

## **This is a series of articles on what apportionments are, and why they are an important core value of being a United Methodist.**

(Portions of these articles will draw on material provided by the Wisconsin Annual Conference.)

### **What are Apportionments? (part 1)**

This is probably the hardest question to answer for someone who is new to the United Methodist church. Even those who have been life-long United Methodist may know that apportionments are a part of our heritage, and still may not fully understand them.

Over a series of articles, it is hoped that we can have a greater understanding of apportionments, and as a congregation, embrace a joy in paying our apportionments in full.

The United Methodist Church as a whole needs a change of heart, as well as mind if we are to recover the heritage of generosity that defined us in our early days. A renovation of sorts. We share a common history of relational evangelism, sacrificial mission, and active social justice. Apportionments allow us to honor our history and extend our witness into the future.

The first step in appreciating the ministry that apportionments make possible, is a fundamental attitude adjustment. Apportionments are not a "church tax," nor are they a form of "membership dues" or a "disciplinary obligation." They are a gift and an opportunity. They are a means by which even the smallest church may magnify and increase it's ministry potential, and the largest churches may multiply the blessings and impact they provide. Each dollar given to fund the apportionments of The United Methodist Church undergoes the miracle of the loaves and fishes - they multiply to serve and satisfy those who hunger and are in need around the world. Apportionments are an investment in building the realm of God and spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. Lives are changed, faith is shared, and hope is raised. By our giving, we participate in the saving of lives as well as souls.

In recent years St. James has struggled to pay our apportionments. Most years we paid something, but often fell short of the goal. As a church we need to be in prayer about paying our apportionments in full.

*Lord help us to do all the good we can. By all the means we can. In all the ways we can. In all the places we can. At all the times we can. To all the people we can. As long as ever we can. Amen.*

More to come next week.

Deb Kraemer, Finance Chair

See this fun video, "[Chuck Knows Apportionments](#)"  
Being this is on YouTube, just ignore all the extra ads & videos.

(Portions of these articles will draw on material provided by the Wisconsin Annual Conference.)

## What are Apportionments? (part 2)

We continue this week with some more general information on apportionments.

Apportionments are the vision of The United Methodist Church that each member of each congregation will make a commitment to fully fund them. The United Methodist church doesn't ask any individual to go into poverty, nor any local church to suffer financially. If each member takes seriously her or his commitment, then it will be a simple matter to hold the church accountable. Churches should never feel forced or coerced to pay apportionments. When faithful Christians understand the good that is done and the benefits received, they choose to pay apportionments with joy and pride.

We need to help one another understand the great good that we accomplish through our apportionment giving. What exactly are apportionments, and where did the concept come from? Turning to the 2016 edition of our Book of Discipline, we find a wordy explanation in ¶1247.14 (page 177):

*As soon as practicable after the session of Annual Conference, each district superintendent or designated agent shall notify each local church in the district what amounts have been apportioned to it for World Service, conference benevolences and other general Church, jurisdictional, and annual conference funds. In the event that the conference uses an apportionment formula whereby the local church contributes a specified percentage of its current income and / or expenses, the specified percentage may be used in lieu of an actual dollar amount. In preparation for and at the charge conference, it shall be the responsibility of the district superintendent, the pastor, and the lay member(s) of the annual conference and/or the church lay leader(s) to interpret to each charge conference the importance of these apportioned funds, explaining the causes supported by each of them and their place in the total program of the Church. The World Service Fund is basic in the financial program of The United Methodist Church. World Service on apportionment represents the minimum needs for the mission and ministry of the Church. Conference benevolences represent the minimum needs for mission and ministry in the annual conference. Payment in full of these apportionments by local churches is the first benevolent responsibility of the church.*

In other words, apportionments are a combination of funds needed to provide the minimum level of financial support for the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church as a denomination, plus the funds needed to provide the minimum level of mission and ministry support within the annual conference, plus additional general Church, jurisdictional, and annual conference commitments (generally short-term fiscal needs to offset deficits or provide for special needs). Just as we give a portion of our financial support to our annual conference, our annual conference pledges a portion of what they receive, to the general conference, and so on. All this equals the ability for us as individuals to make a difference in the world in which we live.

Note that payment in full is identified as the first financial priority of a local church, and that it is the responsibility of the district superintendent, the pastor, the lay member(s) to annual conference and the lay leaders to explain apportionments and educate the congregation as to their value and importance. Why is this viewed as our top financial priority? Because were we to pay our apportionments in full each year - at all levels of the denomination - literally millions of people worldwide would be fed, housed, clothed, healed, strengthened, educated, redeemed, restored and invited into eternal salvation through the love and grace of Jesus Christ... millions who otherwise may be lost physically and spiritually.

More to come next week.

Deb Kraemer, Finance Chair.

## What are Apportionments? (part 3)

An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual Grace. These words come to us from one of our Communion litanies. It reminds us that every spiritual experience contains both an inward and an outward manifestation. Echoing the sentiment expressed in the letter of James, "...faith without works is dead" (James 2:26), we are challenged to make sure that our actions speak more loudly than our words. What we do matters as much as what we believe.

Paying apportionments is a decision, made mindfully and intentionally. It is a promise we make to show our love in action. It is an act of solidarity, proclaiming to the world that we are proud to be United Methodist; proud to be connected in a synergistic way that allows us to do much more together than we can do alone.

Paying apportionments in full is rarely easy or simple, but few things of lasting value are easy or simple. Sacrificial and faithful stewardship stretches us and demands a deep level of commitment. We choose to give generously. And we choose to do so freely, because we believe in the power of connectional ministry, blessed by the Holy Spirit, to change the world!

If everyone in the United States had opportunities to see where in the world The United Methodist Church has made and is making a difference, it would do all of us good to hear that we are thought of as "the very good church!" Apportionments make such acclamation possible. And not just in one small village, but in locations all over the world.

Some of the things The United Methodist Church supports:

- ❖ 309 Hospitals, Clinics and Health Centers
- ❖ 158 Schools, Colleges, Universities and Seminaries
- ❖ 300+ Commissioned Missionaries; 500+ Volunteers in Mission (projects)
- ❖ 850+ Global Mission Projects ... New faith communities through Mission Partnerships all over the world and here at home.

Alone, one person can do little in the world. In small clusters and communities, we might see better results, but to bring about true change, the entire body of Christ must mobilize. Our apportionments are our best tool for the mission and ministry of peacemaking.

Some things that undermine these efforts are ignorance, poverty, over-population, greed, prejudice, and the threats of war, disease, hunger and violence. Economic injustice, and racial inequality, are toxic influences, poisoning the global well, leaving millions living in fear and want. Our Christian scriptures are rife with instructions on how we should treat one another. "Who is my neighbor?" is an eternal question. Our answer is fairly straightforward and simple: if God created him or her, then he or she is our neighbor! And it is our privilege and obligation to live in peace with every one of God's blessed children.

You may ask, "but who are we responsible for?" Surely we cannot be expected to care for everyone everywhere! Again, alone or in the small group of our local congregation, we can do very little, care for very few. But we are a connectional church, and through our shared giving and collective contributions, there are very few places on earth we cannot reach and very few lives we cannot touch and improve.

One key apportioned fund of The United Methodist Church is the World Service Fund. This money prepares and trains clergy worldwide, as well as missionaries, lay servants, doctors and nurses, counselors, and community organizers. This money provides the foundation and infrastructure for the work of our General Board of Global Ministries and funds a large number of programs. It allows us to do children's and youth ministry around the globe. It makes sure that our United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is prepared and able to be among the first responders to a wide variety of natural and human-caused disasters. The hungry are fed, the sick are healed and cared for, the homeless are given shelter, and the hopeless are given

hope. All because of the few dollars we share through our apportionments. Who wouldn't want to be a part of showing such compassion for our neighbors?

More to come next week.

Deb Kraemer, Finance Chair.

## **What are Apportionments (part 4)**

A familiar refrain in The United Methodist Church is that our apportionment costs are too high and prohibitive, therefore, we can't afford them. Couldn't we do more if we kept the money ourselves and spent it closer to home? I hope that through reading the other articles, you realize that the answer is no.

In addition, every year the finance committee puts together a budget which is brought before the administrative council and the charge conference. That budget, which is voted on for approval, always includes paying our apportionments in full. It is not, ever presented as an optional expense.

Consider this, let's say a person puts one dollar in the collection plate on a Sunday morning. What actually happens to that dollar; how much goes to pay apportionments, and how much gets used locally?

First, eighty-four cents (\$.84) of every dollar stays right in the church where it is given. For the average United Methodist church, half of that amount pays salaries and benefits, a fourth pays insurance, building, and maintenance costs, 15% covers programs, equipment, and ministry expenses, 7% goes to material costs, and 3% goes to missions. If apportionments stayed in the local church, there is little evidence that it would be spent on missions.

Of the remaining sixteen cents (\$.16), approximately 80% (\$.13) stays in the annual conference - paying for conference programs and staff, district superintendents, and specialized missions and ministries. Two cents (\$.02) goes to general church apportionments, and a penny (\$.01) goes to Advance Specials, Special Sunday offerings, and other miscellaneous funds.

Too often people misunderstand where apportionment money goes. But, as you can see, the vast majority of apportioned funds stay within the annual conference where the local church is located. For all those who feel we could do a better job with our mission giving if we spent it locally, well, good news! We do. Conference apportionments pay the salaries of the men and women who organize, develop and promote a plan for living our mission and performing our ministry. We offer to the local church and each community, ministries, programs and projects that individual congregations cannot manage alone. Conference camps and retreat programs, campus ministries, mission projects, new congregational development, social justice opportunities, celebration events, archive and history preservation, and a host of other services are paid for by all of our local churches to benefit everyone. Health and welfare ministries that offer healing, counseling, safety, training & education, assisted living, disaster relief, food and clothing receive critically important support. When we don't give, they suffer - and the people they serve suffer most.

In Wisconsin, our apportionments fund fifteen health and welfare ministries. We fund two camps and dozens of camp programs. We help fund nine campus ministries many are life-changing. We support ministries that fight domestic violence, racism, sexism, economic injustice, alcoholism, gambling, drug abuse, educational inequality and bullying. We train laity and clergy leadership for ministry, as well as church planters, social workers, cross cultural and multicultural leaders, and chaplains. We support efforts to combat hunger, homelessness,

mental illness, and violence. We champion and support efforts to defend the elderly, the disabled and challenged, the marginalized, and the oppressed. We educate and advocate for immigration justice, the elimination of institutional racism and sexism, and community organizing. Through our apportionment giving, the state of Wisconsin is transformed in meaningful and positive ways.

Each of the ministries we provide and support translates to pennies a day per member. Over eight hundred ministries are supported locally, conference-wide, nation-wide, and globally through United Methodist giving. The cost per member per week to fully fund our apportionments is about \$1.80. (This figure assumes that every 'member' faithfully participates in the ministries of this church with their gifts, as well as their prayers, presence, service and witness.)

Think about it, for about what a cup of coffee, or a snack at Kwik Trip costs, each of us can support more than eight hundred expressions of Christian love, mercy, kindness, justice and compassion. This is what being a member of The United Methodist Church is about. This is who we are; kind, compassionate, mercy filled, loving Christians. Why would we not want to support making sure our apportionments are paid in full?

More to come next week.

Deb Kraemer, Finance Chair.

### **What are Apportionments?** *(part 5)*

United Methodists are among the most generous givers in the United States. However, giving to and through the church has declined as United Methodists shifted much of their giving to other charitable organizations. Many view the church as just one charity among many. This indicates a subtle but serious misunderstanding of giving as a spiritual discipline. The Christian church is not a 'charitable' organization. Certainly we do many good works in the world that accomplish the same ends as charities, but we are a '*communion of faith.*' Christian service and witness is not just something we do, it is an outward and visible sign of who we are - the body of Christ. Mercy, compassion, kindness, justice, healing and generosity are core characteristics of true Christian discipleship. In addition to the money we give, we also commit time, energy, knowledge, expertise, and intentionality to being Christ in the world. Perhaps one individual has limited financial resources, and even giving \$2 a week is a challenge. This person still has the capacity to learn everything she or he can about where United Methodist money goes and what it does. This person can teach others about the power of apportionment giving to transform the world, inspiring those with more financial resources to make a commitment.

Our apportionments are basically based upon two main factors; our expense budget, and the number of members we have. It is one of the reasons each year we re-visit our Member Care, leading up to our Charge Conference agenda.

"Christian stewardship" is more than "time, talent, and treasure." It is also our "attitude, experience, abilities, networks, associations," and a host of other valuable assets. We have so much more to give to the kingdom-redeeming work of God. The Holy Spirit works within every community of faith to bless all the gifts given for mission and ministry. As a congregation, we need to explore the question, "What must we all do together to make sure our church pays 100% of our apportionments?"

Paying apportionments isn't the pastor's job, or the finance committee's task, or the responsibility of the church council or any other administrative agent of the church.

**Apportionments are the faith commitment of the entire congregation**, and every person is invited and encouraged to participate in this amazing, life-giving, transformative outreach of The United Methodist Church.

As we conclude this series of articles on apportionments, here are a few things to think about...

- ❖ What are some of the ways we express our love in visible and tangible ways?
- ❖ What are the reasons, excuses, explanations and rationalizations we use to justify not doing more to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, or welcome the stranger?
- ❖ How do apportionments address these reasons, excuses, explanations and rationalizations?

I encourage you to consider these lyrics from, "We Are Called"

*Come! Live in the light!*

*Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!*

*We are called to be light for the kingdom, to live in the freedom of the city of God! (Chorus)*

*Come! Open your heart!*

*Show your mercy to all those in fear!*

*We are called to be hope for the hopeless, so all hatred and blindness will be no more!*

*(Chorus)*

*Sing! Sing a new song!*

*Sing of that great day when all will be one!*

*God will reign, and we'll walk with each other, as sisters and brothers united in love! (Chorus)*

*(Chorus) We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly,*

*We are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God!*

This concludes our apportionment articles.

Thank you for taking the time to read them,

Deb Kraemer, Finance Chair, St. James United Methodist Church, Appleton WI