

STEWARDSHIP GIVING GUIDE

This year we celebrate the joy of generosity as we offer our *Estimate of Giving* card for the operating budget for 2010. We are encouraged to find greater contentment and simplicity in our lives as we put God first in our giving and living, and to experience the joy that comes from knowing our gifts honor God and change lives. Our challenge is to find ways to grow deeper in our faith. One way to do this is to offer our financial blessings to God through our tithes and offerings. Through these gifts, we invest in God's vision and purpose and create an opportunity for God to work through us. Our gifts to God each week are an act of worship; and our offerings are vitally necessary to change lives, transform communities, and renew churches.

Scriptures tell us how to share our gifts

"Command those who are rich in the world...to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life"

- St. Paul's first Letter to Timothy

Why is giving important?

The Bible has much to say about wisdom and finances, with 2,300 verses that tell us to be generous and good stewards of our resources. Jesus taught generosity and sacrifice. He demanded that his followers serve not wealth but God, and in the parable of the talents he taught that God will hold us each accountable for what we do with all our earthly possessions.

What is expected of me?

The Bible teaches us to give a tithe, or the first 10 percent of what we earn, to God and the church's work. For some, giving one tenth is a very difficult goal. For others, it is the starting point and their giving far exceeds 10 percent. The important thing is that we start somewhere, that our giving be in proportion to our income, that our giving reflects an appropriate offering to God given our means, and that our offerings express both our desire to serve the Lord and our investment in God's work. Begin by determining what percentage of your income you are giving to God. If you are not yet tithing, consider taking a step toward tithing this year. For example, if you now give 3 percent of your income, consider increasing your gift to 4 percent, and add 1 percent each year until you reach the tithing goal. Our prayer is that everyone will grow in his or her faith through giving financially to the ministries of the church and experience the joy and blessings that come from financial generosity.

Everything we have belongs to God

“A tithe [tenth] of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.”

—Leviticus 27:30 (NIV)

“The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God”

—Exodus 34:29 (NRSV)

Why do I need to return an *Estimate of Giving* card?

There are two reasons why it is important that every member of our church family return an *Estimate of Giving* card. First, the process of prayerfully asking God to guide your decision and then making a commitment to serve the Lord with your financial gifts is an act of worship, an expression of gratitude and praise to God. Second, on a more practical note, your commitment allows our church to budget and better plan for our ministries and key objectives.

What if financial hardship prohibits me from making a commitment this year?

Don't let your inability to give at this time keep you from worship. Remember that God honors your faithfulness and that your acceptance at First United Methodist Church is not based upon your capacity to give. We ask that everyone return an *Estimate of Giving* card even if it is a limited financial commitment at this time. You can always increase or decrease your commitment if your situation changes by calling the church. *Also, be sure to let our pastoral staff know of your situation so that they can pray for and support you during any difficulty.*

Because we reap what we sow

*“The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”*

—2 Corinthians 9:6

Why do I need to turn in a new *Estimate of Giving* card each year?

Financial situations change from year to year, and if we are growing in our faith, our annual commitment should likewise reflect that giving growth. Each year, our church budget is based upon the growing commitments of our congregation.

Should I use Electronic Funds Transfer?

Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) is the easiest, most cost-effective giving option for both you and the church. With EFT, you can reinforce your commitment to give your tithes and offerings to God first, before anything else. One easy step each year guarantees that the church will receive your gifts on a regular basis, even if you are out of town or you forget one week. You may also contribute to the monthly mission offering or debt reduction through EFT. If you wish to begin EFT giving, please mark the box on the back of the *Estimate of Giving* card and we will send an application. For more information contact Cheryl Wilburn at 812.332.6396

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

First United Methodist Church

PO Box 936

Bloomington, IN 47402

812.332.6396

fumcb@fumcb.org