

# Giving at Dalton First United Methodist Church

## 1. The Operating Budget

Our Operating Budget for 2009 is \$1,676,150. In 2008 giving was \$1,666,089, up almost \$100,000 over 2007. In anticipation of similar growth, the Church Council set the 2009 giving target.

While it is true that every member takes the same vow to support the church, the reality is that 20% of the membership shoulders 80% of the load when it comes to giving. Some families give nothing, which is a shame because giving is an important spiritual discipline. Two terms need to be explained. The "tithe" is 10%. Americans, on average, give 2.3% to all causes, secular and sacred. Many Christians grow into tithing by giving 3% one year and 4% the next, adding a percent each year until they reach 10%.

An "offering" is a gift over and above the tithe. A lot of church people never make an "offering." Usually an "offering" is for some special cause, while the "tithe" underwrites the normal operating budget.

At Dalton FUMC, we receive pledges from the congregation in the fall toward the operating budget. We ask for pledges because pledging helps members be decisive about giving. For 2009, we received pledges of \$1,400,000 from 385 families. Pledges ran from \$50 to \$40,000, with the average being \$3446. Pledges are signed promises, which can be modified or canceled by the donor at any time.

The 2009 Operating Budget includes \$100,000 debt service for the \$750,000 worth of deferred maintenance projects being undertaken by the Trustees this year and next. At the end of the year, there are those who want to give the church appreciated stock. We are happy to work with members to maximize the tax advantage of a gift.

## 2. Special Offerings

The North Georgia Annual Conference, which meets every year, and the General Conference, which meets every four years, mandates a number of offerings which each local church is expected to take each year.

North Georgia causes are:

- Homeless and Housing Offering - in February
- Wesley Woods - "Mother's Day Offering"
- United Methodist Children's Home - in September

General Church causes are:

- Human Relations Day - in January
- One Great Hour of Sharing - in March
- Heritage Sunday - in April
- Peace with Justice - in June
- World Communion - in October
- Methodist Student Day - in November

The Finance Committee voted to contribute to these General Church offerings from the budget at a rate per member to be decided upon at the end of the year. From time to time, the Finance Committee will authorize groups in the church to solicit contributions from the congregation for particular causes.

## 3. Mission Giving

In February, the Missions Committee sponsors a full weekend of activities focused on the missionaries we support. For 2008 we pledged \$144,000 above and beyond the Operating Budget, for missions. The Faith Promise Missions pledge is an anonymous pledge in that donors do not identify themselves on their cards. If they fulfill their pledge, only they and the good Lord know it.

Faith Promise pledges are unusual because they assume a conversation between you and God in which you ask, "Lord,

how much do you want to give me to pass on to the Mission work at the church?" The pledge reflects the amount you feel God is prompting you to trust him for. This pledge is not normally paid with tithe money. This pledge is paid as God provides unexpected, unanticipated resources.

I know a preacher who normally did four or five weddings a year, who felt led by God to commit that year's wedding honorariums as his faith promise. The next year he did nearly twenty weddings. Another friend felt led to commit \$1000. In the fall, he was surprised by an unexpected inheritance. Faith promise is about trusting God to provide the resources, and for us to pass it on when it comes.

The Missions Committee divides the faith promise funds among 1. direct support of international missionaries, 2. direct support of local ministries like, DOC-UP, Salvation Army, Providence, and 3. support for groups going on short term mission trips.

In addition to the pledges made in February, the operating budget contains \$30,000 for the Missions Committee and \$208,000 for conference apportionments. Apportionments are funds assigned to the church by the annual conference. They represent our fair share of the ministries of the national church and the annual conference. Sunday School classes will often have budgets and projects of their own choosing. Mission giving will probably exceed \$400,000.

#### **4. Endowments**

The Endowment Committee asked Dr. Robert Fletcher, Executive Director for the North Georgia Foundation, which manages our funds, "What are the most popular ways people choose for giving endowment gifts?" Dr. Fletcher's answer was simple. "The most popular method is leaving a bequest in a will. The second most popular is, far and away, the Charitable Gift Annuity."

In a Charitable Gift Annuity, the donor sets aside a certain number of dollars and, in accordance with industry actuarial tables, receives income from that money for life. After death, the remainder, in whole or in part, will go to the church. The paperwork for a Charitable Gift Annuity is simple to execute, but every potential donor will want to consult his or her own advisors first. Currently, we have several endowments which yield 4% each year to support specific ministries:

1. The Margaret and Ed Million General Music Endowment Fund, named for the family who initiated the endowment, is used to enhance the music ministry of the church.
2. The Margaret S. Painter and C. Sue Phelps Day Care Scholarship Fund offsets fees for day care for children.
3. The General Facilities Endowment Fund is used for general maintenance projects.
4. The Loraine Edwards Parrott and Valvard DeForrest Parrott Memorial Scholarship Fund is used to provide scholarships to United Methodist college students.
5. The George and Mary Kirkpatrick Youth Music Endowment, named for the family who initiated the endowment, is used to enhance the youth music ministry of the church.

If you would like to discuss the possibility of leaving a gift to the church or establishing a named endowment, contact one of the pastors or a member of the Endowment Committee.