

## **The Rhythm of Life**

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Sunday mornings in our house are hectic with pre-church preparations, but post-church Sunday afternoons are much more relaxed, and usually involve the Sunday *New York Times*. My wife opts first for the Sunday Styles section (also known as “sports pages for women”) to read the wonderfully frank and quirky wedding announcements. I usually go for the Arts and Leisure section first.

Last Sunday when I looked at the current and coming shows on Broadway, I counted nine revivals among the twenty-five or so plays and musicals. That doesn't count *Phantom of the Opera*, which has been running so long it only seems like a revival. The reason for all the revivals is mostly economic, with the enormous cost and risk of putting up a brand new, unproven show leading many producers to fall back on trusted box-office winners. One such recent revival, now in its national tour, is *Sweet Charity*, the 1966 show that starred Gwen Verdon in the title role. Bob Fosse was the director and choreographer, Cy Coleman wrote the music, Dorothy Fields the lyrics, Neil Simon the book. Talk about an all-star creative team!

One of the tunes from *Sweet Charity* is “The Rhythm of Life,” memorably performed by Sammy Davis, Jr. as the unorthodox “preacher” Big Daddy in the movie version.

*And the rhythm of life is a powerful beat,  
Puts a tingle in your fingers  
And a tingle in your feet.  
Rhythm in the inside,  
Rhythm in the street,  
Yes, the rhythm of life is a powerful beat.*

There is indeed a rhythm and a beat to our lives. As Christopher Kimball, founder and editor of *Cook's Illustrated* magazine, wrote in a recent editorial, “Anyone who has ever spent time on a farm knows that a year has a rhythm to it, one that is determined by the weather. Every day has a purpose and more than one task at hand.” He went on to describe his mother's calendar, notated with reminders of when to plant the garlic, when to order the baby chicks. “The advantage of this system,” he wrote, “is that you always know where you are in the grand scheme of things.” Sounds ambitious, doesn't it, knowing where you are in the grand scheme of things?

The church year has a rhythm to it too. We're now in what's called “ordinary time,” the Sundays after Epiphany and Pentecost, the time between the great celebrations of the Christmas and Easter seasons. By the way, “ordinary” doesn't mean that these are mundane or unimportant Sundays, but simply that they are counted (the word ordinary is derived from ordinal). For example, this Sunday is the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. But enough about that.

Our stewardship lives have a rhythm as well. Most churches conduct stewardship campaigns in the fall, a holdover from our agricultural past when tithes were measured in bushels rather than dollars. Most local churches, and other non-profit groups too, see a spike in giving during Advent, the days between Thanksgiving and Christmas, when generosity seems to peak. It probably has something to do with tax planning too, but I prefer to think of it as generosity. Giving declines in many churches in January, when holiday-shopping credit card statements arrive. Giving also declines in the summer, when many parishioners are on vacation. It's a predictable rhythm.

But the needs of people in our communities march to a much steadier beat. There are people in our communities who are hungry and homeless year-round. There are people seeking fellowship, community and in need of saving grace through Jesus Christ all the time. The need for ministry and mission never takes time off.

How do we respond? We are made in the image of God, the ultimate giver. May we reflect that image in our giving and in our daily living, a steady rhythm of faithful commitment.

It's a powerful beat.

As the stewardship voice of the Florida Conference, the Foundation is ready to help you, your family and your church with anything related to comprehensive Christian stewardship. For more information please call, click or write us at 1-866-363-9673 toll-free; [www.fumf.org](http://www.fumf.org); or PO Box 3549, Lakeland, FL 33802.