

# Envelope by envelope, Meadowood Church lives out Scripture

*By Tony Martin*  
*Associate Editor*

Meadowood Church, Amory, offered its members a unique ministry opportunity December 18. Each person present, from the bed babies to the oldest member, received \$100 cash from the church's overflowing budget with special instructions for its use.

Pastor Lloyd Sweatt is quick to point out that it wasn't about the church, but rather what the Lord wanted to accomplish. "People have been giving faithfully," said the current president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. "Even during COVID giving was great.

"We've moved to where we don't even take up an offering during the church service. We have offering boxes now rather than passing around plates. We started that around COVID time. That's been an interesting thing to move to."



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“The last couple of months, United Furniture – which had plants in Amory, Tupelo, and other places – closed basically overnight. There were probably close to 3,000 people who lost their jobs nationwide almost immediately, and several in our church lost their jobs.

“Over the course of the year, we’d been putting money in a certificate of deposit (CD) because we’ll be building a sanctuary. We do that maybe twice a year. My thing is, when the Lord returns He’s going to spank me if we have money in the bank.”

Sweatt felt the church was at a place where they were going to just keep parking money in that CD. “We came to believe our mission was here, to the church. There are so many needs our people have, so we decided we would give to our church members.”

Sweatt took his idea to some of the church’s “older guys – you know, those folks that can be really stingy and tight,” Sweatt noted with a grin. “They thought it was a God-given idea. I joked with one of them, ‘Are we going to have to put you in the emergency room with a stroke or something?’

“We planned through it with our deacons without telling anyone else,” Sweatt said. “We have 650 people who normally show up on Sundays, and we put a \$100 bill in individual envelopes.” The envelope read:

*MERRY CHRISTMAS!*

*MEADOWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH has been blessed by many who faithfully tithe and give offerings to the Lord Jesus Christ through His church. (Meadowood also did not have as many “major” expenses during the year).*

*MEADOWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH gives to mission causes locally and globally throughout the year. At this time of the year, YOU ARE THE MISSION, (either to receive a GIFT, or share a GIFT).*

*THIS IS A GIFT FOR YOU! May our Lord bless you this Christmas, as well as encourage you and your family. Please use your GIFT in any way the Lord desires for you to use. If your GIFT is not needed by you personally nor your family, use your GIFT to bless others who may not be expecting any kind of GIFT. Whether you use the GIFT personally for your needs or to GIVE to bless others, GIVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST THE PRAISE and GLORY HE DESERVES.*

*AGAIN, MERRY CHRISTMAS!*

"We gave an envelope to everyone there," Sweatt said. "We had about 16 or 17 babies in the nursery, and we asked that the babies be brought into the service. Visitors got envelopes; families got envelopes. For instance, a family with a mom, dad, and two kids in the nursery got \$400."

Sweatt said there were folks who received envelopes who really needed the gift but never would have asked for anything.

"There were some who didn't need it," Sweatt said, "so my challenge was for them to give it to someone who did. It could be family, it could be a stranger or a neighbor. I asked that they just pass it along, and tell whoever received it that God had blessed [the giver] and wanted to bless [the recipient] with just a little bit of encouragement.

"God has blessed this," Sweatt continued. "There were several families that needed it. I've gotten calls, handwritten letters, saying that they were able to give their children something they didn't expect.

"There was one family – and this broke my heart in a way because I had no idea of this – that have twin girls and a

two-year-old boy. She called Sunday afternoon and told me her husband had changed jobs and their insurance wasn't there yet.

"The two-year-old has to have asthma medicine and they said for a while they wouldn't have that. They got up that morning and wrote their tithe check. She said, 'We didn't know how we'd be able to do all the things we needed to this Christmas.'

"When they opened the envelope they were just floored. They couldn't believe God would answer a prayer that quickly," Sweatt recounted. Other people knew about the needs of this family and also gave their envelopes to them as they were leaving church that day.

"This affirms to me that you give and it's given back to you," Sweatt stated, referring to Luke 6:38. "Our giving, even in the last two Sundays, has been remarkable. I believe God blesses the gift and the giver, and so many are experiencing that right now."

There have been other stories. One group paid for the groceries of the woman in front of them at the checkout line at Walmart. Two or three people from a Sunday School class financially helped another family who aren't members of the church whose son is receiving chemotherapy.

"That's been an amazing thing I've seen," Sweatt said. "It's helped us turn away from ourselves to help others."