



"Building the Church for Generations to Come"

A Pastor's Knowledge of Giving

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A question frequently heard by United Methodist Foundation staff while meeting with various church committees is "Should the pastor be involved in the finances of the church, and in particular should the pastor know what members are giving?" My answer to this is simple....Absolutely!!!

A church in many respects is not unlike other nonprofit institutions. The services provided by a nonprofit, or in the case of a church its ministries, are made available through the financial support of an organization's constituents, donors, members, etc. An illustration which I have frequently shared is from J. Clif Christopher's, *Not Your Parents Offering Plate* - The most important person in terms of raising money for a college or university is the school president. The most important person in terms of raising money for a hospital is the hospital's president or the chairperson of the board. Would you expect the president of your alma mater to be unaware of who the school's donors are? If you serve on a nonprofit board, would you expect the executive director to be unaware of who the organization's donors are? Absolutely not, why should we expect that a pastor would be any different?

Many people do not consider that a church in many respects is like a business. A church's product or service is the ministries that it offers to serve and to make disciples of Christ. There is a cost of doing business, which in a church would be the overhead or expenses that are involved in being in ministry. The pastor, as stated in the Discipline, serves as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Administrator of their church. In order to provide the necessary leadership to fulfill the organization's mission, a CEO must know the funding that is currently available as well as potential opportunities for additional funding for new ministries.

Knowing an individual's giving habits can assist a pastor in serving their membership through pastoral care. Consider an individual or a family who have given consistently to their church. Then there is a noticeable reduction in their giving. Perhaps this individual or family is struggling spiritually, financially, or professionally. This is an opportunity for the pastor to minister to this person or family to provide comfort and support during any possible crisis they may be experiencing.

General Conference legislative changes include an addition to the Discipline which speaks directly to this issue.

Financial Accountability

Amend ¶ 340.2.c.(2)(c):

To provide leadership for the funding ministry of the congregation. To ensure membership care including compliance with charitable giving documentation requirements and to provide appropriate pastoral care, the pastor, in cooperation with the financial secretary, shall have access to and responsibility for professional stewardship of congregational giving records.

Rationale:

Giving is part of our membership covenant with God and the Church, which deserves careful stewardship by pastors and financial secretaries. Pastoral leadership for member care, congregational vitality, and mission capacity improves significantly when congregations include the pastor in stewardship of donor relationships and share knowledge about congregational resources.

In summary, a pastor's ability to minister properly and effectively includes being able to lead in the creation of a culture of generosity. As a part of the leadership, a pastor must be able to address all aspects of generosity and that means knowing and challenging members and friends regarding the use of all the resources available to them under all of life's circumstances.

The United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina, Inc. is a ministry of the Church for the Church whose mission is to build the Church for generations to come. We fulfill this mission by investing in people, churches and related institutions, and innovation. We envision a Church where people live-out their discipleship through the faithful use of their God-given resources. If we may be of service to you we welcome you to contact the Foundation office directly at 888.450.1956. We look forward to the day when we can be in ministry with you!