

The Conference as the Storehouse?

A few months ago, I sat through an excellent Sabbath School discussion where we tackled the tricky question of “the conference as the storehouse.” You can imagine how my role as conference president and guest speaker for the day adds spice to any discussion in which the conference can be seen as the beneficiary.

The study presented the usual questions: “Where is the storehouse? Why is it there? Is that biblical?” As I listened to the discussion, a question arose in my mind that seemed to inform the discussion in a way that I found helpful. Rather than being a question of geography (Where is it?), our position on this question is informed by our identity (Who are we?).

If our identity does not include the understanding that our local church is a part of a larger sisterhood of churches, it feels funny to send our tithe to a “storehouse” that is outside of our local church. In fact, storing what God has entrusted to us in someone else’s storehouse calls our stewardship into question. If our identity as a local church ends at the local church, it makes sense that the church’s money stays local. As such, it would be natural for an independent congregation to build its own storehouse to serve the community in which that congregation primarily functions and ministers.

But if we are a part of a larger community, it would be natural to store our tithe in the larger community’s storehouse. This is because we see the mission field of the local church broader than the footprint of the local church. This idea of a mission field larger than my local community has always informed the identity of Adventism.

With such an identity in place, we can contribute to the larger community’s storehouse with joy rather than resentment. Our new identity as a part of the larger community opens us to the reality that we are stronger together and can accomplish far more in terms of mission that we ever could as a single congregation.



It occurs to me that this question of identity explains the emotion that often accompanies the storehouse discussion. When we clarify our identity as a part of a larger sisterhood of churches, we elevate the discussion of the storehouse to a dialogue that now focuses on mission as a larger entity.

When I chair committees, I often say, “None of us is as smart as all of us.” This is simply a way of sharing that a team can usually accomplish more than one lone hero. This same principle is true in church finances. By pooling funds as a sisterhood of churches, we can accomplish mission in a more impactful way than we ever could as independent, autonomous local churches. That’s the church that I want to be part of and the church I want my returning tithe to help fund.



Bob Cundiff
President

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 21: Adventurer Fun Day, *Eastwood Church*

May 28: Spring Valley Academy Graduation

June 4: Ohio Conference Constituency Meeting, *Worthington Church*

June 11: Summer Camp Season Starts, *Camp Mohaven*