

Our mission is “to reach the North American Division and the world with the distinctive, Christ-centered Seventh-day Adventist message of hope and wholeness.” Stewardship Ministries is dedicated to helping members catch this vision.

Systematic giving is part of being a faithful steward. When we return tithe, we are recognizing that God owns everything. Giving offerings expresses our gratitude for what God has done for us. God loves a cheerful giver and He has chosen this method to support those who preach the gospel as they reach the world with His message.

You will find an extensive selection of videos emphasizing various offerings by visiting our website at [www.nadstewardship.org/videos](http://www.nadstewardship.org/videos). You can use them in conjunction with the offering appeals or in place of them. They average between a-minute-and-a-half and two minutes in length.

Faithful stewardship is a matter of the heart. We don't give to receive love and blessings from God. We give because we have already received God's love and blessings. We give because our hearts and lives are full of the joy of the Lord. We give because we want to live out God's character of abundant generosity—especially as exhibited through the giving of the ultimate gift: the life of His Son. Giving is a natural response for recipients of God's goodness.

God's blessings to you as you help others experience the joy of faithful stewardship.

Michael Anthony Harpe



Director

Stewardship Ministries

North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

## **Stewardship Directors**

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## About the Author



Steve Case grew up as a Seventh-day Adventist with parents who taught him how to plan his finances. This started with an allowance for completing chores and paying tithe first, followed by offerings, savings, and personal spending. These foundational practices have remained in his personal life and his work.

Steve has served as a youth pastor and seminary professor, emphasizing youth ministry for decades, with a new focus on intergenerational church—all ages helping each other grow spiritually. As the president of Involve Youth, he speaks at youth events, trains and creates resources for youth and youth leaders, coordinates the Doctor of Ministry concentration in Intergenerational Church for Andrews University, and leads several short-term mission trips for Maranatha each year.

Steve knows what it's like to experience plenty as well as want (by North American standards), learning Paul's admonition to be content in all circumstances. In his personal life, Steve knows first-hand the pain and loss from divorce, and the grace of second chances. He's re-married to Marit—an ordained Seventh-day Adventist pastor. His adult daughter continues to make him proud while regularly challenging him.

The NAD Stewardship department surprised Steve by asking him to write the offering appeals for 2023, requesting greater participation by the congregation rather than just sitting while one person reads a paragraph from the front of the church.

## About the Readings

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## Activity

You will notice this graphic in the readings for several Sabbaths throughout the Offering Appeals in 2023. What this means is that Steve Case wants some participation from the worshippers. Since Steve is trying to reach the youth and young adults of our church, he encourages participation to appeal to younger worshippers. Even if your church doesn't have young people, please try to apply the principles and adjust the activity for the circumstances of your local congregation.

**IMPORTANT:** Please read all the activity directions in advance and make the necessary preparations for that Sabbath. Some examples of activity preparation include a quote to be put on a power point slide or printed in the bulletin, a song to be played before the offertory reading for that Sabbath, cards to be printed for every worshipper to make a decision, and the list of the 7 T's of Stewardship to be printed in the bulletin on five Sabbaths. Please prepare in advance so these Sabbaths can be impactful.

## About My Personal Giving Plan

The North American Division encourages the use of the “My Personal Giving Plan.” This plan was developed as a guideline to assist members in systematic giving. The plan suggests that, in addition to returning 10 percent of a member’s personal income as tithe, certain percentages may be dedicated as offerings to three main categories:

- Local Church Budget: 3–5 percent
- Conference Advance: 1–2 percent (education, evangelism, VBS, summer camps, and Union magazines)
- World Budget: 1–3 percent

Visit <https://www.personalgivingplan.com> to see a more extensive breakdown for each category.

The My Personal Giving Plan encourages each of us to renew our commitment to the principles of Christian stewardship. While it blesses the church as a whole, its real impact is on us as individuals in our faith-based covenant with God.

Everything in God’s creation is orderly and purposeful. The same can be said of the My Personal Giving Plan. Like all plans, it requires thought and consideration. No great work can be built upon emotional or sporadic giving.

## *Where Do My Offerings Go?*

### *13th Sabbath Offering*

You've heard how everyone in an Amish community comes together for a barn raising. Well, Seventh-day Adventists also have projects where we all pitch in to accomplish a goal. That is the purpose of the 13th Sabbath offering. Every 13<sup>th</sup> Sabbath, the church focuses on one of its world Divisions to accomplish a mission goal. The offering often goes toward constructing a building that will be used for education, evangelism, or media outreach. The 13th Sabbath offerings have been used to establish schools such as Central Philippine Adventist College. A recent offering made a youth camp possible in Belize. All the church members around the world join hands in these projects through sacrificial giving. In 1913, the 13th Sabbath overflow amounted to 474 dollars. Now, it exceeds a quarter of a million dollars. We call it an overflow offering because it encourages extra giving beyond the usual mission offering. In practice, 25 percent of the 13th Sabbath offering is considered overflow. The rest is more broadly distributed to continue mission work around the globe. You can also give a 13th Sabbath offering anytime by marking it on your tithe envelope. Do you want to be part of something big? You'll be part of a worldwide community expanding Adventist mission work when you give to the 13th Sabbath offering. Remember: Our giving funds the mission to finish the work.

### *Birthday Thank Offering*

On your birthday, you usually get a present. However, in church, many people give a gift on their special day. It is called a Birthday Thank Offering. Have you ever given someone a thank-you gift? Maybe they watched your cat for a weekend or sang a song at your wedding, and you just wanted to show how grateful you felt. Well, church members sometimes offer a gift of pure gratitude to God. It might be on the occasion of a birthday, thanking God for the blessings of the past year. Or maybe thanking Him for one blessing

in particular, such as a promotion at work. Or a new grandbaby. They mark it on their tithe envelope as a Birthday Thank Offering.

So, what happens to the Birthday Thank Offering? This gift is directed to church Divisions outside North America to do mission work. Much of it is used in evangelistic activities, but some also goes to clinics, hospitals, and educational institutions. A portion of your gift goes to administer the General Conference mission program, helping to move missionaries into new fields and advance the Adventist message. Thus, your gift of gratitude goes to missionaries and church institutions around the world who in turn will accept it with gratitude. It shows that being thankful can be contagious, doesn't it?

### *Conference Advance*

Your local Conference is a sisterhood of local churches that helps each congregation within its boundaries to accomplish important objectives that are beyond the reach of any one church alone. A Conference Advance offering addresses these specific needs as well as a variety of special projects. One of the largest portions goes to fund Christian education. Another substantial part of the Conference Advance offering is set aside for evangelism in the local community. It is also used to finance programs and advertising that most local churches cannot shoulder alone. Child evangelism, inner-city evangelism, Vacation Bible School, summer camps, and youth evangelism are also areas supported by the Conference Advance offering. Another benefit of the Conference Advance offering is the popular Union papers and magazines that are shipped free of charge to church members. These informative publications help to unite believers over a large area and create a sense of community. All of these educational and life-changing programs are possible because individual members choose to contribute a suggested amount of 1 to 2 percent of their income to Conference Advance.

### *Local Church Budget*

Perhaps the most obvious need addressed in the My Personal Giving Plan is the local church. Like every family, the local church family has financial obligations to meet. Some are easy to see like power and heat, but many are not as obvious: children's magazines, Sabbath School Bible study guides, teaching supplies, staff salaries, cleaning services, church school operating expenses, property insurance, worthy student fund, and community outreach. These are but a few of the costs that must be met month after month as the local church seeks to be a light in the community. Because these expenses are constant, My Personal Giving Plan recommends that 3 to 5 percent of one's income be set aside for the local church budget. This systematic giving ensures that all share both in the blessings and the responsibilities of the local congregation.

### *Mission Investment Offering*

The Mission Investment Offering is a partnership between you and God. You pick a project and dedicate the income to the Mission Investment Offering.

Here's an example involving chickens! When Kelly Rose Bishop was a teenager, she decided to commit 10 percent of her egg business to investment. She sold eggs to regular customers and to people who just stopped by her house. After two months, she noticed that her sales had gone up by 50 percent. That's how the partnership worked. She promised to give 10 percent of her income (that was her part), but she believes that God blessed her little business because the 10 percent grew due to a new larger income. That was God's part.

There are many ways to enter into partnership with God. For example, you might dedicate the money you save using coupons at the grocery store, or you can dedicate the money you save by skipping dessert when eating out. One person picked up aluminum cans that she found on her morning run and gave the proceeds to



investment. Every dollar you raise goes to advance Adventist missions overseas. Come up with your own mission investment idea today.

### *Sabbath School Mission Offering*

When the Sabbath School Mission Offering envelope comes around, it is easy to slip in a dollar or two. But when you find out where it goes, you might want to give more!

The mission offering travels to church Divisions outside North America where the needs are great. Much of it is used in evangelistic activities, but some also goes to aid clinics, hospitals, and educational institutions. Adventist World Radio gets help from this offering, and a portion of your gift goes to administer the General Conference's mission program, which helps to train and move missionaries into new fields to advance the Adventist message. The offering that you give in your Sabbath School room literally goes a long way as it aids mission work around the globe.

### *World Budget Offering*

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a worldwide church, and the world budget is our contribution to this global mission.

From the earliest days of the Adventist Church, men and women have responded to Christ's Great Commission by looking beyond their own shores. Today, Seventh-day Adventists make up one of the fastest growing Christian churches in the world, with more than 3,000 people being baptized every day! In more than 200 countries and in more than 600 languages, the message of Jesus's soon return can be heard.

Historically, it has been the privilege and duty of materially blessed members in developed nations to plant seeds of growth in poorer regions of the world. New evangelistic strategies that address ever-changing global realities are constantly being developed, and our offerings give life to these new programs.

My Personal Giving Plan recommends that 1 to 3 percent of our income be set aside for this global outreach. Working together, we can make sure the Adventist message continues to grow worldwide.

### *Special Projects Offerings*

These offerings include ministries such as Women's Ministries and Christian Record Services. My Personal Giving Plan doesn't recommend a specific percentage for these since the need and scope will vary from project to project. For example, these offerings support undertaking local church building initiatives or a mission trip. The special projects also include requests for help from denominational entities such as ADRA and Adventist World Radio, as well as other Adventist supporting ministries that you may wish to assist.

## **2023 North American Division Sabbath School Mission Investment Projects**

### **COLUMBIA UNION**

The Columbia Union is planting a Slavic Seventh-day Adventist church in the greater Cleveland, OH region to serve and minister to the existing Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Moldovan population. We also want to extend services and ministries to the incoming Ukrainian refugees.

### **LAKE UNION**

Local youth leaders are devising and implementing evangelism initiatives for their congregations. The cost is split between the union and local church, but more local churches wish to participate than there are union funds to match.

### **SOUTHERN UNION**

There is a fast-growing group of Karen refugees in the Clarkston area of Atlanta, Georgia. Several congregations have been providing basic necessities, but their limited understanding of the language impedes their ability to minister to their needs. The solution is a recently hired, full-time, experienced Karen pastor.

The pastor plays a prominent role in the Karen community and is successfully establishing connections with various help centers and governmental agencies. We want to see this congregation become a full-fledged SDA Church with a solid ministry to the Karen population.

Dear Presenter,

Thank you for your willingness to share the offering appeals with your local congregation. It is a wonderful and gratifying responsibility. How you present these readings will determine how effective they are. Here are some suggestions to consider before you share:

**Pray:** Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray that God will use your words to speak to the hearts in the congregation.

**Practice:** Read over the appeal at least three times to familiarize yourself with it. Read slowly and clearly. Underline or highlight key words to be emphasized during the reading. Strive to share these readings with excellence.

**Prepare:** Sometimes materials for special days are sent to your local church to distribute or present along with the appeal. Determine how they can be used most effectively.

**Personalize:** If you have a personal experience that you think will add strength to the appeal, please share it. People connect with others through stories.

**Present with Passion:** A presentation can have all the above elements, but without passion, it may not stir the hearts of the hearers. Ask God to fill your heart with His Spirit so that you can present the appeal with spirit and truth.

May God richly bless you and speak through you as we take this journey together in 2023.

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January 7, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

Happy New Year! Did you make any New Year's resolutions? Some people don't make New Year's resolutions because they have tried making resolutions before and don't want the discouragement that comes from repeated failures.

And yet we make commitments and re-commitments all the time. Vibrant relationships involve commitments and re-commitments, including forgiveness when we mess up. Weddings call for commitments, and anniversaries spark natural moments of re-commitment. The start of a school year launches commitments for students, staff, and families.

Beginning a new year provides a natural time to make a commitment, or a re-commitment, to Jesus. Today, I'm inviting you to acknowledge explicitly that "all you are" comes from Jesus and give all you are back to Jesus.

January 14, 2023

## Religious Liberty

Did you know that just 150 years ago, being a Seventh-day Adventist in the United States could be a risky business? Take the case of Pastor James Scoles from Springdale, Arkansas. He volunteered to help finish painting his congregation's newly built church and decided to complete the work one quiet Sunday morning. "I went over to the church," he said later, "and finished up a small strip of painting on the south side... and here I quietly worked away for perhaps two hours."\* For this act, Pastor Scoles was arrested and jailed—and it was just one of many cases where Adventists and other religious minorities were prosecuted under state Sunday laws.

Today, we may not be arrested for working on Sunday, but religious freedom must still be defended. As Ellen White reminded us, we must remain vigilant and hold high the "banner of truth and religious liberty" in these last days. Today, we have the opportunity to support the vital mission of *Liberty* magazine and the work of our Public Affairs and Religious Liberty leaders. With each issue of *Liberty* magazine that rolls off the presses, and with each visit to a legislator's office, or legal case argued, our religious liberty leaders are working to defend the precious, God-given gift of freedom for all people. With our offering today, we have a chance to raise high the banner of religious liberty.

\* A. T. Jones, *Civil Government and Religion* (Oakland, CA: American Sentinel, 1889), p. 114.

January 21, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

In Christ's parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30), it seems God gives people what they have. We then develop and use these, and then we give an account to Christ when He returns. Not everyone receives the same talents or the same number of talents.

What talent(s) has God given you? Some might be obvious, while others could seem minor or even uncertain. Let's take a moment corporately to consider what God has given to each of us. You can do this on your own, as well. You might already have a clear answer or two from God, or maybe you need more time. Perhaps each of us should do this at least once a week.

However, the next question for us to consider would be, "What are you doing with what God has given you?" Yes, it comes from God, but He gives it to you to develop and to use for His glory and for the benefit of others.

Now consider, "What are you doing with what God has given you?"

Let's pray together, thanking God for our talents, and asking His guidance for their use.

January 28, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners Evangelism**

The early Christian church was marked by its deep love for the Lord and sacrificial giving to His cause. In Acts 2:44, 45 we read how “all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” Two chapters later we are told that “all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.” (Acts 4:34, 35)

Amid this incredible tide of giving, the hearts of two believers, Ananias and Sapphira, were stirred as well. When selling a valuable possession, they enthusiastically pledged the proceeds to the Lord. But as the time to surrender their pledge drew near, their enthusiasm cooled, and they decided to only give part of what they had originally promised. You can read the tragic results in Acts 5:1-11.

The great sin of this couple wasn’t that they refused to give all. The Lord doesn’t ask us to give everything, but merely to give as our hearts are moved—and to give without wavering. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was making a covenant with God and then going back on their commitment.

As we give for the work of evangelism today, let us do so without wavering. May the Lord remove any equivocation in our hearts and bless our humble offerings to His glory.



February 4, 2023

## Local Church Budget

We Seventh-day Adventists have a reputation of being faithful in returning our tithes to God, at least compared to most other Christian denominations. However, our tithing might contradict what's in our hymnal, and I'm talking about a well-known hymn. Either we need to change our giving or we need to change the lyrics in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, specifically song #309.

Here's how the revised version of this song should go: "10% to Jesus I surrender, 10% to Him I freely give." Join me on the chorus, "I surrender 10%, I surrender 10%, 10% to thee my blessed Savior, I surrender 10%."

Something about that just doesn't sound right, does it? Jesus never asked us for 10%; He's always asked for everything. That's why the hymn goes, "All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give."

Yes, the Bible talks about a tithe being 10% as a practice of worship and reminds us that everything comes from God, but let's remember that everything belongs to God, including the local church offering. With what's left, I buy food to take care of my body or to pay my bills; even this belongs to Jesus. When we bring our offerings to God, we acknowledge that EVERYTHING comes from Him and we can trust Him to supply everything we need.

Today I invite you to give everything to Jesus and allocate a portion of that to the offerings at this church as you actively worship God.

February 11, 2023

## **Adventist Television Ministries Evangelism**

The world we've come to know may never return to what we once referred to as normal if for no other reason than the precious influence of Jesus' time on earth, though it has lingered like a sweet perfume for 2,000 years, has lessened the impact on the lives of everyday people now because hearts are hardened. Nevertheless, you can make a difference in the lives of others whose hearts are still open to knowing Him by supporting Adventist Television Ministries in reaching the masses for Jesus.

One pastor recalls the day a woman came to church with her family in tow all because of a TV media ministry. Though he studied with her, she had apparently viewed our programming for so long that there was hardly anything left to tell her. What a wonderful day when she and her family were baptized.

Adventist Media Ministries undergird your local ministry and make it more impactful. Breath of Life, Faith for Today, Jesus 101, and It Is Written are each designed to reach a specific audience through a unique worldview.

Whether people know their Bible well or not at all, they must still be presented with the *Adventist* story. And yes, your offering can help reach around the corner or around the world through streaming, touching hearts and changing lives with a Christ-centered message of hope and wholeness. Please give liberally to advance our message through Adventist Television Ministries and broaden your outreach so Jesus can come and we can go home.

February 18, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

“Tithes and offerings.” What are they?

“Tithe” literally means one-tenth, or 10%. If you have \$10, one-tenth would be \$1. If you have \$1,000, one-tenth would be \$100. People who “tithe” take their income, like their paycheck or their profit when they sell something, and give 10% of it to God as their tithe. Malachi 3:10 says, “Bring ye” or “you bring.” For those in a relationship with God, this statement means, “If you love me, bring the tithe into the storehouse.”

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, tithes and offerings are received at the local church, and then the tithe begins its journey. There is an immediate benefit to the local church from the tithe in the form of a full-time or part-time pastor, teacher/principal, disaster response, and access to the Conference, Union, Division, and General Conference leadership and services. The journey continues and tithe is sent to the Conference (storehouse) where a portion remains to fund ministries and workers in the territory. We follow the New Testament teaching that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14). The rest is sent to fulfill the mission of the gospel to reach the world everywhere.

“Offerings” are any donations you make beyond the return of tithe—10%. The majority of offerings remain at the church for various ministries and church budget operations which include church upkeep and special offerings important to your congregation, your community, or you personally.

Let’s be faithful with tithe and offerings so that none of these vital ministries are neglected.

February 25, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners**

The Ann Arbor Seventh-day Adventist church has three buildings on its campus. The buildings were showing its age and were in great need of repairs and updates. The major repairs included replacing the boiler in the church, repainting the school, and a new furnace for the center of influence.

Each project required significant investment for the church, which was greater than the members could afford on their own. So, they decided to fundraise and also ask for MAP funds. Many people responded to the call for support, even those who were not members of the church. However, the church still needed approximately 25% more to complete all the repairs and updates. The monies from MAP were able to fund this amount.

Now, the new paint color makes the school look cleaner, modern, and more appealing. The church and center will have heat in the winter, and cool air in the summer. All 3 buildings are ready to continue advancing the gospel in Ann Arbor, MI. All this was made possible because of those who give faithfully to MAP. Your gift today will help other churches, like Ann Arbor, to further God's work in their communities.

March 4, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

This is the time during the worship service when the person in front says something like, “Now is the time when everyone can participate in the worship service.” This implies all people present should take out a wallet to put something in the offering. It also suggests that the other parts of the worship service aren’t for everyone.

Money makes a great offering, and it takes funds to continue the work of the church, but the best offering is to give yourself to God. Today I ask everyone to participate by giving not just money, but yourself, to God. This is true worship.

March 11, 2023

## **World Budget - Adventist World Radio**

Just over a year ago, hardened assassins from the New People's Army in Mindoro, Philippines, laid down their guns and chose a new life—and baptism—after listening to Adventist World Radio and studying with local Adventist pastors. No longer “Former Rebels” but “Fully Reconciled,” these men and women wanted to get right to work in sharing what they had found with their family, neighbors, and friends.

Just after their big baptism, they declared that they would “each one reach one.” They decided amongst themselves that each of them would lead someone to Jesus so they would soon have 700 people ready for baptism! Only a couple months later, 700 more Former Rebels had given their lives to Jesus as a result of these converted friends witnessing to them. They had used the projectors and Bible study materials AWR had given them, and by February 2022, they had already reached their goal for the year!

AWR is currently working with these new believers so that each of their villages will have a church building. In addition, they are helping AWR reach into places like Mindanao to reach *current* rebels and assassins whose lives would also be changed with the love of Jesus! Please pray for AWR as its radio waves travel to some of the most difficult places on earth—including the Middle East and North Korea—to help reach every “nation, tribe, language and people” (Rev. 14:6).

March 18, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

When does Spring begin? That probably depends on where you live in North America. Most schools will take a “Spring vacation,” with students and families vacationing to warm climates.

Some places are already experiencing warmer temperatures and signs of new life on trees and shrubs—plants that may have looked lifeless during the winter months. Of course, many places in North America won’t have signs of Spring for another week or two, or maybe a month or two, but Spring will come, and the miracle of rebirth reminds us of the new birth Christ offers each of us.

What does this have to do with our call for the offering this Sabbath? At least two things.

1. Seasons change. Systematic giving to God remains a good practice for prioritizing God and living for Him on a regular basis. However, seasons can affect your giving pattern, sometimes resulting in smaller gifts and sometimes resulting in larger gifts. What season are you in right now? And when have your giving seasons changed?

2. God gives new life. We might think primarily about money when it comes to tithes and offerings—our gifts to God, but God continues to be the One who first gives to us. Even when it seems like we have little or nothing, God gives new life!

Whether Spring has arrived, or you hold to its promise to arrive soon, respond now to God’s gift of new life for you.

March 25, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners**

By Patricia Lykins, Chair of MAP, Area D.

I was appointed to the Conference Lay Advisory Committee as Vice Chair of Area D and last year moved to Chair of Area D. Back when the MAP concept was presented by Jerry Snowden at Cedar Lake, I was there. It seemed like a genius idea, and I have supported MAP with my 1% offering ever since.

During my time on the committee, I have personally been blessed to deliver 9 of the 10 grants for Area D. It has been a joy and pleasure visiting the churches and seeing how they are dedicated to maintaining and building up their churches to the glory of God!

On these trips to deliver grants, we make an appeal to all members to focus on the MAP giving which is recommended at 1%. Historically, there has been about .25% donated for capital improvements and unique evangelism projects through MAP giving.

Funding is approved for distribution in the meetings the committee has each year, generally scheduled in March, August, and December. Your church application for funding needs to be funneled through your Area Chairperson and is due a minimum of 14 days before these meetings.

You may find more information on the Lay Advisory page at [www.misda.org](http://www.misda.org). Thank you for your support of MAP every 4<sup>th</sup> Sabbath.



April 1, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

Happy April Fools' Day—a day of frequent pranks followed by someone gleefully spouting, “April Fools!”

The Bible mentions the term “fool” a number of times, but never in a glib or “happy trickster” sort of way. Twice in the Psalms we read, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Ps. 14:1 and Ps. 53:1). If you're in church today, you probably aren't the fool found in Psalms.

We're more susceptible to being the “fool” found in Luke 12. Christ's parable warns against the natural trigger called “greed.” In this story, a farmer realized some bumper crops, so he decided to enlarge his storage capacity, then take an early retirement so he could just “eat, drink and be merry” (Luke 12:19).

Sound inviting?

Jesus came down harshly, not because of what the farmer had, but because of what he didn't have. According to v. 21 (NLT), “A person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.” One way to have a rich relationship with God is to give offerings with a thankful heart.

Does this mean we're fools if we don't put everything we have into the offering? Not necessarily. It does mean that when we make our relationship with God our highest priority, the result is wisdom (Prov. 9:10) rather than being a fool—on April Fools' Day or on any other day.

April 8, 2023

## **Hope Channel International, Inc.**

God is using Hope Channel International, Inc. to transform lives for a better life today and for eternity. With 70 global networks and growing, broadcasting in over 80 languages, Hope Channel is fulfilling the mission to preach the gospel “in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14).

Hope Channel is also an evangelistic resource center. *Wake Up with Hope* is a daily morning program that nurtures viewers’ souls and their spiritual needs. *3AM: Morning is Coming* is a program that encourages young people to understand the Three Angels’ Messages. *Hope.Study*, an online Bible study course platform, continues to grow—within the first year of its inception, 144,850 people have started a course. People are searching for understanding and truth in this broken world. *Heroes II*, Hope Channel’s brand-new video game app, is inspiring a new generation to study the Bible. Imagine if we could reach every gamer with the gospel!

All these opportunities are made possible through your generous support of Hope Channel. Watch Christ-centered programming on DirecTV 368, HopeTV.org/Watch, Roku, and the Hope Channel app. We want the message of hope to reach people until there are no more people to reach. Only then can the end come! Your faithful financial giving will be blessed to do just that. “Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed” (Prov. 11:25).

April 15, 2023

## Local Church Budget

“Tax Day” is April 15 for U.S. citizens, while it’s April 30 in Canada, but when do you actually pay your taxes? Some do it ASAP, while others wait until the last minute, and still others file for extensions. Did you know that some people make quarterly payments throughout the year rather than a lump sum in April? Bermuda has no Tax Day, but it collects a payroll tax throughout the year.

Do you view giving your tithe to God as a tax—something the government requires of its citizens to fund its services? Does God tax believers so His church has money to operate? Some might view it in this manner.

Today I invite you to view it differently—your voluntary gift to God. We include “offerings” during our worship service because giving to God is an act of worship. Sure, everything comes from God, and He doesn’t *need* our money since He already owns “the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps. 50:10). But giving enables us to participate in worship—like joining the congregation in singing or praying along silently during the main prayer of the church service.

When you give a birthday gift because you feel obligated, it’s rarely as pleasurable for you or the recipient as when you give a gift because you want to give.

Take that same approach as you give your offering to God. It’s your gift, and you’re giving it to God! Let’s worship!

April 22, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners**

The St. Johns Church had been in discussion for 3 years on the deterioration of their parking lot. The cracks were so wide, members were getting parts of their shoes stuck and others were stumbling. Estimates from various Asphalt Companies indicated it would cost \$80,000 to do the job. Unfortunately, the members knew they could not afford it, and every year the prices seemed to go up.

In 2021, the church received an estimate of \$8,000 for work that would just fill the cracks, top those areas with hot rubber, paint the complete lot, and put down new striping. The members began a campaign to collect funds and appealed to MAP for \$2,000. The church used a large, clear glass cylinder to track their progress. For every \$500 that came in, they put a bag of colored dry beans in the cylinder. Watching the cylinder fill up was both fun and motivating.

It took one year to raise the \$8000 needed to repair the parking lot. Unfortunately, due to increased costs, the church needed an additional \$8000 to complete the project. An appeal for more funds was made, and in just one month the extra \$8000 was sacrificially given.

Thanks to MAP funds and sacrificial giving, today there is a new lot to park on and walk safely into church. The Bible promise is true: “Give and it shall be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.” Luke 6:38

April 29, 2023

## Local Church Budget

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly, will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously... God loves the cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:6–7).

The law of sowing and reaping is very simple. One stalk of corn yields around four ears of corn. If I only sow three seeds of corn, I will enjoy about 12 ears of corn on the cob. But if I sow 100 seeds then I will harvest 400 juicy, sweet ears of corn that I can share with friends and neighbors or sell at the farmer’s market. The more you sow, the more you will reap. The word is multiplication. What you sow, God multiplies. The Bible says that God is the One who makes the food grow. He is the One who multiplies the harvest, and God tells us that the more we sow, the more we will reap.

The law of sowing and reaping is true not only in agriculture but also in finances. Our passage today tells us that the more financial seeds you plant, the more He will prosper you. God’s multiplication ensures that when you give generously, you will also reap generously; the Bible promises it.

I invite you to be a cheerful giver and sow abundantly by providing for our local church budget.

**Prayer:** Dear God, help us to sow generously and be cheerful givers this morning. Bless the ministry of our local church as we work together to seek and save the lost. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

May 6, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

Perhaps the best-known text in the Old Testament book of Malachi is, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.” Malachi added God’s challenge: “Test me... and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it” (Mal. 3:10).

Today, some Christians promote the “Prosperity Gospel,” which draws on verses like this. Give to God (or my church or ministry), and God will give you more money than you gave. Forget investing in the stock market or real estate; give your money to God and watch your bank account surge.

While God wanted to illustrate His blessing through material prosperity to the Israelites in Old Testament times, Christ certainly didn’t exhibit lots of money. In the New Testament, Paul predicted that those who sowed sparingly would reap sparingly, while those who sowed generously would also reap generously (2 Cor. 9:6). However, Paul further explained that abundance would be in good deeds and righteousness (vv. 8–10).

Have you put God to the test when it comes to blessings? What did you “sow” in the past? What will you “sow” this year? Are you prepared to receive God’s blessings, whether they are financial or whether they come in another form—like faith, godliness, joy, fellowship, and love for God and others?

Let’s give to God and rely on him to provide the blessings in the forms He chooses and at the time He chooses.

May 13, 2023

## **Disaster and Famine Relief**

You've read the news and watched the footage—witnessed the aftermath from hurricanes, fires, floods, and other disasters tearing apart communities. Families are displaced, having lost their home, livelihood, and even loved ones. What happens next?

For many, the answer is Adventist Community Services (ACS) Disaster Response. The ACS network of trained volunteers respond across the North American Division (NAD), offering services, goods, and a caring heart.

Adventist expertise has traditionally focused on leading and operating the warehouses where donated goods are sent to be sorted, inventoried, and distributed to the affected community. Recent years have seen the Adventist role expand to meet a variety of needs such as sheltering, delivery of goods, rebuilding communities, and providing emotional and spiritual care.

Almost four months after Hurricane Ida swept through Louisiana, the Houma Nation was still in desperate need of help as many homes were damaged and winter was approaching fast. ACS Disaster Response leaders came to the area to learn how they could help those who had been overlooked. One resident asked in desperation, “What are we supposed to do?”

After assessing the situation, ACS was quickly able to bring blankets and other household items to share. In addition, the North American Division ACS Disaster Response sent funds to local teams who purchased space heaters to keep people warm while they rebuilt their homes. This money was from gifts like yours.

Today's offering is shared between Adventist Community Services Disaster Response, who responds to disasters within the NAD, and Adventist Development and Relief Agency's international disaster response work. Thank you for joining the teams that extend a hand of mercy to people in crisis.

May 20, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Sometimes when people go to visit another person or family, they take a gift for the host. Were you invited for a special dinner? Then take a pie or a bouquet of flowers. Were you invited on Saturday night for some table games? Maybe you'll take some snacks—sweet, salty, or healthy! This simply demonstrates good manners. The gift isn't more than the meal you receive, but it acknowledges a relationship that isn't merely one-way. Good relationships involve both give and take.

When David successfully took the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, he gave everyone in Israel gifts of food, with a much larger gift to God. David also gave his music leader a song, found in both Ps. 96 and 1 Chron. 16, which includes this modern way of singing it:

Bravo, God, Bravo!

Everyone join in the great shout: Encore!

In awe before the beauty, in awe before the might.

Bring gifts and celebrate,

Bow before the beauty of God,

Then to your knees—everyone worship! (Ps. 96:7-8 MSG)

We have come to worship God at His house on this Sabbath. This includes bringing our gifts and celebrating in worship. No, we don't give as much as God gives us, but we give because that's part of the relationship we have with our great God and part of the worship we practice each week.

**Prayer:** God, please accept our gifts at this time. Bless our humble offering we give to you today in Jesus' name, Amen.



May 27, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners**

For with You *is* the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. Psa. 36:9

At the First Flint church we are blessed with wonderful facilities to reach out to the community and provide a place to gather for worship of our Creator. When our new pastor and his family arrived, we were excited to have them join our church family. In our eagerness, we asked him what he thought of our facilities. His answer surprised us. He said, “it just seems a little dark in the sanctuary.”

The pastor was right! It was dark, even to the point of making it difficult to read our Bibles. But we had gotten accustomed to the darkness and hadn't realized how much we needed to bring more light into the sanctuary.

So, we began getting bids to redo all the lights for the sanctuary, fellowship hall, Sabbath school rooms, hallways, youth chapel, baptistry, and community service center. The best bid came to \$22,000. This represented quite a large sum for a church that was still recovering, like many, from the challenges of attending members created by Covid.

We had previously received funding from Michigan Advance Partners for our parking lot, so to start the project rolling, once again we requested assistance for the lights.

Now, with the wonderful support of MAP, we have brand new LED lights throughout our entire church and community services center. Thank you for your kind contributions to MAP that help us to be blessed with physical light, so we can bring the spiritual Light to our community.

June 3, 2023

## Local Church Budget

It's that time of year when school graduations take place. You, or someone close to you, may have already celebrated this milestone, or perhaps it's just around the corner.

Graduations matter! They mark a significant accomplishment—the culmination of years of study, hard work, and hopefully, worthwhile education along the way. The regalia might look funny, but it represents something. For some, graduation is a miracle they once thought might be impossible. For others, it's the expected result from their investment.

And then what?

The day after graduation might mean starting a job or maybe continuing with more schooling. Time marches on. Even with photos and video clips of graduation, you must still face another day. As you look back, one question that often surfaces is, “Was it worth it?” Did all the time and money and study pay off, or was it merely a passing chapter of life with little to show for all the investment made?

That's true for all of us, whether or not we're formally graduating.

What do you have to show for the investments you've made? God repeatedly reminds us to invest in Him and in others for eternity. Is it worth it? It actually turns out to be more than a passing chapter of life. It *is* life—and eternal life at that. The investment of our time, temple, talent, and treasure (the pillars of stewardship) pays off when we take it to graduation and beyond.

June 10, 2023

## **Women's Ministries**

Women are specifically designed by God to meet the needs of other women. Women's Ministries is the best way to connect the church with unchurched women in your community and introduce them to Jesus Christ.

Across the North American Division, from the United States to Canada and from Bermuda to Guam-Micronesia, the women of the church are engaged in serving others. They give Bible studies, hold evangelistic series, and minister to those in shelters for battered and homeless women. They provide for the needs of families seeking refuge on our shores from oppressive regimes, teach English as a second language classes, tutor school children, and make bags of love for children who are displaced from their homes or their parents. The women of the church are making a significant difference in their communities and their congregations.

COVID didn't slow down ministry, it just moved it online. Local, Conference, Union, and Division women's ministries offered online and live webinars, retreats, and seminars. Zoom became the place to get together to talk, study, discuss books, and pray together.

Established in 1898 at the urging of Ellen White, the Women's Ministries Offering funds evangelistic outreach events and leadership training for women across the North American Division. These women partner with God in service through ministries that seek to encourage, equip, and challenge girls, teens, young adults, and women to grow deeply in God and serve Him uniquely with their gifts and talents.

June 17, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

According to 2 Cor. 9:7, “God loves a cheerful giver.”

That raises two questions: 1. Does God love you? (wait for response); and 2. Are you a cheerful giver? (wait for response).

Hopefully the message you receive here each Sabbath is that God loves you. Are you also a cheerful giver each Sabbath? We're about to give you the opportunity to be cheerful and to give whatever you purposed in your hearts to give today. Thank you so much for your continued support of the work of Jesus.

June 24, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners Camp Meeting**

When thousands of like-minded believers are gathered in the same room with the same purpose: to grow closer to our Lord Jesus, the atmosphere is unique. This is the atmosphere of camp meeting: all of us together, worshipping our Lord. Christ says that when “two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:19-20). In the Camp Meeting, thousands are gathered together, and Christ is indeed in the midst.

Camp meeting is something to look forward to year after year, for the prayer, and the fellowship, and the revival—but most importantly, for Christ’s presence drawing close to us and our families. Michigan Conference camp meeting would not be possible without Michigan Advance Partners (MAP), which is funded by the faithful giving of Christ’s church. One way to give regularly is to commit 1% of your monthly income to MAP, which will fund camp meeting and other projects and events that we hold close to our hearts.

Today’s loose change will go towards MAP to support camp meeting. You can also give through the Tithes & Offerings envelope in the pews or utilize online giving. May the Lord bless you as you give and continue to bless our camp meetings as we seek to draw closer to Him.

July 1, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Happy Independence Day!

If you live in Canada, today is *the* day. If you live in the United States, it comes this next week. For both countries, independence came from no longer being under the British crown.

Some might compare this to a child growing up and becoming independent of one's parents—something pseudo or fabricated until there's financial independence as well.

Independence Day—for your nation or for kids who grow up and stand on their own—how does this compare to our relationship with God? When do we declare our independence from Him? Is this something we forge, or is it merely fictitious? Does our increase in responsibility release God to care for others who need Him more?

Consider ancient or more recent history, and you'll find throughout earth's orbits around the sun that our "independence" from God might find a place in our imagination, but not in reality. Can you change the earth's rotation, add 100 years to your life, make an actual sunset rather than just paint it on canvas, answer the individual prayers of billions of people each day, put your finger on sub-atomic particles, or change a heart of stone to a heart of flesh?

You don't need to. God remains in control and invites you to be "interdependent" with Him rather than "independent" of Him. Make this Sabbath your "Interdependence Day" by giving to God, who gives life to you.

July 8, 2023

## **World Budget**

Have you ever wondered what happens to the mission offerings you give each week or as part of your promise offerings? Think of your mission offerings as a vital river flowing through the entire world, providing life-giving support to build God's work in every mission field. But exactly where do our offerings go? What do they achieve? And what do they support?

Seventy percent of your weekly mission and promise offerings help support the work of about 400 missionary families working with the 13 world Divisions, plus the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission and the Israel Field, to help these regions build and sustain mission activities. The remaining 30 percent of your mission offerings help several church institutions such as the medical mission work of Loma Linda University, the outreach of Adventist World Radio, and the humanitarian ministry of ADRA, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

Thanks to your faithful offerings, millions of people from the most challenging areas of the world have found salvation in Jesus and have joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Thousands of new congregations have been established in unreached areas, and new believers are being trained in how to share their new faith with others in their neighborhoods. Your river of mission offerings helps grow and sustain mission work throughout the world. Please keep this life-giving river flowing.

July 15, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

Can you outgive God?

This idea is that when you give something to God, He gives you more than you gave to Him.

But does it work? If you give God a dollar, or \$100, or \$1,000 or \$100,000, will you get back more than you gave to God?

For some of us, just paying our bills is a great accomplishment. Others have extra or prioritize investing in a retirement account, real estate, or the stock market, hoping they will get back more than they put into their investment. Often it works, although sometimes it doesn't.

Can you outgive God?

Remember, whatever we give actually came to us from God, the original Giver (James 1:17 says: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father..."). God started this by giving us something to give—like an older person giving a child something to put in the offering plate.

When Jesus told the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30), it seemed clear that He expected us to take what He gave us and put it to use—to yield even more than He gave. When those recipients gave an account of what their master had given them, commendation went to those who invested, and the master gave them even more.

Today I invite you to take what God has given you and give it to Him; then let Him give you more—whether that's money, opportunities, talent, heart, love, or life.

You can't outgive God, but it's great to try!



July 22, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners**

The congregation in Big Rapids knew their church roof needed to be replaced but had no idea how to pay it. Short-term fixes had failed to correct the damaged area on the roof and the need to have it repaired had become urgent. Buckets had to be placed in the hallway when it rained in order to catch the water coming in – and each time it rained, there was potential for further damage to walls and floors.

Estimates for having the roof replaced came to over \$20,000! For a small group of 20-30 people, it looked as if the church would have to go into debt to pay for the necessary roof replacement.

With many prayers for guidance and asking God to provide the necessary funds, the Big Rapids church submitted an application to MAP requesting financial assistance to repair the church roof. While waiting for a decision from MAP, the church members continued to pray and to donate what they could toward the roof repairs.

The news that MAP would be able to pay approximately half the cost of the repairs brought great relief to the congregation. When available local funds were combined with the money donated by MAP, the church was able to pay for the needed repairs without incurring any debt! The members in Big Rapids are worshipping again with no worry for the rain or snow – and with gratitude for God's provision through Michigan Advance Partners.

July 29

## Local Church Budget

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).

The one thing that stands out in this Bible verse is that it doesn't give us an option NOT to give. The Bible takes for granted that we are going to give. The issue is how much have you decided to give? Zacchaeus gave 50% of his wealth. The poor widow gave 100% of what she had—two copper coins. Barnabas sold a field he owned and provided for the preaching of the gospel. The people of God have been giving for the Lord's work throughout history. God's children don't spend all their income on themselves but think of sharing their wealth for the preaching of the gospel.

We find three biblical principles of giving in this passage. First, you need to decide how much you are going to give. We need to plan in advance what we are going to give to God. Second, don't give reluctantly or under compulsion. The opposite of a cheerful giver is a sad and ornery giver. God doesn't want you to give because you are being pressured to give. Third, God loves a cheerful giver. God wants you to give from the heart, willingly and cheerfully. Are you happy that you can contribute to God's remnant church?

Today, I encourage you to provide for your local church expense and give, not reluctantly but cheerfully.

**Prayer:** Father in heaven, bless the lives of the people here today as they provide for our local church by giving cheerfully to preach the gospel in our part of the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

August 5, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

At this time during our worship service, we typically collect money, whether that's cash or checks. Some people give each week as part of their worship to God. Others give once a month or once every pay period. Some give online, and still others do a combination, maybe planning in advance so they can participate at this moment rather than just reaching for some spare change or the customary dollar.

What will you give to God today? Won't you take some time this week to consider your offering for next Sabbath? Intentionality is so important in the life of a giver.

August 12, 2023

## Christian Record Services

Imagine the scene recorded in Mark 10. A huge crowd was following Jesus. Voices buzzed around Him, clamoring for His attention. And then, a desperate shout reached Jesus' ears (or, perhaps, struck His heart).

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stopped in His tracks and called out to Bartimaeus. Immediately, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

Without hesitation, Bartimaeus declared, “Rabbi, I want to see!” Jesus answered, “Go, your faith has healed you!”

I love that we can share the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ with people who are blind or experiencing vision loss! Christian Record Services, a ministry of compassion of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1899, is serving nearly 18,000 members throughout the United States and in countries around the world.

Christian Record Services offers an array of services and programs, including Bible study lessons, books, magazines and Bibles in audio, braille, and large print from a library of more than 2,000 titles. Members can also deepen social, educational, and spiritual connections through PhoneFaith, scholarships for higher education, and National Camps for Blind Children.

These services and programs are free of charge to people who are legally blind. Your offerings will help further the mission to *empower* people who are blind to *engage* with their communities and *embrace* the Blessed Hope.

August 19, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

You have, at your control, the power to increase or decrease your love for God. The same can be said about your love for this church—you have the power to increase or decrease your love for it.

How?

Jesus stated it plainly in Matt. 6:21: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Here’s how the Amplified Bible explains it: “Where your treasure is, there your heart [your wishes, your desires, that on which your life centers] will be also.”

Let me explain it this way. God has set things up so that your heart will follow wherever you make your investment. If you neglect your friends or family, your love for them will diminish. If you invest more time and money with them, your love for them will grow! The same is true with your love for God and His church. Your love for God and His church increases as you place your treasure—your money, time, skills, and service—with God and His church.

I can testify today that it works this way for me. How about you? The amount of time you spend at work or school, on a hobby, or virtually anything will impact how important that is to you. Your heart follows where you place your treasure.

Today I’m inviting you to increase your love for God and for His church. And you can do that simply by giving at this time.

August 26, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners**

In the 2022-2023 school year we experienced a slight increase in our Conference K-12 enrollment. This is a blessing and shows the benefit and value parents are seeing in having their children in an Adventist environment. We anticipate that this number may continue to grow.

The challenge we face is the affordability for parents and the ability of schools to function and cover the costs that are necessary to operate. Our children need your support. You can do that through the MAP offering today.

Even if you aren't part of a school constituency, think of every student in our Conference as "your kid." Your church can still be a partner and participator in Adventist Education. How about sponsoring a child for Adventist Education? Call the Education Office and ask how you can partner with them to "educate a child for eternity".

Thank you for your prayers and support of Adventist Education, and for your offerings to Michigan Advance Partners!

September 2, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

Labor Day Weekend is here—for the United States, Canada, Bermuda, plus Guam and Micronesia—throughout the North American Division.

Ironically, instead of working on Labor Day, most people have a holiday with no work! In other words, many “play” on “Labor Day.”

Does that seem wrong, or is it actually right—in a counter-intuitive way? Is it like:

Laughing so hard that you cry;

Letting something go and then finding it returns to you on its own;

Saying, “It doesn’t matter” when it really matters a lot;

Being groggy because you’ve slept so much;

Standing tall before others because you kneel before your Maker;

Giving away what you have and finding you have more than you had at the start.

Those who think Labor Day is for working need a new perspective because it’s the holiday given for the work you’ve already done. When we put it in spiritual terms, it means we give to God and others because we’ve already received so much from both God and others. Our offering today provides the opportunity for you to do it!

September 9, 2023

## **World Budget: Radio Ministries**

The Voice of Prophecy radio ministry began with an offer that founder H.M.S. Richards Sr. simply could not refuse. The *Los Angeles Express* newspaper promised Pastor Richards several *free* 15-minute slots of radio time each week if he would place weekly advertising for his tent meetings in their paper.

Always wanting to embrace new methods to reach souls, the 35-year-old Richards jumped at the chance. On October 19, 1929, only days before the Great Depression hit, Richards was on the air, sharing the hope of Jesus with the people of Southern California.

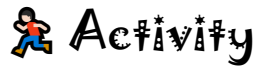
By World War II, the Voice of Prophecy had become the first religious coast-to-coast broadcast in North America on the Mutual Broadcasting Network. That same year, 1942, it launched a Spanish-language broadcast that would later be called *La Voz de la Esperanza*.

More North Americans access radio regularly than any other major media format. Eighty-eight percent of Canadians report having listened to radio in any given month, while 93% of Americans say they listen to radio every week. Online audio also remains a fast-growing market, as millions turn to digital platforms for more engaging content. As listeners tune in week by week, they are invited to go deeper with the Lord through the radio ministries' Bible schools and evangelistic events.

Day by day and week by week, the power of radio evangelism continues to change lives. Please join today in giving generously to support the ministry of the Voice of Prophecy and *La Voz de la Esperanza*.




September 16, 2023



## Local Church Budget

Even though the Bible says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), sometimes it’s just not possible to give. Let’s illustrate this because it might help each of us when it comes to the part of our worship service where we can receive a blessing, but only if we give.

 *(You will need to have a collection of small objects in a sack with you to do this illustration. Invite someone to join you in the front for a “living illustration.” You can ask the person in advance or take a chance and invite someone on the spot. Often this makes a great opportunity to bring a young person on the platform to participate actively in the church service.)*

(Say to the volunteer who has joined you in the front of the church:) I’m going to ask you to hold out your hand and clench your fist (demonstrate for your volunteer). Good! Just hold it there as together we illustrate the statement, “When you clench your fist, no one can put anything in your hand” Alex Haley quote. Another way of saying it is, “A clenched fist won’t give, and can’t receive.”

Let’s try it. I have something in this sack to give you. How does this work when your fist is clenched? (Pull out one of the objects, like a golf ball, ping pong ball, apple, etc.) With a closed fist, you can’t receive my gift.

Let’s try it again, but this time release the fist and open your hand. What a difference that makes! But I have more! Can you receive more? Let’s try. It might work only if you give what you have received.

Today I invite you to open your fist—to give. Only then will you be able to receive.

September 23, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners**

What is MAP? MAP stands for Michigan Advance Partners and funds a variety of needs within the conference. It is collected on the fourth Sabbath of each month. Members are encouraged to give 1% of their income. The following is a breakdown of how those offerings are spent:

### **33.33% - Evangelism**

This includes funding for public evangelism, CAMPUS Ministries, Bible Study Offer, lay training, VBS, etc.

### **33.67% - Education**

These funds are matched on a 3-way basis with the local church and senior academy to assist students, with financial needs, to attend one of the four senior academies in the state, including keeping classroom equipment up-to-date.

### **4% - Camp Au Sable**

These funds are used to improve facilities and provide necessary equipment for Camp Au Sable.

### **4% - Campmeeting/Campground**

These funds are used to improve facilities and provide necessary equipment for camp meeting.

### **25% - Pooled Resources**

Requests for funding building purchases, new build and remodeling, and special evangelism projects are reviewed by the Lay Advisory Committee for consideration.

As you can see, your offering today will go a long way in reaching several ministries in the Michigan Conference. May the Lord richly bless you as you give to support His work in this part of His vineyard.

September 30, 2023

## Local Church Budget

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap” (Luke 6:38).

Gloria and Enoch embarked on their long-awaited vacation. The plan was to spend a couple of days visiting their son’s family and their three granddaughters and then go to their favorite beach on the coast to enjoy the sun and water. That Sabbath, as they attended church with their granddaughters, the pastor made a special offering appeal to those in attendance to cover the expense of replacing the roof on the church. Gloria and Enoch felt impressed to give all the money they had saved for their beach vacation to the church for the new roof and to spend the rest of their vacation with their son’s family instead. To their surprise, when they returned home, Gloria found a letter in the mail from her work at the hospital stating that they had miscalculated her wages and needed to pay her back wages. Enclosed was a check for exactly double what she and Enoch gave to the Adventist church to help with the roof.

The Bible promises that when you give, it will be given to you. We invite you to give for your local church budget so the work of the Adventist church will continue here at \_\_\_\_\_ [name of your congregation].

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, help us to believe in your promises that you will provide for us when we give of our resources to advance God’s kingdom here on earth. In your name, Amen.

October 7, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

Some parents hand their young child something to put in the offering. When does that stop?

I want you to think about what you are giving and the reason you're giving it. Some of you may have already given your tithes and offerings this month, or maybe you give online, so you aren't giving anything today during the church service. Thank you for returning your tithe and offerings. But...

Let me ask two questions:

1. What are you giving?
2. Why are you giving it?

If we don't examine and understand what we do and why we do it, it really is meaningless. God knows our motives though, and He can read what is in our hearts. I hope you are giving because you love Him and are thankful for how He has provided for you in so many ways. Gratitude is the only motivation for giving that means anything.

Thank you for giving with a grateful heart today.

October 14, 2023

## **Michigan Radio Ministries**

Radio waves travel in a straight line, making tall mountains a big problem. That's why it was such a surprise to the technician at the small Adventist World Radio studio in Nepal, one of the most mountainous countries on earth, when a group of 30 people showed up one day saying they had been listening to the AWR programs—from over three mountain ranges away! They had come to meet the speaker and to learn more about the Bible! God literally moved mountains—or at least radio waves—so that this village could hear the gospel story and learn about Jesus.

Right here in Michigan there's the story of Dustin and Sarah. Though raised a Christian, Dustin's poor choices and bad habits pulled him far from what he knew was right. Deciding to make a change, he cut Rock n' Roll music out of his life completely but needed something else to take its place. By God's grace, a few days later he found the perfect replacement—Strong Tower Radio! Through a miraculous series of events, Dustin and his wife, Sarah, were both convicted of the truths they learned through Strong Tower Radio and TV broadcasts. Praise the Lord, today Dustin and Sarah are baptized members of the Reed City Seventh-day Adventist Church!

Today's offering is for the important work of Adventist radio here in the Michigan Conference. Please prayerfully consider how you can help expand this vital evangelistic tool to even more people as the Lord provides new opportunities.

October 21, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Happy Thanksgiving!

You might think I'm a bit confused. In Canada, Thanksgiving was the second Monday of October—the 9th. In the United States, it won't be until next month—the fourth Thursday in November, which will be the 23rd. Why say, “Happy Thanksgiving” today?

Of course, any day can be Thanksgiving. And Scripture gives us many reasons to give thanks, such as these:

“I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly...The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy” (Ps. 111:1, 7).

“It is good to give thanks to the LORD. . . . O LORD, what great works you do! And how deep are your thoughts. Only a simpleton would not know, and only a fool would not understand this” (Ps. 92:1, 5–6 NLT).

“Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him” (Ps. 28:6–7).

National holidays for Thanksgiving come from expected harvest blessings. Most of us aren't farmers, but we have experienced God's abundant blessings in so many ways. So today, join me in Thanksgiving—we aren't limited to one day a year. Let's give to God from an abundant heart of praise and thanksgiving today!

October 28, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners**

One of the most stirring accounts of divine power recorded in the life of Jesus is the resurrection of Lazarus. Yet, before it happened, not even Christ's closest followers believed He could do it! Mary and Martha both lamented Jesus's apparent failure to heal Lazarus before it was too late. "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." (John 11:21, 32). The crowd of mourners likewise knew He could have healed Lazarus, but believed death was beyond His ability to reverse. "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" (John 11:37)

Amid this atmosphere of doubt, Jesus bid the obstructing stone be rolled away, appealed to Heaven, and performed one of His most striking miracles, commanding "Lazarus, come forth!" "And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go.'" (John 11:44)

Amazement mixes with curiosity: Why would One so powerful not roll away the stone or remove the graveclothes Himself? In His infinite wisdom, God has ordained that we be co-laborers with Him. This is particularly true in His work of giving the Gospel to the world. "God has made the proclamation of the gospel dependent upon the labors and the gifts of His people." (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 74)

Today's offering is for Michigan Advance Partners. Please give as though the Lord Himself is relying on your cooperation.

November 4, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Some people receive a regular income for their work, such as pastors and teachers, bank tellers and other hourly or salaried employees. They can plan accordingly. Their tithe remains constant, and their offerings might also be constant, even though some expenses might fluctuate while others remain steady. Other people might get paid in bursts with irregular amounts each time—like farmers who harvest their crops, salespeople on commissions, restaurant waiters, and Uber/Lyft drivers. Their tithes and offerings fluctuate, just like their income.

The Jews gathered for three major religious festivals each year in Old Testament times. According to Deut. 16:16-17, “no one should appear before the LORD empty-handed: Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.” Notice this last sentence, “Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.”

How much has God blessed you? Bring God a gift in proportion to His blessing. Tithing makes that pretty simple—one-tenth of your paycheck. The same can be said of your offerings—give in proportion to the way God has blessed you.

Maybe we need to pause and count our blessings! Don't give what you “can't” or merely give what you “can.” Instead, give according to God's blessings to you.

**Prayer:** Thank you, God, and please accept our gifts to You today, just as You have blessed us. In Christ's name, Amen.



November 11, 2023

## **Annual Sacrifice Offering for Global Mission**

If you could make a difference in someone's life by giving up something for one week, would you do it? What would you give up? The latest issue of your favorite magazine? A pizza? A new pair of shoes? Think what you can give up this week so someone you don't know can be introduced to Jesus, and then put that amount in an offering envelope marked *Annual Sacrifice Offering*.

Your gift might sponsor a seminar about healthful living or help support a Global Mission pioneer in a city where most people have never heard about Jesus. Just think! One day you could meet the person you sacrificed for in heaven.

Ask God how much He wants you to give Him by giving beyond your regular tithe and promise offering. If you agree to give God what He is asking, He will provide what He has asked you to give.

This is your opportunity to sacrifice and share God's love with someone who doesn't know Jesus. Your gift will help reach every unreached person. What would you sacrifice for that individual?

**Prayer:** Lord, we humbly accept the advice that the Apostle Paul gives us in Heb. 13:16 where he said, "Sacrifices are pleasing to God" (ESV). So, Lord, we ask you to bless our offerings of sacrifice so that they might multiply and help Global Mission pioneers reach the unreached. In Jesus' name, Amen.

November 18, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

At grocery store check-out lines, you'll find an array of items for impulse buying. They hope you will add additional items to your cart while you wait in line.

The same thing happens with online purchasing. When you select something, you see other items like what you're purchasing and a little button called "click here" will add them to your virtual shopping cart. How many times have you purchased more than you intended simply because of impulse shopping?! Me too!

While impulse shopping might be fun (or hazardous), the Bible suggests a different way of giving.

Paul instructed the believers in Corinth to make plans and take action each week, at the start of the week. We call this "planning" or "systematic benevolence"—giving regularly as a lifestyle.

Paul wrote, "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come, no collections will have to be made" (1 Cor. 16:2). Because Paul didn't come by the Corinthians' church each Sabbath, the people started each week by putting God first with their personal giving. You might have a container where you put your offering as you start each week, and then bring it to church on Sabbath and give it to God, just as you planned.

November 25, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners**

Today, the offering is designated for Michigan Advance Partners or MAP. This offering gives our Conference the opportunity to support a variety of projects for all churches under its care. The Conference is a fellowship of local congregations, and by working together, we accomplish much more.

Evangelism is also one of the ministries that the local conference supports with the offering we give. Evangelism is central to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. By joining with other churches in this offering, we can provide the funds needed to strengthen existing churches and also plant new congregations.

Today, you and I are invited to return the tithe to the Lord. God asks us to return a faithful tithe, and we receive something wonderful from Him. Ellen White writes that tithing will “be a blessing to those who carry it out to the end of time” (*Counsels on Stewardship*, page 67). Members who have been faithful tithers can testify of the blessings given to them. You and I can experience that blessing.

Thank you for returning God’s tithe and giving an offering for MAP.

December 2, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

December starts off the Christmas season in earnest for many people, even if merchants have been pushing the need to buy gifts for weeks already.

What makes the Christmas season special for you? Is it the music, the decorations, special foods, family gatherings, or the gifts—what you might receive, as well as what you might give?

Gift-giving can be problematic. What if someone gives you a gift, but you don't have one to give in return or vice versa?! Which matters more: the amount of money you spend on the gift or giving a "perfect gift" to a particular person? Let's reverse that; what if someone gives you a gift and it's not something you've ever wanted or will ever use? Should you put on a happy face and say something like, "How can I ever thank you enough for this gift?"

Each Sabbath we collect an offering as you give your gifts to God. We don't limit this to the Christmas season because Christmas happens every time we come to church. We come to worship the greatest gift of all time—the gift of God coming to this earth in the form of Jesus Christ.

Our gifts, whether they are wrapped in beautiful Christmas paper or given as cash or checks or through online giving with a credit card, show our thankfulness to God.

So, "Merry Christmas!" And let's take this opportunity to give our gifts to God.

December 9, 2023

## **Adventist Community Services**

People come in all shapes and sizes, and so do their needs. Adventist Community Services offers diverse services tailored to fit the needs of the vulnerable in their community.

David walked into Joseph's Storehouse Food Pantry, an ACS center in Oklahoma. The staff soon learned that he had recently been released from prison and was saving money to rent an apartment. At the time, he was living in a tent near a creek just outside of town and had no way to cook. David chose food that was ready to eat out of the package.

Realizing that more was needed, a volunteer invited him back the next day to pick up cooking items. The volunteer went shopping for items they didn't already have at the center and soon, David received a small cook stove, fuel, can opener, and cookware when he returned. ACS continues to assist David with food when he runs low, and prays for his safety and for God's continued presence.

Whether giving food and cooking gear, dental care, clothing, after school tutoring, or English language skills, your ACS offering paves a pathway forward for somebody in need.

Ellen White shared, "The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'" (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

Adventist Community Service's ministries mingle in our communities, bringing Jesus' goodwill to the people. Join us and become the practical hands and feet of God in our world.

December 16, 2023

## Local Church Budget

The Christmas story of Christ's birth in a stable includes visits by local shepherds and Wise Men from far away.

The shepherds, although the low-class people of Bethlehem, played a vital role for God's people. Jerusalem, located only five miles (eight kilometers) from Bethlehem, needed "spotless lambs" for daily sacrifices and many more during festivals like the Passover. These shepherds took care of the little lambs to ensure they would be pristine enough for sacrifice. Maybe that's why the angelic host appeared to the shepherds in Bethlehem, giving them a personalized invitation to visit the spotless Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. However, the shepherds had no gift for Baby Jesus. Instead, they joyfully proclaimed His arrival to the world (Luke 2:16–18).

The Wise Men represented the other end of the social and economic spectrum. Even though they were wealthy they still found themselves drawn to something far greater than themselves. Following the star, they came to Jerusalem (Matt. 2:1) and directly to the temple (*Desire of Ages*, p. 60), asking, "Where is the newborn King of the Jews?" Prejudiced and defensive religious leaders could point the Magi to nearby Bethlehem, but they refused to go there themselves. However, the Wise Men went. In fact, "wise men still seek Him." And they worshiped and gave gifts.

This Sabbath you're invited to worship and to give gifts, just like the Wise Men thousands of years ago.

December 23, 2023

## **Michigan Advance Partners**

Over the history of Adventist Education we have seen a financial model that has struggled in recent times. Gone are the days when tuition income was the main contributor to financial viability. As a matter of fact, we are seeing more and more families struggle to pay for tuition and this in turn puts more pressure on the Conference, schools, and churches to make up the difference.

Unfortunately, tuition continues to rise, and will continue to do so, to match the increasing cost it takes to run and manage our institutions. Let's be honest, Adventist Education is expensive. Yet, the cost of not having Adventist Education in these last days is infinitely more expensive.

“As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man.” (Matt 24:37)

Given what we are seeing around us it would be fair to say we are living in the last days of earth's history. Our schools exist to help form characters in our students that will help them stand for Christ in a world without a moral compass.

Please consider the ministry of Adventist Education in your giving. Investing in a human life pays dividends this world cannot calculate. Part of your offering to Michigan Advance Partners is used to support Adventist Education in Michigan.

December 30, 2023

## **Camp Sagola**

Camp Sagola was purchased around 1960 by Elder LaVern Pomeroy, and later sold to the Michigan Conference at cost. A hotel on an island in Lake Superior was dismantled and transported to Sagola, where it was reconstructed as a lodge.

There are eleven cabins with heat and electricity. There are 12 camper sites with electricity, tent sites and a centralized bath house. A dock and boat house along with beach improvements have upgraded the lake front. A large auditorium has a capacity for about 400 people.

Recently, due to a fire in the main lodge, Camp Sagola was rebuilt and updated as much as possible with the funding available. However, there are many updates that remain as well as the finishing of the basement facilities, which include rooms for lodging and meeting space, which is in great demand as Camp Sagola expands.

Camp Sagola serves as the Upper Peninsula center for youth camps, the U.P. camp meeting, and other U.P. events. Programs include Junior Camp and Youth Outpost, Teen Snow Outing in February, Men's Retreat in early Spring, A spring retreat in May, U.P. camp meeting in early August, Women's Retreat in September, and a Fall Retreat in October. The camp also hosts other workshops, seminars, and meetings as well as Pathfinder events for the U.P. The camp facilities are also available for use during non-program times. Please give generously to support beautiful Camp Sagola on this 5<sup>th</sup> Sabbath offering