

*A colleague and friend, the Rev. Dr. John Van Nuys, of Wabash Avenue Presbyterian Church in Crawfordsville, IN shared the following in the Presbytery of Wabash Valley "E-Newsletter" earlier this week. Having just completed our "Consecration Sunday" I found this true story emotionally inspiring, encouraging and challenging. It is in that spirit I share it with all of you.*

## **"A Mighty Big Mustard Seed"**

Last Sunday after worship, an usher handed me a pledge card to pass along to our Stewardship Chair. I was about to routinely file it in her mailbox when I noticed the handwriting. I immediately got a lump in my throat. The pledge card was from a child. The scrawled name read Tyler Brunty. Tyler is a bright-eyed eight-year-old who loves baseball and singing in our youth choir. Then the lump in my throat got bigger and several tears welled up when I saw that Tyler had pledged in 2011 to give God through the church \$1 per week.



I called his folks Sunday evening to ask them if they knew about this. Tyler's mom Jennifer said, "Oh, yes. Tyler asked us to please get him a pledge card." After giving him the card during the Prelude, his parents explained to Tyler that their giving as a family included Tyler and his sister; that Tyler's gift was already a part of the 2011 pledge his parents had made. But Tyler replied: "I know that you give for us, but I want to give God something from me." As he worked to fill out his pledge, his folks asked him why he wanted to do that. Tyler replied, "Look at that poster. It says 'Will you grow a step in your giving next year?'" Tyler was referring to the Stewardship Committee's step-up chart which lists the number of folks who gave at each giving level from zero on up. He said, "I don't give anything now, but if I do next year, just think of all the good things God will do through my gift! That is why I want to pledge." His parents looked at each other and smiled as Tyler happily put his pledge card in the collection plate. Jennifer said, "On the way home after church, Tyler kept talking and talking about his pledge, asking his dad and me about the chores he could do to earn his \$1 a week to give to God."

Hearing this story Sunday night completely humbled me -- and encouraged me. On Tuesday, I saw Tyler's grandmother and asked her if she had heard of her grandson's incredible act of faith and love. Grandma Nanette nodded and said, "There's more: Tyler hasn't stopped talking about his pledge. He now wants to do even more chores so that he can give God \$2 each week."

Like many churches in these lean times, Wabash Avenue Presbyterian Church in the big city of Crawfordsville is stretched. We have frozen the budget; we have gone to an e-newsletter; we have disconnected the kitchen phone; we are stretching every penny as far as we can while preserving our mission giving as best as we can.

The Bible promises us that God will provide; that in God's abundance there is always enough for all whom God loves. Tyler's mustard seed of faith has inspired many in our congregation. Tyler's parents allowed me to share this story in the hope that it also will inspire you. This selfless, innocent act makes me want to do more, stretch more and give more in gratitude and love to God.

What mustard seed acts of faith in action do you see in your life, community, and congregation? If we have eyes to see, they are all around us, just waiting to be discovered. And if we have willing hearts, we can experience similar moments, too, as we allow the love of God in Jesus Christ to lead us into fuller service, greater generosity, and deeper love. May Tyler's example inspire us all. As we are so rightly reminded during Advent, a little child shall lead us.

*I asked John for permission to share this article with our congregation. He said he has had several other requests to do the same. One came from a pastor in California, another from a pastor in Colorado. He said Tyler is a remarkable young boy who will be pleased to know his example has touched the lives of people beyond Wabash Avenue Presbyterian Church. YES!!! A little child shall lead us!!!*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "I. Curtis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.