



Gifts of Love

Each Part Does Its Work

by Linda Gage

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Baubles and basketball. Rummage sales and running meetings. What do these things have in common? These are some of the ways that Rebecca and Mark Bessell of Hamlin, New York, work for the Lord, using their gifts in service to Him. Rebecca collects donated jewelry and cleans, boxes, and tags each piece to sell at their Lutheran church’s bi-annual rummage sale. Mark has served at their church and school as coach of the boy’s basketball team, mentoring young men as Christian athletes connected to a sport he loves. Both Rebecca and Mark have run their share of meetings too: Rebecca served as District President of the LWML Eastern District and co-host of the 2013 LWML Pittsburgh Convention, and Mark conducted many meetings on the Church Council and Board of Trustees at St. Paul Lutheran Church and School in Hilton, New York.

“We believe in giving back to the Lord our time, talents, and treasures,” Rebecca shared. Giving back also included their estate plan, which included gifts to the ministries they are passionate about, such as LWML. When Rebecca learned about our Gifts of Love Ministry, she suggested to Mark that they meet with me. Mark wasn’t so sure this was necessary. Their plan was done. They were happy with it. Or so they thought. They made the decision to review their plan with me and shared details about their stewardship goals, tax preferences, and itemized blessings from the Lord. I learned that Mark and Rebecca wanted to gift their IRA and tax deferred assets to ministry when God calls them to heaven. They also preferred to give a gift over time to ministries rather than in one lump sum.

They were thrilled to learn that their faith could be shared through their estate documents. Rebecca and Mark now have a Christian Preamble in their Will. We identified that the best way to gift

their IRA and tax deferred assets was directly to ministry by beneficiary designation. In doing so, the estate will avoid the needless pitfall of incurring 25 to 55 percent of their retirement funds to taxes, since ministries are tax exempt and can receive the eventual gift tax-free. We also set up the Bessell Endowment Fund for ongoing gifts to ministry. Mark shared, “We didn’t know our gifts to ministry would be reduced so significantly by taxes in our original plan. We are so glad that we sat down with Linda and developed a new plan, a better plan, which enabled a larger ministry gift.”

What a peaceful feeling they now have after completing their plan. They know the LCMS Foundation will expertly handle the distribution of their wishes and lessen the burden on their executor. Rebecca summed up their experience, “The knowledge we both gained through this process spiritually motivated us to share the benefits of having the right plan in place with our congregation and LWML members.” Rebecca now serves as the LWML Eastern District Gifts of Love Advocate.

Rebecca and Mark live out the Bible verse on every email Rebecca sends out, Ephesians 4:16: *From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.*

Baubles, basketball, rummage sales, meetings, and including God’s ongoing ministry in their charitable estate plan are all part of the kingdom work Rebecca and Mark do, as they put their faith in action and live forgiven as disciples of Jesus.

For more information about Gifts of Love Ministry or charitable estate planning, go to www.lwmlgiftplan.org, call 1(800) 741-4138, or email lwmlgiftplanner@lwml.org. Please consider naming LWML in your estate plan. Our legal name is Lutheran Women’s Missionary League.