



Why Pay Apportionments?

Dear Friends:

Frequently I am asked the question "Why pay apportionments? Over the fourteen years I have worked with church finances, this is the question I have been asked the most often. My first response is too glib, "That's what United Methodists do!" But when I am at my best and say, "Tell me what you mean," the question becomes "Why do we have to send money to the Conference office? We have so many things we could be doing locally with the money."

At a deeper level some actually are asking, "Do United Methodist apportionments really make a difference? Do they change lives, create missions, feed the homeless, build churches, etc.?" There is a practical response, as well as one that goes to the heart of stewardship.

From our earliest days the people known as United Methodist have understood our life together as connectional. Whether part of an urban congregation, a weekly gathering at a rural crossroads, or making a new church start become a reality, United Methodists are all interconnected. The Gospel comes alive in the ministries we do in our individual settings, but we also know that we are called to witness in a larger world.

That shared understanding empowers us to financially support outreach that no single congregation could do on its own. The connection allows us to effectively share programs that really work in our local area throughout the country and the world, so that we can enhance the power of our witness everywhere. Our very existence as United Methodists engages us at the local, annual conference and worldwide level in ministries made possible by our shared commitments. For that reason, local congregations support annual conference budgets, and the annual conferences support the general church.

Giving is a major embodiment of my Christian witness and a significant part of my faith journey. I give because Jesus taught giving as a basic aspect of discipleship. As a United Methodist, my heritage embodied in Wesley's teachings further underscores the reasons I need to give. Giving is crucial for my spiritual growth. Giving out of gratitude helps me grow closer to God.

At every level of our church, be it local, annual conference or general, we work together to understand each other and bring resolution to those things we don't agree about. Shared ministries continue, even during those times when we experience disharmony. Its part of what it means to be United Methodist.

It seems pretty simple. If giving to God is part of my spiritual journey, how can I stop giving when it doesn't happen to be "going my way?" If I stop giving, I alter my relationship with God and give up on my Church, and I simply can't do either.

Together in Ministry,

Sandra K. Lackore