

Paying It Forward
May 2024

“Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow . . . So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.” Galatians 6: 7, 9

According to the Good News Network, 84% of adult Americans agree with the idea that “what goes around comes around.” Therefore, the same number also say that they will go out of their way to “pay it forward” whenever possible.

Respondents reported that they were doing so in a number of ways, including:

- Treating their loved ones to something special (50%)
- Giving generous tips (48%)
- Helping out a neighbor by carrying their groceries or shoveling snow (46%)
- Donating money to organizations or charities (40%)

In addition, almost four in ten said they volunteered their time to help friends or family or supported locally owned business. The average adult engages in five generous acts per week, which adds up to 260 random acts of kindness each year.

Whether it's to align their cosmic mojo or simply acting out of human nature, those who pay it forward believe these acts have real effects on more than those on the receiving end. Americans feel better about themselves (49%), their life overall (37%), and feel more confident (22%) when they extend kindness to others.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

Help for the Stewardship Team

Annual Stewardship Campaign Planning

As the calendar begins to turn toward summer, this is the perfect time to begin planning your Fall Annual Stewardship Campaign. Beginning planning now will not only give your team time to review the different options that are available, it will also give you time to customize any pre-packaged campaign, so it better fits your context.

Which campaign is best for your church? It depends. There are different types of campaigns. The campaigns [listed in this brochure](#) are organized into categories according to the style of approach used. Many of the campaigns are tricky to classify, so don't automatically rule out an option because it is in a certain category. Begin by thinking about which type of campaign might work most effectively in your church at this time. How would you answer these questions?

- What approach will people respond to best at this time?
- How will this help people be open to growing in their generosity?
- How does the congregation enjoy spending time together – in a large group or small group discussions or meetings? Do you prefer emails and/or mailings?
- What types of campaigns have you done lately?
- What is the budget and amount of time to be spent on a campaign?
- What spiritual needs does the congregation have in regards to giving? Has there been discussion about tithing?
- What are the educational goals for the program? What are the goals for interpreting the ministries of your congregation?

We suggest the Pastor and a member of the stewardship committee start by narrowing the initial selection to about two to six options [from this brochure](#). Then a committee could make the final decision. If you would like to preview the material, we have many of the campaigns available here at the Foundation. Simply reach out to Jason Mahnke at jason@wumf.org for more information.

Generous Words
April 2024

Our world is becoming increasingly visual. That means it is important for our newsletters to adapt to help share the message of generosity effectively. Several times a year, rather than sharing a written story about generosity, I will share a video. I encourage you to do the same in your newsletters.



<https://vimeo.com/798817132>

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

Help for the Stewardship Team

Celebrate Generosity

It's not uncommon for me to visit a church and hear a financial update from the pulpit stating the dire circumstances of the church's finances and then urging people to give more. While financial transparency is important, doom and gloom stewardship appeals do more harm than good. Even if there is a short-term financial boost from a few people, such messages usually lead people to stop giving.

For your next financial update, take some time to celebrate the ways people have been generous, both to the church and in their lives.

Consider, for instance, the points from this article from Forbes, 'Wired to Give – How to Make the Most of Your Innate Generosity':

We're wired to give. Neurologically, psychologically, socially, spiritually – everywhere we look, the evidence suggests that generosity is one of the hallmarks of humanity.

You're already a giver. You are likely more charitable than you even knew. Do you have any life insurance, for instance? It won't do you any good personally, but it sure is helpful to anyone who depends on you financially.

Praising behavior that you'd like to see more of goes a lot further than bemoaning what you don't see happening. It's a big part of having a mindset focused on abundance rather than scarcity.

There Never Seems to Be Enough

March 2024

Sometimes it flies, sometimes it crawls, but it always passes inexorably. We mark it, save it, waste it, bide it, race against it. We measure it incessantly with a passion for precision that borders on the obsessive. We are obsessed with it; we never seem to have enough of it; and yet scientists don't even know how to explain it. What is it? The answer is time.

We never seem to have enough time. A group of experts once got together to figure out how much time we should need to get everything done in one day. These experts got together and noted how much time was needed for exercise, hygiene, work, commuting, household chores, eating, entertainment, spiritual development, sleep, and family time. When these figures were all added together, the experts said that a human being needs 42 hours a day. That's not very encouraging.

Of course, those are the things we're supposed to be doing every day according to experts. In truth, we add to that list as well. Consider that every day in the United States:

- 74,000 of us move to a different home and 22,465 move to another state.
- 36 businesses go bankrupt while 13,700 new ones start up.
- Americans purchase 38,082 new automobiles and trucks and smash 16,438.
- 2,266 couples get divorced while 6,578 get married.
- Dogs bite 12,329 people including 15 mail carriers.
- We eat 75 acres of pizza, 53 million hotdogs, 167 million eggs, 3 million gallons of ice cream, and 3,000 tons of candy.

The Psalmist tells us that "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." In other words, every moment of every second, and every second of every minute, and every minute of every hour, and every hour of every day is literally a gift from God. Unfortunately, in all of the hustle and bustle of our lives, we forget this. Instead, we are more often stressed out by this gift than

thankful for it. Think about this: God gives to every one of us all the same amount of time in a day.

Sometimes it's just our perspective. What if we were to get up every morning and thank God and remember that "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." It wouldn't give us any more time, but maybe our perspective each day would change and we'd appreciate the gift of time a little more.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

Help for the Stewardship Team

Did you know?

Jesus talked about money and possessions twice as much as he did about heaven and hell, five times as much as he talked about prayer, and nearly half of Jesus' parables deal with how we manage money and possessions.

John Wesley's goal was not to raise money for the church, but to lead people into a healthier, more productive, more positive life by providing practical wisdom on the relationship between their faith and their finances. Wesley's rules are not about fundraising for the church. They are about becoming more like Christ. They are about practicing the spiritual discipline of generosity so that we become generous people whose lives are shaped in the likeness of an extravagantly generous God. How can your Stewardship team continue striving for Wesley's goal in your context?

A thick bankroll is no help when life falls apart, but a principled life can stand up to the worst. ~*Proverbs 11:4 The Message*

Whoever loves money never has money enough; Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. ~*Ecclesiastes 5:10 NIV*

Practice, Practice, Practice February 2024

Believe it or not, even though Christmas feels like it is just behind us, Lent is about to begin (Ash Wednesday is February 14 this year). In the church, Lent is a period of 40 days (not including Easter) during which we re-examine our lives and our faith practices as we prepare for the coming of Easter. The practice of re-examination and recommitment dates to the very beginning of the church as new members prepared to be baptized on Easter Sunday. We may ask ourselves, however, **why is the observation of Lent important to us today?**

The reality of the situation is, if we don't take the time to re-examine what's important to us and practice the basics of faith, we run the risk of forgetting who we are, where we've come from, and what God has done in our lives. Every professional sports team gathers before the season begins and focuses on many of the things the players have done since they were small children. In baseball, they field ground balls (and coincidentally, Spring Training also begins on February 14 for many teams this year). In football, they go over tackling and blocking. In basketball they dribble and pass. These are adults who are the best players in the world, and yet their coaches start them off at the very beginning every year. Only the teams who've mastered the basics have a chance of contending for a championship.

As Lent approaches let's be encouraged to get back to the basics of faith. Come to worship regularly. Take time to become a part of a study group to grow in your faith together. Pray daily. Give generously both your time and your money. The basics aren't just for the young or inexperienced in faith. They are for everyone — from the youngest child to the champions of faith who've been an inspiration to us.

Let's take time to refocus on the basics as we begin our journey to the cross with Jesus.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

Don't forget to register for the **Clergy Tax Seminar** on Monday, January 22 and the **How to Reach New People Seminar** on Saturday, February 3. Both are available in-person and virtually. For more information and to register, visit: <https://www.wumf.org/upcoming-events/>

Help for the Stewardship Team

What's Your Church's Vision for 2024?

The top reason people give to any non-profit, including the church, is because they believe in its mission and vision. So here is a vital question for your church's leadership: What is your vision for 2024?

Wondering where to start to define your vision? Let's begin with some definitions.

Mission – the mission of a church is a broad statement that explains why the church exists and does not change often. The Book of Discipline states that the mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Vision – a vision is what a church wants to achieve, in a defined period, to contribute to its mission. It is aspirational. It points to where the congregation believes God is calling them to be in the future (usually within a few years). Consider the transformation in the community and world that will occur because of their work in that time.

A wise pastor once noted, "In order to raise money, you must have a bold vision. It must be dramatic and exciting." When we've been in the church long enough, we too often forget that people don't generally give because they want to keep the doors of the church open. They give to the church (and other non-profits) because they believe the ministries of the church are making a vital difference in people's lives. No church has a money problem – only a vision problem. If you have the right vision, you can raise the money required.

Resources for Creating Your Church's Vision

- [Marks of a Vital Congregation: Vision](#) from the Center of Faith and Giving
- [Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create a Movement](#) by Will Mancini
- [Visioning: What is the next step?](#) from ResourceUMC
- [Leading Topics: Leadership and Vision](#) from the Lewis Center for Church Leadership
- [Mission and Vision Statement Renewal Workbook for Churches](#) by Rev. Jessica Crane Munoz (note: this book reverses the definition of mission and vision as stated above).

Active Discipleship January 2024

A University chaplain had an interesting conversation with a student that came to see him one day. He writes:

“I was wondering what I ought to do about the exam,” she said, “then I looked at this bracelet” (here she gestured to the “What Would Jesus Do?” bracelet on her wrist), “and I said to myself, ‘I am going to just say a little prayer, relax, and look after myself.’”

And I thought to myself, “I can think of at least a couple of other things Jesus might tell you to do — like get over to the library and get busy studying for this exam.”

Devoid of specific content, insubstantial, vague “spirituality” may be our contemporary Christian undoing. We have rendered Jesus into someone so vague, amorphous, and flimsy that he makes little claim upon us. Jesus has become a fashion accessory, something tied to our wrist, a comfort, never a challenge. What would Jesus do? Whatever we do, it appears.

This short story reminds me of what a challenge Christian Discipleship. It is easy for us to become a member of a church, attend several times a year, give a little money, and to sit back and relax because we all know that God’s grace is free. And yet, we forget that while God’s love is given to us freely, if we allow it to grab ahold of us, it changes our lives. Our priorities are no longer our own, but God’s. We pray that “God’s will be done,” not only in a general sense, but particularly in and through our own lives. This means becoming an active part of our community of faith. Giving our energy to worship, instead of being a passive observer. Actively loving and serving our neighbor, instead of just praying for them and hoping for a miracle. Spending time with God in prayer and study. Letting generosity be the top priority in our finances, not just giving what’s left over after we’ve gotten ours.

Christian Discipleship is a difficult enterprise. Thank God we have grace to support us and strengthen us. And thank God we have a community of faith to help us along and to hold us accountable.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

Help for the Stewardship Team

[Save the Dates \(or better yet, register now!\)](#)

2024 Clergy Tax Seminar

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s **Clergy Tax Workshop** is designed to assist you in the preparation of your 2023 Federal and Wisconsin state income tax filings. This year’s tax workshop will be a hybrid event, in-person at the Conference Center in Sun Prairie and online via Zoom and YouTube. James Tarp, a tax consultant with Mennenga Tax & Financial Service, will facilitate. Feel free to bring your tax returns, which you can finish filling out during the workshop. If you are a **church treasurer** and have questions about clergy taxes or tax forms, this workshop could be informative to you as well.

Topics include:

- Parsonages, housing allowances, and taxes
- Preparing W-2’s for Clergy (helpful for church treasurers)
- Tax tips
- Time to ask your tax questions.

This workshop is made possible through a grant from the Rev. Carl Berry Endowment and is provided **at no charge** to the Wisconsin Conference or to apportionments.

When: January 22, 2024

1:00-2:30 p.m. Tax information for clergy, church treasurers, retirees
2:30-3:30 p.m. Important specific tax information for new retirees (please attend at least the first 90 minutes of this time block)

Where:

- **In-person:** Conference Center (750 Windsor St. Sun Prairie, WI)
- **Virtual:** Zoom Webinar or Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation YouTube Channel

Registration: Register [by clicking here](#).

How to Reach & Welcome New People Seminar Building, Communicating, and Funding Vision that Connects

A church that is successfully reaching and welcoming new people knows those connections don't occur by accident. Effectively connecting with new people and changing lives happens at the intersection of God's calling, the identified needs of the community, and the passions and gifts of the church.

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation and the Wisconsin Conference are excited to announce this year's How to Reach & Welcome New People Seminar. This seminar will give church leaders practical tools they can use to rediscover their community's needs, their church's passions and gifts, and discern God's call to effectively make connections with their community. Workshops include:

- **Reconnecting with Your Community** – Learn effective strategies for reconnecting with your church's community by utilizing demographic insights and engaging in purposeful conversations.
- **Funding Ministry: Mission, Storytelling, and the Art of the Ask** – The top reason people give to a non-profit is because they believe in its mission, which is making a difference in people's lives. This workshop will equip people to communicate the impact their church's ministry is making, with current and potential donors, to fund current and future ministry opportunities.
- **Helping Your Church Name and Claim Their Gifts, Passions and Call** – Learn how to facilitate a process that will help your church name its strengths, gifts, and passion for future ministry.
- **Creating a Culture of Hospitality in Your Church** - The #1 reason guests come back to a church for a second visit is because of the hospitality of the congregation. Gain insights into practical methods that will empower every member of your congregation to connect with guests in ways that are engaging, natural, and comfortable.

There will also be an opportunity for participants to meet with Rev. Krystal Goodger, the President of the Foundation, to discuss New Ministry Grant applications*, how to start or maintain endowments, or hosting a Planned Giving Seminar at your church.

Where: Cargill United Methodist Church or on Zoom
2000 Wesley Ave.
Janesville, WI 53545

When: February 3, 2024
9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$25 per person (in-person), which includes lunch and materials.
\$60 maximum per church (in-person) no matter how many people attend

\$40 per church to attend virtually

Registration Deadline:

Register by January 29 to attend in-person at Cargill United Methodist Church. Late registrations for in-person are accepted, but we will not be able to provide lunch for in-person registrations after that date.

The virtual registration deadline is February 2 at 5 p.m. CST.

Visit www.wumf.org/upcoming-events to register and for the latest information.

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.