

January 2015  
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#15-1 The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed;  
Those who help others are helped. Proverbs 11:26-27 *The Message*

God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, the courage to change the one I can, and the wisdom to know it's me.  
-Author Unknown

January is the season for New Year's resolutions. We want to start out the New Year on the "right foot," taking care to improve ourselves and our habits. Getting out of debt and saving money are generally two of the top ten resolutions made each year. Cuts in income seem to be the norm these days, so how do we remain faithful and generous as we set priorities in the New Year?

It seems counter-intuitive but it begins by giving. Generosity breeds a positive, "can-do" attitude in us. It's good to say thank you, even in tough times. Therefore as you make moves toward financial freedom from debt, consider:

1. Making the first payment from your check every week or month a "thank you" gift for the many blessings you've received.
2. Save an equal amount in an emergency savings account you can use when you truly need to overspend your regular budget for medical needs, car repairs, house repairs or emergency family travel.

Some folks find that giving 5% of their income to the church and saving another 5% each week or month in an emergency fund can be a helpful spiritual tool as they take responsibility for their finances.

If you'd like help in meeting your financial New Year's resolution, sign up today to attend the two-hour **Freed Up From Debt Workshop** sponsored by the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation on Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 - 4:00 pm in Room 305 of the Conference Center in Sun Prairie. Cost is \$8.00. Everyone is welcome! For more information, visit us at [wumf.org](http://wumf.org).

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*Growing in Generosity with Children*

A Quart of Coins by Rev. Jean Ehnert Nicholas

We keep a quart jar in a prominent place in our bedroom and put our loose change into it on a regular basis. When it's almost full we take it to the bank and are surprised to discover there's about \$100 that has magically accumulated!

It's also amazing to me that for about \$100 per member/year we are able to fund the worldwide mission and ministry of the entire United Methodist Church! We may have loose coin offerings for a number of very worthy ministries in our churches throughout the year, but what are we teaching our children if we don't meet our primary commitment to the ministry, done in our name here in Wisconsin and throughout the world, through our apportionments?

I invite you to start now - at the beginning of the year - to find a way to fund your share of the church's apportionments. Maybe you can write a check for the full amount upfront. Or you may be like many folks who are struggling to make ends meet and the most you can give are a few coins each week. Start now and when that jar is full, you'll be amazed at how much you've saved!

If you don't have children or grandchildren at home, invite a child or two from your church to help you count it. And, if you wish, involve those children in giving the gift the following Sunday in a special envelope marked for apportionments. For many wonderful stories of how these gifts are used for the ministry of Christ and the glory of God, go to [www.umcgiving.org](http://www.umcgiving.org). For more resources to help you and yours meet your financial goals this year visit:

- [www.sharesavespend.com](http://www.sharesavespend.com) - Family Money Talks, Mind Your Money - for adults, and Money Sanity Solutions Book and DVD  
[www.moneypurposejoy.com](http://www.moneypurposejoy.com) - click on "Resources," "Calculators," and then "Accelerated Debt Payoff Calculator"  
[www.threerules.org](http://www.threerules.org) - a simple, easy to use budget book  
[http://www.willowcreek.com/resources/good\\_sense.asp](http://www.willowcreek.com/resources/good_sense.asp)

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February 2015  
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#15-2 **Giving is commanded.** “I command you to be openhanded toward each other and toward the poor and needy in the land.” (Deut. 15:11)

When Rev. Lowell Bartel retired, he wanted to honor the ministry of the many local pastors he admired as colleagues over the years. His initial gift of \$10,000 established the Licensed Local Pastor Endowment Fund to provide financial assistance to Licensed Local Pastors attending the Course of Study for Ministry. To date, \$6,550.43 has been distributed in scholarships.

The amount available each year will be based on 5% of the balance in the Endowment Fund, which is \$16,078.95 as of Dec. 31, 2014. Rev. Bartel’s hope was that others would also contribute to this Endowment Fund. To date others who share his passion have added just over \$4,000.

What is your passion? What moves you to establish an Endowment Fund for a ministry in your church or the world?

In this month of expressing our love and passion, we invite you to consider giving a gift that keeps on giving from now into perpetuity. Consider the gift of establishing an Endowment Fund for a ministry purpose that is important to you. Or consider adding funds to an existing account. (The Licensed Local Pastor Endowment Fund is account #C229 at the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation.)

For more information on establishing an Endowment Fund for your church, please contact us at:

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750 Windsor Street, Suite 305  
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1-608-837-9582 or [wumf@wumf.org](mailto:wumf@wumf.org)

*Growing in Generosity with Children*

*Heart-Warming Tree*

One church decided to have a heart-warming tree after seeing one in another church decorated with fabric patches to represent blankets. They took a small bare tree, painted it white, trimmed it with miniature white lights, and placed it in the front of the sanctuary. For Blanket Sunday in February, they placed red cardboard hearts on the tree and announced the theme: “A Heart - Warming Event.” For a donation, members of the congregation could have their own or a loved one’s name printed on a heart. The money was used to purchase blankets to be distributed by the denomination’s missionary ministries.

Because nearly twice as much money was collected that year as in previous years, it was decided to keep the tree and use it for other church fund-raising projects.

In March, shamrocks were placed on the tree and the money raised was used to carpet one of the Sunday school rooms.

This is a great idea! In April, crosses can be used; in May, graduation caps; in June, praying children; in July, flags; in August, butterflies; in September, children’s backpacks; and in October, pumpkins. In November, turkeys might be placed on the tree and the money raised could be used to aid a local food pantry. In December symbols of the nativity could be used to raise money for the victims of a hurricane, flood, or other disaster.

Let us know how this idea works for you!

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**March 2015**  
**A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH**

**#15-3 Giving is Putting God First.** “*The truth is that this poor widow gave more to the collection than all the others put together. All the others gave what they'll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford – she gave her all.*” (Mark 12:43-44, *The Message*)

Jane grew up attending church almost every Sunday and receiving some coins from her parents each week to add to the offering. In her first leadership position in the church as a young adult, Pastor Dick asked her to lead the “gifts” portion of the confirmation lesson. The class was studying our United Methodist vows to support the church through our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. She responded, “I’m not sure you want me to lead that one. I want to give, but I’m saving for graduate school. I just give what I can.” Pastor Dick quickly asked her to cover a different aspect of the lesson that day!

That was a pivotal moment in her decision to begin putting God first in all aspects of her life. In that moment she realized her thinking had been, “Who me? Why should I give something of my own back to God?” From that moment on she felt called to begin giving something back to God on a regular basis from her own income. Her goal was to give at least enough to pay her fair share of the apportionments her church paid every year and whatever else she could.

Eventually, Jane grew in her faith and increased her giving to 5 percent of every paycheck as often as she could. Years later some crises in her life helped her to see the miracles of God’s mighty love more clearly and her offerings shifted from dues she thought she owed to gifts of thanks. Ultimately, she gave to express her hope and belief in the miracles of God’s love and took the risk of asking what God was calling her to give. Now, she is “Putting God First” and having her full tithe (10%) deposited to the church electronically on the first day of every pay period. What is God calling you to give?

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**Helps for the Stewardship Chair**

Biblical Stewardship Principle:

***Giving is Putting God First***

I never would have been able to tithe the first million dollars I ever made if I had not tithed my first salary, which was \$1.50 per week.

-John D. Rockefeller  
(1839-1937)

Money is like manure. You have to spread it around or it smells.

- J. Paul Getty

When you cease to make a contribution you begin to die.

- Eleanor Roosevelt

Could it be that we have not truly given our hearts to God? Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

- Arthur Simon, Founder of Bread for the World

Give me five minutes with a person’s checkbook, and I will tell you where their heart is.

- Billy Graham

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April 2015  
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#15-4 *Give Willingly.....*"Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar—and to God what belongs to God." (Matt. 22:21)

**Did you know?** The average tax refund is up 3% to \$3,034 so far this year, the Internal Revenue Service reported on March 5<sup>th</sup>. The average tax refund for the last three years, paid in 2012, 2013 and 2014 was just over \$2,700.

How will we spend our tax refunds? We know that some taxpayers do not receive a refund. But, of those who do, how do they spend it? The most popular answers are: 1) Pay off Debt; 2) Have fun – do something special or buy something special and 3) Save it. On most lists of ideas the thought of 4) Giving it Away to a favorite charity is either last on the list or never makes the list!

If we're going to "*give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God,*" what are we called to give away? As people of faith we may wish to consider giving a tithe (10%) or some portion of our tax return to the church to say thank you to God for the jobs we have and the earnings we receive.

Consider tithing. If the average refund is \$2,700 and 10 people tithe at \$270 each, the total giving to your church would increase \$2,700. That might pay most of the snow plowing bill for the winter or help you do something new and creative for Vacation Bible School.

Your tithe might be more or less than average, but a gift of \$270 would save 27 lives at \$10 apiece for the Imagine No Malaria Campaign. Gifts totaling \$2,700 would also make a big difference in paying the mission giving through our apportionments for a number of churches – for some it would pay their apportionments in full, for others it will cover 1/10 of the total or one month.

*What is God calling you to give?*

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### Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Many people will receive tax refunds from the IRS for their 2014 income taxes. Following are some "one-liners" you can use for your Sunday bulletin or monthly newsletter. Feel free to adapt them in ways that will be most meaningful for your congregation.

1. Try tithing. Give the first 10% of your tax refund to Church.
2. Giving 10% of your tax refund is a good way to start Tithing.
3. Tithing can be a new way of life. Start by donating 10% of this year's tax refund to the church.
4. Try "first fruits" giving ... Give the first 10% of your 2014 Income Tax refund to the church.
5. Ever thought about tithing? Start by giving the first 10% of this year's tax refund.
6. The rewards of tithing can start with 10% of this year's tax refund.
7. "Who, me? Tithe?" Why not try it by giving 10% of your 2014 tax refund.
8. Tithing is rewarding. Reward yourself. Start with 10% of your 2014 tax refund.
9. Giving 10% of your 2014 tax refund is a great way to start your life as a tither.

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**May 2015**  
**A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH**

**#15-5 God owns everything. “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.” (Psalm 24:1)**

*April showers bring May flowers....and a variety of rummage sales.*  
Preparing to make my gifts and offerings to the annual church rummage sale is quite a cleansing process. I discover treasures that have been buried or ignored for years, yet at one time I couldn't live without them! My hope in taking them to the church rummage sale is that my gift will become a marvelous treasure once again for a new owner.

It is important for each of us to sift and sort through our many possessions from time to time. What we often discover are items which we no longer need but which could be transformed into marvelous “charitable gifts.”

Perhaps you have stocks purchased long ago which have increased in value but don't provide much current income. Perhaps your family has property or real estate bought long ago but now it just takes energy and money to maintain. Perhaps you discover an old insurance policy which was paid up long ago but is no longer needed for its original purpose.

All of these “treasures” can be transformed into wonderful charitable gifts. With the help and guidance of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation your church can do many good things with charitable gifts like these right now! Consider what God is calling you to give.

-Rev. Jean Ehnert Nicholas

P.S. Did you know we can help you liquidate **shares of stock** or shares of a mutual fund to make a special summer gift to help your church get through the summer months? Here's a link to our most recent forms  
<http://www.wumf.org/assets/ProcessingStockGifts.pdf>. What's even better is that we can do this for any United Methodist Church or ministry at no selling fee or commission, and you avoid paying capital gains taxes! Call or email us today and be sure to send us a copy of your Security Transfer Form because privacy laws don't allow your broker to do so.

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**Helps for the Stewardship Chair**  
**Biblical Stewardship Principle:**

***God owns everything.***

Christ didn't hold back on his love when he willingly went to the cross for us. God didn't hold back and make the cross the last word. God who owns everything also offered everything for our sake. We, in turn, are called to share that Good News.

If we believe that all we have is a gift from God, then we affirm a faithful distribution of God's gifts in the world. Consider these affirmations, written by Bishop Bruce R. Ough of the Minnesota Annual Conference, as you decide how much of your time, talents, and treasures you will offer to share the Good News of Christ's love with the world.

- I know God wants me to redistribute some of God's money and time to care for my family. (See 1 Timothy 5:8)
- I know God wants me to redistribute some of God's money to the state. (See Mark 12:13-17)
- I know God wants me to redistribute some of God's time to worship and pray. (See Psalm 42:1-2)
- I know God wants me to redistribute some of God's money to the poor. (See Luke 12:33-34)
- I know God wants me to redistribute some of God's money to the building of God's kingdom.  
(See Leviticus 27:30-33)

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June 2015

## A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#15-6 **Giving is a Form of Praise** "...Praise God's glorious name; bring an offering and come into his Temple." Psalm 96:8

It's summer time and the ice cream carts are starting to make their rounds. In some places the vendors are on motorized carts, others use push carts and some ride bikes. All of them are eventually surrounded by excited patrons of all ages looking for a cool treat.

Is ice cream a need or a want? That is the question late at night when I want something cool and sweet, but it's the last thing I need! Ice cream isn't the only temptation we face as summer begins to emerge.

Vacations, graduations, family reunions, picnics with family and friends all call for extra travel and special food items. With these pressures and temptations we may be wondering how we can be faithful stewards, especially in these tough economic times. Each of us has to answer this question in our own way. What is God calling us to give?

Praising God is something we all NEED to do as Christians to feed our souls. We need to continue praising God through our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness even as the temptations of summer abound. As you consider your gifts, choose an amount to dedicate in praise to God that allows you to feel at peace. Choose a regular amount of 1%, 3%, 5%, 8%, or 10% and offer that gift first, before you buy extra treats this summer.

If you're preparing for a vacation this summer, even if you're staying a lot closer to home than usual, consider this:

It's a lot easier to send your offering to the church **before** you go on vacation than to come up with two Sundays' worth when you get back. If you give it to God first to say "thank you" for the opportunity to go on vacation, you'll have a sense of the peace that comes from following the Great Commandment Jesus gave that we should love God FIRST – with all our hearts and souls and minds and strength – and our neighbors as ourselves.

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## Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Announcing: Two Stewardship Training Events this summer co-sponsored by the Foundation

STEWARDSHIP MATTERS: Inspiring Kingdom Investors to Give Toward the Mission on Friday, July 17<sup>th</sup>  
Trinity Church – Beaver Dam, 9:30 am – 4 pm  
Led by Jason Moore and Jean Nicholas  
Register at [www.trinitychurch-unitedmethodist.org](http://www.trinitychurch-unitedmethodist.org)

2015 STEWARDSHIP RETREAT – Pine Lake Camp  
August 14-15, 2015

Register at [www.WIUMCamps.org/reg](http://www.WIUMCamps.org/reg)  
For more information, call us at 608-837-9582 or 888-903-9863.

## An Attitude of Gratitude

Being grateful is a way to control toxic stress. Try something for the next month: Either journal or share verbally with another person what you are grateful for each day and end your day with a prayer of gratitude. When we end our day with a focus on our gratitude, we tend to sleep better, with more REM cycles (Rapid Eye Movement) and less unwanted wake ups. A good night's sleep is essential to good health, and good health is important for a good life.

It is said that even on a bad day there is something good. However, we need to get rid of the ANTS (automatic negative thoughts) to see the good. Finding a way to share our gratitude helps us remove the ANTS from our brain, giving us greater power over our fears, anxieties, bitterness and insomnia. It helps us build enthusiasm and more joyful, positive relationships. Intentionally focusing on our gratitude helps us to see the hidden gift even in the hard times. The Serenity Prayer can also help on sleepless nights:

***God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.***

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August 2015  
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#15-8 "I'm thankful for all of you every time I pray ... because of the way you have been my partners in the ministry of the gospel from the time you first believed it until now." (Philippians 1:4-5, CEV)

Thank you for your faithfulness in giving and worship attendance this summer. Your continued giving through your tithes and offerings has made it possible for us to pay our utilities and salaries and provide for persons in need. It means we have provided nursery care for our youngest disciples, summer Sunday School and Vacation Bible School classes and a youth mission trip experience. Families celebrating baptisms have been welcomed and families remembering the gifts of one who has died have been comforted.

Your giving also allows us to pay a portion of our mission giving. Our apportionments (or a-portion-meant-for-others) have put the systems in place so we could actually get pastors moved to serve new congregations throughout Wisconsin starting July 1<sup>st</sup>. They also put the systems in place to allow all of the health kits, flood buckets and other items brought to annual conference to be delivered to those in need. A total of 12,581 pounds was sent to the Midwest Mission Distribution Center following annual conference. About 1500 pounds was collected for Harbor House in Superior, about 300 pounds each for Northcott Neighborhood House and United Methodist Children's Services in Milwaukee.

Our apportionments help provide the staff and facilities at Pine Lake Camp and Lake Lucerne Camp and Retreat Center. More than 725 campers have registered to date this summer, including: Super Hero Camp, Night Owl Camp, horse camps, canoe camps, family camps, grandparent/grandchild camps, adult Special Needs camps, the Stewardship Retreat and many more. All of our camps invite children, youth and adults to experience the love of Jesus Christ in new and different ways in the outdoors.

Our ministry is in our local community, our state, our nation and world-wide. Thank you for the gifts you continue to give to the ministry of Christ through our Church in the world.

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Register Today for the  
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at  
Pine Lake Camp  
August 14-15, 2015  
Register at [www.WIUMCamps.org/reg](http://www.WIUMCamps.org/reg)  
For more information, call us at 608-837-9582 or toll free at 888-903-9863.

**60 Second Offering Statements for the Summer:**

It is definitely hot and humid outside today. I give thanks for all of you who have come to worship here today in the name of Jesus in spite of the heat. I give thanks for our air conditioning that enables me to preach and you to listen to the Word of God in comfort. Your faithful offerings, week by week, enable us to pay our utility bills in order that we can all share in Christian community, regardless of the temperature outside. Thank you!

\*\*\*\*\*

For churches without air conditioning:

Thank you for your faithful presence here today, even though the weather outside continues to make it hot and uncomfortable inside. The warmth of God's love is evident as we share and sing and pray together. This building is a special, sacred space that has served many faithful generations of Christian people in our community. Thank you for your faithful offerings that keep our ministry alive.

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September 2015  
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#198 The amount you give should be in proportion to what you receive. "Teach your children right from wrong and when they are grown they will still do right." Pr. 22:6

With school starting again, children everywhere are learning the wonders of addition and subtraction. These are lessons that begin in the earliest grades and carry us through the rest of our lives. They are also lessons we use as we live our faith through our financial giving. Do you teach the children around you about how to say "thank you" to God by giving a portion of everything you have back to God?

Consider: Do you manage your finances or do your finances manage you? One of the keys to becoming a good steward is learning to manage your money. Call it a budget or whatever ... you must plan how you spend, or you will continue to be a victim of marketing, commercials, and impulse purchasing.

Good stewards start by setting aside "God's Share", then the necessities of life, and finally discretionary items. Poor stewards do it in the exact opposite order. Good stewardship brings peace and contentment. Poor stewardship leads to chaos and crises.

Listen and pray. Try to find out what God is calling you to do and model for the children around you!

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Biblical Stewardship Principle:

*The amount you give should be in proportion to what you receive.*

Quotes for Bulletins/Newsletters:

A story is told about the great composer Rossini. When on tour, he would go from town to town, incorporating the local talents into his concerts. In one town, there was only one singer, and the only note she could sing was B flat. People were sure that at last, Rossini's great genius had met its match. The time for the concert came at last, and nearly everyone in town was there to see what he could do with this pitiful one-note woman.

When the curtain rose, the woman sang her one note, pure and strong. Then Rossini's music floated in, intertwining and swelling, surrounding her one note with beauty and perfection, enveloping it in a glorious symphony!

This is what God does with us. We need to offer the gifts we have been given, no matter how small. God will do the rest, turning it into the very music of the spheres.

Mark 14:8 - "She has done what she could."

by Betsy Schwarzentraub

November 2015  
A STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE FOR YOUR CHURCH

#200 *Giving puts you closer to God's work through your church.*  
"...I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35 NRSV

Thanksgiving is a time to "take stock" of the many blessings we have received. It is also a time when we are led to live out what Jesus taught us when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This Thanksgiving, we invite you to consider giving gifts of appreciated stock as you count your blessings and give thanks.

Have you ever thought of using appreciated stock to pay your church pledge, to make a special year-end gift to your favorite mission or ministry, or to make a gift to your church's building program, debt-retirement or special project? If you own appreciated stock it may make more sense to use that stock instead of cash to make a charitable gift.

Using appreciated stock may allow you to give a larger gift because (1) you eliminate payment of capital gains taxes; and, (2) you receive a charitable deduction for the market value (average of the high and low of the stock) on the day of the gift.

If you make a stock gift through the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation, we will process that gift without a sales commission. Thus, allowing your church or the ministry of your choice to receive the entire proceeds for use in its program or mission.

Call us for details on how we can help you give a gift of appreciated stock as a special way of giving thanks this Thanksgiving.

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Biblical Stewardship Principle:

*Giving puts you closer to God's work through your church.*

Quotes for Bulletins/Newsletters:

**Why I Give Money to This Church**

1. Because all things are from God in the beginning.
2. Because the talents I utilize and develop in a paying career are gifts from the One who made me.
3. Because God made humans to be caretakers, not just consumers.
4. Because what I give back to God is a response to God's love and amazing grace toward me.
5. Because the Bible says to give to others.
6. Because giving money is not just about budgets, but rather about practicing a spiritual discipline. My personal relationship with Jesus Christ is more in tune when I give.
7. Because "practice makes perfect." Tithing is a spiritual discipline to be practiced, cultivated and improved, just like prayer, scripture study, service, worship, fasting and such.
8. Because giving helps me keep my priorities in order. God is our higher power. Money is a thing, but it's not a god.
9. Because I said I would when I joined the church, when I gave my word that I would support my local congregation with my prayers, presence, gifts and service.
10. I give money because I have witnessed with my own eyes the transforming, resurrecting power of God's love. It affects people's lives and hearts, in part through the ministries that this church performs and provides. In the real world, ministries need supplies, leaders, staff, equipment, curriculum, paper, bread, scissors, and sheet music - worldly stuff for an out-of-this-world revelation of love!