

# When a Church Tithes

by Jim Borgeson

The 150 members of the congregation faced a dilemma. Should 75-year-old First Church of the Nazarene in Lawrence, Kansas, move to a new location or stay where it had been for the past 40 years? The majority desired to move. Opinions abounded on how to accomplish the move, and the opinions were becoming further apart.

During a church planning committee meeting one day in the spring of 1998, tornado warnings sounded. The committee moved to a room in the basement with a single stained-glass window. The power went off, and the planning team was in complete darkness except when lightning lit up the window. There was nothing to do but pray, acknowledging that God was in control of everything outside the room and asking Him to be in control of every decision inside the room.

Almost immediately, one of the men expressed a solution. From the light of a key chain flashlight, everyone could see that all agreed. God used a mighty wind to remove all obstacles. On Easter Sunday 2000, the first service was held in the new church building.

To keep up with bills, denominational obligations were not paid for 1999–2000 or 2000-01. Only a few months after the congregation moved into the new facility, the chairman of the finance committee called a special meeting. Using gloomy charts, he showed the church board that the current level of giving could keep the church doors open only two more months. Even if the church cut all paid staff except the pastor and trimmed every dollar possible, the situation appeared hopeless.

One man spoke up. “Do we all agree that our situation is impossible? Great! Now we will see what God can do. But we have to do our part. Our denominational allocations are how we satisfy our part of the Great Commission. They are not an option. These allocations are our church’s tithe.”

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situation is impossible?

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The new budget was drafted to include the 2001-02 denominational obligations as well as a commitment to pay the previous two years’ unpaid allocations. The vote for passage was unanimous. Committed to pay the church’s tithe and acknowledging their total dependence on God, the congregation was now ready to receive His blessings.

The church treasurer received a phone call from the bank that held the mortgage. Without any paperwork or additional cost to the congregation, the monthly mortgage payment was reduced from \$11,000 to \$5,200. Thousands of dollars of unexpected donations poured in. Several people used their interests and hobbies to raise \$10,000 toward necessary parsonage repairs.

God showed that He is master of the physical as well as the financial. Four people with serious illnesses were miraculously healed. Average worship attendance has increased to 242, and 27 new Nazarenes have completed membership classes. People are accepting and growing in Christ in the worship services. A spirit of optimism and joy abounds.

Tithing is the only commandment with a promise that invites us to test God. “‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it’” (Malachi 3:10).

If you think this applies also to individuals and families, you are absolutely right. If you want God’s blessings, tithe.

**Jim Borgeson** is a chiropractor and fourth-generation Nazarene living in Baldwin City, Kansas, with his wife, Sharon. He serves on the administration team of the church board at Lawrence First Church.