant in the life of the community and to be faithful stewards of God's creation, Second UP has adopted the park next to its property. To extend the reach of its "We Care" food program, the congregation is putting in a garden. Vegetables will also be shared with members and neighbors. We are working with the Nine-Mile Run Conservancy who will help us install rain barrels to conserve water resources and to be better stewards of the environment (and cut down on our watering bills!)

The care of our building also reflects our commitment to stewardship. We understand that deferred maintenance often leads to larger expenses. Second UP is blessed to have long-time members who keep a daily check on the condition of the property. Simple preventative actions, like installing door kick plates to keep the beautiful wooden doors from being damaged when we had a large influx of small children, make our building inviting to the neighborhood. Our building is becoming a community center, and we have been intentional in caring for it.

Being good stewards of the building and grounds opens doors for worship and mission to grow. Second UP is working with the Calvert Memorial Church in Etna and the Mt. Pleasant Presbyterian Church in Wexford in a model called the Shepherd's Staff. Just as Jesus modeled working in teams, the pastors of the three churches and congregations are sharing their time and talents and resources.

The three churches will be sharing Vacation Bible School materials and staff. Mission projects, such as Cookies for the Troops, brought in almost 3,000 cookies from the three communities. Calvert has a seminary assistant which frees the pastor to help with activities in the other churches, including preaching and even pastoral care. By "shepherding" the gifts and time of people, staff and members find more energy because they are not working alone.

Per capita giving at Second UP is above the national average, at about \$1600 per member per year. Having a small congregation allows everyone to see that every gift matters. Using those gifts responsibly, creatively and in "connection" with other churches and the surrounding communities, some more prosperous than others, is bringing new life in many ways. We look forward to where God will "shepherd" us next!

We would enjoy speaking with pastors and churches who would like to explore this model with us!