



FIRST-FRUITS CELEBRATION

Fellow Members and Friends of Bridgewater Church of the Brethren,

Greetings.

Our congregation's stewardship commission is again using the *First-Fruits Celebration Stewardship Program* as a way to emphasize biblical and spiritual principles of generous giving as part of our stewardship education emphasis. We believe that congregations who approach financial stewardship from a biblical perspective do not view the money Christians give to their church merely as a way to pay its bills. Rather, we see financial contributions as a way to help people grow spiritually in their relationship with God by supporting their church's mission and ministry with a percentage of their incomes.

First-Fruits Celebration is based on the biblical philosophy of the need of the giver to give for his or her own spiritual development rather than on the need of the church to receive. Instead of treating people like members of a social club who should pay dues, we treat people like followers of Jesus Christ who want to give unselfishly as an act of discipleship. A *First-Fruits Celebration* encourages people toward proportionate and systematic giving in response to the question, "What percentage of my income is God calling me to give?"

Our First-Fruits Celebration Sunday is coming October 16, 2011. Please mark it on your calendar. An *Estimate of Giving Card* will be mailed to each household in early October. During morning worship on *First-Fruits Celebration Sunday*, October 16, 2011, our good friend and former interim pastor, Fred Bernhard, will conduct a brief period of instruction and inspiration, climaxed by members making their commitments as a confidential act of worship. Returning *Estimate of Giving Cards* during worship allows each attendee to make their financial commitment to our church's missionary outreach and educational ministries in this community and around the world.

We will do no home solicitation to ask people to complete cards. Since we will make no follow-up visits to ask people to complete their cards, we are making every effort to inform, invite, and encourage everyone to attend our *First-Fruits Celebration Sunday* worship. Then, immediately after the 11 a.m. worship service, everyone is invited to participate in a *First-Fruits Celebration* meal in our social hall. **No reservations are needed.** We look forward to this time of fellowship, sharing a meal, celebrating stewardship, and enjoying a good time together.

Thanks in advance for your enthusiastic participation in *First-Fruits Celebration* events.

Earle W. Fike Jr.
Chair, Board of Administration

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