

## Giving Breaks the Temptation of Greed

December 2022

*"The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7a)*

**Are you 70-1/2 or older?**

**Or do you know someone 70-1/2 or older?**

**If you are, what ministries are you most passionate about?**

**Don't pass up the chance to make a special gift this year!**

Don and Sandi always wanted to see a youth minister in place at their church. When they learned they could make a distribution directly to their church from their Traditional IRA to provide the seed money to start this ministry, they decided to tithe their IRA. A few other members of their church joined them in this effort, and now the youth ministry position is funded for the next five years.

The IRA Rollover is a special giving option that is only available to persons 70-1/2 and older. Call your IRA administrator today and request to have your Required Minimum Distribution for 2022 (or a gift of your choice up to a maximum of \$100,000) sent directly to your local church (or other charity). This gift will benefit the ministry you have designated and will NOT be included in your gross income for tax purposes.

What types of IRAs qualify? Only Traditional and Roth IRAs qualify.

Where can I make Qualified Charitable Distributions from my IRA? Only to qualified public charities. All United Methodist Churches and United Methodist Ministries are qualified public charities: UMCOR, any of our Health and Welfare Ministries, UM Camps, or Advance Specials. You may make an outright gift or make a gift that establishes a permanent endowment fund. On the next page is a sample letter. For more information contact us at:

Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
750 Windsor Street #305  
Sun Prairie, WI 53590-0620  
888-903-9863 or [wumf@wumf.org](mailto:wumf@wumf.org)

Dear IRA Custodian,

In late December 2015, Congress passed, and the President signed into law legislation that made permanent the ability to rollover directly from an IRA to a qualified charitable organization. As the owner of IRA account # \_\_\_\_\_ that is in the custody of your organization, I request that you transfer from that account the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the:

Your Church or Charity Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Treasury Tax ID Number: \_\_\_\_ — \_\_\_\_\_

It is my intention to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from my IRA to be sent directly to \_\_\_\_\_ at the address listed above.

It is also my intention that this distribution \_\_\_ will / \_\_\_ will not (choose one) fulfill part or all my IRA required minimum distribution for year 20\_\_.

This letter is sufficient authorization for you to make this QCD gift. However, if you require any further documents completed, please promptly send those to me.

Cordially yours,

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name and Address)

**Save the Date:**  
**Clergy Tax Seminar**  
**at Sun Prairie UMC or attend**  
**virtually**  
**January 23, 2023**  
**More information at**  
**[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org)**

## Accomplish the Impossible November 2022

*“God is looking for people through whom He can do the impossible – what a pity that we plan only the things we can do by ourselves.”  
- A.W. Tozer*

I recently ran across a story that highlights the power of partnership. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the Methodist church was holding its denominational convention, one leader stood up and shared his vision both for the church and society at large. He told the ministers and evangelists how he believed someday men would fly from place to place instead of merely traveling on horseback. But it was a concept too outlandish for many members of his audience to handle.

One minister, Bishop Wright, stood up and angrily protested, “Heresy!” he shouted. “Flight is reserved for the angels!” He went on to elaborate that if God had intended for man to fly, God would have given him wings. Clearly the bishop was unable to envision what the speaker was predicting.

When Bishop Wright finished his brief protest, he gathered up his two sons, Orville and Wilbur, and left the auditorium.

That’s right. His sons were Orville and Wilbur Wright. And several years later, on December 17, 1903, those two sons did what their father called impossible. They made four flights that day. The first lasted only 12 seconds, but the fourth lasted 59 seconds and took them 852 feet.

Soon the Wright brothers had built the first practical airplane, the Flyer III, and by 1908, the brothers had demonstrated an improved model in France that flew 60 miles in less than two hours.

The brothers partnered together to accomplish the impossible – and in the process, they changed the world.

*Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation*

## Help for the Stewardship Team

### Have a “Growth Mindset”

Do you have a growth mindset? A growth mindset means that you thrive on challenge, and don’t see failure to describe yourself, but as a springboard for growth and developing your abilities. In other words, your intelligence and talents are all susceptible to growth. This, of course, is true of individuals and groups – including churches and stewardship teams.

It is not unheard of to try something new in stewardship and not see immediate results. More than that, that “something new” might be difficult and not go quite the way we originally planned. Rather than tossing that effort on the trash heap as something that didn’t work, what if we rather evaluated what went well, what was challenging, and what could be improved – and then trying again. I don’t know about you, but the first time I try something, it usually feels awkward and doesn’t go as well as I’d hoped. But, seeing that first attempt as an opportunity for growth and learning so I can repeat the task more successfully in the future, offers hope and encouragement as I struggle through my initial efforts.

Of course, to try something new, we have to learn something new first. If you are interested in resourcing your stewardship team for effective ministry in the future, consider attending the **Stewardship Spooktacular**, either virtually or in-person, on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. For more information and to register, visit <https://www.wumf.org/upcoming-events/>.

Busy on October 22<sup>nd</sup>? You can also access the workshops from this summer’s Stewardship Conference at Pine Lake online. To see the workshops that are available and to find out how to get access, visit <https://www.wumf.org/upcoming-events/>.

---

**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 [jason@wumf.org](mailto:jason@wumf.org).

**God's Voice**  
October 2022

In my ministry, several people have asked why God doesn't speak to people like God did in the Bible. Their assumption is that any time Scripture talks about God speaking to someone, that person is hearing a literal voice saying words. I think this is a far too limited understanding of how God speaks to us every day. Consider this story told by Scott McKenzie and Kristine Miller.

"Every day, on her way to work, Audrey's route took her past a women's penitentiary. Surrounding the building and grounds stood a large chain-link fence topped off with barbed wire intended to keep separate those on the inside from those on the outside. Each time Audrey passed the woman's penitentiary, she saw the women walking the grounds or sitting at picnic tables soaking in a few precious moments of warm sunshine. As she passed, Audrey would quietly say a prayer for the incarcerated women and their families. One day, as Audrey was driving past, she felt a strong urge to pull in. Without fully realizing what she was doing, she turned sharply into the entrance of the prison. In an instant, she found herself face-to-face with a large, intimidating prison guard whose face suggested a humorless disposition. Feeling the awkwardness of the moment, Audrey explained that she had felt God's push to visit the facility and asked if they received volunteers."

"The prison guard responded by giving Audrey the business card of the volunteer coordinator and sent Audrey on her way. God's nudge had sent Audrey to an unfamiliar place, and she was courageous enough to go. Soon she started a Bible study class at the prison sharing Jesus' message of love and hope."

Audrey believed that the urge to pull into the penitentiary was God speaking to her. I tend to agree. Rather than waiting for a literal voice to speak to us, what if God spoke and called us through our nudges, yearnings, and hopes. That would mean that God is closer than many of us think or realize. It also means that God challenges us more frequently than we realize. But, when we courageously listen to God with a willing heart, we will discover that the result is

transformational, not just for us, but for everyone whose life is impacted.

*Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation*  
**Help for the Stewardship Team**

**Talk about Your Church's "Why"**

Now that it is fall, it is stewardship season in many churches. Groups of people are busy at work talking about the best ways to raise money for the life-giving ministries of your church. The questions that take center stage are usually the same every year, like: Which campaign should we use? What should our theme be? Should we have a celebration and thank you meal? Should we reach out to people in-person, over the phone, or by email and mail?

Those questions all have to do with "how" can we raise money for ministry. Too often, we skip over the first important question we need to answer every time we talk about giving, generosity, and stewardship. "Why would someone want to support our ministry?"

One person observed, "If I were to summarize what is written in newsletters and bulletins about why people should give to the church, the banner headline would probably read, 'How to Keep Our Doors Open,' or 'How to Balance the Budget.'"

If you want to increase giving and experience God's bounty, stop talking about budgets, bills, and survival, and start talking about mission, ministry, and changed lives. By focusing on the question *why* instead of how, ministries instead of budgets, and changed lives instead of paying bills, the mission and vision will be fulfilled, because it's the why that inspires generosity.

---

**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 [jason@wumf.org](mailto:jason@wumf.org).

## A Note in the Offering September 2022

A young child wrote this note to his pastor. "Dear minister, I'm sorry I don't give more money to the church on Sundays, but my father didn't give me a raise in my allowance. Could you give a sermon about a raise in my allowance? It would help the church get more money."

As funny as this is, many of us approach giving in this way, whether it's to the church or to any other organization that helps those in need. We'd give more if only we had a little more to give. We just need that raise and everything will be so much easier. There's only so much to go around and there's just not enough right now.

Unfortunately, this paints a false picture of God. Our world tells us over and over those resources are scarce. There's only so much to go around. And so, we can only give so much because otherwise there won't be enough left for us. We spend so much time and energy acquiring and worrying about what we don't have and often are so measured and cautious with what give, because we believe there isn't going to be enough. This is the myth of scarcity. That God hasn't given his children enough to go around. This is not the God we worship.

The truth is, we believe that the God we worship has given to us abundantly! Not only is there enough to go around, but there's also more than enough. And therefore, we give in response to the abundance God continually provides us with.

I have heard people say that the more they have given the more God has given them. From my experience, I don't think God gives more to the generous and less to misers. I have found that the more I give the more I recognize how much God has already blessed me with. It's not that God has given me more in a "quid pro quo" arrangement. In giving, I am transformed. I can see the gifts I have more clearly. I can give thanks more fully. I can give more joyously.

Thank God for the many abundances he has given to us!  
*Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation*

## Help for the Stewardship Team

### Stewardship Beyond Giving

Too often, when we talk about stewardship in the church, we only talk about giving and generosity (usually to the church). But we know that financial stewardship is far more than giving and generosity. In fact, if giving to the church is the only thing we talk about when addressing the topics of money and finances, I wouldn't be surprised if people complained or tuned the church out.

Theodore Roosevelt said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." This is very true when it comes to talking about financial stewardship. The church teaches financial stewardship because we believe that faithful financial wellness leads to mental, emotional, and spiritual peace.

Therefore, a truly well-rounded financial stewardship program in a church will deal with topics like earning. Saving. Spending. Getting out of debt. Planning for retirement. How to leave a legacy. And yes, generosity.

Churches can do this by offering financial wellness programs like [Saving Grace](#) and partnering with other organizations in the community to teach people how to improve their resumes, interview well, and gain the skills they need to get a better job.

I do believe giving is transformational. But it is not the only word the church should have regarding finances. What can your church teach that will give people financial hope today?

---

**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 [jason@wumf.org](mailto:jason@wumf.org).

## A Chicken or an Eagle? August 2022

“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)

Once upon a time, a man found the egg of an eagle. It had been abandoned for some reason by its mother, but as it was still warm, the man took it and put it in the nest of one of his backyard chickens along with the other eggs that were there being brooded upon.

After a period of time, the eaglet was hatched, and along with the other chicks from his next began to go about the back yard doing what the other chicks did. He scratched the earth for worms and insects. He looked for the corn that the man would throw into the yard. He clucked and cackled as best as he could, and as he grew, he would, like other chickens, thrash his wings and fly a few feet in the air.

Years passed in this way, and the eagle grew very old. One day he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. It glided majestically among the powerful wind currents, soaring and swooping, scarcely beating its long golden wings.

The old eagle looked at it in awe and asked, “What is that?”

“That is the eagle, the king of birds,” said one of his neighbors. “He belongs to the sky and to the high places. We belong to the earth, we are chickens.” The old eagle knew this was true, and so it was he lived and died as a chicken, for that is what he believed he was.

In life, our perspective determines our reality. For instance, most people believe that they need more money to be “okay” financially. How much more? It didn’t matter if they were making \$25,000 or \$250,000, the answer to how much more they needed was always right around 10% more. The truth is, if we haven’t learned how to manage well what we have, having more will leave us with the same set of problems.

On the other hand, developing an attitude of gratitude,<sup>1</sup> an abundance mindset, and planning for giving and saving in our spending plans (aka, budgets) can help us discover contentment no amount of money can give

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

<sup>1</sup> <https://parade.com/1223325/kaitlin-vogel/attitude-of-gratitude/>

## Help for the Stewardship Team

### Summer Stewardship Conference August 12 & 13

This year’s Stewardship Conference at Pine Lake (formerly known as the Stewardship Retreat) will help participants learn both the essentials of growing generous givers, as well as best practices that have emerged since Covid.

**Rev. Dan Dick** will provide the keynote addresses throughout the weekend, including: *Resurrecting the Tithe*, *Redeeming Alms*, *Reclaiming a Gifts-Based Identity*, and *Recovering the Offering*.

Other workshops will include:

- ***ABC’s of Financially Healthy Churches*** - Looking at some of the tenants of getting healthy, staying healthy, growing in God. Let’s do our ABC’s...
- ***Creating a Culture of Storytelling in Worship*** – in this workshop, we will explore ways to tell stories of how God is changing lives through our ministries as we seek to inspire and thank people for their generous offerings.
- ***Offering with No Plate*** - Many churches did the previously unthinkable when they returned to in-person worship when they decided not to pass an offering plate. In this workshop, we will discuss some practical and spiritual implications of permanently discontinuing the traditional passing of the offering plate.

Bring yourself or your whole church team to create or refine your stewardship ministry. This year, you can attend either in-person or virtually. For more information and to register, visit:

<https://www.wumf.org/upcoming-events/>

**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 [jason@wumf.org](mailto:jason@wumf.org)

## A Matter of Perspective July 2022

Some things are simply a matter of perspective. We can be reminded often how words can be used to skew the truth. For instance, an interoffice softball game was held every year between the marketing department and support staff of one company. The day of the game, as hard as the marketers tried, the support staff whipped the marketing department soundly.

In its best tradition, the marketing department decided to find the best “spin” they could on the dismal result. They showed how they earn their keep by posting this memo on the bulletin board after the game: “The marketing department is pleased to announce that for the recently completed softball season, we came in second place, having lost but one game all year. The support department, however, had a rather dismal season, as they won only one game all year.”

On the other hand, hidden beauty can also be found by looking at a situation in a different way. A little girl named Lauren (age 5) reports, “I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones.”

I think Lauren is on to something. Our entire lives can be shaped by perspective. How would I approach money, “stuff,” and giving if I knew that God had already given me everything I need, rather than seeing all of the things I “need” in the store windows? How would I treat others if I focused on the ways I could serve, rather than making sure everyone respected my rights? How would my marriage change if it were based on being one another’s servant rather than a struggle for power? What would my attitude be toward work be if I saw it as my God-given vocation rather than someplace I had to go to earn a paycheck? What if I saw Sunday as a true Sabbath . . . a time for connecting with God and family and rest . . . rather than a day to run the kids to more activities and the last day I have to get things done at home before I go to work?

Sometimes we need God to help us see the world differently before we can live differently in it.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

### Help for the Stewardship Team

[Where to Start](#)

It is not uncommon for me to receive a call from a church stating they’d like to begin a renewed emphasis on stewardship, but they’re not sure where to start. If this is your situation, this is my recommendation.

1. Start with the [Challenge Grant 2.0](#). Not only is a way for your church to earn money for your ministry but completing the even the Initial Level of the grant will set your church up for stewardship success. The *Challenge Grant 2.0* expires at the end of the year. Look for an announcement about the *Jim Wells Challenge Grant 3.0* in the next few months.

If the *Challenge Grant 2.0* seems too daunting, consider the following.

2. Create a team dedicated to stewardship. This team’s sole focus should be helping people grow in their faithfulness to money. It should include helping people learn how to get out of debt, grow as generous givers, explore topics like contentment and gratitude, and celebrating the difference your church’s ministry is making in the lives of people in the church and community.
3. Have your stewardship team read a chapter a month from a book to learn about best stewardship practices. Take 15 minutes to discuss what stood out for people at the beginning of every meeting. A couple of books to start with could be [Not Your Parents Offering Plate](#), [Rich Church, Poor Church](#), or [A Better Offering](#).
4. Create opportunities for people to wrestle with the question, “What is God calling me to give?” Ultimately, generosity is a gift that needs to be developed as a part of a person’s spiritual growth, just like patience, kindness, love, etc.
5. Have your team and pastor take part in the *Foundation’s Stewardship Conference at Pine Lake Camp* (formerly known as the Foundation’s Stewardship Retreat) on August 12 & 13. There, you will have the opportunity to learn the basics of a fruitful stewardship ministry or learn the latest best practices. You can take part either in-person or virtually. Learn more by visiting: <https://www.wumf.org/upcoming-events/>

Finally, if you or your team would like personal guidance or help, please feel free to reach out to me. I’d be happy to spend some time with you on the phone, via Zoom, or in-person to help your church continue to both grow generous givers and fund life-giving ministries.

---

### 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 [jason@wumf.org](mailto:jason@wumf.org)

Good  
June 2022

To be a follower of Jesus means to be willing to sacrifice ourselves for the good of all. It means to be willing to deny ourselves for the benefit of all of humanity.

I recently read about a man named Thomas Cannon who did this in a truly remarkable way. He was a postal worker in Richmond, Virginia, who lived much of his life on the edge of poverty so that he could give to those in need. Describing himself as “a poor man’s philanthropist,” he gave away more than \$150,000 to people who were experiencing hard times, or who had been unusually kind or brave. He gave these gifts over the last 33 years of his life, mostly in the form of \$1,000 checks.

He traced his inspiration to his time in the Navy. While he was away at signal school, there was a shipboard explosion at the Port of Chicago and many of his shipmates were killed. He concluded that he was spared for a reason — to help others, to be a role model, to inspire people to see what he called “the oneness of it all.”

Cannon gave to people of all ages, races, nationalities, and incomes. He gave to a low-income woman who started a youth center in her apartment complex . . . to a retired postal worker who was a regular volunteer at an elementary school . . . to a woman and a man who wanted to return to Vietnam to visit their hometown . . . to an advocate for the victims of crime . . . and to a teenager who had been abandoned as an infant but grew up to be named Virginia’s Youth of the Year.

This generosity didn’t come without sacrifice. Cannon supported his wife, his two sons, and himself and his charitable efforts on a salary that never exceeded \$20,000 a year. When he retired from the postal service in 1983, he and his wife lived near the poverty line on his pension. “We lived simply,” he said before his death in 2005, “so we could give money away.”

He wasn’t unhappy about these sacrifices. In fact, he had a great sense of humor, one that he kept even after being diagnosed with terminal cancer. As his health was failing, he told the Richmond newspaper, “A Baptist deacon who owed me \$200 died recently. First thing I’m going to do when I get to the other side is run him down.”

Thomas Cannon didn’t want a foundation to be set up to continue his work after his death. He feared that a foundation would require a

bureaucracy, and tons of paperwork. He didn’t even what his name attached to anything. He just left one simple request: “Help somebody.”

*Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation*

### Help for the Stewardship Team

#### Do This, Not That

When churches are trying to encourage generosity, too often leadership engages in practices that lead to decreased giving. Consider adjusting your stewardship strategy to excite and energize, even in difficult and anxious times.

- **Do not** stand up in worship and talk about how the church is behind financially, needs people to give more, pledge more, etc.
- **Do** tell stories of the impact the churches ministries are having in people’s lives on a regular basis, especially in worship.

People don’t give money TO the church; they give THROUGH the church to touch people’s lives. If short-term financial challenges need to be addressed, they should be dealt with by the church’s leadership.

- **Do not** print “amount needed, amount contributed” in the newsletter, bulletin, church website, bulletin board, etc.
- **Do** celebrate what has been given, repeatedly thank those who give generously, and cast a vision for what mission and ministry can be carried out with continued growth (in both people and generosity).

People rise to challenges that are inspiring and exciting. Similarly, people will stop giving to and taking part in ministries that they feel are sinking. One of the greatest gifts leaders can give their church is framing obstacles and challenges as God given opportunities (because that’s what they really are).

---

#### 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 [jason@wumf.org](mailto:jason@wumf.org).

Good  
May 2022

"Life is good." You may disagree, but "Life is Good" is a registered and trademarked expression by the "Life is Good" people for whom, life is good. The "Life is Good" logo is a stick figure named Jake who wears a black beret, beatnik sunglasses, and flashes a giant grin. Jake is often posed in any number of activities that bring simple pleasures to life — hiking, surfing, flying a kite, walking the dog.



"Life is Good" started inauspiciously as brothers Bert and John Jacobs hawked homemade novelty T-shirts in the Boston streets and door-to-door through the college dorms. They were literally living in their van down by the river. They found their key to success when they printed 48 shirts of Jake over the saying, "Life is Good" for a 1994 street fair in Cambridge. The shirts sold out by noon. People were crazy for the simple and sunny philosophy. So much so, that the sincere and optimistic slogan has grown into an \$80 million-a-year merchandise line sold by 5,000 distributors in 14 countries.

One key to the success of "Life is Good" merchandise lies in the interpretation of those who own the products. Someone wearing the kayaking Jake shirt announces both his hobby and the simple pleasure that makes his life good. But cancer sufferers and survivors have also flocked to the merchandise line due to its simple, clear worldview. "Life is Good" is the hopeful battle cry of the cancer afflicted and the celebration song of cancer survivors.

There's an implicit sense of truthfulness to the slogan which preserves its widespread appeal. The Jacobses are quick to note the humility of the assertion — life isn't perfect or great, but it's good. They know there's plenty of bad in the world but find it better to focus on what's good. John claims that the slogan is an affirmation of

the here and now. "Don't determine that you're going to be happy when you get the new car or the big promotion or when you meet that special person. You can decide that you're going to be happy today."

In the church, we have a similar saying, but I don't think that it's trademarked. "God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good." This is more than an observation, however. Among other things, it's a promise that our good God is with us and is active in our lives when we are struggling and in the valleys of life and when our hearts are full of the many blessings we have received and we are filled with joy.

Yes, life may be good, but if it is, it's because "God is good . . . all the time."

*Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation*

### Help for the Stewardship Team

#### Eliminating Secrecy Surrounding Money

In their book *Bounty*, Kristine Miller & Scott McKenzie highlight the importance for the church to talk about money issues, not just during stewardship campaigns, but throughout the year. Personal money issues, including mounting debt, pressure to give in to consumerism to the detriment of our relationships and our planet, and struggles to save and give are issues that have real consequences in people's lives that our faith can address. They suggest employing the following strategies in our churches.

- 1) Hold a **personal finance program** regularly to help people understand and adjust their money behaviors. Consider taking part in the [Foundation's Saving Grace Grant](#) to get started.



- 2) Encourage your church's leadership to share personal observations and insights about money with each other. Consider offering a few questions in advance of your next meeting. For instance:
  - a. Growing up, did you feel wealthy or poor? What was your family's attitude toward money? Did you worry about money?
  - b. How much does your personal self-worth depend on your income? How much does your personal self-worth depend on how much you give away?
  - c. What was the first time you were asked to make a charitable gift? What is your first memory of deciding to make a charitable gift? What inspired you to do so?  
(And of course, don't force anyone to answer who doesn't wish to share.)
- 3) As you consider filling leadership positions in the church, identify those whose giving reflects a strong commitment to your mission and ministry. This **does not mean** church leaders need to be the largest contributors but giving should reflect a meaningful commitment relative to one's means.
- 4) Pastors – preach about money and don't limit your discussion to giving. Address topics like debt, possessions, saving, earning, determining how much is enough, etc. Remember, in talking about money and possessions, Jesus never used guilt or pressure as a motivation. Rather, he invited people to consider their blessings and how individual gifts can be used by God for God's purposes.

---

**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](mailto:jmahnke@wumf.org).

## Inviting Others to be a Part April 2022

"Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened." ~ Matthew 7:7

In his book *Creating Generous Congregations*, David Heetland tells a story about an 8-year-old girl who often gave more than a tithe from her nickel and dime allowance. She once gave her grandmother 38 cents in small coins "for missions." Her grandmother then asked her, "Do you want this to go for homeless people, hospitals in Africa, or buying fish to stock ponds to feed the hungry?"

Her granddaughter replied, "Just a minute," and returned shortly with 29 cents more, making a total of 67 cents to be divided three ways. She found each mission so important that her initial gift was instantly almost doubled so she could support all three.

Too often, we worry that when we ask someone to support a ministry with either their time or their money, the request will be taken as pushy (at best) or offensive (at worst). And there are certainly people who would take it that way.

On the other hand, I believe that not inviting people to support a ministry I'm excited about excludes them from being a part of something that may be transformational for them, and the people touched by the ministry.

Finally, there are many people who are just waiting to be asked to be a part of something bigger than them. They may not be the first to raise their hands when a general invitation goes out but would love to be personally invited to be a part of what God is doing through the church.

*Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation*

## Help for the Stewardship Team

### Developing a Year-Round Stewardship Program

How do you help people grow as generous givers? Here are some simple ideas.

- Each week, highlight a ministry that has made an impact on people's lives during the offering time. Conclude the highlight by thanking people for their support of that ministry through their giving and time.
- Each month, give a 2-3 minute talk during worship on the stewardship topic of the month. It does not always have to be about giving (although it should be some of the time). Topics can include contentment, dealing with debt, how to save wisely, gratitude.
- Each quarter, send a thank you note to every giver indicating the total received. Include news about an upcoming event or sermon series and a ministry story of how the gifts were used and the impact it had.
- Offer a personal financial planning and budgeting class twice a year. Sign-up for the Foundation's *Saving Grace Grant Program* [here](#) for training and seed money to kick-off this ministry.

Find more year-round stewardship ideas [here](#).

---

#### **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](mailto:jmahnke@wumf.org).

## Blessed to be a Blessing March 2022

In their book, The Generosity Challenge, Kristine Miller and Scott McKenzie share the results of a 2017 Barna Group study on prayer called, *Silent and Solo: How Americans Pray*. The study found that 79% of American adults have prayed in the last three months. What was the content of those prayers?

- Gratitude and thanksgiving – 62%
- The needs of family and community – 61%
- Personal guidance in crisis – 49%
- My health and wellness – 47%
- Confession and forgiveness – 43%
- Things I suddenly feel compelled to pray about – 43%
- Safety in my daily tasks or travel – 41%
- A sense of peace – 37%
- Blessings for meals – 37%
- Specific requests for others – 34%
- Several others at lesser percentages

First, let me note that I love that gratitude and thanksgiving top the list of prayer subjects. Part of spiritual, emotional, and mental wellness can be found in gratitude practices. Miller and McKenzie do point out that something important is missing from this list, however. There is no mention of listening to God, no mention of asking “God, what do you want me to do, how do you want me to live?”

These questions, for us as individuals and for our churches, are key part of our stewardship practices. Our faith teaches us that God gives us good things for a purpose that is greater than satisfying our own needs and desires. We are blessed to be a blessing. It is important for our prayers of gratitude to be followed by an openness to the movement of God’s Spirit.

May God grant you the courage to ask, “Lord, what can I do in gratitude for all you have already done for me?”

*Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation*

## Help for the Stewardship Team

### Helping Parents Teach Children about Money

Too often, we shield our children from our financial practices because they’re “personal” or “private.” Of course, that means our children will have no model for understanding how to handle their finances except for what our culture teaches. I would argue that this is a dangerous practice that often leads our children down the path of discontentment and debt.

What if our stewardship and finance teams spent time teaching parents how to talk to their children about money from the perspective of our faith? How does our earning, spending, saving, and giving reflect our values?

You may find these resources may be helpful as you resource parents to have conversations with their children.

Rachel Cruze and Dave Ramsey. Smart Money, Smart Kids (Cokesbury or Amazon)

Caryn Rivandeneira. It’s Not Fair! A Book About Having Enough (Abingdon or Amazon)

Good Stewards Together: Twelve Intergenerational Summer Events (Abingdon)

---

#### **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](mailto:jmahnke@wumf.org).

## An Attitude of Gratitude Makes a Big Impact

February 2022

Most of the time it seems as if making a positive change in your life takes a lot of discipline, time, and effort. This makes sense. If quick and easy fixes really led to things like better physical and mental health, financial wealth, and problem-free relationships – we'd all be rich, deliriously happy, and well-adjusted. We do know that life isn't that easy or simple.

But, what if one word was able to improve both your physical and mental health, give you more and better friends, and help you accomplish more? Such a word does exist. It is GRATITUDE.

### Save the Dates:

### Clergy Tax Seminar

Sun Prairie UMC & Virtual

January 24, 2022

### Super Bowl of Stewardship Retreat

Algoma Boulevard UMC: Oshkosh

February 12, 2022

More Information at [www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org)

A 2014 article from *Forbes* outlines seven benefits of showing gratitude:<sup>1</sup>

1. Gratitude opens the door to more relationships. When we say thank you or express appreciation to someone we've just met, the person we thank is more likely to seek an ongoing relationship.
2. People who express gratitude experience fewer aches and pains and they report feeling healthier than people who do not express gratitude.
3. Gratitude improves psychological health. Research confirms that gratitude effectively increases happiness and reduces depression.
4. Gratitude reduces aggression and increases both sensitivity and empathy.
5. Grateful people sleep better.

6. Gratitude increases a person's self-esteem and reduces resentment toward people who are perceived as having more.
7. Gratitude increases mental strength. Studies indicate that people who are grateful respond to trauma and tragedy with greater resilience and strength. Recognizing all you have to be thankful for – even during the worst times of your life – fosters resilience.

How can you nurture an attitude of gratitude?

- Consider creating a gratitude journal, taking time each day to write out what you are grateful for.
- Surround yourself with "gratitude cues," which are notes or visual reminders of what you must be grateful for, set in places where you will see them throughout the day.
- During your daily prayer time, be sure to include time to give thanks.
- Begin practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness and gratitude are connected.

Yes, we may find that being grateful is neither easy nor simple, especially during difficult times. But I believe its impact on our lives is well worth the effort.

*Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation*

### Help for the Stewardship Team

### How Do You Say Thank You?

Saying thank you to donors is one of the simplest and most powerful ways to cultivate generosity. Unfortunately, we don't say thank you enough or at all. Consider recruiting a person to be a part of your stewardship or finance team whose sole responsibility is to say thank you for the ways people give of their time and talent. Here are some ideas to get started:

- Send a handwritten note, preferably from the Pastor, the first time someone financially contributes to the church.
- Instead of just explaining how people can give during worship on Sunday morning, take a moment to highlight a ministry that has made a difference that week. Then thank the people for their tithes and offerings that make that ministry possible.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/amymorin/2014/11/23/7-scientifically-proven-benefits-of-gratitude-that-will-motivate-you-to-give-thanks-year-round/?sh=6bde3ba4183c>

- When new servant-leaders begin their positions on committees, teams, etc., take a moment to say a blessing over them in worship, thanking them for the ministry they have said yes to.
- After a ministry effort, have the person on the ministry team send thank you notes to all who volunteered to serve. Be sure to have someone say thank you to the person who is writing the notes as well.

---

**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](mailto:jmahnke@wumf.org).

Scarcity or Abundance  
What are you looking for?  
January 2022

A few years ago, I read a fun book by A.J. Jacobs called *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*. It's important to note that Jacobs, a journalist and author, is Jewish and agnostic. For one year, he tried to follow every biblical "rule" as literally as possible. This includes well-known rules like "Love your neighbor" and the Ten Commandments, as well as lesser-known commands to stone adulterers (which he does by throwing little pebbles at a rather cranky man he meets in a park who brags to Jacobs about an affair he is involved in). Jacobs also decided to follow the biblical instruction to tithe, deciding to give away 10 percent of his income.

Save the Date:  
**Super Bowl of Stewardship Retreat**  
**Algoma Boulevard UMC: Oshkosh**  
**February 12, 2022**  
More Information at [www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org)

After convincing his wife to join him, Jacobs gave the donations away to several charities electronically. He describes his experience this way, "The

giving was painful. I mean, 10 percent? That would have an impact on our lives. Vacations would need to be scaled back; new furniture would have to wait. It was huge. When I pressed 'send' on the donations, my palms got wet, my heart rate spiked."

In giving, Jacobs felt the fear that is common to all of us. The fear of not having enough. However, that wasn't all he experienced. He continues:

"It was a pain mixed with pleasure. When the confirmation email pinged in, I felt good. There's a haunting line from the movie *Chariots of Fire*. It's spoken by Ian Charleson, who plays a deeply religious sprinter in the 1924 Olympics. He says: 'When I run, I feel his pleasure.' And as I gave away money, I think I might have felt God's pleasure. Which is odd. Because I'm agnostic. I don't know if there's a God or not, but still I've felt some high sense of purpose. It was like a cozy ember that started at the back of my neck and slowly spread its warmth through my skull. I felt like I was doing something I should have done all my life."

Ultimately, Jacobs' generosity changed him. I wonder, how our relationship with God and our lives might be vivified because of our giving?

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

### Help for the Stewardship Team

## Paying Attention to the Calendar

When trying to grow generous givers within our churches and communities, it is helpful to pay attention to the calendar as we plan stewardship activities.

Consider the month of January. Of course, it's the dawn of the New Year. People tend to make New Year's Resolutions. They are also receiving their credit card bills and bank statements that detail all the purchases they made during the holidays. How can these events shape your approach to Stewardship? Consider:

- Challenging people to take a step forward in their discipleship as a part of a New Year's Resolution. Will they consider praying daily? Serving others in a ministry once a month? Consider giving proportionally and regularly? Take a step closer toward tithing?
- Hosting a Financial Wellness small group like *Saving Grace* or *Financial Peace University* to help people establish an emergency fund, get out of debt, learn how to give, and intentionally manage their finances.
- Continue to connect money and mission by celebrating different ministries during worship and the impact they are making. Remember to say thank you for people's generosity that makes these ministries happen.

For more ideas, check out our [Year-Round Stewardship Brochure](#) or contact **The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation** toll-free at 1-888-903-9863 or email us at [wumf@wumf.org](mailto:wumf@wumf.org).