

Scarcity or Abundance
What are you looking for?
December 2021

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

~Matthew 7:7

Pastor John Pavlovitz tells a story about a time when he was a young youth leader and he found himself overly worried about the future. He was sharing his concerns with his pastor, who replied, "John, do you know why a bluebird finds worms? Because that's what it looks for."

Save the Date:
Super Bowl of Stewardship Retreat
Algoma Boulevard UMC: Oshkosh
February 12, 2022
More Information at www.wumf.org

John remembers his pastor continuing to tell him that much of what we discover in this life is about the questions we ask, the things we give attention to, and the way we invest our time. The more John was aware of the orientation of his life at any given moment, and the more intentional he was along the way, his pastor counseled, the more John could rest in knowing that he'd eventually end up where he needed to be.

What are you aware of during this Advent and Christmas season? What are you looking for? With global supply chain issues along with the commercialized nature of the holidays, it is easy to fall into a scarcity mindset. However, if we choose to focus on the blessings we have and look to see where God is at work in our lives, in our churches, and communities – we are more likely to experience the joy and peace, not only of the season but that Christ offers all – no matter what time of year.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

Help for the Stewardship Team

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.

Stewardship Great Quotes on Giving November 2021

Sometimes a great quote sticks with you, rings true, and really makes you look at something in a new way. Stores like Hobby Lobby seem to have based a large part of their business models on the fact that we love having great quotes hanging in our homes. As we approach Thanksgiving, I hope you find these giving quotes inspiring.

“Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.”

~John Wesley

“He who obtains has little. He who scatters has much.”

~Lao-Tzu

“No person was ever honored for what he received. He was honored for what he gave.”

~Calvin Coolidge

“It is possible to give without loving, but it is impossible to love without giving.”

~Richard Braunstein

“You can’t have a perfect day without doing something for someone who’ll never be able to repay you.”

~John Wooden

“You can have everything in life that you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want”

~Zig Ziglar

“Remember this – you can’t serve God and Money, but you can serve God with money.”

~Selwyn Hughes

“I judge all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity.”

~John Wesley

“It is more blessed to give than receive.”

~Jesus, Acts 20:35

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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www.wumf.org or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)
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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Connecting Money and Your Church’s Mission

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Whether this is the exact language of your church’s mission statement or you have made yours more specific to your context, it is vital for churches and their leaders to link all of their ministries to living out that mission. When a mission links the needs of a community, the passion and call of the congregation, and is communicated clearly and regularly, the more likely it is that a ministry will thrive and be transformative.

Likewise, the more we connect giving to the mission and ministry of the church, the more likely generous people within our congregation are to give abundantly. Here are some ideas to link giving to the mission and ministry of the church.

- During the offering time, have someone give a 2 – 3 minute talk about a ministry of your church through which lives are being changed and thank people for the gifts that make that ministry possible.
- When your church sends out a giving statement, include a note sharing the story of how someone was impacted by your church’s ministry and thank people for making that ministry possible.
- Encourage your pastor to review the monthly giving records of the congregation. Look for changes. This may reflect a life change, where pastoral care is needed. It may also be an opportunity to say thank you for an unexpected gift.

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

Jason Mahnke, Director of Programming & Campaigns, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 608-837-9582 or jmahnke@wumf.org.

Stewardship Helping God's Kingdom Come About October 2021

(The Kingdom of God) "is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." Mark 4:31-32

My two children have received an allowance for doing chores from the time they understood the concept of money. We paid them allowances, not because they needed the money, but because we wanted them to begin to understand that money is something to earn, not to just ask their parents for. We also wanted to begin to teach them how to manage money.

The lesson was very simple. When they were little, every Friday, I'd grab 10 dimes and sit down with them. We'd first take a dime, grab an offering envelope, put their name on it, and slide the dime in. The second dime would be dropped in their piggy bank, which we'd take to the local bank every few months. The other eight would go into their pocket or purse for them to bring with to the store when we went.

I was once asked what difference those dimes given to the church really made. To which I responded, "To the church finances, I can't imagine anything. To my kids – more than I can explain. Every Sunday they put their envelopes in the offering plate with huge smiles on their faces. As they got older, when they made more money, they'd continue the same practice – along with reflecting on how they wanted to make a difference with their generosity. Would they give it all to the church? Would they give some to a mission or another non-profit that was making a difference?"

Watching them grow in generosity constantly reminds me that we all have a place in bringing about God's kingdom, whether what we have to offer is large or small. It's about the need of the giver to give, rather than the church to receive. Even a seemingly small act of generosity can grow into something beyond what we could ever ask or imagine.

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

New Saving Grace Grant

We are excited to announce a new grant program called the Saving Grace grant. The grant is designed to give clergy, and eventually congregations, a firsthand experience of the new transformative Saving Grace Financial Well-Being program, along with financial incentives designed to both encourage and equip participants. For more information, visit:

<https://www.wumf.org/assets/SavingGraceGrant2021.pdf>.

To apply, email Rev. Jason Mahnke, Director of Programming and Campaigns at jmahnke@wumf.org. Participation is limited and in on a first-come basis. Sign up today!

Online Stewardship Resource Videos

The Foundation now has Stewardship training and resourcing videos available on our [YouTube channel](#). Videos cover a wide variety of Stewardship topics, including motivation vs. manipulation, how to create a 3-5-year stewardship plan, stewardship with children, capital campaigns, planned giving, and more. Each video is no more than 15 minutes and is designed to give pastors, stewardship team, finance committees, and administrative boards the tools they need to continue to help people grow in generosity as a part of their discipleship. New videos will be added several times a week. Subscribe and click on the notification icon on our channel to be alerted when new videos become available.

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

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Stewardship
Connecting Vision and Generosity
September 2021

*Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.
Matthew 7:7-8*

After serving my first local church part-time as a college student for two years, I had just finished leading my last worship service and was greeting folks at the door. One gentleman shook my hand and said, “Jason, thank you for being our pastor. I think one of the things I liked about you the most is that you never talked about money.”

I’ve thought about his statement many times over the years. I’ve also heard the same sentiment repeated by both laity and clergy in many ways. We tend to see financial stewardship and money as a “necessary evil.” It’s something we must deal with to get to real ministry.

In his short book, *A Spirituality of Fundraising*, Henri Nouwen challenges this view of money and stewardship (which he calls fundraising). He writes: *Fundraising is, first and foremost, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission. Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission. We are declaring, ‘We have a vision that is amazing and exciting. We are inviting you to invest yourself through the resources that God has given you – your energy, your prayers, and your money – in this work to which God has called us.*

I wonder what vision God has entrusted to you and your congregation that you can invite others to be a part of through their prayers, their presence, their service, their witness, and their gifts.

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Continuing 2020’s Strong Giving Trends

Ministry during a pandemic is challenging, to say the least. The list of things we’re doing that we’d never thought we’d have to do is growing longer. As we continue to live in our new reality, there is much we can take away that is positive.

Consider the outpouring of generosity in the United States. One study found that many donors gave more in 2020 than they had in previous years and that their 2021 giving will keep pace with last year’s. (<https://www.ecfa.church/Content/Some-Donors-Say-They-ll-Keep-Giving-in-2021>) Some of the takeaways in the report can be instructive for our Stewardship and Finance teams.

- **Online growth** – Donors of all ages surveyed said they were more likely to give online than by mail. If your congregation does not offer online giving, you are more than likely missing out on a key stewardship resource. It is just as important for congregations to continue offering online giving once the pandemic is over.
- **Justice Giving** – Calls for racial justice inspired donors. 62% of respondents aged 34 or younger said they contributed to that cause last year.
- **Continue to Share the Vision** - Churches and other non-profits must point to their successes of the past year, telling donors, “We proved to you that you can trust us because we did a great job during the pandemic. Now look what we’re going to do with this new initiative.”

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Summer God is not on Vacation! August 2021

Matthew 6:34~

"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

The pace of August is often hectic and life (yours, your children's, your family's) takes you in many directions. But let us remember, God does not take a summer vacation! God is always here for us, so should not we make time for God this summer?

The church is not closed during the summer, we are still open! We still worship on Sundays! The pastor continues to preach sermons and the secretary still writes and prints the bulletin. The pianists prepare and practice each week to lead music in worship. The ushers and greeters show up each Sunday and the communion stewards set up communion. The church is open for worship!

So, I invite you to make church part of your summer plans. When you are in town, I invite you to come to worship. (Though sleeping in may sound fun, remember, God doesn't sleep in.) When you are out of town, I encourage you to find a church wherever you may be. If you cannot find a church, try to worship as a family. Sing hymns, read scriptures, and ask one another where they see God present.

Church is an important part of Christian discipleship. It is good for you to be with other Christians and with God. It is good for you to give of your time, talents, and treasures. It is good for you to recharge and recenter.

It may be nice outside, but don't forget you also need Son-shine!

What are your summer plans? School may be out, but church is not. Summer is here. Enjoy the Son-shine!

Rev. Krystal Goodger, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Summer Giving

Summer attendance = Summer Giving?

School may be out, but church is not. Let's face it, when summer finally gets here it's like recess... everyone takes some time off or away from the usual routine and it is no different at church. Whether folks are off on vacation or just taking a day off from church, we see attendance take a dip. This often corresponds with a dip in offerings. So, what do we do about the summer giving drop?

I have heard it that if you "put them in the pew, they will put it in the plate."

How do we encourage people to come to church and/or give during the summer? Help them to make it a priority.

1. Remind them...
 - a. Once you get out of the habit of regular worship, it becomes a habit not to go to church and pretty soon it has been more than a few weeks... it's been months!
 - b. What silent lessons are we teaching our children?
2. Give them something to do. Let them see that the church is still open!
 - a. Offer a Bible study or Christian book study.
 - b. VBS.
 - c. Prayer group
 - d. Hymn sing
3. Give them ways to give!
 - a. Offer EFT or online giving

Don't be too busy for God! Remember your summer priorities.

Rev. Krystal Goodger, President

Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

Contact us at: 608-837-9582 or kgoodger@wumf.org.

Storytime
Your ministry story
July 2021

Ephesians 3:20

"Now to God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to God's power that is at work within us."

I took my kids fishing for the first-time last month. You can imagine the excitement of 5-year-olds with a fishing rod! Besides fishing, they had fun throwing things into the lake. They enjoyed seeing how far they could throw sticks and rocks and see the ripples they create. That was a great teaching moment. "Do you know your words and actions are like these sticks? You do one thing, but it has a reaction much larger."

There is a church in our conference that received an estate gift in the mid-1990s for youth. The gift was \$5,000 and was invested here at the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation. That gift has grown and continued to be used for ministry. In the last 25 years, over \$6,500 has been used for youth ministry! There is still almost \$7,000 in that fund today!

Isn't it wonderful what a modest gift can do for the ministry of a church even after we have died! Isn't it wonderful how one gift can affect youth for years! Isn't it wonderful that one gift is a much larger action than the original giver could have ever known?

How are you giving to the church with your time, talents, and treasures? What ripple affect will it have now and in the future?

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Tell the Story

Tell Your Ministry Story

"Effectively communicating how you are transforming lives cuts through what the culture has to say about money."

~Joe Park, Horizons Stewardship

When?

Anytime! Always!

Allow telling stories of impact to permeate all channels of communication. Get your message out far and wide.

Newsletters

Don't just hide it in the children/youth page.

Website or Social Media

Offering

Before the offering is a wonderful time to tell how your church is making disciples of Jesus Christ!

How?

To Do

Share about a single life and how that life is now changed by a mission or ministry in your church.

Connect that story with donor's generosity.

Not To Do

Fill your talk with data and facts.

Getting these stories helps to build donor relationships and generosity within the church. Telling these stories helps people to see that their giving matters.

Rev. Krystal Goodger, Director of Programming, Stewardship & Campaigns, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation
Contact us at: 608-837-9582 or kgoodger@wumf.org.

Celebrate Light at the End of the Tunnel June 2021

Psalm 118:24

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Where and when do you stop and celebrate? How do you "rejoice and be glad" in the day the "Lord has made?"

Today I stop to rejoice in the rain that is coming down, that we very much need. I celebrate the sun from this weekend that brought so many smiles. I rejoice in all of our churches who have and are continuing to do ministry despite the difficulties of the times. I celebrate the faithfulness of our congregations to continue to give of their time, talents, and treasures.

How are you celebrating God's continued blessings in your lives?
What is your response going to be?
How are you going to give to others because God has given to you?

We are so blessed. So, we are called to be a blessing to others. Volunteer in ways you feel comfortable. Attend church, in whatever format you wish. Donate to your church, other nonprofits, and causes close to your heart. Pray. Always Pray.

Celebrate! Because "This is the day that the Lord has made."

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Celebrate the Little Things

There is light at the end of the tunnel. 2020 is gone and 2021 is brighter. Do we see the light? Or are we just as forlorn as before? Let us jump up and out of the rut we are in. How can we do that? By stopping to rejoice and celebrate!

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation's Stewardship Challenge Grant has a few different stewardship activities that have to do with celebrating.

#11 Personal Thanks to Donors

When we thank donors, they are more likely to give again. Thanking people makes them feel good. This also increases the likelihood that they will give a larger amount if asked.

#13 Thank New Givers

Giving for the first time is hard. Often the first gift is anonymous... cash in the plate. The first gift that is trackable, is huge because they were willing to give you their name and address. They are stating that this ministry has value. Take notice of it! They put in effort, so can we. Again, if we thank them, they are more likely to give again.

#14 Celebrate What You Have

There is still ministry happening. Celebrate it! Tell people what is going on. Tell the story. Tell how lives are being changed. Tell how people are coming to Christ.

We should celebrate in worship, in the bulletin, in the newsletter, and on social media. Do not forget that pictures are worth 1,000 words!

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Contact us at: 608-837-9582 or kgoodger@wumf.org.

Change Nothing stays the same May 2021

"In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree; in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free! In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see." ~In the Bulb there is a Flower, Natalie Sleeth, UMH # 707

There is nothing like a crisis to help us to reset priorities. With Covid-19 we have witnessed job layoffs, deaths, social and economic upheavals, and health emergencies. Despite our natural resistance to change, we are learning new ways to live. On account of Covid 19, what personal priorities have you reset?

Toilet paper. Seriously. Will we ever take lowly "TP" for granted again?

Toilet paper is just one of the countless everyday blessings that the pain of COVID-19 has taught us to savor – along with worshipping beside loved ones, going to work, getting paid, shopping, going to the movies, and on and on. (What's on your list?)

We are not just individuals; we are brothers and sisters in Christ. As a follower of Jesus, what priorities have you rearrange? How will the Holy Spirit guide us to a "new normal" of holy living as both disciples and community that will be different – and better – than what we have known?

May the "new normal" find us better stewards of our lives -- less greedy, less self-focused, less preoccupied with silly things, and more centered in Christ, more loving to our neighbor, more generous, more hopeful, and more tolerant.

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Look Forward

"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."
~Isaiah 43:19

Covid 19 is a time of our lives that will remain with us forever. We cannot just go back to church as it always was. How we do life and how we do church is forever changed.

Here are some questions to pray over and discuss:

- When your church suspended in-person worship, what ways did you find to stay connected to God? To one another? What did this teach you about holy living? About being church together?
- Covid-19 forced us to "be church" without buildings. What has this revealed about the nature of community? About the value of buildings? As we go back into our buildings, how can things be different? Why must they be?
- How did we treat technology a year ago? How do we do technology now? Has it changed? Has it grown? Has it increase in priority? How are we going to keep/change our level of technology after Covid-19?
- In light of what we have learned, what values, ideas, traditions, habits should we let go of? Which should we keep? What really matters? And why?
- How can your insights, strengths and gifts help to shape the future of your life as a disciple and follower of Jesus? Of your congregation? What can you give to the future church in time, talent, and treasure?

Covid-19's crises are still teaching us. As stewards of God's church, we can renew and restructure our church to fulfill God's mission. With God's guidance, we will.

Rev. Krystal Goodger, Director of Programming, Stewardship & Campaigns, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation
Contact us at: 608-837-9582 or kgoodger@wumf.org.

Light
There is light ahead.
April 2021

"The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day."

~Proverbs 4:18, NLT

How is your Lent going? Does it feel long, dark, and empty? Lent can feel that way when we give up fun activities or foods that we like. This year in particular, we are also still dealing with the pandemic. Closed or limited occupancy to our favorite places, the need to stay away from people, and the illness and death rates all increase the feeling of darkness. But is that it? Is that all there is?

There is light ahead. Literally there is light ahead when you look at when the sun sets in the next few weeks. The sun set at 7:37p.m. at the end of March. It will set in April at 8:30p.m. May: 9:17p.m. June: 9:34p.m. There are brighter days ahead.

There is light ahead. On a dark morning, the women will come to the tomb just to find it empty. Christ arose! Christ arose!

There is light ahead. The virus will be beaten down. Our communities will open up. We will be able to see and hug our families again. Our church will open up again. But what will be left of our church? What have we given to the church to sustain it during this long haul? How have we given of our time, talents, and treasures over the last few months... and how will we give for Easter and the next few months to make sure we can continue our church's mission and ministry?

Be the light now so it can burn brighter later!

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Dream Big!

"It's better to have an impossible dream than no dream at all."

~Anonymous

We all have dreams. We have dreams in our professions, families, size of house, car, RV, or vacation house, and retirement. Do you have dreams for your church? Are your dreams for your church as big as your personal dreams? If not, dream bigger!

What are your dreams?

- Dream Big!
"If it doesn't scare you, you're probably not dreaming big enough." ~Tory Burch
 - What major projects would you like to see happen?
 - These could be in 1 year or in 10 years.
 - What objects do you need?
 - New paraments? Worship Table?
 - What fun can you have that will brighten the church?
 - New paint? Collage of church pictures?
 - What new missions do you want to do or strengthen?
 - What is needed in your community?
 - Where are your congregation's passions?
 - What mission/ministry can you expand?

Do your church members know your dreams?

- How do you promote your dreams?
 - Bulletin? Newsletter? Poster in the back?
 - Talk to individual givers?

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CHANGE
Is it time for change?
March 2021

"Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.'" Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing — grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God."
~Joel 2:12-14

With February comes the cold dark days of Lent. Are you ready? Are you ready to seriously look inside yourself? Are you ready to be honest about what is godly and what is not? Are you ready to change?

Change is a great theme word for Lent (and all of 2020). Many things changed health, wealth, and politics. It changed without us trying and definitely without us wanting it to change. But in Lent, things change because we make them change. It is our time to change our habits, minds, action, and internal/external words to become more like Christ.

Do you need to change your change? Think about how much you give to the church. Should/can you give more? Maybe your answer is "I don't know." Think about this: How much do you spend each month going out to eat. How much money do you spend on coffee? How much money do you spend on fun item, hobbies, and events? Now compare those numbers to the amount you give to God each month.

Do you need to make a change?

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Raise the standard!

"When God blesses you financially, don't raise your standard of living, raise your standard of giving." ~Mark Batterson

As a Stewardship Team, Finance Team, or Pastor, how are you trying to help your congregants raise their standards of giving? Talking about money is... scary, embarrassing, awkward, and hard... if you let it. So, talk about money often and in many ways.

- Ask for it.
 - Specifically ask for money for specific programs, events, or items
- Model it.
 - Have the Pastor, Finance Team, Stewardship Team, and Leadership/Administration Board tithe.
 - Let the congregation know that they all tithe.
- Challenge it.
 - Do a 1-month, 2-month, 90-day Tithe Challenge.
 - Have someone match an amount.
 - Have someone put in \$x and challenge the congregation to do the same.
- Show it.
 - Does your congregation know how much others give? I don't mean specifically (Mrs. Smith give \$100/week). Do they know that 42 giving unity give between \$50-\$99/week (for example)?
 - Create a stair step chart and ask the question, "What is God calling me to do?"

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GIVING
Giving is Love and Love is Giving
February 2021

*The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **God loves a cheerful giver**. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)*

“God loves a cheerful giver.” Why do you give? Why do you put money in the plate? Why did you sign up for EFT? Is it to keep the lights on? Is it out of obligation? Is it because “it is just the thing you do”?

In this month of February, when consumer products turn red, chocolate, and velvety, society asks us to think about love. We give gifts to others because we love them. Could it be that we give in church (online) because of **Love**?

We are called to give to God because God **loves** us. We are called to give to God because we **love** God. We are called to give, not begrudgingly, but cheerfully! When we give, we are saying, “I love you God!” We are not saying, “Fine, here you go God.”

Why do you give? Look inside of yourself right now. Be honest. Why do you give? When the plate passes you, what goes through your mind? In this time of online giving, has your giving changed? Have you been giving more or less? More or less often? Why? Always remember, you cannot out give God!

God loves us and has, does, and will do so much for us. So, in response, we give back to the Lord. We give out of LOVE.

Rev. Krystal Goodger, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Help others reframe the offering

Why do we give? People give for many reasons: Love, because they feel blessed/thankful, obligation, or coercion. Why do the people in your church give? Have you asked them? Have you helped them to look at it through the lens of **love**?

The Invitation to the Offering is a powerful teaching and invitational tool. You can boil your sermon down into a sentence/statement or two. Maybe you will challenge them. Perhaps you want to use this time to remind them of what the church has done or is doing in the community and the world.

Here are some possible prompts:

As the plates are passed, think of your offering as... Ushers, would you help us to take the first step?

As we give our offerings this morning...

In this offering we have the opportunity to...

Let us give as people who...

Giving is an act of faith... I invite you, to give now as an act of faith.

Giving is an act of love... I invite you, to give now as an act of love.

Now is the time to return to God, that which has first been given to you... for the strengthening of the church in its mission to care for the world.

...commit to give of your whole selves...

...Think about this (consider this) truth (message, statement) as you return to God your gift.

Let us worship God with our gifts.

We have the opportunity right now to make visible God's work in us. How have you been blessed by the abundance of God? Won't you reveal your gratitude? Right now? The ushers are waiting.

Rev. Krystal Goodger, Director of Programming and Planned Giving, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at 608-837-9582 or kgoodger@wumf.org.

GIVING
Because our Giving Is Worship
January 2021

You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God." (2 Corinthians 9:10-12)

God established a design for worshipping when God revealed to Moses the plan for the Tent of Meeting (aka Tabernacle). Central to that worship was sacrificial giving. God required gifts of animals and grain be brought to the Tabernacle to be sacrificed and offered to God because it was pleasing to God. These gifts were the first fruits of the agricultural work of the people representing a tithe (10%) of their production.

God knew that an institution like Temple worship would require resources to be sustained. We read in the Old Testament that the people's gifts of meat and bread, cooked in a way pleasing to God, directly provided food for the priests, guards, and caretakers of the temple and the spiritual leaders of the tribes. Sharing the fruits of the harvest became the large feasts we read about in Jesus' time.

In the modern Christian church, we maintain this pattern of giving designed by God. Now, people are called to give in a way pleasing to God: first fruits representing 10% of each family's productivity. Though, in modern times, it is money rather than agricultural produce.

These gifts to God, offered and dedicated in our worship services, are used to maintain the institution of the church by supporting its ministry and mission. This includes worship, congregational care, spiritual development, hospitality & outreach, and missions by way of support for clergy and staff, building maintenance and other budgetary items.

What we can conclude from this is that we give first because it is a gift pleasing to God. As a result of our giving to God in worship, we also support all aspects of the important work of the church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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Helps for the Stewardship Team

Give God a Chance to Bless Our Giving

I recently consulted with a church that shared that they had eliminated the **Offertory** portion of online worship during the pandemic. Presumably, this is because there is no passing of the plate during online worship. Others have commented on this trend in many other churches as well. I recommended that the church include the **Offertory** in worship starting immediately.

Ann Michel of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership writes that **"From a theological perspective, offering should be part of every expression of Christian worship."**¹

That does not mean that what is offered must be collected during worship or via passing the plate. The **Offertory** may include dedication of all gifts since the previous worship service by whatever manner they have been conveyed to the church. In fact, the **Offertory** serves several functions. It provides a designated time during worship:

- To invite people to give.
- To explain the theological significance of giving.
- To share some of the good that giving accomplishes, especially when expressed by a recipient of that mission or ministry. This may be live or pre-recorded and played during the Offertory.
- To share the reasons that people in the congregation are motivated to give. This would be in the words of regular and faithful givers, again, live or pre-recorded.
- To dedicate or bless people's gifts, however they may have been given.

Michel adds, "These practices reinforce the connection between giving and worship, regardless of the means by which the collection is received."

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

¹<https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/are-your-pandemic-giving-systems-as-effective-as-the-offering-plate/>