



**REPAIRING THE BREACH
STRENGTHENING OUR WITNESS
FOR THE NEXT GENERATION**



**UNIVERSITY
UNITED
METHODIST
CHURCH**

Beloved,

Over the years, the people of University United Methodist Church have shown remarkable faithfulness. We have worshiped together through seasons of joy and uncertainty, served our neighbors with compassion, and raised generations of children to know the love of God. Every brick of this campus, every note of music, every word of prayer has been made possible because someone before us said **“yes” — yes to God’s call, yes to generosity, yes to the next generation.**

Now, it’s our turn.

We stand at an important crossroads. In recent years, our expenses — driven by rising costs in insurance, utilities, and fair compensation for our dedicated staff — have outpaced the growth of our giving. While our weekday ministries remain strong and our mission vibrant, the financial gap between what it takes to sustain our shared life and what is currently pledged continues to widen.

I hope we can perceive this moment is not one of despair — it’s one of **opportunity**. The campaign we’re calling “Repairing the Breach: Strengthening Our Ministry for the Next Generation” is about more than numbers. It’s about renewal — of our commitment, our courage, and our faith in the God.



I encourage you to read these pages, taking a look at the financial information and the giving challenge. Join me in praying about deepening our financial commitment to University United Methodist Church. There is an estimate of giving card enclosed in this booklet, and we will turn in our cards together in worship on **Sunday, November 16th.**

Every gift matters. Every household's response will help repair the breach not just in our finances, but in the spiritual fabric that connects us as the body of Christ. Together, we can ensure that University United Methodist Church continues to be a place and a people where faith is nurtured and our city experiences **God's transforming grace** because of the choices we make today.

With Great Hope—Always,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Katie McKay Simpson".

Rev. Katie McKay Simpson
Senior Pastor
University United Methodist Church





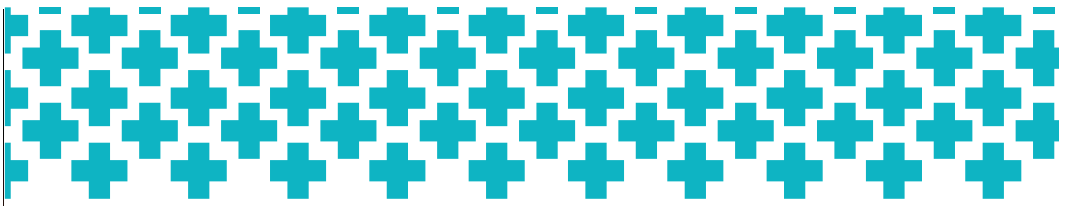
Giving Thanks

for where we
have been...



Celebration of our Accomplishments
2023-2025





Membership Growth & Engagement

Modernized Communication & Branding: Partnered with a Baton Rouge-based media firm to develop a fresh church brand, new logo, signage and consistent messaging that better reflects UUMC's welcoming spirit and identity.

Deepened Relationship with Preschool Families: Offered socials and rebranded UMPA's monthly communications to strengthen partnership with UUMC.

Expanded Digital Presence: Revamped the church website and launched new online engagement tools and social media strategies, strengthening outreach to both members and guests.

Strengthened LSU Connections: Renewed relationships with LSU students through collaboration with the Wesley Foundation and campus outreach events.

Improved Member Engagement Systems: Created regular touchpoints—digital newsletters, text updates, the Church Center app and small group invitations—to increase participation across worship, service, and learning communities.

New Planning Center Integration: Implemented a unified church database and giving platform, making event registration and recurring giving easier for members and guests.

Impact: UUMC has welcomed 46 new members since 2022, with over half actively involved in worship, growth, or service ministries—strengthening community life and connection.

Children & Youth Ministries

Expanded Volunteer Leadership: Increased the children's ministry volunteer base by 16 people and the youth ministry by 14, offering leader training and mentoring to strengthen long-term sustainability.

Growth in Participation: Since 2022, active children's ministry engagement grew by 33% and youth ministry by over 100%.

New Check-In Technology: Introduced digital safety systems for children's ministry check-ins, enhancing family trust, security and program efficiency.

Restoration: Began work towards approval of revitalization of Youth Area with church leadership.

Family Engagement Efforts: Developed parent education sessions and regular family events to help parents partner in their children's faith development.

Cross-Ministry Collaboration: Partnered with other area churches for shared youth programming, creating a network of spiritual growth for teens across Baton Rouge.

Impact: UUMC's ministry now reaches a growing number of families each month—strengthening discipleship at home and in the community.



Worship

Expanded Worship Attendance: Worship participation (in-person and online) has increased by 28% since 2022, with continued momentum following worship redesign and music ministry growth.

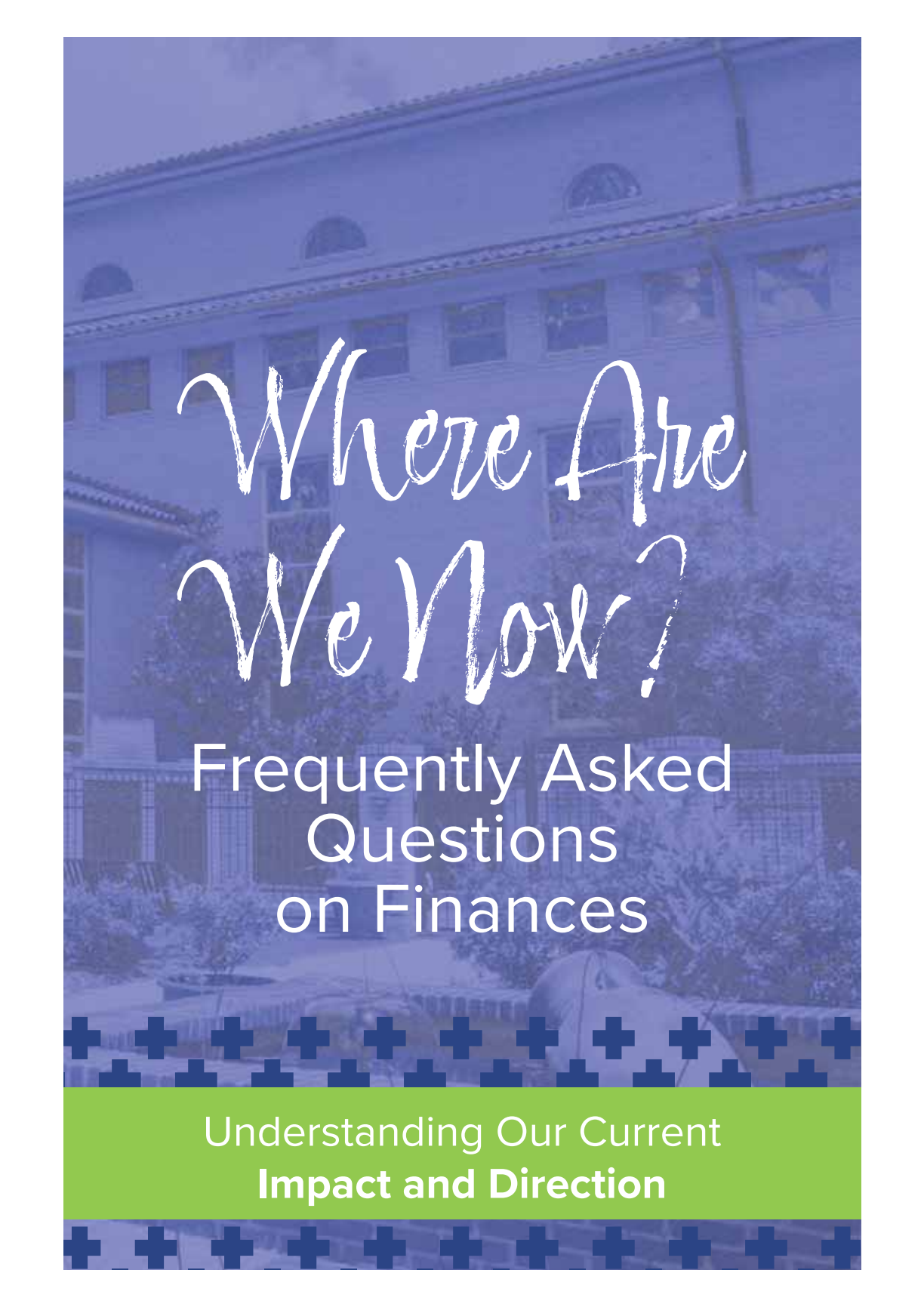
Improved Online Experience: Invested in livestream technology and sound systems for clearer, more engaging worship broadcasts to reach at-home and out-of-town participants through social media and our website.

Music Ministry Revitalization: Launched a campaign to grow choir and instrumental engagement, strengthening both worship quality and congregational participation.

Research & Data-Driven Improvement: Conducted congregational research to better understand worship preferences and attendance trends, helping shape new approaches for 2025.

Impact: UUMC's worship now reaches more people through in-person and digital connection, fostering spiritual vitality and community renewal.

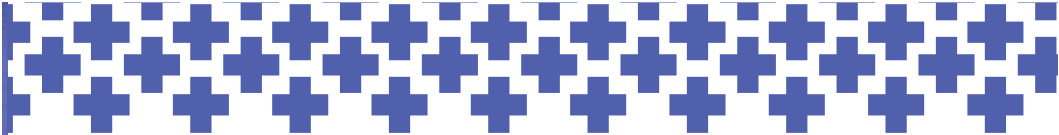




Where Are We Now?

Frequently Asked Questions on Finances

Understanding Our Current
Impact and Direction



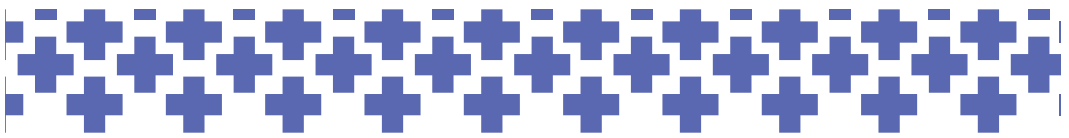
What should we know about our present financial reality?

Since 2018, the church's pledges and miscellaneous income have only grown by \$45,000 in 2025. At the same time, the church's expenses have increased by \$129,344. This is all while in general, according to the General Social Survey, the share of Americans with no religious affiliation have gone from 5% in 1972 to 28% in 2022. This reality, no doubt, has impact upon us as the work of generosity passes to the hands of new generations. We are witnessing this trend bear out in post-COVID times, in that the past three years, 2022 – 2024, have been the lowest pledges and miscellaneous income years we have experienced in a decade.

Presently, only half of our operating income comes from member donations, with the other half (47%) made from the preschool and afterschool programs now contribute approximately half of the income needed for the church to operate at a level of excellence expected by our membership and broader community.

What are some of these increased expenses we have experienced over the last few years, and can they be trimmed with more prudent oversight?

Presently, only about half of our operating income comes from member donations, while the other half (approximately 47%) is generated by the preschool and afterschool programs, which now provide the income needed for the church to operate at the level of excellence expected by our membership and the broader community. However, some costs remain unavoidable based on the economy and the status of certain factors, such as inflation and increased insurance costs.



Why have the contributions of the preschool and afterschool programs been reduced so drastically?

Those programs have consistently been considered some of the finest in the city. There is always a waiting list to get into them. That said, we became aware two years ago that our teachers for these programs were some of the city's lowest-paid staff for these types of programs. The church, the leaders of our church in Finance and SPRC committees, felt it was imperative to keep the quality teachers and raise their salaries, not to be the highest paid in the field, but to bring them up to the median standards of wages.

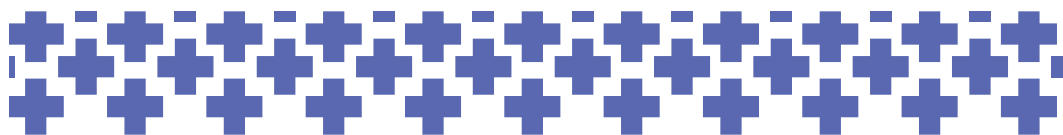
This fall, understanding the increase in expenses, the fees paid by those attending the programs have increased, helping to offset some of the income reduction over the last two years. The actual increase in funds to the church will be helpful, but not enough to overcome our deficit.

The major areas of increase are as follows:

Utilities have increased by \$25,000 or 30% since 2021.

Insurance seems to be the most significant driver of increases. Since 2022, there has been a \$70,000 increase, a 59% increase. This is despite the Board of Trustees shopping around and even reducing coverage to an acceptable but austere level.

Miscellaneous Expenses have increased by \$40,000 over the last two years, a 200% increase, which is attributed mostly to an increase in professional services.

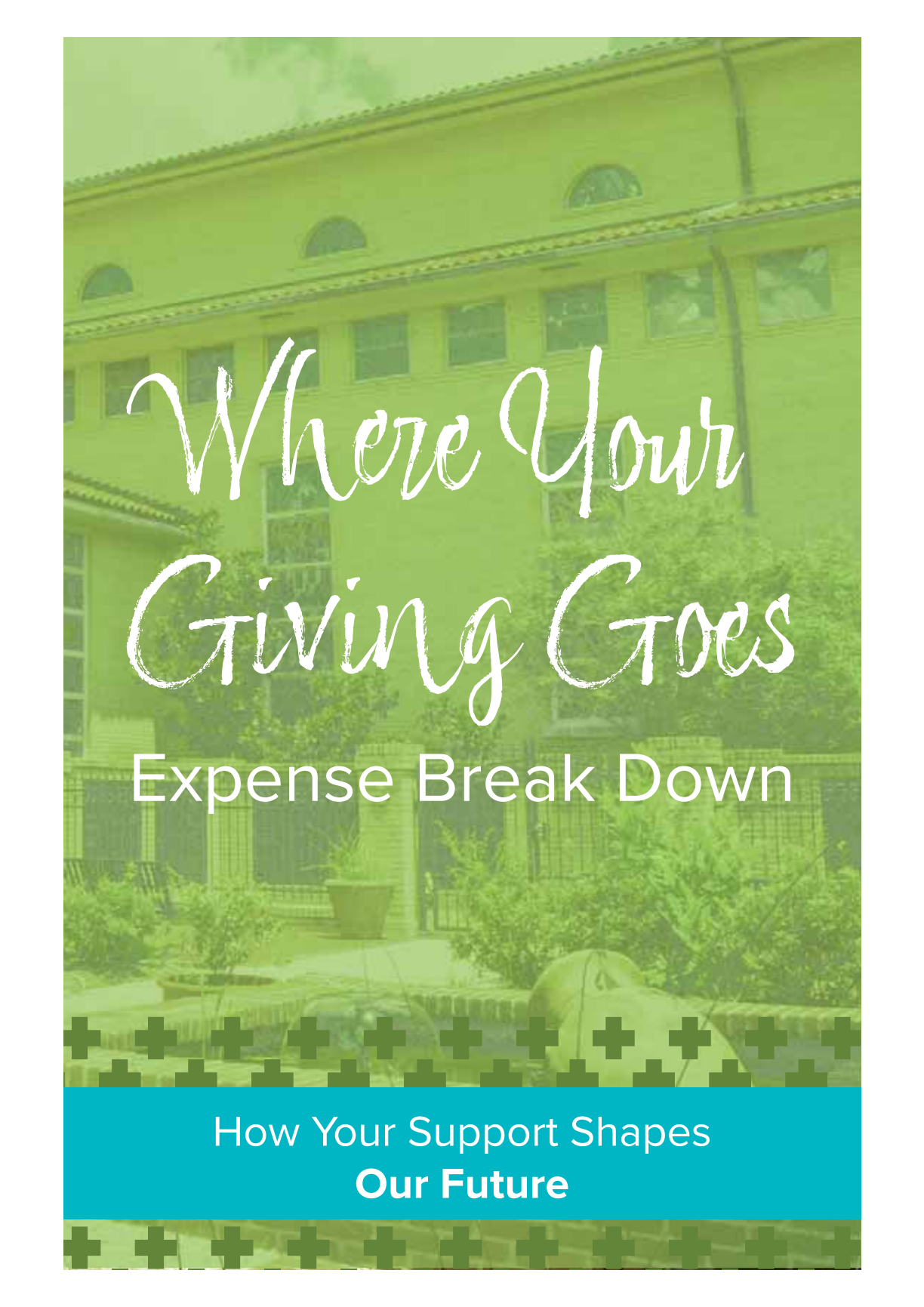


The **professional services** include the church's switching to a CPA firm to handle our financial information. The startup costs were a significant expense resulting from the change to the firm. This expense will not be reflected in subsequent years. We will also have some offset by eliminating the salary of the financial staff position.

Salaries increased 23% in 2022 after remaining relatively static since 2018. Any raises in the last few years have been generally limited to 3% cost-of-living raises. Some of the increase can also be attributed to our attempt to better serve the congregation by adjusting our children/youth director positions from part-time to full-time and adding a part-time Associate Pastor.

Also, because many of our staff were church members previously, as we hired new staff we had to grapple with the reality that our salaries had not kept up with comparable rates that would attract the kind of high-capacity talent the congregation expected, so some modest increases were necessary to hire and retain new staff on our team.





Where Your Giving Goes

Expense Break Down

How Your Support Shapes
Our Future

Facilities Staff and funding for facilities needs in the church, Preschool/Afterschool and Wesley Foundation.

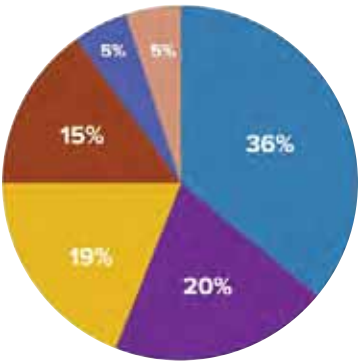
Discipleship Formation Staff for adult, youth and children’s formation programs, resources, and events.

Administration Pastoral and administrative staff salaries support, general office needs & technology support.

Worship and Music staff and resources for worship support, including scholarship singers.

Missions Staff and budget for Kids’ Hope, Missions and Justice ministries.

LA Annual Conference Pays apportionments for local and worldwide needs in The United Methodist Church.



MINISTRY AREA	%	BUDGET
FACILITIES	36	\$471,995.59
DISCIPLESHIP FORMATION	20	\$261,851.55
ADMINISTRATION	19	\$248,458.18
WORSHIP & MUSIC	15	\$192,565.06
MISSIONS	5	\$62,384.51
LA ANNUAL CONFERENCE	5	\$65,608.00
TOTAL	100%	\$1,302,862.89



Finally, regarding expenses, there have been some inquiries about the costs of our Visioning Process of improved signage, website redesign, and use of the new Church Center App. That app connects all of us with the church's interactions. Also, there have been discussions about purchasing new choir robes during this financial crisis. The church operating funds paid neither of those expenses. Instead, they were handled by two large donations provided by devoted members of our church over the past two years.

What happens if we don't increase pledges and income?

The obvious answer to this question is that we would have to cut programs and staff to maintain a balanced or workable budget. Since we are obligated under the Book of Discipline to protect the church's property, reducing insurance and failing to commit to the upkeep and repair facilities is not an area to cut expenses. Nor are utilities, if we are going to keep use of the campus buildings up to date. Programs like the Music and staff, as well as the children's programs and staff, may be the first areas of reduction.

What happens if we successfully increase our pledges and income?

We would first establish a reserve fund to better weather any future downturns. Of course, we are always looking to better the programs that are the lifeblood of our congregation, the children and youth programs, and the improvement of our spiritual formation programs, as well as those that increase our community of fellowship within our congregation.

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Watching the resilience of our congregation while we have weathered a pandemic and significant changes in church policy has been inspiring. I am grateful for the recent growth in our ministry



and truly believe that UUMC is prepared to meet a new age. I am confident that our members and our leaders are equipped to carry our mission into the future, with the right support.

Now is the time for every member of our congregation to give generously of our time, our talents, and our gifts to ensure that UUMC can continue to serve as that special place in the community. A place that others can call their spiritual home and their family, just as we do, today.

- Steve Backstrom
Lay Leader

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UUMC is facing financial challenges due to flat revenues and rising expenses. In response, the Finance Committee and staff have taken steps to improve financial management. Leadership now monitors monthly results and adjusts as needed.



A major area of increased cost is staffing for children and youth programs—an investment in our church’s future. We’ve also expanded ministries and enhanced communications to strengthen our mission.

Budgets are tight, but people find ways to support what they love. If each household—whether currently giving or not—commits an additional \$100 per month, UUMC can move toward financial stability.

With God’s guidance, and your support, we can continue to be a strong community of faith for generations to come.

- Jeff Albright
Financial Chair

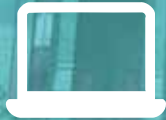
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How to Give

ACH



Online



Stock



DAF



Electronic Funds Transfer (ACH)

To establish an electronic funds transfer, complete the Estimate of Giving Card authorizing the EFT and attach a voided check for the account you will use. You can choose to have the withdrawal once or twice a month. EFT giving is simple and convenient. To change the amount on your current EFT, indicate the change on your Estimate of Giving Card. Or you can contact the church office where we.

Recurring Giving

Automated plan for regular giving each month. Recurring giving allows you to give your tithes and offerings to God first. It also provides the church with a predictable income stream.

Recurring Bill Pay: Bill Pay is another way to plan to schedule your giving. All major banks offer this service. You tell them when and how much to send, and they mail us a check.

Recurring Online Giving: Online Giving is a convenient, secure online system that makes giving easy! Setting up Online Giving is a quick, one-time process. You will be asked to link a credit or debit card to your account. You get to determine how often and when you give. Visit universitymethodist.org/give to set up recurring online giving.

Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs)

Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) are the minimum amounts you must withdraw from your retirement accounts each year. You generally must start taking withdrawals from your traditional IRA, SEP IRA, SIMPLE IRA, and retirement plan accounts when you reach age 72.

A QCD can help meet your RMD requirement. By giving all or part of your RMD, you can practice generosity and benefit from substantial tax savings. Many of our donors in this age group are giving from their RMD. To donate from an IRA, it is important to donate directly from the IRA to the church. Contact your tax professional or financial planner if you have questions.

Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)

For those aged 70 ½ and older, making tax-favorable charitable gifts from IRA accounts is possible. This is known as a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). A total of up to \$100,000 per year can be transferred directly from IRAs to a qualified charity, such as our church, free from federal income tax. There may also be state income tax savings.

Appreciated Stock

We accept stocks and other securities. Like the RMDs noted above, many have found tax savings through this giving option—contact Alaina at financial@universitymethodist.org for information on transferring stock to the church.

Checks and Cash

Checks and cash can be placed in the offering plate during worship on Sundays or brought/mailed to the church office during regular business hours.





**UNIVERSITY
UNITED
METHODIST
CHURCH**

OPEN *Hearts.* OUTWARD *Faith.*

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