

Part IV

Managing Our Money – Plate Offerings

(This is part of an ongoing series of articles about the church's finances by Dual Macintyre, Treasurer)

Plate offerings are the cash and checks placed in the collection plate at each service. These offerings are usually made by one-time or occasional visitors to St. Paul's – people who would not normally make a pledge to our church. Pledge envelopes are also placed in the plate each Sunday, as are checks from people who have made a pledge to St. Paul's. These pledge offerings are not counted as part of the "loose" offering, but are credited to the individuals who made the pledge. The loose plate offering is a substantial part of our income each year - \$75,000 or 15% of this year's budget, although to date we have been running below our forecast.

What happens after you place your offering in the plate or, bluntly, how do we protect your cash? After each service, a trusted counter takes *everything* from the plate, separates the offerings into cash, checks and envelopes, places all that into a bank deposit pouch and puts it in our safe. The safe is like a bank night-deposit vault ... there is a small slot that accepts the pouch which then drops into the safe. The safe can then be opened only by using a key that is kept under lock and key in the Treasurer's office.

Each Monday morning, two different counters collect the safe key and together open the safe and remove the pouches from the Sunday services. They then return to the Treasurer's office where they open the pouches, count the cash, list and photocopy the checks and prepare a deposit slip for the bank. While this is happening, our bookkeeper, who is also present, posts to each pledge account the amount received from that person. The counters then go to the bank where the cash is counted again by the teller and the checks totaled to verify the amount of the deposit. The deposit slip is then returned to the bookkeeper, who adds the deposited amount to our books. The Monday counters may work as a team for a week or two, but we make it a point to rotate the counters frequently so that the same two people do not always work together. Each year we also conduct an audit that includes random sampling of the paper trail supporting the deposits. We owe a huge vote of thanks to all the counters because they work, unheralded, behind the scenes to insure that our cash donations are safe.