

GIVING
Giving Wholeheartedly
December 2020

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

Is **Giving Wholeheartedly** a minor stewardship theme **OR**, is it the whole point of being a follower of Christ? Is **giving wholeheartedly** the essential to having a relationship with the Creator? Is **presenting our gifts to God** not just an important part of Sabbath worship, but is it the central and most important part and the true reason for our worship?

“Giving Wholeheartedly means committing ourselves entirely to the mission and ministry exemplified by the life of Jesus Christ. This means that **every** bit of time, **every** bit talent and **every** bit of treasure, even that which we spend on ourselves and our families, is for God’s purpose.

“Giving Wholeheartedly means that when our hearts are open, our arms are open as well. When we are practicing our discipleship, we are sharing the love and grace with our neighbors near and far. We live out our love by reaching out to those in need, for example, Ruby’s Pantry food distribution that served 380 families and individuals this week.

“Finally, **Giving Wholeheartedly** means a willingness to give to the church so that whatever ministry unfolds, it is funded. **Giving wholeheartedly** provides opportunities for our local churches to be ready, willing and available to serve in whatever manner Christ calls us to serve.” [Source: *Think Greater, Wisconsin Conference UMC*]

What we can conclude from this is that you need to give for your own spiritual benefit. Not selfishly because it makes you feel good, but because it fulfills your need to be a faithful follower of Christ.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

CARES Act Promotes Charitable Contributions

The **Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act** (H.R. 748), known as the **CARES Act**, was enacted in March 2020. Certain provisions were included to make it easier for individuals to give to churches and other charitable organizations. Below is a summary provided by Wespath Benefits and Investments.¹ **Please share it with your congregation as soon as possible:**

The **CARES Act** encourages individuals, families, and corporations to continue to contribute to churches and other charitable organizations.

Allowance of Partial Above-the-Line Deduction for Charitable Contributions

Section 2204 of the Act **permits taxpayers to deduct up to \$300 of cash contributions**, whether they itemize their deductions or not. It creates a new “above-the-line” deduction for all taxpayers who contribute to religious, charitable and educational organizations (i.e., for taxpayers who take the standard deduction). This deduction will permit these taxpayers to deduct up to \$300 of annual monetary contributions. This is applicable for tax years beginning after 2019, and does not sunset after 2020 like the increased limits described below.

Modification of Limitations on Charitable Contributions during 2020

Section 2205 of CARES **increases the limitations on deductions for charitable contributions by individuals who itemize**, as well as corporations. **Such cash contributions must be made during 2020.** This provision does not extend the due date of the 2020 tax return. For individuals, the 50%-of-adjusted-gross-income limitation is suspended for 2020. [*That is, you may claim charitable contributions up to 100% of adjusted-gross-income.*]

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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

¹<https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/gbod-assets/generic/CARES-Act-Summary-from-Wespath.pdf>

GIVING
Stewardship as Discipleship
November 2020

If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (James 2:15-17)

How does a disciple set aside his or her life for God? We simplify, in our denomination, the complicated issue of discipleship as the following: your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. It is important to note that discipleship is comprised of actions, not beliefs. You may say all the creeds, but as James (2:19) points out, "Even the demons believe [in God]."

Much of our teaching about stewardship has to do with giving financially to support the mission and ministry of the church. That is giving, but what makes it discipleship. Last month I noted that when we are planning an expenditure, John Wesley advises us to ask, 1) am I acting as a proprietor or a steward? 2) am I following Scripture? 3) can I offer this as a sacrifice to God, through Jesus Christ? and 4) will this action be judged as righteous?

These are the questions of a mature disciple who understands that in the Kingdom of God, actions speak louder than words. Since the disciple knows that everything comes from God (a belief), then every expenditure, even spending for oneself or one's family, should be put to Wesley's tests. That is what sets aside the disciple's expenditures for God. The disciple turns beliefs into action and converts the simple materialism of the economy into spirituality. Spending money may be indistinguishable between disciple and non-disciple, but the *disciple's* spending helps bring about the Kingdom of God.

Reread Wesley's four rules above and you will see that a disciple's expenditure includes prayer, presence, gift, service, and witness.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Stewardship Retreat 2020 Available Online

The materials developed for the **Online Stewardship Retreat 2020** are available to anyone on the Website of the **Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation**. This includes video presentations, slides, handouts, forms, spreadsheets, etc. relevant to the topics included in the retreat.

Find the Retreat materials at www.wumf.org/knowledge
Click on **Topic #7 "Online Stewardship Planning Retreat"**

Even if you did not register for the Retreat in August, you can still participate by following the link above.

The Retreat is intended to help churches to plan for multi-year Stewardship activities that transcend simply seeking pledges for a church budget. Topics include:

- Introduction and Overview
- Importance of a Stewardship Plan
- Developing a Multi-Year Plan
- Ideas for Year-Round Stewardship
- How River of Life Plans Stewardship
- Using the Stewardship Challenge Grant
- Help with Stewardship Tools
- Narrative Budget-Share a Budget that Tells a Story

The staff of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation is always ready to help. If you have any questions or need help during your planning, do not hesitate to reach out to us. We can connect you with the Retreat presenters and others or the materials that can help you customize a Stewardship program that is right for your church.

Find the Retreat materials at www.wumf.org/knowledge
Click on **Topic #7 "Online Stewardship Planning Retreat"**

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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GIVING
"Tis the Gift to Be Simple"
October 2020

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free; 'tis the gift to come down where you ought to be (Simple Gifts/Shaker Hymn, Joseph Brackett)

During the Covid-19 pandemic, most of us are living under conditions of enforced simplicity. There are fewer luxuries and entertainments to spend money on and for most of us, less traveling, shopping, and visiting. Although, some people find the forced confinement to be stressful itself, most people are, all in all, under less of the kinds of stress they usually experience.

John Wesley, in his sermon, "The Use of Money (#50)," insists that simplicity is essential for the Godly use of money. If we earn all we can honestly, then we are to save all we can, meaning retain all we can, by not using it wastefully. Rather than spending on luxury foods and personal ornaments (home, fashion, etc.), says Wesley, we should "be content with what plain nature requires." Nor, should we lead our children into an extravagant lifestyle.

Why, then are we saving? In order to serve God through 1) supplying your own simple needs, 2) and the needs of your family and household, and then 3) giving your surplus to the "household of faith" and to other people for their simple needs. We are not the proprietors of creation, but rather the stewards of it. So, when we are planning an expenditure, Wesley advises us to ask, 1) am I acting as a proprietor or a steward? 2) am I following Scripture? 3) can I offer this as a sacrifice to God, through Jesus Christ? and 4) will this action be judged as righteous?

There are plenty of churches and people in need during the pandemic. This is a good time to get even better at God's simplicity. As Wesley says in ending his sermon, "Give all ye have, as well as all ye are, a spiritual sacrifice to Him who withheld not from you his Son, his only Son."

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

How Christians Leaders Talk About Money

The **Lewis Center for Church Leadership** at Wesley Theological Seminary is a great resource for the Stewardship Team (<https://www.churchleadership.com/tag/stewardship/>).

In a recent article from the Center, Lovett Weems Jr. writes about, "Changing the Tone of Conversations about Money and Church." He states two principles:

- **Never talk about people's money apart from their discipleship.**
- **Never talk about the church's money apart from its mission.**

Notice, he doesn't say never talk about money. Indeed, if we are out to make disciples of Jesus Christ and we want them to glorify God through how they use everything they have, including their money, then we *must* talk about money and the uses of money.

When talking about the church's money, Weems says, "The church only exists to do God's will. And every dollar that is entrusted to the church can be used for only one purpose — to fulfill the mission God has for the congregation. Therefore, there should be no item in the budget that cannot be connected to that mission." If we are asking disciples to glorify God with their money by giving it to the church, then the church had better be glorifying God with that money.

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation has resources to help your Stewardship and Finance Teams to connect your church budget to the church's mission and ministry and to budget with sound church management principles. Our Stewardship Knowledge Base (<https://www.wumf.org/knowledge/>) has two relevant topics: Topic #1 Creating a Narrative Budget and Topic #6 Financial Tools for Stewardship.

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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

GIVING
Resilience in Clay Jars
September 2020

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (2 Corinthians 4:7-9)

There is much being written about the need for resilience in our home lives, in our churches, in our communities and in our institutions. Resilience is the ability to recover quickly from difficulties; think of the tree that bends but does not break. Clearly, the Apostle Paul had resilience in mind when writing to the Corinthians.

There are three things that I believe a resilient church needs:

1. Devotion to a vision of ministry and mission
2. Knowledge of the spiritual gifts of members and friends of the congregation (the "treasure in clay jars")
3. Nurturing of gifts through spiritual disciplines of prayer, presence, gifts, service and witness.

In these pandemic times, we will need to discover and nurture resilience because, first, our affliction will not be ending any time soon. Until there is an effective vaccine that has been broadly implemented (2 or 3 or more years in the future), church attendance will be dangerous to members over 60 or those with chronic illnesses. Our churches must be resilient, second, because we are not going back to where we were. A mix of online and in-person worship, participation and giving will be the new normal going forward. Finally, we must be resilient because the newcomers we need to survive will judge us according to how we adhered to Christian values during the pandemic.

In all ways acknowledge God, and God will make straight your paths.

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts reflect the power of the Holy Spirit incarnate in each of us and expressed as specific abilities. These abilities may become strengths in the service of the Lord if we first identify them, second own them, third nurture and grow them, and fourth use them for good. As Barbara Dick has written, "Much like the characters in the Wizard of Oz, we have just the gifts we need to fulfill our deepest desires and the world's need, but we are not aware of them or lack confidence in their power."

Dan and Barbara Dick have written, "**Equipped for Every Good Work**," a systematic approach to building a gifts-based church. In addition to the book, they have created a Website with additional tools and resources: <https://equippedforeverygoodwork.wordpress.com/>. The book includes a tool for identifying your spiritual gifts.

The **StrengthFinder** assessment developed by the Gallup Organization provides another approach. "Living Your Strengths" is a faith-based book that helps you turn gifts into strengths. The book includes a link to the StrengthsFinder tool for identifying your talents.

Another resource is the **spiritual gifts inventory** provided by the United Methodist at <https://www.umc.org/en/content/exploring-your-spiritual-gifts>.

It is not too late to sign up for the Online Stewardship Retreat. We are asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

Register at bit.ly/WUMFretreat20

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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GIVING
Will You Bear Fruit?
August 2020

As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." (Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future. This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Online Stewardship Retreat 2020

The Foundation's 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. **There will be no cost for participating.**

Register at bit.ly/WUMFretreat20

In addition, the Retreat will not be in real time. The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation board members and staff will provide recorded presentations online. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation's staff. The consultant will review the church's plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

Presentation topics will include the 3-5 year Stewardship process, year-round stewardship, planning at River of Life Church, tools for stewardship, the Stewardship Challenge Grant, and electronic giving.

We are asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

Register at bit.ly/WUMFretreat20

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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GIVING

The Only Constant In Life Is Change

July 2020

No woman/man steps into the same river twice. For it is not the same river and she/he is not the same woman/man. –Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 500 BC)

What will church be like after the pandemic? We should plan for it to be different. The Israelites returned from exile to rebuild the temple, as well as their religion. However, neither was the same as it had been.

Around the same time, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus noted that, “The only constant in life is change.” No one can step into the same church twice, especially post-Covid-19. In the post-Covid-19 church:

Worship will be online. Most churches find that the number of links to online worship is greater than their average attendance before the epidemic. Who would go back to serving fewer people? Therefore, we will have in-person and online services. However, we will need new ways of reaching out to people who may not live nearby.

Buildings will be less important. We spend a quarter to a third of our budgets on physical properties. That will likely change, though slowly.

Time will be less important. Many churches record their worship and people can watch anytime. No more will our churches be able to ignore those who work, travel, or spend time with family on Sunday mornings.

How you support the church will change as well. You may not be present, but God will still be working through the church. Thus, your giving will have to be digital (funds transfer, online giving, etc.).

How we relate to the community will change. We will have to be more adaptable to changing circumstances. For example, right now a famine is starting. As food grows scarce, rising prices thrust many families into famine-like circumstances. How will our church help feed others, not just at home, but around the world?

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Online Stewardship Retreat

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

The Foundation’s Stewardship Retreat will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. **The event will be online rather than in-person this year.**

In addition, the Retreat will not be in real time. The **Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation** board members and staff will provide recorded presentations online. Stewardship teams may view the presentations they choose and download related materials. Topics will include the planning process, year-round stewardship, tools for stewardship, the Stewardship Challenge Grant, and electronic giving.

The Online Retreat Process

August 15 The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation will make retreat materials available online. These will be presentations lasting no more than 20 minutes and related planning materials.

**August 15-
September 14** Church Stewardship Teams may view the presentation at times suitable to them. They may begin to prepare a 3-5 year plan for their church’s Stewardship Ministry.

**September 15-
October 15** Church Stewardship Teams may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

We will ask churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead. We will send registration information in an email.

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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GIVING
New Age, New Church
June 2020

31but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will fly up on wings like eagles; they will run and not be tired, they will walk and not be weary. (Isaiah 40:31)

After Superstorm Sandy, my brother's church on Long Island became the center for recovery efforts in the Mid-Atlantic. 75% sustained damage to their homes; all had neighbors affected by the storm.

Today, we are in the midst of an unprecedented urgent response and recovery effort in which **every church must be a center of recovery**. Unlike a hurricane, earthquake, wildfire, flood or famine, the COVID-19 pandemic affects every person and every community worldwide.

As we return to church after quarantine, we should not fall into the trap of thinking, "How do we get back to the way we were?" Rather, we ought to ask, "How can we be a better church coming out of the pandemic, than we were going in?" Economic and emotional recovery is going to be a matter of years. What will your church do to help?

Each United Methodist should be discerning his or her own and their congregation's strengths; praying and preparing to join with a small group of congregants who will identify needs in the community/nation/world. Then each group must create, fund, and carry out a plan to address those needs.

There will be children who have fallen behind in school. They will need tutoring and encouragement. There will be those who will have no job to which to return. They will need help applying for benefits, negotiating with banks, or getting enough food for their families. There will be people who continue to fall ill with the coronavirus. Fear and anxiety will continue to be widespread.

Prepare yourself for the times to come.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Growing Through Disaster

The bottom of the soul may be in repose, even while we are in many outward troubles; just as the bottom of the sea is calm, while the surface is strongly agitated. –John Wesley

Your Stewardship Team can become a key resource and organizer of your church's spiritual, emotional and financial recovery. Rev Clayton Smith and Matt Schoenfeld have written a book, ***Growing Through Disaster***. The book was published last year, but it can serve as a useful source of tools and ideas for planning around your church's relief, recovery and restoration after the initial upheaval of COVID-19.

The **Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation** encourages Stewardship Teams to create plans for the next three to five years. Clayton and Schoenfeld provide ways to do the same for recovery from the epidemic. They point out that in addition to healing from the trauma and reigniting hope as the church goes forward, we need to

- assess financial impacts of the epidemic,
- make a spending plan for the years ahead, and
- create a financial recovery plan.

Our churches' planning can also provide a model for members who would benefit from resources related to budgeting, debt elimination, investing and other tools for recovering from financial losses.

The Foundation's Stewardship Retreat will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on assessing impacts and making recovery plans. **The event will be online rather than in-person this year. Stay tuned for details.**

To hear a Webinar by Clayton Smith summarizing his book, visit www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/start-planning-your-churchs-covid-19-recovery-ministry-now.

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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GIVING

“In remembrance of me heal the sick” TFWS 2254

May 2020

And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ (Matthew 25:39-40)

In the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, when pagans far outnumbered Christians, a pair of epidemics rocked the Roman Empire. After the second in 252 AD, Dionysius (190?-264), Bishop of Alexandria, wrote in an Easter letter how Christians had behaved better toward the sick, than had the pagans. The pagans had run from the sick, abandoned relatives, ejected the dying from their homes and left the dead in the streets. In contrast, Christians diligently ministered to the sick and prepared the dead for burial. As a result, many Christians, themselves, became ill and died; it was a death akin to martyrdom, in the Bishop’s opinion.

The sociologist of religion Rodney Stark, in the *Rise of Christianity*, has argued that this behavior of early Christians, and similar behavior during other epidemics, was critically important in the early growth of Christianity and its displacement of pagan polytheism. Christians survived at higher rates, the plague disrupted their communities less, they exhibited less fear, and they helped those in dire need. The pagans noticed and in subsequent years, the ranks of Christianity swelled.

One can only hope that history will remember the service and witness of our generation of Christians in the time of the coronavirus epidemic. Did we pray together, did we continue to worship, though from afar, did we give to financially support the mission and ministry of the church? Did we support charities caring for the poor and sick, did we help teach the children home from school, did we help the laid off and furloughed apply for benefits, and did we help the disenfranchised vote, and so on?

You are the answer to my questions.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Resources for Churches during Social Distancing

Churches are enduring social distancing. Many organizations have developed resources for the church during this uncommon time. Here are some resources on staying connected, encouraging generosity, and perhaps applying for a payroll loan through the CARES Act that you should review thoroughly and use as needed.

Discipleship Ministries: www.umcdiscipleship.org/equipping-leaders/stewardship, www.umcdiscipleship.org/content-library/tags/covid-19, and www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/cares-act/

Finance & Administration Office: www.wisconsinumc.org/ministries/worship-witness/finance/latest-news

Horizons Stewardship: Coronavirus and Social Distancing Resource Center: horizons.net/covid-19-resources/

General Council on Finance and Administration: www.gcfa.org/about-us/resources-during-covid-19/

Faithlife: faithlife.com/coronavirus/church-online

MortarStone: mortarstone.com/communication_crisis

VANCO: www.vancopayments.com/

PCUSA: www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/covid-19/cares_act_summary_33020.pdf

(The CARES Act provides for extra unemployment pay, mortgage and student loan deferral; your church can help laid-off employees to apply)

SAVE THE DATE: We have scheduled the Stewardship Retreat @ Pine Lake Camp for Friday August 14 and Saturday August 15, 2020. You can sign up for either Friday or Saturday as a drive-in day or stay overnight and attend events on both days. We will announce when registration for the event will be opening, later in the spring.

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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GIVING
Privacy or Secrecy
April 2020

The love of money is the root of all evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. (1 Timothy 6:10)

Rev. Molly Baskette has written an interesting devotional (www.ucc.org/daily_devotional_the_burden_of_money) in which she states that, "Church people often tell me that money is a private matter, but what they really practice with money is secrecy, not privacy."

The problem, according to Pastor Baskette, is that fear, shame and secrecy about money do the work of evil just as much as our love of it. Yes, some things need to be secret: like the recipe for Coca Cola or the identities of spies. However, many of our institutional practices at church become distorted because we, the members, have unhealthy relationships with money.

We may think of the person who loves money as a monumental striver, always trying to get richer, never having enough. But those who love money also may long for more and then feel ashamed of that longing, or they may not balance their checkbook and live in fear of the debt collector (and feel ashamed), or may desire to be generous, but cannot let go (and feel ashamed). We want to keep these things secret.

But, shame is not a healthy relationship with money and secrecy is not a healthy relationship with God or our fellow Christians. The Lenten/Easter season is a good time to recognize our shortcomings, confess them to God, ourselves, and maybe others, and to repent. That is, to try to do things differently in the future.

Many United Methodist churches provide courses on personal finance and getting out of debt. If yours does not, please contact us at the **Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation**.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

New Saturday Drive-In Day

This year, we have reorganized and improved the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation's **Stewardship Retreat @ Pine Lake Camp**. Now, there will be a second Drive-In Day on Saturday.

If in the past, you have had to forego the **Stewardship Retreat @ Pine Lake Camp** because your team could not take off work on Friday, you now have a chance to experience the Stewardship Retreat on Saturday.

We have scheduled the Retreat for Friday August 14 and Saturday August 15, 2020. You can sign up for either Friday or Saturday as a drive-in day or stay overnight and attend events on both days. We will announce when registration for the event will be opening, later in the spring.

If you need help to get going on your congregation's **3-5 Year Stewardship Plan** or, you have started but want to polish your plan and get some expert input, save the date for the **Stewardship Retreat @ Pine Lake Camp**.

We have designed the topics presented at the Drive-In Days to give you the tools you need to leave with a **3-5 Year Stewardship Plan**. Including:

- The Importance of a Stewardship Plan
- Developing a Year-Round Plan
- Tools for Financial Stewardship
- The Annual Budget Pledge Campaign
- Planned Giving

In addition, there will be plenty of time for your Stewardship Team to work on your Year-Round Plan. You can ask questions of and receive help from Retreat staff who have implemented Year-Round Plans in Wisconsin United Methodist churches.

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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

GIVING

When Propensity meets Capacity

March 2020

To give away money is an easy matter and within anyone's power, but to decide to whom to give it, how much to give, when to give, and to give for the right motive and in the right way, is neither in everyone's power nor an easy matter. Hence, it is that such excellence is rare, praiseworthy, and noble. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book II, Chapter 9

Recently a church asked me to help determine their congregation's capacity for giving. Here is my simple answer: any congregation's capacity to give is at least 10% (the tithe) of its annual income.

I usually estimate a church's congregation-wide annual income as the median income within a 5-mile radius of the church times the number of giving units in the church. (So that I do not inadvertently overestimate congregational income, I usually work with 90 percent of this number.)

Ten percent of total congregational income is the tithe and is our best scripturally based estimate of congregational capacity to give.

God proposed the tithe as a target for giving **to support the church** with other charitable giving to be over and above that amount. (Our denomination's stance is that "tithing is the minimum goal of giving" (Book of Discipline ¶130.5e) and "God's standard of giving" (¶1304.1c)).

In Wisconsin, our actual giving averages 2.9%. We are spending much of God's share on ourselves. How much could our churches accomplish if we tithed and had more than three times as much in giving?

In my talks with United Methodists around the state, I hear a lot of anxiety about the state of our churches, often because they are experiencing budget shortfalls. What they often propose is cutting more costs or getting new people to pay for the church.

Yet, we could reverse the trajectory of United Methodism by simply giving what God has asked us to give. That is the revitalization we need.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Save the Date for the Stewardship Retreat

In last month's "Helps for the Stewardship Team," we noted that the broader your Stewardship horizons, the stronger your Stewardship program. We suggested expanding your vision by preparing a three-to-five year plan for Stewardship at your church.

If you need help to get going on your plan or, you have started but want to polish your plan and get some expert input, make plans now to attend the **Stewardship Retreat @ Pine Lake Camp**.

We have scheduled the Retreat for **Friday August 14 and Saturday August 15, 2020**. You can sign up for either day as a drive-in day or stay overnight and attend events on both days. We will announce when registration opens later in the Spring.

In any case, now is the time to put together your **Stewardship Task Force**. This team should be separate from the finance committee (it may be a subcommittee). It will coordinate the stewardship efforts throughout the year including planning the Annual Financial Campaign.

Members of the Stewardship Task Force, most importantly, should exemplify generous giving, devotion to lifelong learning, and passion for helping others learn and grow in knowledge and faith.

Some central functions of the Stewardship Task Force include:

Communication- sharing with the congregation how central Stewardship and giving are to being a Christian disciple—by using Stewardship moments in worship, letters, bulletin inserts, social media, newsletters, etc.

Planning- Creating a comprehensive, year-round, multi-year plan for encouraging your congregation to live generously.

Events- Planning events and campaigns that highlight Stewardship.

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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

GIVING
Concentrating on Our Need for God
February 2020

³...they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, ⁴begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints. (2 Corinthians 8:3b-4)

Self-denial helps us to concentrate on our need for God. It is one thing to say that God provides all the food we need, but is quite another to go without food. It is one thing to say that God provides us with income to provide for our needs, but it is quite another to give 10% of that income back to God to provide for the needs of others.

Fasting and tithing are forms of sacrifice, a Latin word that comes from combining "to make" and "holy or sacred". Over time, sacrifice has become synonymous with giving something up that is dear to us (self-denial) in order to serve a greater good, like the Kingdom of God.

Lent is a good time to remember that self-denial draws us closer to God. Lenten fasting should not be *pro forma* as in giving up chocolate, for example. It should be real self-denial accompanied by prayer, repentance and soul-searching.

Sacrificial giving is a fast from spending on yourself and is equally appropriate for Lent, especially if accompanied by prayer, repentance and soul-searching. We are called to sacrificial giving year-round, but at Lent we can especially remember Who and what our sacrifice is for.

Several years ago, I was part of a *Disciple Bible Study* group that decided during Lent to fast by skipping food between breakfast and dinner. We saved the money we would normally spend on lunch, snacks and coffee and brought this to the class each week. In the end, we were able to donate over \$2,200 to a local feeding program for the homeless and poor.

Join me this Lent in focusing on our need for God.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Expanding Your Stewardship Horizons

January's resolutions have come and, mostly, gone. Now is a good time to concentrate on important matters like expanding the Stewardship horizons of your church. A horizon—literally, where the earth meets the sky—is also the limit of your range of vision.

In most churches, the Stewardship range of vision is about 15 months. They do something limited, if at all, in October/November, hoping to have an effect on giving in the coming January to December.

However, one lesson we have learned at the **Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation** is that the broader your Stewardship horizons, the stronger your Stewardship program. This is based not just on our own experience, but that of many denominations and congregations across North America.

We recommend a Stewardship horizon of three to five years. Why not use Lent as a time for your Finance and/or Stewardship teams to prepare a three-to-five year plan for Stewardship at your church. Then share it with your church council and congregation.

We have included tools and resources for [Utilizing a 3-5 Year Stewardship Horizon](#) in the KnowledgeBase section of our Website:

www.wumf.org/knowledge/

At our **Stewardship Retreat @ Pine Lake Camp** in 2019, we heard from The River of Life United Methodist Church in Beloit, which has used these tools for several years to accomplish a striking turnaround of stewardship in their church. Now, nearly 90 percent of their giving units pledge and their stewardship campaigns meet or exceed the budget.

If you have questions or want to learn more, contact:

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

GIVING
Closing the Gap
 January 2020

¹²For 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)

This year, join me in taking care of the problematic and typical shortfalls in our local church budgets. Many stewardship books propose **a step of 1% of income** per year as you grow toward tithing. In Wisconsin, if the roughly 34,000 giving households increased their giving by an average of 1% of income in 2020, **our churches would receive \$18 million more in 2020 than in 2019**. Overall, we would increase our giving from 3% to 4% of our collective income.

If you make the median income in Wisconsin, then one percent is about \$600. That is \$11.54 per week in 2020. Coming up with another \$12 per week for the church may take some effort and sacrifice, but you can see that for most families earning the median, this would be doable.

If your household earns \$100,000 per year, one percent is \$1,000, or about \$19 per week. If your household earns \$25,000 per year, one percent is \$250 or just under \$5 per week.

Generosity is not a big check; rather, it is these weekly increments that today you will resolve to give to God in 2020. If you have already pledged, tell them you want to change it, or just starting giving the additional \$5 or \$12 or \$19 or whatever is 1% of your income over and above your giving last year.

If most giving units increased their giving in this way, **your church would close the budget gap** that people have been worrying about. Apportionments would be paid and delayed maintenance would be done. More importantly, your congregation would be able to feed the hungry, help the poor, send youth on mission trips, sponsor missionaries and do good in many other ways. **Isn't this why you are a church?**


Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Chair

Tending to all Sources of Giving

I like to think of church finance as a giant ice cream cone. The cone at the bottom is the church's assets: building/parsonage, endowments, and other investments. The scoops are annual budget giving, mission-related giving, planned giving, and special project giving. The table below shows how the **Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation** can help your church maximize congregational stewardship by addressing these sources of giving.

Special Project Giving/Capital Campaigns		The Foundation can help your church raise funds for new ministry, ministry growth, new building, building renovation, building maintenance and debt reduction.
Planned Giving		The Foundation can provide congregants with information on giving through wills, trusts and other legacy bequests.
Mission-Related Giving		The Foundation can educate your congregation about apportionments and assist with inviting congregants to support conference projects, special Sundays, UMCOR, national/international advance projects, and missionaries.
Annual Budget Giving		The Foundation can help your team choose and implement an annual stewardship campaign.
Church Assets		The Foundation invests and grows church endowments and other funds.

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