



Stories of Partnership & Support

A Humble Story for Humble Times

Mary Neathway from Clearwater United Church in British Columbia recently reported on a project underway to raise enough money for at least one soccer ball for Camp Mackenzie. Now, that might seem like a rather tiny gift, but Clearwater is a small church and they struggle. In spite of that, the congregation decided they could not ignore a need and decided they could do this.

The church has a poster up, with a soccer ball drawn on it and some paper-doll players, along with a jug for penny donations. As people bring in their pennies and drop them into the jug, they can write their name on a soccer player or colour in the clothes.

The Sunday before presbytery meets, they will give people a chance to guess how many pennies are in the jug and the one closest will win a prize. Graham Brownmiller, minister of Clearwater United Church, will bring a cheque for the amount raised to presbytery and deliver it to the appropriate person.

Mary says, “Who knows? Perhaps we’ll find lots of pennies around and make enough for two balls! Our vision statement says we are people ‘Belonging to God, Working Together, Helping the World.’ And so we are!”

A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Jesus called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had.”

(Mark 12:42–44)

A few months later...

Mary reported to Camp MacKenzie, “The penny story is reaching the end of the chapter and we are absolutely thrilled and amazed at the outcome... We’ve laughed, we’ve talked to our friends about what we are doing as a church, and we’ve had so much fun joking about pennies. We thought we’d be able to raise enough for one soccer ball...”

Mary had mentioned to a local elementary school’s intermediate teacher that the church was doing a congregational fundraiser for the camp. That teacher spoke with staff and students at the school and they agreed to join the effort. The school’s senior students have often spent a week at Camp MacKenzie for an end-of-year field trip. The camp provides activities such as kayaking, canoeing, rock climbing, swimming, archery, and hiking. They also provide counsellors and cooks for the school and summer programs that they run.

Students and staff held a penny drive and brought in more pennies than an adult could lift! Their goal was to collect 10,000 pennies. The congregation of the United Church was awed by the amount the students collected. Mary Neathway was less surprised. As a former staff member of the school, she knows these students are capable of great things. They contributed \$137 in pennies to MacKenzie Camp. Added to the congregation’s penny drive, the total came in at over \$200!

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

(2 Corinthians 9:10)