

GIVING
God At Work!
January 2018

For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. (Matthew 25:29)

Matthew 25 shares a series of parables describing the Kingdom of God. In the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) the master leaves his immense wealth (the equivalent of 160 annual salaries) in the hands of his servants. Two servants double what they were entrusted with; while one only returns the talent he was given. The master rewards the two successful servants with even more responsibility, but casts out the unsuccessful servant. Clearly, stewardship is central to discipleship in the Kingdom of God.

The punishment of the poor steward seems severe, but the stakes were incredibly high. Thus, it is with our stewardship. Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world is our job alone. What will we have to show for it when the Master returns?

Therefore, we must strengthen our stewardship so we can be the best disciples possible, not out of fear of punishment, but out of an abundant desire to do what is right and what pleases the Lord. Like a gymnast or musician, we are always looking for those occasions when it all seems to happen perfectly—in our prayers, presence, service, witness and in our giving. God does not just want our average performance, but our best prayers, our most engaged presence, our most selfless service to others, our deep and abiding witness, and our sacrificial giving. Of course, we know there will be difficulties along the way, but we have the assurance of God's abundance.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Or call 1-888-903-9863

Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Super Bowl of Stewardship
February 3 • Summerfield UMC, Milwaukee

The **SUPER BOWL OF STEWARDSHIP 2018** will be hosted by **Summerfield United Methodist Church**, 728 E. Juneau Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53202 on Saturday February 3, 2018.

Rev Anna-Lisa Hunter will provide the keynote address, "**Digital Tools for Stewardship**". Jim Wells will present, "**Using Data to Guide Stewardship**".

Other workshops will include:

- "**Helping Your Congregation Save & Give More**" – Tools to effectively deal with personal finances using Biblical principles.
- "**Year-Round Stewardship Planning**" – Creating a plan that embraces year-round stewardship and looks ahead 3-5 years.
- "**Stewardship Is More Than Fundraising**" – Methods, tools and best practices for effective church financial operations.

Bring yourself or your whole church team for the day to create or refine your annual stewardship plan and attend workshops on current and compelling stewardship topics.

See www.wumf.org/upcoming-events to register and to see workshop details.

The event costs \$10/person and includes lunch and materials.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact:

Jim Wells, Director of Stewardship & Capital Campaigns, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 608-837-9582 or jwells@wumf.org.

GIVING
God At Work!
December 2017

... for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. (Philippians 2:13)

How we invite God to work in us is to become increasingly more like Christ in the process called discipleship. Its aim is to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, but this usually comes in stages of commitment whether it be prayer, presence, service, witness, or giving.

There are four stages of giving. In **Stage 1**, people spend on themselves and then to give to God from what is left over. They usually give little or nothing. They are not ready to commit.

In **Stage 2**, people take responsibility and wonder what equal shares of the goal (e.g., church budget) are. Of course, this fails to recognize that households have different levels of resources. People at this stage are ready to give regularly and many of them pledge.

In **Stage 3**, people want to put God first in their lives, even if they must change spending habits and attitudes toward having things. They understand that an offering to God is intended to be a sacrifice. They look to move toward tithing, giving ten percent of their income to God, by increasing the percentage of income they give each year.

In **Stage 4**, people want to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. They see even what they spend on their own needs to be support for their discipleship. Often, their giving to church exceeds the 10 percent tithing mark.

Where are you in your discipleship journey? Is this the year, you make a change? Let's pray for one another as we grow together.

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

How the Foundation Can Help You Leave a Legacy I: Your Will

By preparing a will, you can extend your Christian stewardship beyond your lifetime. In addition to providing for your family's needs, your will can direct how your assets will continue to support the missions and ministries you have supported in life.

A simple, cost-effective way to do this is to insert this paragraph into your wills: ***"After all my bills are paid, I want [x] percent of my estate to go to the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation, Inc., to be used for such exempt purposes of the Foundation as are provided in a specific written instrument."***

Then you provide the Foundation with a letter of instruction that says "In accordance with the wills I have prepared, I have designated that [x] percent of my estate will be given to charity. The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation, Inc. has been designated to receive this bequest. I request the Foundation to distribute this bequest as follows:"

You may then specify percentages to be given to a specific United Methodist church, Wisconsin UM health or welfare ministry, UM college or seminary, specific missionary, or local community outreach organization. In fact any religious or not-for-profit organization.

You may want to spend some time praying and thinking about the kinds of ministries that you have a calling to support. UM Global Ministries has a browsable, searchable list of mission projects by category, region, focus area, population served, etc.

If you need assistance with preparing your letter of instruction or wish to know more about leaving a gift to your favorite church or charitable organization, contact **The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation** toll-free at 1-888-903-9863 or email us at wumf@wumf.org.

GIVING

Not One Member, But Many

November 2017

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

A **division of labor** marks our occupations and social institutions in modern society: people perform highly specialized, but reciprocal and interdependent activities. This results both in greater benefits for the whole and greater dependence of individuals on one another.

Paul the Apostle recognized both this benefit and this interdependence among the followers of Christ. He likened us Christians to body parts. We form a whole Paul calls the Body of Christ, and we are interdependent, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.'" Stewardship is like that. Our gifts work **together** for the good.

Arthur Tappan Pierson summarized the lesson of 1 Corinthians 12:

- Every believer has some gift, therefore all should be encouraged.
- No one has all the gifts, therefore all should be humble.
- All gifts are for the Body, therefore all should be harmonious.
- All gifts are for the Lord, therefore all should be contented.
- All gifts are mutually helpful, therefore all should be faithful.
- All gifts promote the whole Body's health, therefore none can be dispensed with.
- All gifts depend upon the Holy Spirit's empowerment, therefore none should be out of fellowship with Him.

Stewardship strives to maximize the impact of our collective gifts.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Invite Your Congregation to Make An IRA Charitable Rollover Gift

If you are 70½ or older and have a Traditional or Roth IRA you may give up to \$100,000 to a charitable organization without being subject to income tax on the distribution. In addition, the gift satisfies all or in part the annual **Required Minimum Distribution** from the IRA.

We encourage you to consider an IRA Charitable Rollover gift to your local church or any United Methodist ministry of your choosing. You may make a direct charitable gift to fund your church's operating budget, fund a special project or establish a permanent endowment fund to benefit your church in perpetuity.

It is wise to consult your IRA custodian or financial planner to assist you. **The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation** is available to assist you, as well. Please call toll-free at 1-888-903-9863 or email the Foundation at wumf@wumf.org.

Either way, you will need to know the federal tax ID number for your church or the charities you wish to benefit. You can call your church Treasurer for the tax ID.

The Foundation will provide you with a letter template to send to your IRA Custodian and ask them to make a direct transfer of funds from your IRA to your local church or favorite charity. Be sure that the check is made payable to the church or charity, even if it is mailed to you. Otherwise, the tax benefit may not apply.

If you have questions or would like a copy of the letter template, please contact:

Jim Wells, Director of Stewardship & Capital Campaigns, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 608-837-9582 or jwells@wumf.org.

GIVING

The Work of God is Done by Giving
October 2017

The work of God is to be done by the people of God giving according to the will of God. (Sutherland & Nowery, The 33 Laws of Stewardship.)

This is as good a definition of Stewardship as there is. Whenever there is something to be done in the Kingdom of God, the followers of God are the ones who are called to do it. This may be leading prayers, meeting in small groups, working in the community garden, balancing the church's books, inviting our neighbors to worship, visiting shut-ins, or serving the poor.

We do much of this work of God through or supported by our local churches. Worship is the most visible, perhaps, but many other activities are equally important, such as spiritual formation, congregational care, hospitality and outreach, or missions. Moreover, the local churches support the works of the conference and denomination, as well. In Wisconsin, this includes ministries like congregational revitalization and new church starts, or health and welfare ministries and, elsewhere, ministries such as Africa University.

Without the people of God giving according to the will of God, none of these things would be happening.

Sometime in the coming year, and for most of us, this fall, we will be called upon as God's people to give generously to support financially God's work in our local churches and beyond. This is a recurring call to discipleship that we all share through our connection in the Wisconsin Conference of the United Methodist Church.

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

October Festival of Stewardship
October 28 • Wesley UMC, La Crosse

The **OCTOBER FESTIVAL OF STEWARDSHIP 2017** will be hosted by historic **Wesley United Methodist Church**, 721 King Street, La Crosse on Saturday October 28, 2017.

Rev Anna-Lisa Hunter will provide the keynote address, "**Digital Tools for Stewardship**". Jim Wells will present, "**Using Data to Guide Stewardship**".

Other workshops will include:

- "**Which Annual Campaign?**" – Tools and approaches to choosing an annual stewardship campaign.
- "**Year-Round Stewardship Planning**" – Creating a plan that embraces year-round stewardship and looks ahead 3-5 years.
- "**Stewardship Is More Than Fundraising**" – Methods, tools and best practices for effective church financial operations.

Bring yourself or your whole church team for the day to create or refine your annual stewardship plan and attend workshops on current and compelling stewardship topics.

See www.wumf.org/upcoming-events to register and to see workshop details.

The event costs \$15/person and includes lunch and materials.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact:

Jim Wells, Director of Stewardship & Capital Campaigns, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 608-837-9582 or jwells@wumf.org.

GIVING

The Joy of Giving & The Purity of the Gift September 2017

¹²*For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have.” (2 Corinthians 8:12)*

In my experience, we are pretty casual in our churches about ensuring whether our gifts are acceptable. We write a check, drop it in the plate or even send it to the office. Alternatively, our gift is sent directly by electronic funds transfer from our bank account to the church’s account. But is the gift acceptable to God, and how can we ensure that it is acceptable?

During worship, the collected tithes and offerings are usually taken to the altar at which time the congregation sings a doxology (literally word of praise) and the pastor says a prayer. Hopefully, in this way, we are asking God to bless our gifts. If God blesses them, then they are acceptable (pure, sacred, clean, holy) to God.

(Unfortunately, in many of our worship services, we give our offering of gifts to God very short shrift. I attended a service of worship recently in which we skipped the doxology because we were running short on time.)

In the Scripture above, Paul gives a very different slant on what is acceptable. He says, the gift is acceptable if the giver is eager to give. I certainly would want to continue to praise God and ask God’s blessing on my gifts during worship, but I can ensure their acceptability by giving them with joy in my heart.

Interestingly, Paul also indicates in this passage that acceptability of our gifts is proportional, that is, “according to what we have.” The widow’s two small coins (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4) are as acceptable as the large sums given by the rich because her gift was proportionally greater, indeed it was all she had.

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Leading by Example

⁶*Then the leaders of ancestral houses made their freewill offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, and the officers over the king’s work. (1 Chronicles 29:6)*

One of the most prevalent themes in Scripture from Father Abraham to Moses, to King David to Jesus the Messiah and his disciples, is leading by example. It is important for leaders **to practice** righteousness and for the congregation **to know** about it.

Thus, it is important for the Stewardship Chair, Finance Chair, Council Chair, Pastor, and other leaders of the church to be proportional givers and to share that information. We don’t have to share how many dollars we give, but we should share what percentage. Anonymity may do for some congregation members, but not for leaders.

During a recent Capital Campaign, I preached about the importance of tithing and proportional giving. Proportional giving is thinking about your pledges and gifts as a proportion of your earnings; and striving to give the tithe (ten percent) or more in your annual giving to the church.

This in turn, inspired the pastor to share, proportionally, what her family gave to the church. She had never done this before. It turns out that they had not been tithing, but were moving toward tithing by increasing the percentage given each year.

This simple revelation must have inspired others, because the campaign produced not only the desired debt reduction funds, but pledges sufficient for a fully funded annual budget at that church for the first time in anyone’s memory. Alleluia.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

GIVING

The Righteous Will Live by Faith

August 2017

"For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means" (2 Corinthians 8:3)

Paul wanted the church in the wealthy trading center of Corinth to give generously to his mission to Jerusalem. To encourage them he noted how freely the churches in poorer Macedonia had already given.

So, how were the Macedonians able to give "beyond their means?" How is that even possible? It is possible because if we have faith, then God will provide. If we have faith, we can give even more than we might think we are able.

In their book, *The 33 Laws of Stewardship*, Dave Sutherland and Kirk Nowery point out three ways we can live into this kind of faith. The first is to **get rid of a scarcity mindset**. We have more than enough already on hand to pay for all our hopes for mission and ministry! But if we need to, we can in faith call on God for as much as we need.

Second, "when you think about giving, and specifically when you make a commitment to give, **don't focus on your limitations, but on [God's] limitlessness.**" How much faith does it take to believe that God can do more than we can? Why trust in yourself, when you can trust in God?

Finally, **extend the limits of your spiritual comfort zone**. We are here to assist the Holy Spirit in establishing the Kingdom of God. Business as usual won't do the job. Can we be like the Christians in Macedonia who gave beyond their means? And not just *giving* beyond our means. How about—in faith and with God's help—*praying* beyond our means, *engaging* with church and community beyond our means, *ministering* to the least and the lost beyond our means, and *testifying* in thought, word and deed to God's meaning in our lives beyond our means.

We are called to be stewards of the abundant Grace we have been given through Jesus Christ.

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Ideas for Linking Giving to Mission & Ministry

The mission of the Church is to make **disciples** of Jesus Christ for the **transformation** of the world. Therefore, our giving is for creating disciples and for transforming the world. Here are some ideas to link giving to the mission and ministry of the church.

- Once or twice each month, have someone give a 2-3 minute talk during worship on a stewardship topic of the month. See our booklet, *Year-Round Financial Stewardship*, for topic ideas.

For more ideas on growing your stewardship ministry, read the Foundation's publication, *Ideas for Year-Round Financial Stewardship*. Go to www.wumf.org/year-round-ideas and click on the link to the booklet. Or contact the Foundation and we will mail you a copy.

- Once or twice each month, have someone give a 2-3 minute talk during worship about a ministry about a ministry of your church through which lives are being changed *and* thank people for their gifts which make that ministry possible.
- Prepare bulletin boards or other displays to highlight the different missions and ministries the church supports.
- Send a letter to the congregation about the stewardship topic of the month. Use a different writer each month.
- Ask the Church Council chair to put the Treasurer's Report last at the meeting. Put exciting changes happening in people's lives at the beginning of the meeting. When new items are proposed – ask if it is a part of God's vision instead of who will pay for it.
- Prepare newsletter articles or bulletin inserts about the topic of the month or reporting, "Because of your gifts...this has happened..."
- Encourage your pastor to review the monthly giving records of the congregation. Look for changes –this may reflect a life change.
- Ask children, youth, or adults to write about "How I've shared this week." Publish these edited comments in the bulletin or newsletter.

GIVING

The Paradox of Generosity

July 2017

"for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part." (2 Corinthians 8:2b)

Extreme poverty overflowing into a wealth of generosity is another of those grace-filled paradoxes we find in Scripture: those who humble themselves will be exalted, those who lose their life for my sake will find it, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Sometimes we United Methodists act as if, while struggling to make ends meet in our churches, we are suffering a "severe ordeal of affliction." Nothing could be farther from the truth. In 2016, the 35,231 United Methodist households in Wisconsin were blessed with incomes totaling about \$2.5 billion. Even assuming we put away ten percent of that for retirement, college educations, etc., the tithe on our remaining earnings should be about \$172 million. Instead, in 2016, we gave just over \$52 million, about 3%. Our wallets are not afflicted, but our faith may be. Our paradox is though blessed with much, we withhold much.

What would we be able to achieve if we tithed? In addition to "paying the bills," each church could feed the hungry in its community, support overseas missionaries, sponsor and provide scholarships for Volunteer in Mission trips around the world, provide tutoring after school, build a youth center, create a multi-platform communication system that provides your community with access to sermons & Christian education, and hire staff to develop, organize and manage all these activities.

And, consider this. As we start doing so much more in the community, our congregations will grow in both membership and attendance as well. When these new and newly revived members model their giving on your example, they will increase the church's capacity for good even more. Now that is Stewardship!

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Stewardship Retreat, August 11-12

STEWARDSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE is the theme of the **2017 Stewardship Retreat @ Pine Lake Camp**. **Bishop Hee-Soo Jung** will kick off our retreat with a keynote presentation on the "Theology of Generosity". Other talks and workshops will concentrate on one of two tracks:

- **"Essentials of Stewardship"** – Creating a stewardship plan, choosing an annual stewardship campaign, year-round stewardship, the stewardship challenge grant, creating a narrative budget
- **"Digital Stewardship"** – Electronic giving, digital apps for congregations, stewardship content resources, data-driven stewardship, help with finance tools

Bring yourself or your whole church team for one day or two to create or refine your annual stewardship plan and attend workshops on current and compelling stewardship topics.

Also, there will be plenty of time for enjoying beautiful Pine Lake Camp.

See www.wumf.org/upcoming-events for workshop details.

- Full Retreat – Friday & Saturday, August 11-12
 - Double Occupancy (Rader Retreat Center) \$100/person
 - Single Occupancy (Rader Retreat Center) \$150/person
- Drive-In Day – Friday August 11, 10 am – 4 pm \$ 40/person

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact:

Jim Wells, Director of Stewardship & Capital Campaigns, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 608-837-9582 or jwells@wumf.org.

GIVING
Found Trustworthy
June 2017

*"Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy."
(1 Corinthians 4:2)*

The Apostle Paul's statement about stewardship is a definition. To be a steward means to have been given a trust.

It is amazing how much God is willing to entrust to mortals. We are entrusted with the well-being of God's creation, with the mysteries of the Gospel, with spreading of the Gospel to all the nations of the Earth, and with the health of the Church. That's a lot of trust.

What do we do to earn that trust? Nothing. As it is with the unmerited grace that is offered to us as disciples, so it is with the unmerited trust offered to us as stewards. We say, "Yes" to the invitation and then, if we follow the plan, we grow and mature in stewardship.

Jesus points the way to growth in stewardship by admonishing us to start small. "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own?" (Luke 16:10-12).

In stewardship, faith is not what you believe, it is what you do to grow the Kingdom.

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Exploring the Universe of Giving

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church authorizes the local church Trustees or Permanent Endowment and Planned Giving Ministry Committee to receive and invest bequests and trusts with the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation. The charge conference is encouraged to:

- Emphasize the need for adults of all ages to have a will and an estate plan and provide information on the preparation of these to the members of the congregation.
- Stress the opportunities for church members and constituents to make provisions for giving through United Methodist churches, institutions, agencies, and causes by means of wills, annuities, trusts, life insurance, memorials, and various types of property.
- Arrange for the dissemination of information that will be helpful in preretirement planning, including such considerations as establishing a living will, a living trust, and the need for each person to designate someone to serve as a responsible advocate should independent decision-making ability be lost.

A firm grounding in planned giving principles is part of well-rounded stewardship education. The Finance/Stewardship Ministry Committee should work closely with Trustees, Endowment Committee or Local Church Foundation to carry out this educational task.

If your church needs assistance in carrying out these duties, please contact:

Jim Wells, Director of Stewardship & Capital Campaigns, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 608-837-9582 or jwells@wumf.org.

GIVING

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

May 2017

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:7-8)

The apostle Paul reminds us of the *Law of the Harvest*: “whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” How simple is that. Each year, every farmer has the same choice. Consume all the seed as food or give some back to the soil to ensure next year’s harvest.

And the same is true with the **spiritual** harvest where our seeds are our good works, financial giving, prayers, study, service, and worship. If one’s return is determined by his or her investment, then no farmer would sow sparingly or haphazardly and expect a beautiful, bountiful harvest. And neither should we.

The *Law of Spirituality* is as certain as the law of nature: When we live in the world of the flesh, we are tempted to withhold from God and withdraw from helping others. When we feel God’s abundance, however, we know and experience a bountiful return.

Additionally, God does not value gifts given reluctantly or under compulsion. We feel loved by God every day when we receive God’s gifts, of life and food and family and work, or at least we should. But, does God feel loved when he receives our gifts? Or, is he offended by the spirit in which they are given? That is what it means to be a cheerful giver. We give because we love the recipient.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Alternative Ways of Giving

How much do you feel called to return to God to say “thank you” for the blessings you’ve received? In reviewing your finances and taxes for the year ahead, we invite you to consider the following creative options for meeting your charitable giving goals.

Your Gift	How to Make that Gift	Your Benefits
Appreciated stock, securities, or other assets	Donate stock, securities, or mutual fund shares through the Foundation at no fee.	An income tax deduction and avoidance of capital gains tax. This allows you to make a larger gift than if you made it with cash.
Direct gift of up to \$100,000 from Traditional or Roth IRA	If you’re 70-1/2 or older, ask your IRA administrator to make a gift directly to the church or another charity from your Traditional or Roth IRA.	You can make a generous gift that is tax-free and can count for the mandatory minimum withdrawal from your IRA. It is a direct gift to charity, which means you do not pay income tax on the withdrawal. Nor does it affect your Social Security income.
Deferred Gift from an IRA or other Retirement Plan	Name the church or another charity as a beneficiary of the remaining assets after your lifetime.	You’ll be able to leave your less heavily taxed assets to family, and others that you love.
Real Estate	Donate property to the church through the Foundation.	Avoid capital gains taxes, receive an immediate charitable deduction, and possibly establish a life income trust.

For ideas on how to maximize the impact of your giving contact:
Eric Churan, President, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 608-837-9582 or echuran@wumf.org.

GIVING

Give and It Will Be Given to You

April 2017

The Measure You Give Will Be the Measure You Get Back. ¹³⁸*give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.* (Luke 6:38)

Fairness in the exchange of goods and services is of great importance. Establishing uniform weights and measures was written into the U.S. Constitution (Art. 1, Sec. 8) and just weights and measures are addressed on several occasions in the Bible. For example, one of God commands the Israelites, "You shall not cheat in measuring length, weight, or quantity. You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah [.6 bushel], and a just hin [1 gallon]," Leviticus 19:35-36.

We might think that "a good measure" in Luke 6:38 means a large amount, but what follows is a recipe for giving a *fair* or *just* amount (probably of wheat). Fill the basket, press it down, shake it, make sure it is running over. The lesson is that if you expect good measure, you should give good measure. This formula works with God as well as with humans. Aren't we taught in the Lord's Prayer to expect forgiveness in proportion to how forgiving we are? We should expect the same to pertain to compassion, to mercy, and to generosity. According to John Wesley, this means God lets *us* decide how much blessing we wish to receive. And why would we wish to receive anything but the greatest measure of God's blessings.

How does your giving to the operations of the church and to missions appear in light of this formula? Does your giving reflect a faith that you will receive generously? Or does it reflect something other than complete trust in God's generosity?

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Why is My Giving Tax-Deductible?

As I write this on March 1, 2017, I am aware that today is the 100th anniversary of the Zimmerman Telegram, a proposal from Germany to Mexico, that Mexico ally with Germany should the United States enter World War I. Partly because of the telegram's publication, support in the United States for joining the war grew significantly and war was declared early in April. Mexico stayed neutral.

Congress resolved to increase taxes to fund the war effort. For the first time, the impact of taxes on charitable giving became an issue. The *Washington Post* opined:

If the government takes all or nearly all of one's disposable income or surplus income . . . it must then support all those works of charity and mercy and all the educational and religious works which in this country have heretofore been supported by private benevolence.

Eventually, Congress passed the War Revenue Act of 2017, which increased the income tax and corporate tax significantly. However, the Act also provided a deduction for:

contributions or gifts actually made within the year to corporations or associations organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, or educational purposes, or to societies for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals

The deduction for charitable gifts has continued to the present day and allows the public to maximize their gifts to religious, educational and charitable organizations. In 2015, Wisconsin United Methodists in 35,231 households donated to regular giving for their congregations a total of \$52,303,000. An additional \$14,285,000 was given, mostly by these same United Methodist households, to special offerings, fundraisers, capital campaigns and memorials, bequests or endowments.

For ideas on how to maximize the impact of your giving contact:
Eric Churan, President, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 608-837-9582 or echuran@wumf.org.

GIVING

Do you have the faith to be generous?

March 2017

Ask God for what you need. ²You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures." (James 4:2-3); ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

On a Volunteer-in-Mission trip to Costa Rica, our team was blessed to be led in worship by a local contemporary worship band using guitars and drums. The service was held in a screened-in shelter employed as a chapel at the rural camp where we stayed and also was used by our team for storage of extra supplies donated by churches in our Conference.

At the end of the service we collected an offering for the worship band and their congregation. Then, our lead pastor asked the worship leader if there was anything the band really needed. You could tell that he felt it was a little outlandish to ask, but shared that they had really been praying for a long while for an electronic keyboard. At this, our lead pastor walked to the back of the chapel and from the pile of extra supplies pulled a brand new electronic keyboard and presented it to the band.

Needless to say they were as amazed as we on the Mission Team were. You see, before taking off, we had debated the value in carting a keyboard, along with our Vacation Bible School and Dental supplies, over 2,000 miles to rural Costa Rica. Yet someone had been moved to donate it, so we trusted God to find a use for it and for us.

God asks for our support in many ways and we can't always anticipate how our generosity will be used for God's purposes. We must simply have faith that our gifts are pleasing to God.

Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at
www.wumf.org or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)
Or call 1-888-903-9863

Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Empowering Generosity

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation & Wisconsin Annual Conference are partnering with VANCO Payment Solutions to offer a benefit to Wisconsin churches that implement electronic giving. The program is called "**Empowering Generosity.**"

- **For Wisconsin churches who adopt electronic giving by June 20, 2017, VANCO will waive its start-up fee and monthly fees for the first year.** The start-up fee would be \$100 and monthly fees for most churches in Wisconsin (attendance under 500/week) would range from \$10 to \$30.
- **For churches that currently use electronic funds transfer, but add online giving in 2017, VANCO also will waive its start-up fee and monthly fees for the first year.**
- VANCO also charges a processing fee based on number of transactions & donation volume which the church is responsible for. **However, The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation will give your church a \$100 grant to offset these processing fees, if you sign up for EFT and/or online giving through VANCO.**

Why Electronic Funds Transfer?

- Fewer people use or carry checks nowadays.
- You only indicate your desired giving amount once a year.
- Scheduled giving provides stability for the church's budget. Fewer skipped giving opportunities means greater collections.
- EFT is more secure than checks or cash.
- Electronic giving is attractive to the younger generation, but also is used by snowbirds and others to meet their obligations.

For more information contact:

Eric Churan, President, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 608-837-9582 or echuran@wumf.org.

GIVING

Are you prepared to be a steward?

February 2017

Everything is from God. "Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all." (1 Chronicles 29:11)

Pete Fromm, a Wisconsinite, thought he was prepared to live like a mountain man! He and his college friends read all about mountain men and wilderness survival. They stayed up late at night to talk and dream about living like a mountain man. Then, Pete's chance came. The Fish and Wildlife service needed someone to spend the winter in the Bitterroot Mountains of Idaho watching over salmon breeding grounds. That's when Pete found out that he was not entirely prepared; that there was needed knowledge and skills he did not have.*

Are you ready to be a faithful steward of God's gifts? The first lesson is to realize and embrace that God is the owner and we are the stewards, the caretakers of God's realm. As scripture says, "the heavens and the earth are yours ... O Lord." Each of us should ask, how am I, together with others in my church, taking care of all that God has placed in our care? Where are our opportunities to take care of the planet, of people who are in need, of those who are seeking for meaning in their lives, for our neighbors, for our friends?

What is your plan for stewardship this year? Who needs your generosity? Who needs to experience God's grace through your generosity and careful shepherding of God's gifts? Now is the time to prepare. Make a plan to acquire the knowledge and skills of Christian stewardship.

(Read more about Pete Fromm's experiences in his memoir, *Indian Creek Chronicles*.)

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www.wumf.org or Facebook/wumf.org
Or call 1-888-903-9863

Helps for the Stewardship Chair

New Year, New Game Plan

How are you preparing for a 2017 that helps your congregation to grow in discipleship and generosity? The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation offers training and consultation to assist churches in the Wisconsin Conference to help their congregations become and remain good stewards of God's gifts.

On February 4, the Foundation will join the Conference Discipleship Leadership Council to present the **Stewardship-Leadership SuperBowl**. Bishop Hee-Soo Jung will be the keynote speaker at this exciting event to be held at Peace UMC in Kaukauna (from 9am -3pm, registration at 8:30am). Topics include:

Discipleship Systems // Tools for Evangelism // Theology of Abundance/Generosity // Year-Round Stewardship // Creating a Narrative Budget // "Change the World" Stewardship Campaign // Tools for Sound Church Financial Management // Feasibility Study Information Forum (Optional 3:15-4:30pm)

On August 11-12, the Foundation will sponsor a two-day Stewardship Retreat @ Pine Lake Camp including these and other topics, such as electronic giving. Churches can bring a team and create or improve on a long-term (3 to 5 year) plan for stewardship in their congregation and participate in workshops on a variety of stewardship topics. You can attend Drive-In Day on Friday (9am - 5 pm) or stay overnight for the full experience.

The Foundation can also provide individualized consultations to your finance and stewardship teams on capital campaigns, building loans, planned giving, finance and stewardship best practices, and other topics related to the growth generosity in your congregation. Contact us today for more information on any of these opportunities for growth.