# Tithing

One of the great tenets of the Judeo-Christian tradition is tithing. Beyond being simply a way for the Church to fund itself, tithing is a principle of great depth. The Fuller Center for Housing asks its Covenant Partners to tithe of the gifts they receive to help fund house building in places with fewer native resources. Tithes are considered a sacred trust and 100% of the funds are distributed to other Covenant Partners for house building. The obvious reason for this is to assure that those living in less affluent places have some measure of the opportunities enjoyed by the wealthy. But there are deeper matters at work:

TITHING AS A MATTER OF FAITH: The Prophet Malachi makes a bold promise to the saints. He says that if we bring our tithes and offerings to the temple the windows of heaven will be opened and blessings poured out upon us. This is a promise that no wise person could pass up—but it does require faith. We must believe that the words of the prophet are true and have faith that the Lord will fulfill His promises. As a Christian ministry we are by definition a collection of the faithful, and tithing provides us the opportunity of demonstrating our faith.

TITHING AS A MATTER OF TRUE CHARITY: The spiritual father of The Fuller Center, Clarence Jordan, wisely observed that what the poor need isn't charity so much as capital. The Fuller Center model is built around this philosophy—we provide the poor with capital and then ask that they repay the investment on terms they can afford. In doing this a subtle but tremendously important social dynamic is at work: the poor, who are too often simply recipients are suddenly donors themselves. There is great dignity in that. Fuller Center Covenant Partners are similar to the poor they serve—they are poor as well, relying on the goodwill of others to fund their projects and build their houses. It is fitting, then, that we offer the same blessing to ourselves as we do to the families we serve: that we become givers as well as receivers. It can surely be said that most of what we do involves giving, but in organizational terms when a Covenant Partner is only concerned with its own work it is missing the opportunity of sharing as Jesus shared, with all the world.

TITHING AS A MATTER OF ATTITUDE: There seem two basic attitudes about resources, one of scarcity, the other of abundance. Those who believe in scarcity are not typically generous. They tend to hoard in anticipation of someday not having what they have today. They are often unhappy and frightened. Those who believe in abundance give freely with the expectation that there will always be more, and have more joy—and less fear—in their lives. The Fuller Center is a ministry based on the philosophy of abundance. We know that there are sufficient resources for all of God's people to have a decent place to live; those resources just aren't yet properly allocated. We know from rich experience that the funds are there to build as many

houses as we can build, it just takes a little work to move it from the pockets of the rich to the walls and rooftops of the poor. Tithing is a sincere expression of an abundance attitude, and Covenant Partners who tithe share that attitude and have an easier time raising money, recruiting volunteers, and getting the poor properly housed.

TITHING AS A PRACTICAL MATTER: Experience teaches that Covenant Partners that tithe are generally more sophisticated in terms of organization and fund raising than those that don't. It's hard to say if this is a result of the blessings such organizations receive from tithing or because their higher level of fiscal discipline makes it easier for them to do so. It can be said that a Covenant Partner that dedicates itself to tithing will necessarily impose organizational, financial and spiritual parameters on itself that will result in greater mission success.

So we encourage all Covenant Partners to share of their blessings by tithing so that houses can be built for all of God's people in need. Fuller Centers are local undertakings and Covenant Partners are committed to solving housing needs in their own home towns. But The Fuller Center is a global ministry which means that we are all committed to building houses around the world, many in places with limited local resources. Tithing allows us to demonstrate faith, true charity, and an attitude of abundance, while being a practical thing to do. Tithing is a spiritual undertaking, and tithes should be given joyfully. The Fuller Center commits that all tithing funds will go directly to the house building work of other Covenant Partners.

HOW IT WORKS

The Fuller Center asks its Covenant Partners to give 10% of the donated funds they receive, to the extent their donors allow, to fund house building in places that lack local resources. These funds are processed through the Americus office with 100% going to the field—no fees or surcharges are assessed. To the extent funds can be distributed equitably we will honor requests for tithes to go to specific projects.

Partners as also urged to share other resources including training materials, fund raising tips, surplus building supplies and volunteers with one another, both at home and abroad. This reminds us all that, "In Christ there is no east or west, in Him no south or north; but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth."