

WHAT ARE APPORTIONMENTS? (MISSION SHARES)

Apportionments are a prime expression of the covenantal connection of the United Methodist Church. They are not taxes, they are not a bill, but instead an expression of a covenant that enables the mission, ministry and programs of our Conference and the greater United Methodist Church. Together all churches as represented by their pastor and lay delegate(s) at Annual Conference and their elected leaders at General Conference help to determine what these missions, ministries, and programs will be, and together we agree to fully fund them. In this manner, our church is not simply a "local church", but rather reflects the words of John Wesley, "the world is my parish."

Also see <http://www.umcsgiving.org/site/c.qwL6KkNWLrH/b.3593849> for the official UMC description and details of connectional giving, including video clips. In addition, you may want go to http://www.bwcumc.org/files/your_apportionment_dollars.swf for information from our own Baltimore-Washington Conference about how our apportionment dollars are at work.

HOW ARE APPORTIONMENTS FIGURED?

The apportionments are calculated based on each church's operating expenses. This information comes from the Statistical Report that each church turns in each January. They include the Pastor's salary and expenses, church programs, and operating expenses such as utilities, office expenses and church maintenance. The figures on these lines are added together and then multiplied by what we call the Benevolence Factor. The Benevolence Factor is a percentage from each church that is requested for its share in our connectional or collective ministry as a Conference. For 2009 the Benevolence factor is 22%.

WHAT IS OUR SHARE?

Our apportionment/mission share for 2009 is **\$17,486.70**.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DON'T PAY THEM IN FULL?

For one, it is a bad reflection on our church and on our pastor. As a United Methodist congregation we have made a commitment to be part of a wider connection of people and ministries that extends beyond our own walls and ministries. We have made a promise to help support this connection through our apportionment giving. To not pay our share would be to renege on our promise and not fulfill the commitment we've made. This puts pressure on other churches to give more to make up our shortfall. And worse, if this doesn't happen, it may mean that the people and ministries dependent upon our apportionment giving may suffer. People may not receive the help they need, ministries

may be halted, programs may go undeveloped and other conference and local church costs may go up.

Our Baltimore-Washington Conference currently uses apportionments paid as an indicator of a local church's health. To not pay our apportionments would send a message to our conference that our congregation may be struggling. This may be true, in part, due to tough economic times, but it may also be a sign of our church's spiritual health and our willingness to be faithful stewards of that for which God has given us responsibility.

Our ability to pay (or not to pay) our apportionments directly effects conference decisions about pastor appointments, grants and our future. Churches unwilling or unable to pay apportionments in full may be seen as unable to afford a capable, full-time pastor. It might also be assumed that such churches are unable to expand ministries and programs that make disciples and grow the church. Pastors and leaders of these churches may find their leadership in question. All of this is to say that churches unwilling or unable to pay their apportionments in full may lose the confidence of conference leaders and staff. More importantly, they may lose the confidence of their own members who understand the importance of good stewardship, connectional giving, and faithful discipleship.

SO WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE?

I know the times are tough. Everyone wants a part of our paychecks. And it's becoming increasingly more difficult to sustain our families in the lifestyles we lead. But that's just it; these times are forcing us to change, to look again at how we live and how we spend our money. The gospel has always challenged us to live more simply and focus our priorities on the things of God. Now the economy and circumstances of the world are forcing us to do just that, whether we like it or not. So, look at this as a good thing, for our families and for our faith. Trust that as we reexamine our priorities and make the changes that are needed to sustain our families and continue the work of the church, that God, who is the great Provider, will sustain us and take care of all our needs. God loves us more than we can imagine. His plans are to prosper us and not to harm us; to give us hope and a future (Jer. 29:11). If we faithfully follow Jesus, no matter the cost, God will not abandon us.

I guess what I'm saying is, paying our apportionments is an important part of our ministry together and it will help determine the course of our future. We need to do everything we can to pay off our apportionments this year and every year. I want us to give it our best effort. If we do our best and still come up short, than so be it. We will face the consequences together. But please, don't let us face those consequences because we've held back or because we've spent our money on less important things. Let us put our trust in God, work hard and sacrifice together so that the burden is shared equally by each of us and God is given the glory! Apportionments are part of our responsibility as a United Methodist congregation. They are our promise to those who depend on us and are a part of our larger connection. They are an important way for us to live out our vision of being a church that makes a holy impact on the world.