

## FINANCIAL HEALTH FOR ME AND MY CHURCH 2

### **“WE DON’T GIVE TO BUDGETS - WE GIVE TO CHANGE LIVES”**

*“Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.” Psalm 126: 5-6*

People give \_\_\_\_\_ to budgets,  
people give \_\_\_\_\_ to buildings,  
but people give \_\_\_\_\_ to vision.

We have a vision here at FUMC; it is to be a church of Jesus Christ that welcomes all people to:

\_\_\_\_\_ God  
\_\_\_\_\_ Each Other  
\_\_\_\_\_ Our Faith  
\_\_\_\_\_ Our Neighbors  
\_\_\_\_\_ God’s World.

a church that spends 35-40% of its annual budget on staff is staffing for \_\_\_\_\_.  
a church that spends 40-45% of its budget on staff, it is staffing for \_\_\_\_\_.  
a church that is spending 45% or more of its budget on staff it is staffing for \_\_\_\_\_.  
Our current staff portion of the budget is approximately \_\_\_\_%.

We employ a \_\_\_\_\_ of 12 people in various full and part time positions.  
The second largest section of our budget is the \_\_\_\_\_.  
We are a United Methodist Church, and we pay what we call \_\_\_\_\_.  
The third part of our purpose statement concerns \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_  
for all our members.  
We certainly would be remiss to not mention the dollars spent on \_\_\_\_\_.  
We support a number of \_\_\_\_\_ efforts.

There are other parts of the budget, but those are the main ones, and in case you have missed the point:

\_\_\_\_\_!!!

## **FINANCIAL HEALTH FOR ME AND MY CHURCH 2** **“WE DON’T GIVE TO BUDGETS - WE GIVE TO CHANGE LIVES”**

*“Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.” Psalm 126: 5-6*

As this series evolves, you may be noticing it is addressing from both a positive and negative perspective, why, and how we should give, and not give. Last week we discussed that God doesn’t need our money; we need to give it. Today we will be discussing that we don’t give to budgets, but to change lives. Next week we’ll explore how Godly giving has virtually nothing to do with the amount we give. The week following, we’ll speak of sacrificial giving. I believe education is a major motivator when it comes to giving. The more you know about the right reasons to give, and not to give, hopefully, the more you will want to give.

Let’s explore this phenomenon before us today. Of the 3000 or so people I have pastored in my 21 year career, only one man that I can remember got excited about giving to the budget. He couldn’t wait until the budget was set, and especially the fuel bill was averaged, because that was his passion in life, to pay the fuel bill. I don’t know if he had stock in the local co-op that sold us our fuel, but he was passionate about paying the fuel bill. Actually, I do know his internal motivation. He didn’t like being a Methodist and paying those “dues” as he called them, meaning our apportionments. So he found great comfort in paying the fuel bill. I never did remind him that all our giving ended in one pot, and all our bills were paid from the same pot. Let him believe what he wanted.

Most people don’t get very excited about budgets, especially when it comes to giving. I want to assure you that your Finance Task Force and Administrative Team are working diligently right now to prepare a reasonable budget for our church and ministry for the year 2003.

In light of our current fiscal condition, they are shooting for an 80% of last years budget in every area but personnel. It is admirable, and hard work. Your prayers, support and commitments would be appreciated.

This morning I want to explore with you giving that changes lives. Last week while I was gone I received in the mail a letter stuffed with about 30 individual notes written by a group of high school students from Iroquois High School. These notes each spoke about how much these students were learning, in and through their group of Fellowship Of Christian Athletes, about the Christian life. Many of them wrote of meeting Jesus in recent months through the ministry. Why were they sending them to me? Well for the past 10 years or so I have been paying the annual membership fee to keep that FCA huddle sanctioned and equipped with resources. They didn't know until recently who was paying their fees. It was such a blessing to my heart to read the testimonies of kids I didn't know, whose parents were classmates of mine, who were coming to faith in Jesus. Do you think I'll have trouble writing that check next summer when it comes time to renew? No.

I'm going to try to do something this morning I have never done before, and I guess as usual you'll be the judge to its effectiveness. I want to break down our budget, not dollar wise but with a different intent. I heard this quote recently and it has inspired me: People give **regularly** to budgets, people give **generously** to buildings, but people give **sacrificially** to vision. We have a vision here at FUMC; it is to be a church of Jesus Christ that welcomes all people to:

**Encounter** God

**Love** Each Other

**Deepen** Our Faith

**Reach** Our Neighbors

**Serve** God's World.

Many of you give regularly, diligently and sacrificially to see that vision accomplished, but I want to share some stories, stories from our budget, stories of changed lives because of your giving.

The single largest portion of our annual budget is what is paid in salary, benefits, insurance, and compensations for our staff. I heard a quote a few years ago that a church that spends 35-40% of its annual budget on staff is staffing for **decline**. If a church spends 40-45% of its budget on staff, it is staffing for **maintaince**. But if a church is spending 45% or more of its budget on staff it is staffing for **growth**. Our current staff portion of the budget is approximately 42%. But what does that really mean. Let me share a story or two.

We employ a **staff** of 12 people in various full and part time positions. For the most part I imagine you know what most of those persons do. I preach and teach, and counsel and try to administer this church. Nycol works diligently with our youth. Barb creatively with our Children, Leslee is committed to planning and executing excellent worship. Judy helps take care of our elderly and others with physical as well as spiritual concerns. Walt is a faithful visitor, and leads those active keenagers. Pauline and Ben clean up after all of us, and Carol and Joy keep us all in line, and running efficiently. But what you may not know is that what we do, changes lives.

While I was vacationing early this summer a family in this church tragically lost a 15-year-old daughter. Upon my return the members of our staff, and a number of lay people from our church were actively ministering effectively to this bereaving family.

Just this past week I returned from the hospital to find occupants in my office. I discovered that Carol was counseling one of our members who was struggling with personal issues in her life. A month or so ago, a young college student who has been attending only since Aug. made a commitment to Christ during a worship service.

What you don't know is that Leslee has been faithfully loving and ministering to this girl who is a friend of one of her sons, for a number of years.

I don't mean to brag on our staff, but you need to know that we all work hard, we are committed to Christ, and to this church, and the money in the budget earmarked for salaries, changes peoples lives!

The second largest section of our budget is the **Trustees**. We typically spend around \$100,000 for the physical aspects of our ministry. The trustee's budget covers everything from janitorial supplies to heat, lights, and hopefully soon, power to run our air conditioners! What you may not know is that even the trustees budget makes a difference in peoples lives. It is obvious to most of us that we love this building, and we work hard to maintain it. But did you know that within the past 5 years we have made a number of major investments to address the needs of mainly our elderly members and guests. We have made FM hearing devices available for those who need hearing assistance. We have made accessibility easier for those in wheel chairs and walkers by removing that pew. We have remodeled a bathroom to make it more easily accessible. We have added handrails around both sides of our building where people park to make navigating icy walks more safe. We have purchased sound and video equipment to broadcast our services to shut-ins and others every Sunday. To think that those efforts don't change peoples lives is wrong. Call me this week and I'll gladly give you a list of people who appreciate seeing the building they love on TV each week because they are unable to attend as often as they would like.

I won't be able to cover all parts of the budget, but I want to address one that is especially relevant to us. We are a United Methodist Church, and we pay what we call **apportionments**. Each year every Methodist Church around the world pools their resources to change people's lives. Alone there is no way we could start a university in Africa, but Africa University exists today because of our apportionments.

Wondering about apportionments, call Sam and Eileen Graf and ask if we could cut their pension, cause our apportionments are so high. One of the largest single line items in our Annual Conference Budget is a pension for our oldest retirees and spouses. Now, don't get me wrong, I have some questions and concerns about some of the apportionment appropriations, but for the most part they allow us to connectionally meet the needs of millions of people around the world.

The first and third parts of our purpose statement concern **worship** and **discipleship**, for all our members. Each year significant dollars are spent on materials and resources to enable adults to learn and grow their faith, and to express their praise to God. Each year significant resources are invested in the lives of children and youth who are already making a difference in our church and around the world. At least three of our former youth are right now preparing to attend seminary. Dozens of our youth are serving in ministries here and in colleges and communities across the globe. And our children are not only learning about being little disciples, but about sharing their faith with friends and schoolmates because of the influence of caring adults who shepherd them and teach them how to worship. That all costs money, and it all changes lives.

We certainly would be remiss to not mention the dollars spent on **missions** through this church. We covenant (\$1000 per year) with 4 missionaries, the Cataldos, Nancy Slagg, the Erbelees, and the Graners. All of them are reaching people in places around the world most of us will never visit, all in the name of Christ, and on our behalf. We are the largest supporters of the Open Door, and you want to hear about changed lives, speak to anyone who has been to Bolivia! Anyone!

We support a number of **evangelist** efforts, KNDR, K-LOVE, we maintain a web site, and believe our TV program is reaching unchurched friends across this community.

There are other parts of the budget, but those are the main ones, and in case you have missed the point, **they change lives**.

Now, before I conclude; how many of you are excited about giving to meet the budget? That's what I thought. But how many of you are excited about changing lives? If you have trouble getting excited, maybe you should take a second to consider what it cost some church to make it possible for your life to be changed!

Let me share a parable in closing.

Del Tarr served fourteen years as a missionary in West Africa. His story points out the price some people pay to sow the seed of the gospel that results in changed lives. "I was always perplexed by Psalm 126 until I went to the Sahel, that vast stretch of savanna more than four thousand miles wide just under the Sahara Desert. In the Sahel, all the moisture comes in a four-month period: May, June, July, and August. After that, not a drop of rain falls for eight months. The ground cracks from dryness, and so do your hands and feet. The winds of the Sahara pick up the dust and throw it thousands of feet into the air. It then comes slowly drifting across West Africa as a fine grit. It gets inside your mouth. It gets inside your watch and stops it. The year's food, of course, must all be grown in those four months. People grow sorghum or milo in small fields.

October and November...these are beautiful months. The granaries are full -- the harvest has come. People sing and dance. They eat two meals a day.

The sorghum is ground between two stones to make flour and then a mush with the consistency of yesterday's Cream of Wheat. The sticky mush is eaten hot; they roll it into little balls between their fingers, drop it into a bit of sauce and then pop it into their mouths. The meal lies heavy on their stomachs so they can sleep.

December comes, and the granaries start to recede. Many families omit the morning meal. Certainly by January not one family in fifty is still eating two meals a day. By February, the evening meal diminishes. The meal shrinks even more during March and children succumb to sickness. You don't stay well on half a meal a day.

April is the month that haunts my memory. In it you hear the babies crying in the twilight. Most of the days are passed with only an evening cup of gruel. Then, inevitably, it happens.

A six or seven-year-old boy comes running to his father one day with sudden excitement. "Daddy! Daddy! We've got grain!" he shouts. "Son, you know we haven't had grain for weeks." "Yes, we have!" the boy insists. "Out in the hut where we keep the goats -- there's a leather sack hanging up on the wall -- I reached up and put my hand down in there -- Daddy, there's grain in there! Give it to Mommy so she can make flour, and tonight our tummies can sleep!" The father stands motionless. "Son, we can't do that," he softly explains. "That's next year's seed grain. It's the only thing between us and starvation. We're waiting for the rains, and then we must use it."

The rains finally arrive in May, and when they do the young boy watches as his father takes the sack from the wall and does the most unreasonable thing imaginable. Instead of feeding his desperately weakened family, he goes to the field and with tears streaming down his face, he takes the precious seed and throws it away. He scatters it in the dirt! Why? Because he believes in the harvest.

The seed is his; he owns it. He can do anything with it he wants. The act of sowing hurts so much that he cries. But as the African pastors say when they preach on Psalm 126, "Brother and sisters, this is God's law of the harvest. Don't expect to rejoice later on unless you have been willing to sow in tears."

And I want to ask you: How much would it cost you to sow in tears? I don't mean just giving God something from your abundance, but finding a way to say, "I believe in the harvest, and therefore I will give what makes no sense. The world would call me stupid for doing this, giving to pay a budget seems senseless -- but I must sow regardless, because I believe in the harvest, and I believe in changing lives, for I am one of them. We don't give to meet the budget, we give to God, so He might use us to change lives. Let us pray.

A man said to a friend of his, "Come and have a round of golf with me on Sunday morning." "Oh, I couldn't do that, I have to go to church." "Well," replied the friend, "I don't know what kind of church you attend, but you can keep it to yourself. I have asked you to play golf with me a dozen times but you have never invited me to your church." ANOTHER OUCH!

Dr. Viktor Frankl was an Austrian physician who was imprisoned in one of Hitler's death camps. He and his fellow Jewish people suffered unbelievable atrocities. Everything about their living and working conditions were deplorable, including their medical care.

Dr. Frankl offered what little medical help he could to the sick and dying. Over time, he discovered a unique phenomenon he recorded in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*. He said those people who kept their strength and sanity the longest were those who tried to help other prisoners and share what little they had. Their physical and mental condition seemed strengthened by their friendliness, compassion, and focus on something other than themselves.

Dr. Frankl concluded that if someone responds to life by trying to make life better for others, that effort reinforces the individual's psychological and physical stamina. Ministry energizes, contrary to the great fear that resources will be depleted if we help others.

Evangelist D.L. Moody used to tell about a picture that impressed him greatly. It portrayed a woman grasping a cross with both hands as she was being rescued from a stormy sea. Mr. Moody would then go on to relate how that picture lost much of its impact for him when he saw another painting some time later. The second picture also depicted a woman being rescued from raging waters. But while clinging with one hand to a cross, her other hand was lifting another person out of the waves to safety. That picture dramatically portrays what we who have been rescued from the penalty of our sins should be doing. Recognizing that others around us are lost and perishing, we should not be so selfishly taken up with our own salvation that we forget about them.

In verses six and seven, sowing is equated with sadness and death. In fact, it sort of looks like a burial of the seed. Reaping is seen as a cause for rejoicing, even though it is, in fact, hard work, harder than sowing, like a resurrection. Some cultures for instance, the Canaanites would ritually weep over the buried seed in the hopes that their tears would “water” the seed and produce a fertile crop. These verses, almost certainly proverbial, are quoted here as “comforting promises,” words of consolation to make clear the truth that sowing with tears is followed by a joyous harvest.

The historical miracle of return from exile is equated with the natural “miracle” of sowing and reaping. It is the same God who does both and there is an underlying similarity, not obvious on the surface of things until prayer reveals it.

All a mighty oak is ...??? Is a nut that stood it's ground