

# The Lily Pad



“I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” Solomon 2:1



***Fifth Avenue Friends and Family,***

*Generosity is the secret to being healthy, in body, mind, and spirit.*

A recent survey revealed that three out of every five households are giving less money to faith institutions. Another 37% stopped giving to the church

altogether! The sad truth is that this problem has been developing for a long time, as per-member giving has drastically decreased steadily for the past 49 years. Between 1968 and 2017, giving received for the church decreased from 2.45% to 1.96%.



Overall church membership has declined as well as regular attendance of church members in worship services. We are experiencing a phenomenon referred to as the ‘grazer effect’ — people are not going to church every week, and the weeks they don’t go they’re doing worship on their own, or fellowshiping with people in other ways – sports, family gathering, etc. *Church members are not physically in church as much and consequently they’re not giving as much.*

We, dear Fifth Avenue Family, now have to face our truth – a decline in giving has reached our graceful caring doors and we must now face this challenge head on. My Sisters and Brothers our collection plates are growing lighter and our giving is down and as the summer months are fast approaching, we will be coming up short in meeting our financial obligations, support of our ministries, missions, and charities.

We are a strong caring church family and financial stewardship is everyone’s concern! *Jesus enjoined all believers to give generously according to their conscience, out of their riches or poverty, in obedience to the Great Commission (**preach the gospel**) and the Great Commandment (**love your neighbor**).*

Stewardship - “taking God’s resources—which is time, talents, finance, treasures, relationships, influence—and using it for His purposes because everything “I” have has come from Him.” This life message and life calling should resonate to each of us. God has given us everything, “I am” a steward over everything, and “I” want to use everything God has given me to accomplish His plans and purposes. Finance is a piece of that, but so is time, so are relationships, so is influence, so is truth which God has given us. *“I’m” a steward over everything that God has created.*

Imagine that your neighbor knocks on your door and asks you to help him or her move next weekend. You might eagerly give them your time or you might groan yet do it anyway, or you might say, sorry I don’t have the time to help you; notice how you feel when it’s your **TIME** that is being requested.

Now imagine that same neighbor knocks on your door. This time, he or she asks to borrow \$100 to help make end meets until the next payday comes. Does this request feel different? **OOH, MONEY?** You want money from me? Money is strange, and it does strange things to us. We spend so much of our lives in pursuit of it, collecting it, thinking about it, using it. How much money can comfort you, motivate you, or terrify you? Will there be enough today? This month? In retirement?



Sadly, money defines us. Are we poor? Middle class? Rich? We're afraid our money will get lost or stolen. We want to keep our money, and we're afraid someone will take advantage of us because we have money and/or use our money inappropriately. Oh, the ways money influences our lives, thoughts, and choices. Fifth Avenue Family, there is only one way to lessen the power money holds over us, and that is to be a **GOOD STEWARD** of it.

A **GOOD STEWARD** of money acknowledges that money doesn't belong to you. This materialistic possession cannot be taken to our heavenly reward. So, really, you are the temporary steward of money, and your job is to care for it and use it while you have it. Money is a tool used to provide for and support the things you love and how you use your money is an action that defines you.



The joy of giving has declined because churches still treat people as if they are living in "hard times" — even when they are not. *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."* John 10:10 These times appear hard because people want to take better vacations; they want to get more or better cars; they want to have more of their wants; they want more years on earth.

Because of our desire for these earthly pleasures and the premise that there is always tomorrow, it's easy to take what you have committed to God (time, talents, finance, treasures, relationships, influence) and use it for other earthly pleasures. This behavior is justified with the reassurance – **SOME DAY**. **SOME DAY** - I'll have more time and money; **SOME DAY** - I'll get on a committee, volunteer to teach, speak, sing, or get involved with a ministry or mission. Yes, **SOME DAY**. And then we change the narrative to **ONE DAY**. **ONE DAY** real soon my finances will be better and I will give back all that I meant to give to God to help Him do His work here on earth. Really, **ONE DAY** I will. But it doesn't work that way. There is no perfect **SOME DAY** or **ONE DAY**.

*Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring. Let another praise you, and not your own mouth— a stranger, and not your own lips. Proverbs 27: 1-2*

But you can do something right now! You can have a major impact in the life of Fifth Avenue United Methodist Church and relish the privilege to make a difference and bless the life of others through our church's

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ministries and missions. Be completely transformed into not just being a person who gives generously, but more importantly into a person who is **living generously** – a person who reflect an open-hearted, open-minded and open-handed life.

Financial stewardship is but a mere part of our call to “**STEWARDSHIP**,” yet it is vital to our ability to support and carry out our ministries, missions, and daily functions of Fifth Avenue United Methodist Church. Churches struggle with how to talk about finances, not realizing that churches must teach stewardship, be a living example of a cheerful giver, and communicate about how a relationship with God involves monetary giving. *Generous giving is not in the method someone uses to give but the fact that they are faithful in their giving.*

As a reminder, our Finance Committee has several options available to assist in being faithful in your generous giving to the Lord’s work. It includes: electronic funds transfers, offering envelopes, or consistent giving.

Please revisit, adjust, or commit to your **Stewardship Campaign Pledge**, your weekly/monthly generous giving, your children and youth weekly/monthly generous giving (our children and youth will follow our example) as well as your much needed, anticipated, and desired God given gifts (time, talents, treasures, relationships, influence). Pastor Clarissa, Finance Committee, or Lay Leadership is available and excited to motivate each of you to leap forward in your ability to inspire people, transform lives, embrace your gifts, and increase your giving to your church, its ministries, missions, and the West Bend community.

To God be the Glory, great things He has done!

***A PERSON WHO LIVES GENEROUSLY ALWAYS GIVES GENEROUSLY.***

***Pastor Clarissa & Martin***



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