

What are Challenge Offerings?

How many times do we see the name of something and wonder “where does that come from or what is that for?” At our church that may be applicable to many if asked “What are Challenge Offerings”.

When I came to First Church in 1973, I was exposed to the term, read about it in the bulletins and newsletters and heard it discussed. But in all these years I have never learned *the rest of the story*. After hearing some members recently discussing how the church supports outside causes, it was obvious to me that it would be enlightening to provide a tutorial on this subject.

I know, that if information is needed about a historical aspect, our church history archivist Randy Rosensteel would be a great help. Indeed, he was as Randy found a reference in the *Encyclopedia of the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown*. (I bet you didn't even know there was one!).

Beginning in January 1957 **Challenge Offerings** became the name for Special Monthly Benevolence Offerings. *Each month a benevolence cause is selected by the Benevolence committee for this special offering. Opportunity is also given for members to designate any benevolence cause to which they wish to contribute through the Challenge Offering. Special envelopes are included each month for this purpose with the weekly offering envelopes. These offerings are in addition to the regular Benevolence Budget and are used for the specifically announced cause or as otherwise designated by the donor.*

Here we are 63 years later still following that same practice with little change. Over the years the Session Outreach and Mission Committee (formerly the Mission Interpretation and Stewardship Committee) has diligently and responsibly overseen this fine cause. Yearly this committee reviews past recipients support levels and needs plus any new inputs that may be submitted to prepare a proposed list for the following year. Publicity is provided by each month in *Windows* as to the designee for that month, mentions in the worship bulletin and a Minute for Mission presented during a worship service during that month. The committee encourages input from members as to organizations to be considered for support.

Members are asked to support this offering at their discretion. All the funds collected (100%) through this offering are passed on to the organization or program. These funds are outside the Church's budget and are entirely financed by the congregation's generosity.

Your continued support for Challenge Offerings is appreciated by both our church and the recipient organizations.

Jim Thompson