

January 1, 2022. Local Church Budget

First is Where He Belongs

Appeal: Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

We worship God because first is where He belongs. The opening words of the Holy Scripture, “In the beginning God,” positions God as “The First” without other details about His origin and prior existence. His position as “The First” is more than an honorific or a static title; it declares the Divine Being as the rightful Starter of everything. In Paul’s words, He is the Chief Cornerstone, and for John the Revelator, He is the Alpha. As the appeal “Put God First” resounds in our ears, it would be presumptuous to think that we can decide whether God is first. Putting God First is simply an acknowledgment of who God is: The First, The Starter. When we put God first, we are aligning our existence with the order of the universe.

The story is told of two brothers who were busy assembling the pieces of a puzzle game. After some time, the father could hear conflict between the brothers. As he stepped into the room, he could see both holding and pulling the same piece of the puzzle while screaming at each other. One wanted to place the piece at the bottom left and the other at the top right. ...He could not refrain from smiling and finally gave these words of advice: “Unless the piece is placed where it should be, you will never complete the puzzle.”

Unless “The First,” “The Starter,” is placed where He is supposed to be, our existence will never be complete. We are doomed to be non-starters. In managing our resources, small and great, who and what is competing for the first place? If you aspire to make this year a masterpiece of your life, choose to acknowledge God as the First in everything.

Prayer: Lord, we praise You for being the great Starter of the universe. We invite You to be First in our life and First in the management of our resources. In You, we want a great start and to finish strong.

January 8, 2022. Religious Liberty

Appeal: Matthew 5:9-13

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

The mission of the Adventist Church’s Religious Liberty Ministry is to preserve the ability of its members to practice and share their faith as their conscience dictates, and to administer the Church’s institutions in a manner consistent with our biblical beliefs.

The Public Affairs and Religious ministry protects and defends these sacred freedoms through the distribution of Liberty Magazine, legislative advocacy, public awareness initiatives, coalition building, education of our members and pastors, and the legal system.

The funds given today will go to sponsor Liberty Magazine subscriptions to individuals who make decisions that impact our ability to live out our religious convictions, to share God’s love with others, and to maintain churches and schools that reflect our Christian values and teachings.

It will also support the legal defense of members who experience religious discrimination in the workplace.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church additionally advocates on behalf of the religious freedoms of individuals who believe differently than we do. In doing so we honor God’s gracious gift of individual choice and the power of the Holy Spirit to motivate sincere change.

Please prayerfully consider giving generously to this offering. The amount of money contributed directly impacts the number of Liberty subscriptions that are distributed and the number of members the church is able to assist.

Join me in making the religious freedom of our church and its members a priority.

Prayer: Lord, indeed You are the Wisest Instructor. We invite You to lead us in our life decisions and the management of our resources.

January 15, 2021. Local Church Budget

Supernatural Protection

Appeal: 2 Timothy 4:18

“The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

We worship God with our resources because of His multiple saving acts against supernatural powers. Apostle Paul speaks about his assurance concerning God’s protection and deliverance from every evil attack. God’s rescue from such supernatural powers was one motive leading Paul to constantly give Him glory.

As a young boy, Eric struggled with frequent nightmares, dreaming of attacks by strange animals that looked like some of the divinities worshipped in his culture. Frequently, he would wake up sweating and crying. As soon as he went back to sleep, the nightmares would return. To make things worse, Eric’s family would often hear strange noises on the steel roof of their house, like someone running or a stone rolling. The parents were convinced that their home was haunted and that the evil spirit wanted to kill their son. They tried every possible means to ensure protection from these supernatural attacks. Among many things, the parents would bring the boy to a Hindu priest for regular rituals, and once a year, they would do a pilgrimage to the grave of a priest. They vowed not to cut Eric’s hair until he turned 7. Apparently, these strategies did not bring the little boy peace. Finally, they resolved to seek help from the God of the Bible. At bedtime, the mother would read Psalm 91 while laying hands on the boy’s head. Gradually, Eric began making the connection between a night without nightmares and prayers before sleeping. He became convinced of the existence of a God who is more powerful than the evil forces which were harassing him. For complete security, he dedicated his life to the powerful God.

Evil attacks may be visible or invisible, known or unknown, but they are a reality that many experience. However everyone and everything dedicated to God can be securely preserved. This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings let us express thankfulness for the divine protection.

Prayer: Almighty, powerful God, we are thankful for Your divine protection against the evil one who seeks to destroy and steal what You have provided. Today, we place ourselves and our resources under Your trust and care.

January 22, 2022. Local Conference Advance

Full Restoration

Appeal: Isaiah 43:11

“I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.”

We worship God with our best resources because God has provided what we need the most, salvation: “apart from me there is no savior.” And His salvation embraces all aspects of life; in Him, there is full redemption.

This was the experience of a man named Roger. His dad was a fisherman, and his mother died during his early childhood. Roger coped well because of the love and support of his dad until something terrible happened. While at sea, his dad had to climb to the top of the mast. He fell into the water and was nowhere to be found. At the age of 14, Roger was an orphan with no one to pay for his school fees. He became partially homeless, spending some nights at some relatives’ homes, some nights sleeping in fishing boats by the sea, and other nights sleeping in trees! He would steal raw vegetables from people’s gardens to fill his empty stomach. He was so poor that he had to wear all three pairs of his pants, one on top of the other, to cover himself. To escape this harsh reality, he started drinking alcohol, and rapidly, he became a heavy drinker. But one day, Roger heard about the Gospel and accepted Jesus as Savior. His life was transformed. He was healed of his painful emotions, quit alcohol, settled in a job, ran his own business, grew a happy family, owned a house, sent his kids to school, and lived with a life’s purpose of introducing others to His savior.

In response to the exceptional redemption he experienced, among other things, Roger decided to worship God by faithfully returning his tithe and offerings until he died. What has the Savior accomplished in your existence? This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings, let us show an appropriate response to His salvation.

Prayer: Lord, we are thankful for the complete salvation provided to us and to Roger. Help us to worship you with our transformed life and generosity with our resources.

January 29, 2022. Local Church Budget

The Price of Life

Appeal: Numbers 8:17

“Every firstborn male in Israel, whether human or animal, is mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set them apart for myself.”

We worship God with our resources because He has preserved our lives. We all remember Joseph and Mary bringing baby Jesus to the temple 33 days after his birth. This event is known as the dedication of Jesus and has inspired many Christians. The origin of this practice goes back to the time that the Israelites left Egypt. During the 10th plague, the firstborn of the Egyptian was killed whereas God protected the Israelite firstborn. As a sign of remembrance, every parent in Israel would consecrate their firstborn son to the Lord and make the corresponding offerings. Depending on the family’s wealth it was either a one-year-old lamb or two turtledoves, offered in appreciation and for the consecration of a spared life.

God is still sparing lives today. Eric was a young man when he realized how God spared his life. His summer job was to clean some large windowpanes of a three-story building. He had to step out of each room and stood on a 12-centimeter edge to clean the outside surface of the fixed middle panel of each window. There was no security gear, only holding tight the frame with one hand while working with the other. One day, while he was working outside of a room on the third floor, a violent wind closed the window on his hand that was holding the frame. As a reflex reaction, he opened his grip. For some few seconds, he was standing still, hands free, 20 meters above the ground with no security. Miraculously, Eric came back to himself and managed to take hold of the frame with his injured hand. God had preserved his life and he chose to fully consecrate himself serving His Protector.

After going through a pandemic that has already killed millions of people, we as the survivors have many reasons to be thankful. This week as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings let us show appreciation to our Protector.

Prayer: Lord we worship you because your love and care have preserved our lives. Receive our offerings of thanks and consecration to you.

February 5, 2022. Local Church Budget

Thanks to the Master-Consultant

Appeal: Luke 14:28

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?”

We worship God with our resources because He is the Master-Consultant. Jesus taught that everything comes with a cost and it is wiser to know the cost and plan. This life management principle applies to all aspects of our existence. Ignoring or neglecting this brings embarrassment, trouble, and pain.

A young man was anxious about his upcoming wedding. He knew that the bride was the one he had dreamed of, but he had some real concerns for their finances as a new couple. He would be the only one earning a salary, and previously as a bachelor, he could hardly reach the next payday without borrowing some money. Surprisingly, after the first month, the first quarter, and first year of marriage, the one income was sufficient for the couple’s expenses. They could even reach the next payday with some bit of savings. The result was great peace of mind. How was that made possible? During their wedding preparation, the pastor counseling them reminded them about the instruction of Jesus “sit down and estimate the cost.” They learned about the importance of a family budget. Neither of the spouses was an accountant, but with practice, discipline, and God’s help, they established a budget, a roadmap for their expense.

Today, we live in a generation that is constantly urging us to use our resources without thinking and planning. Commercials and viral advertising appeal to our senses. Many base spending on what they see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. The result is an unhealthy spending pattern leading to some dire consequences. The Master-Consultant, Owner, and Provider of all resources provides valuable insights to avoid the pitfalls of unwise spending. This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings let us place God and His instructions on the forefront of our lives.

Prayer: Lord, we praise you for the multiple resources You have provided us and we thank You for Your valuable instructions.

February 12, 2022. Adventist Television Ministries Evangelism

Agents of Love and Compassion

Appeal: Matthew 25:40

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

We worship with our resources because He invites us to engage in acts of love and compassion. Matthew 25 reports about how those who believe in the imminence of the Second Coming of Jesus should act while waiting. The parable of the ten virgins teaches about the importance of nurturing one’s spirituality. The parable of the bags of gold talks about using God’s given talents and gifts to accomplish His mission. Finally, the parable of the sheep and goats emphasizes the importance of acts of love and compassion as service to God. Our task, while waiting, is incomplete if we do not serve those in need. At the time of judgment, God will hold us accountable for how we treated the least of these.

The Beau-Bassin church in Mauritius has chosen to be an agent of love and compassion in their community. Years ago, the pastoral intern of that church met with two homeless people. Being touched by their conditions, he asked them how the church could help them. “We would like to have a regular meal once a week,” was their answer. One more night with full stomachs meant a lot to them. In response to this call, the Beau-Bassin church began serving “a meal once a week” for the homeless and needy of their locality, feeding 25 to 40 people. The pastor left after some time, but the church members remained committed to the project; through special donations or by bringing already cooked meals, they have supported this ongoing ministry. Many volunteers of all ages have given of their time, often stepping out of their comfort zone. This year they are celebrating 25 years of generosity and service to the homeless.

As Jesus’ disciples, would you choose to be a channel of blessings, drawing a smile on the face of the least of these and on the face of God? This week, we have another opportunity to be a blessing by worshipping with our tithe and regular offerings.

Prayer: Lord, we want to partner with You with our resources to alleviate sufferings and bring relief around us. Make us agents of Your love and compassions.

February 19, 2022. Local Church Budget

Whatever He Receives, He Multiplies

Appeal: John 6: 9

“Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

We worship God with our tithe, regular offerings and donations because whatever He receives, He multiplies. The miracle of the multiplication of bread teaches that a desert can become a restaurant when Jesus is around; nothing is too small for Him to make into a sumptuous feast. Jesus can only multiply what is given to Him. The food that had remained home, He did not multiply; the food that was eaten before the disciples came, could not be multiplied; the food that was hidden away was not be multiplied. Only the food freely offered by the little lad did He multiply. As the disciples went through the crowd to look for bread, the little boy gave his bread and fish. Jesus multiplied both. He multiplies whatever is given to Him.

A young man wanted to become a pastor. As there was no theological school in his home country, he applied to two affordable schools abroad. Unfortunately, one of the schools had to close because of a civil war. For the other, he was not granted a student visa. He was disappointed. Then, unexpectedly, he was invited to the local conference office. There, he was introduced to a man who asked him: “Do you really want to study theology to become a pastor?” He answered affirmatively. Without any further discussions, the stranger informed him of his intention to pay for his studies at any theological school he chose. He could hardly believe what was happening, but on that day, he understood the meaning of whatever God receives, He multiplies. With their limited resources, if his parents had kept their tithe and offerings for several years, it wouldn’t have been enough to pay his tuition at the school which he finally attended.

For all these untold miracles of God multiplying our resources, should we not persevere worshipping Him with our tithe and regular offerings?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, please help us to realize that in the time of scarcity, our wisest move is to return to You what is Yours and what You have asked of us. Renew our faith in You, the God who multiplies what He receives.

February 26, 2022. Local Conference Advance

A Regular Dependable God

Appeal: 1 Kings 17:14

“For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.’”

We choose to give regularly and systematically because of the regularity of God’s care for us. The story of the Shunamite widow’s oil and flour testifies loudly about the God whose compassions never fail and are new every morning. Every single day during these three and half years of famine, there was food on her table. She never missed a single meal. God faithfully realized His promise in response to the widow’s action to provide first for Elijah, the man of God. During these days of scarcity, God’s miracle was as consistent as dawn.

God remains consistent even today. A family had recently settled in a new country and encountered some financial challenges. Their family budget was not balancing. They decided to skim out all superfluous expenses, but that was not enough. It was now time for some drastic decisions; to either cut their giving to the church or not enroll their son in his piano classes. Both decisions would be temporary until their financial condition improved. Prayerfully but painfully, they chose the second option, no piano lessons. A few days later, early in the morning, the wife picked an envelope from their living room floor. The envelope was sealed and had no name written on it. When they opened the envelope, great was their surprise to find money inside! The amount was more than enough for the fee for at least three months of piano lessons. They experienced the consistency of God’s care.

Some life circumstances may tempt us to interrupt our regularity in worshipping God with our resources. If this is our struggle, let us allow God’s faithfulness and regularity to inspire us. This week, in response to God’s consistency, we worship Him with our tithe and regular offerings.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for being the unchanging, eternal God on whom we can depend for our daily sustenance. Help us to reflect Your image of regularity in faithfulness.

March 5, 2022. Local Church Budget

The Modern-Day Waldensians

Appeal: Luke 8:3

“Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.”

We bring our tithe, offerings, and donations because the Master calls us to partner in His final mission. During Jesus’ earthly ministry, a group of women provided the resources for His last trip around Galilee. As a result, this phase of His ministry was particularly rich in teaching, demonstrating power and expansion in mission. During this missionary tour, they visited the Gentile regions outside the borders of Israel: Tyre, Sidon, Bethsaida, and Decapolis. They went north as far as Caesarea Phillipi. Outside Tyre, Jesus repeated the miracle of the multiplication of bread by feeding 4,000 men, non-Jews, presenting Himself as the Bread of Life for all nations.

Today some young people are dedicating their lives to bring the Gospel to some hard-to-reach peoples and groups in the Middle East. In the tradition of the Waldensians of the Middle Ages, they pursue secular activities as a vehicle for preaching the gospel. Some are enrolled in Universities. Though they are students, their first aim and focus is to find opportunities to bring the love and message of Jesus to their peers. One modern-day Waldensian wrote these words: “Being in a foreign land is challenging. You miss your family, your home country, and your friends. You also have to adapt to a new culture, the people, the climate, and so forth.” But her commitment remains unshakable because “Universities are amazing mission fields. You meet people your age, you easily make friends, and you have many opportunities to share about God with open-minded, inquisitive people.”

A part of the tithe and offerings is used to support the work of these young people. Would you like this ministry and other ministries to move forward and expand? Participate this week and onward in returning your tithe and regular offerings.

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for the work of these frontline missionaries. Protect them and bless their service. Help us not to miss any opportunity to support Your final mission.

March 12, 2022

Adventist World Radio

Adventist World Radio is a media ministry of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. With more than 1,000 worldwide radio stations and local studios, cell phone evangelism, apps, podcasts, health messages, and internet-based outreach, AWR is reaching nearly all the world with the Gospel.

Radio is still the primary source of communication for most of the world. It knows no borders, no walls, and no limits. It can penetrate homes and hearts and go where missionaries cannot enter.

One major target of Adventist World Radio's broadcasts is the 10/40 window, comprised of parts of North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia—areas currently closed to the Gospel message, but easily reached by radio.

Last year, AWR's Unlocking Bible Prophecies and Earth's Final Countdown series received millions of views in dozens of languages. Many of these videos are still the top results when people search for Bible prophecy topics on YouTube and Google.

Every day, AWR receives emails, letters, and messages from around the world. One recent letter said: "The Unlocking Bible Prophecies series is transforming my family. I was raised Baptist and attended church on Sunday, so I've been so blessed to learn of the Sabbath and will be attending my first in-person Adventist church service this weekend."

APPEAL: Today's offering is for Adventist World Radio, which has been broadcasting the Good News to the world for more than 50 years. Currently, AWR broadcasts in more than 100 different languages, but plans are underway to prepare evangelistic sermons and health presentations in more than 500 languages and dialects so that every person on the planet can listen to Bible-based messages in their own language. Thank you for your prayers and for partnering with Adventist World Radio is the greatest calling ever.

PRAYER: Father, thank you for the opportunity to work with you in the saving of souls. Please bless the ministry of Adventist World Radio. We know it is only through your Spirit that this work can go, and lives can be changed for the kingdom of heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

March 19, 2022. Local Church Budget

The Invisible Driver

Appeal: Psalms 18:2

“The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”

We worship God with our resources because He is our sure Deliverer. From his anointing when he was around 15 until his old age, King David had a long and perilous journey through many dangers. To name a few: there were the lions and the bears, Goliath—the giant, Saul—the envious king, and Absalom—the overly ambitious son. For keeping him safe, David burst into praises, worshiping God as the Rock, the Fortress, and Deliverer.

A missionary family in Madagascar has also experienced God’s miraculous protection. One early morning, the family of three, with a nine-month baby, together with some friends, started a 12-hour road trip. By midday, after a good lunch, they proceeded immediately for them not to miss their meeting. Heading West, the sun began to set in front of them. Conversations became sparse, and finally, the only noise was the snoring from the front passenger seat. The driver started feeling sleepy. He slept off several times, but he was determined to reach the destination on time. He sped up. Then, for some few seconds, he blacked out. A branch violently hit the front windscreen. The car was seriously damaged, but miraculously the occupants had only some minor bruises. The baby fell on the small foam mattress that the parents bought the day before. Some few meters where the car stopped, children were playing soccer. They were shocked but not harmed. Later, everyone realized that the vehicle had passed perfectly between two trees. There were ditches on both sides of this road, except where the car left the tarmac. The outcome could have been different without the intervention of the Invisible Driver.

The God of David and of the missionary family is not less active today. Do you think that “The Deliverer” deserves our full worship? This week, through our tithe and regular offerings we can worship the Great Deliverer.

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for being our Rock, Fortress, and Deliverer. Help us rest before travel and be alert on the roads. Accept our praises as we honor You with our resources.

March 26, 2022. Local Conference Advance

The Unlimited Provider

Appeal: Philippians 4:19

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”

We worship God because He is the limitless Provider. One day Abraham had a conversation with God during which God informed him about the son that he would soon have through Sarah and the blessing that would rest upon this second son. Perplexed, Abraham pleaded with God, Genesis 17:18, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” This conversation between God and Abraham teaches the important truth about divine abundance. Abraham was troubled that if the blessing would go to his second son, Isaac, there won’t be any blessings left for Ishmael. God reassured Abraham that He has enough blessings for both and everyone. He is the unlimited Provider.

The belief in the scarcity of God’s blessings has led some to function in strange ways. Here are some common scenarios of this mindset: “If someone else receives, I cannot receive, or I may receive less.” This conviction creates a spirit of jealousy, brutal competition, and animosity. Another scenario: “If I give or share, less will be left or available for me. I’m losing what I have.” This curtails generosity and fosters selfishness. However, these are false assumptions that ignore the reality of divine abundance. It is unhealthy to reason from the perspective of finite human beings and forget the Provider who is an infinite God. In Him we are not empty, even if we happen to give away everything.

Do you know that God has a full reserve of untapped blessings for each of us? This week, let us show through our tithe and regular offerings that we believe in divine abundance!

Prayer: Lord, we praise You for being an unlimited God who provides for us according to Your great riches. Increase our faith and help us to have a clearer picture of who You are.

April 2, 2022. Local Church Budget

Holy to the Lord!

Appeal: Proverbs 3:9-10

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”

We worship God with our offerings because offerings are holy to the Lord. The adjective holy is often associated with the Sabbath and the tithe, but rarely with offerings. However, the Scripture is full of references regarding the holiness of offerings. Among other passages, the Bible declares that two expiatory offerings, the sin and guilt offerings, as “most holy” (Lev. 6:25; 7:1), and the grain and food offerings are described as “most holy part” and “too sacred” (Lev. 2:3; 22:10). The offering is a mean, a very special mean set aside and established by God for His children to worship and enjoy a unique encounter with Him. It was an indispensable component of the life of the children of Israel; neglecting the practice of offering was equivalent to robbing God (Mal. 3: 8) of the honor due to Him.

In ancient Israel, through the giving of offerings, God’s children were worshiping and praising Him, celebrating Him as the Giver of the Holy One, affirming Him as Lord, acknowledging Him as Owner, Provider, and Sustainer, showing a willingness to obey, supporting the holy ministry, and being a blessing for many. God set the amount or value of some offerings, and for other offerings, He left it to the personal choice of the worshipper. Nonetheless, according to what one has received, the general principle was always to give in proportion (Deut. 16: 17) and give the very best to God as offerings (Lev. 22:20).

Today, it is common knowledge that the ratio of tithe to offerings is often in favor of tithe. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we observed a clear trend: there was a significantly higher reduction in offerings than in tithe, although in the world field (2020), both declined; however, by the grace of God and the faithfulness of His people, over all, tithe increased (2020). This week, as we worship with our regular offerings let us acknowledge the holy functions of offerings.

Prayer: Lord, we praise You for the privilege to worship. Please help us to value the holy practice of offerings.

April 9, 2022

Hope Channel International, Inc.

Every day, God uses the global evangelistic media ministry of Hope Channel to reach thousands of viewers with the message of hope and love that comes from Him! With 68+ Hope Channels around the world broadcasting in more than 80 languages, the mission of Jesus is being fulfilled by the power of the Holy Spirit—"The harvest truly is great!" (Lk. 10:2).

Through turbulent and unprecedented world events, God used Hope Channel to share uplifting messages and opportunities for connection with viewers around the world. Hope at Home, a new Hope Channel program, has become the local online church service for thousands around the world each weekend by providing inspiring messages, music, and wellness tips from professionals. You can tune in on [HopeTV.org/AtHome](https://www.hopetv.org/AtHome). The Bible study platform, [Hope.Study](https://www.hopetv.org/Study), has grown to provide free and easy-to-use bible study courses on topics such as igniting your prayer life, navigating stressful situations, and learning to understand the Bible better. We are also seeing more and more inspiring testimonies of viewers whose lives have changed; you can watch these testimonies at [HopeTV.org/Transformed](https://www.hopetv.org/Transformed). We encourage you to invite your family and friends to watch Hope Channel too!

Appeal: Your support for Hope Channel provides much-needed resources for this global evangelistic media ministry. The General Conference regularly receives a portion of offerings received from the divisions, and it redistributes the funds to mission projects and institutions. Hope Channel is included in that list. Additional offerings for Hope Channel may be given at any time in a marked envelope.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for the invitation to join You in Your harvest work! Please bless these gifts and all Your harvest workers, in the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

April 16, 2022. Local Church Budget

Love Without Boundaries

Appeal: John 3:17

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

We worship through regular and systematic giving because God gave us an example of love without boundaries. John 3:17 declares the nature and the scope of the mission of the Son: Jesus came to bring salvation, and He brought it to the whole world. Doing mission in the footsteps of Jesus means embracing a universal mission. Among other things, the tithe and offerings plan provides us with an opportunity to participate in a global mission.

The story is told of a pastor who was ministering at a city church. This large and well-off congregation was known for its generosity. They were keen to invest in the regular upgrading of their church facilities, unfortunately sometimes at the expense of returning a faithful tithe and participating in regular offerings. Interestingly, the pastor refrained from educating his members about the danger of self-serving generosity and the importance of supporting the global church family. Pastoring a church with the best facilities was even his source of pride and satisfaction. After some years, the conference transferred him to a different and less affluent locality; he quickly understood the consequences of the narrow vision of mission.

How large is our vision of God’s mission? We are saved because God emptied heaven and sent Jesus to our world. And at some point, the church mobilized resources to send a missionary to our home country or region. With Jesus as our model, would you like to be an instrument of love to every nation, tribe, language, and people? This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings we have another opportunity to give globally.

Prayer: Lord, Your love has no boundaries; that’s why we are saved. We praise Your name. Through our giving, help us to express the same kind of love for all humanity.

April 23, 2022. Local Conference Advance

The Master's Appeal

Appeal: Malachi 1:6

“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is my honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the Lord Almighty.

We worship God with our tithe and offerings in response to the call to acknowledge God as Master. Acknowledging the real Master can sometimes be a struggle.

The captain of the ship looked into the night and saw faint lights in the distance. Immediately he told his signalman to send a message, “Alter your course 10 degrees south.”

Promptly a return message was received: “Alter your course 10 degrees north.”

The captain was angered; his command had been ignored. So, he sent a second message: “Alter your course 10 degrees south—I am the captain!”

Soon another message was received: “Alter your course 10 degrees north—I am seaman third class Jones.”

Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear it would evoke: “Alter your course 10 degrees south--I am a battleship.”

Then the reply came, “Alter your course 10 degrees north—I am a lighthouse.”

Not acknowledging the One in charge, the real Lord, is always risky. For this reason, Malachi appealed to God's people to return and acknowledge Him as Master. Hearing the call, the people responded in Malachi 3:7, “How are we to return?” In response, the Lord reminded His people that they had departed from Him by robbing Him in tithes and offerings.

Each time we consider money as our source of status, protection, security, and even love, we elevate it to the rank of lord in the place of the real Lord. We allow money to compete with God for the position of Lord. The system of tithing was established to acknowledge God as Lord and Master. This week, let us not miss the opportunity of reiterating our confession of God's Lordship by worshipping Him with our tithe and regular offerings.

Prayer: We are blessed to have you as Father and Lord. May our actions and giving reveal that we honor you as Lord and Father.

April 30, 2022. Local Church Budget

Emulate an Orderly God

Appeal: Jeremiah 31:35

“This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and star to shine by night...the Lord Almighty is his name.”

We worship with our resources in a disciplined way because we emulate an orderly God. One striking feature of God’s creation is its well-ordered design. The daily, weekly, and monthly patterns speak loud about the Designer, Creator, and Sustainer of the universe. As believers, we define ourselves as being His image and God being our model. Therefore, those who aspire to be His clear and sharp image are indeed paying attention to these words: “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40). Spontaneity should not be an excuse for an absence of order in worship and giving.

A man was always complaining of people stealing his money; he even suspected his wife and children. One day, his good friend gave him some advice: “If you vow to make a special gift to God, no one will touch your money.” He agreed to make this vow. On payday, he cashed his check and hid his money. After some few days, he remembered his vow but there was only one small bill left to his great disbelief. He burst in a rage, shouting, and cursing his wife and children: “This time, you have stolen God’s money, and He will deal with you.” His wife remained silent, wrote on a sheet of paper from top to bottom, and added some numbers on the right. Then, she gently pushed the paper toward her furious husband. His eyes moved up and down through the list of items and numbers. He dared not add one single word. No one had stolen his money; he was spending carelessly without any plan.

When our finances are in a mess, we can hardly enjoy a happy life, and it is difficult to honor God with a faithful tithe and adequate offerings. Would you like to enjoy the quality of life that your Divine Father has meticulously purposed for you? Exercise more discipline and order in the management of our God-given resources. This week, may we reflect the image of the orderly God that we serve through our tithe and regular offerings.

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for the example of the order that You have set. Please give us the wisdom and discipline to reflect this attribute in the management of our personal affairs.

May 7, 2022. Local Church Budget

He Empowers!

Appeal: Deuteronomy 8:18

“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.”

We worship God with our resources because He has placed something valuable in each of our pockets. Some of you are not convinced by these words because you are thinking of how thin your purse is or about the bank account that you don't have. Sometimes, we search thoroughly and still fail to see the value in things that we have received. Hence, we are tempted even to doubt these words or take comfort by spiritualizing the meaning of the word “wealth.” Is it possible that we focus too much on the end product while not appreciating the “ability to produce wealth” that God has given us?

One day a man was asked about the difference between himself and his wife. Listen to his answer: “When I am hungry, I behave differently from my wife.” “After my day of work at the office, I will drop my bag, rush to the kitchen, remove the lid from over the pot and look for my favorite dish.” “In contrast, my wife, when she is hungry, will open the cupboard and the fridge, get the raw materials and prepare a delicious meal.” Two different strategies to address the same need: one is seeking desperately for the end product and the other using the available raw materials.

Instead of being frustrated and discouraged about the absence or limitation of the end product, it is more efficient to acknowledge and use God's raw materials. They comprise, among other things of the health, energy, talents, and gifts that He has provided. And God promises to empower us as we diligently use these raw materials. Do you know that one of the most thrilling experiences is to partner with God to produce resources for our subsistence? This week, through our participation in tithe and regular offerings we can praise God for assisting us in transforming the raw materials He provides.

Prayer: Lord, we are thankful for both the raw materials and the ability to produce wealth. You are indeed the Provider of everything.

May 14, 2022

Disaster and Famine Relief

Appeal: Galatians 6:2

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Adventist Community Services (ACS) works with the local conferences and disaster response agencies to equip volunteers to serve and assist the community, providing disaster assessments, sheltering services, donation management, home reconstruction, and emotional and spiritual care.

In 2020 – 2021, COVID-19 caused a heavy toll on ACS Food Pantries/Centers, yet our volunteers continued to serve families and individuals who were facing challenges due to this crisis. NAD ACS invested 2 million dollars to assist in providing food to our neighbors who struggled during this difficult time.

When you give to ACS and ADRA, YOU make it possible for the Adventist Church to respond immediately both nationally and internationally to help survivors of hurricanes, fires, floods, earthquakes, famine, and other crisis.

Sabbath, May 14, 2022 is the Disaster and Famine Relief Offering. If you wish to support the Offering, please donate at your local church or online here.

We want to thank everyone for your dedicated ongoing support to Adventist Community Services, whether it is through sacrificial giving, volunteering, or prayers.

Prayer: Lord, we are thankful for both the raw materials and the ability to produce wealth. You are indeed the Provider of everything.

May 21, 2022. Local Church Budget

Demonstrate Self Denial

Appeal: 1 John 3:16

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

We worship God with our resources because of His sacrificial love. Jesus left heaven, and He embraced the plight of fallen humanity. He accomplished his mission against fearful odds and dire resistance. Finally, He offered it all, His own life. This is how He demonstrated love. As God’s representatives, a sacrificial spirit is part of our true identity. That was the spirit demonstrated by our church’s pioneers, and J.N. Andrews was a leading figure among them.

John Andrews was a widow with two children when he accepted a call to go to Europe as the first official Seventh-day Adventist missionary. He accepted the call without knowing what his specific salary would be. They agreed to send him money from time to time, but this was not done as regularly as needed. For him to publish tracts, pamphlets, and the French periodical “Les Signes des Temps” he often had to use his own funds, sometimes going without food and other necessities. He contracted pneumonia in 1877, and after the examination, the physician commented: “This man is almost starved to death!” One year later, his daughter contracted tuberculosis. Andrews brought his daughter home to Battle Creek and she was treated by Dr. J. H. Kellogg, but she sadly passed away. The committed missionary nevertheless returned to Europe to continue his groundbreaking work until he died of tuberculosis at the age of 54.

We are living in a time where money and other resources are hard to find. Waiting for surplus or leftover resources to support the mission could be a pious wish. In this context, these words of Ellen White are most relevant: “Those who profess to be one with Christ and indulge their selfish desires for rich and expensive clothing, furniture, and food, are Christians only in name. To be a Christian is to be Christlike.” (Review & Herald, Oct. 13, 1896). This week, may our tithe and regular offerings reflect a spirit of self-denial, the Spirit of Christ.

Prayer: Lord, we praise You for consenting to the greatest of all sacrifices to save us. Help us demonstrate the same sacrificial spirit in our daily lives, including how we use our resources.

May 28, 2022. Local Conference Advance

Provider of All

Appeal: Philippians 4: 19

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory
in Christ Jesus.

We give a tithe of all because our Lord is the Provider of all. After His victory against a powerful coalition, Abram gave a tithe of everything, food, goods, and possessions to Melchizedek the priest (Gen. 14). Jacob, his grandson, promised to return a tithe of everything (Gen. 28). The book of Leviticus 27:30 does not speak about a good and acceptable for tithe: “A tithe 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.” Jesus himself acknowledged that tithing was from “all I get” (Lk. 18:12) and from the minutest gain (Matt. 23:23a). What could be the reason for this emphasis on tithing everything?

This real value of tithe is not monetary but symbolic. It reminds us to acknowledge and remember God as the Giver of all: “He asks us to acknowledge Him as the Giver of all things; and for this reason He says, of all your possessions I reserve a tenth for Myself, besides gifts and offerings, which are to be brought into My storehouse.” (Counsel to Stewardship, pp. 80-81). A partial tithe would mean that God is the Giver of only part of what we need.

A well-known trust game, the blind swing, helps us to understand the value of depending on God as the Giver of all. In this game, you close your eyes and allow two individuals to swing you to and fro. After some time, you experience the peaceful sensation that results from complete trust. This is only possible when you keep your eyes completely closed and you choose not to peek from time to time. Perfect peace is the outcome of perfect trust. In a world of uncertainties and confusion, the exercise of tithing from everything, an apex of total dependence, will contribute to our inner peace. Which message is your tithing practice sending to your brain and heart? This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings we can grow in heavenly peace.

Prayer: Lord, we praise You because in You there is perfect peace. Help us to regularly acknowledge You as the Giver of all through our tithe, gifts, and offerings.

June 4, 2022. Local Church Budget

Protection Against Babylon's Manipulation!

Appeal: Revelations 18:3

“For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”

We worship God with our resources because it is one of God's protective walls against the Deceitful One. The Bible portrays Babylon as a major threat to God's people. Prophetic Babylon serving intoxicated wine conveys the idea of deception (Prov. 20:1). One of Babylon's final deceptions is to present itself as the source of economic prosperity. This manipulation works well because it appeals to our natural attraction for material gain. Are we not the generation known as “lovers of money”? (2 Tim. 3:2). How do we stand in resistance to the deception of Babylon?

Observing squirrels can teach us a lesson. These cute and furry creatures often roam in your backyard, but they are always cautious not to come too close and are furtive when you approach them. However, when their reserve of acorn is almost depleted, this is the time to attract them to you by offering them some nuts. Their need for food leads them to lower their defense mechanism. Effective manipulations function in the same way: they appeal to a perceived need. When one experiences a financial crisis, the means to acquire some income become particularly attractive!

The practice of tithe, systematic offerings, and donations helps us constantly remember that God is the source of true riches (Deut. 8:18). Hence, we don't have to yield to the Babylonians' manipulative schemes to obtain what we need. Furthermore, the craving for material possession loses its grip over us when we are already appreciative through giving of what we have received. Ellen G. White wrote: “Constant, self-denying benevolence is God's remedy for the cankering sins of selfishness and covetousness” (Testimonies to the Churches, vol. 3, p. 548).

We are called to get out of Babylon. This includes resisting the manipulation of Babylon in issues of finances. Is it safe to neglect to give up this protective gear that Our God has given us? This week, through our tithe and regular offerings we can stand in resistance to Babylon.

Prayer: Lord, we face all sorts of temptations to compromise in matters of faith. We thank You for Your instructions given for our safeguard.

June 11, 2022

Women's Ministries

Appeal: Proverbs 31:8

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.”

Women are specifically designed by God to meet the needs of other women. Women's Ministries is the best way to connect both the church and unchurched women in your community to each other and to 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, seminars, and get together. Zoom became a place where members and community gathered to talk, encourage, 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 who partner with God in service through ministries that impact girls, teens, young adults, and women.

Learn more about women's ministries and how you can impact your church and community at nadwm.org. Thank you for supporting women's ministries as we seek to encourage, equip and challenge girls, teens, and women to grow deeply in God and serve Him uniquely with their gifts and talents.

Prayer: Lord, we give you our hearts, we give you ourselves, and we give you these gifts. Thank you for this privilege, we love You and serve You. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.

June 18, 2022. Local Church Budget

Salvation is Not an Afterthought

Appeal: 1 Peter 1:20

“He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”

We give systematically and regularly because the divine Model has demonstrated that His giving to humanity was not an afterthought. The plan to offer His Son and rescue humanity from sin was elaborated before the creation of the universe, and at the set time, Jesus came to planet earth. This clearly illustrates the consideration of a loving God for fallen humanity. In response to the example set by the greatest Giver, Apostle Paul gave the following admonition to the believers in Corinth, “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...” (1 Cor. 16:2). Giving that is planned honors the receiver.

Think about your feelings when you receive a belated birthday note from someone whom you consider close and important to you. Sometimes the message comes when they see your social media post thanking others for their well-wishes. These belated notes are rarely the most valued. When we want to show someone that he or she counts and is special, we usually mark our calendar and even add a reminder for us not to miss the important event. The best expression of love is both spontaneous and planned.

Which type of giver are we when we have to express love and thanks to God? Do we depend solely on the prompting of our impulses and feelings? Are we those who asked the deacon to wait while we dig deep into our purse or pocket? Or do we remember about returning tithe and giving offerings when we see an expectedly higher balance on our bank statement at the end of the month? How do we honor the Savior who does not treat us as an afterthought? This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular and systematic offerings let us show that our God is first and foremost.

Prayer: Lord, the plan of salvation tells us how much You love us and are important in Your sights. In response, please help us to emulate the same consideration for You and others.

June 25, 2022. Local Conference Advance

The Most Secure Placement

Appeal: Matthew 6:20-21

“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

We worship God using our resources because it is the most secure placement. The Bible reveals that in the end, “the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare” (2 Pet. 3:10). Possession will be of no value. These events will represent the most severe Recession-Hyperinflation-Depression ever experienced by humanity. Peter invites his readers not to take these things lightly but to undergo some fundamental changes: “What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.” (2 Pet. 3:11). We can learn something from those who had to cope with hyperinflation.

In the time of inflation, prices could double in less than 24 hours. In some places, individuals would go to the grocery store carrying cash in a basket over their heads. Worried and angry people would line up for hours in front of banks to withdraw their savings only to hear “request denied.” As a result, the population and investors would lose faith in the local currency. Many would try to exchange their money into stronger currencies as a survival strategy. Some countries would exchange their devalued currency for new currency or start using foreign currencies locally. Exchange is the key strategy. This corresponds with the admonition of Jesus: “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:21).

How can one do this exchange effectively? No need to go through the black market: “To do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share,” this is the path revealed by the Apostle Paul (1 Tim. 6:18). This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings we have another opportunity to exchange our perishable resources by being a blessing to others.

Prayer: Lord, You are so thoughtful that You care for both our present and future life. We thank You for Your advice. Please help us to be doers of your instructions.

July 2, 2022. Local Church Budget

Hasten His Coming

Appeal: Matthew 24:14

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

We worship with our tithe and offerings because we wait eagerly to see our God face to face. The Scripture associates the Second Coming with the proclamation of the gospel to the whole world (Matt. 24:14). He desires all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Our involvement in doing and supporting God’s mission makes it possible for others to hear and receive the good news. Peter describes the waiting experience as an active one: “as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.” Ellen G. White clarifies Peter’s words: “By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord’s return. We are not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God” (The Desire of Ages, 633, 634). It appears that God has given us the possibility to hasten His coming.

The example of a sled helps us to understand the meaning of hastening His return. If you put a sled at the top of a hill and allow it to glide, it will reach the bottom after some time. This is the natural course due to gravity and normal force. However, kids who like playing in the snow know that you can speed up your sled as it goes downhill. Among other tricks, you can spray cooking oil at the bottom of the sled, pack down the snow on the track, stay low on the sled, or balance your weight on the sled. As a result, you go faster, and it is more fun. In the same way, the reality of His Second Coming is unalterable; it will take place, but it can happen earlier if we associate with Him to reach out to others.

Are we going to forsake this opportunity to speed up his coming? This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings we can reveal how hard we wish for Second Coming.

Prayer: Lord, as a friendly God, You don’t want to be separated from Your children any longer. Please help us to demonstrate the same desire through our actions and giving.

July 9, 2022. World Budget

World Budget

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is known throughout the world for its mission outreach. Your regular and systematic mission offerings are like a life-giving river with tributaries flowing around the world, carrying refreshing water to mission fields. Every time we give our mission offerings, we're adding water to a life-giving river that flows through often parched lands bringing life and hope. We're helping the church grow, not only locally but also in areas that we may not have even heard of. We're assisting missionaries we may never meet and building schools and clinics that we probably will never visit. We are helping plant churches we may never worship in. And we're bringing life to the church's mission by introducing Jesus' love to the hearts and minds of people all around the world.

Did you know that even before COVID-19, the Adventist Church was experiencing a noticeable decline in mission offerings? Part of the reason is that we sometimes want to give to a specific project or put our offerings towards something special that stirs our hearts. We see the results, and we feel satisfied. Giving to the mission offering may not be as glamorous as giving to a specific, well-advertised project or program. But mission offerings help sustain all mission projects.

Just as we do not know where every drop of water in a river goes, we can see the results, and they are beautiful. Psalm 104 says, "He sends the springs into the valleys, they flow among the hills, they give drink to every beast of the field, the wild donkeys quench their thirst. By them, the birds of the heavens have their home, they sing among the branches."

In Matthew 28, Jesus Himself said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Please prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to show you what more you can do to support and sustain our Lord's work until He comes.

July 16, 2022. Local Church Budget

Live on What is Left

Appeal: 2 Kings 4:7

She went and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.”

We worship the God who makes promises and provides instructions. Our Bible text describes the initiative of a widow after she has experienced a miracle, a room full of jars with oil. She returned to Elisha to express gratitude. Then, the prophet spoke these final words to her: “Live on what is Left!” These words stand as a promise about the sufficiency of God’s provision. She does not have to fear for her future. They are also an instruction not to live on borrowed resources. Previously, her family contracted a huge debt which resulted in painful consequences. Elisha’s departing advice was for her to manage wisely. The Lord does not only perform miracles, but He also teaches us how to use our blessings.

The instruction “live on what is left” is much relevant for us today. Across G20 countries, a quarter of people did not agree with the statement “before I buy something, I carefully consider whether I can afford it” (OECD, 2017). Personal financial management is a major deficiency for our generation, bringing disastrous consequences. Believers who have the best intentions to partner in God’s mission often do not because their finances are in a mess. These words are unfortunately a common description of reality: “Many do not remember the cause of God, and carelessly expend money in holiday amusements, in dress and folly, and when there is a call made for the advancement of the work in home and foreign missions, they have nothing to give, or even have OVER-DRAWN their account. (Ellen G. White, R. & H., Dec. 19, 1893).

As we claim His promises daily, let us also be diligent in the management of our resources. Some may be struggling not because the Lord has not already blessed them but of their lack of self-discipline and good management. This week as we worship with our tithe and regular and offerings let us choose to be better managers of God’s resources.

Prayer: Lord, Your promises bring peace and comfort to us. We thank You also for Your instructions because they provide directions for our life.

July 23, 2022. Local Conference Advance

The Secret of Cheerful Giving

Appeal: 1 Corinthians 13:3

“If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

We cheerfully worship with our resources because of the love that God has manifested to us. Our attitude while we serve, obey, and worship is important to the Lord. The book of Revelation gives an interesting example. In the letter to the church in Ephesus, the Lord did not reproach this church with any wrongdoing; He even mentioned their good actions, however one thing was missing: “You have forsaken the love you had at first.” Without love, obedience is of no value in the eyes of God. In contrast, when obedience flows out of love, Jesus has a wonderful promise for us: “that your joy may be complete” (Jn. 15:11).

The story is told of a man who was a great provider for his family. Every month, on pay day, he would purchase everything that his wife and sons needed. This family lacked nothing except of a happy father. Once, one of his sons questioned him: “Dad, why did you do all this for us?” His answer was: “I am legally married to your mother and you are my dependents, it is my responsibility to provide for you.” It wasn’t the answer the boy was expecting and later in life, he understood why the father was so sad when everyone was enjoying the goodies. Obligations and responsibilities had replaced love.

How do we give to the Lord? Many factors can lead us to participate in tithing and regular offerings, but apostle Paul speaks about the acceptable attitude: “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). Our God is looking for cheerful givers, and we grow as cheerful givers when we are motivated by God’s love for us.

Let us meditate daily on his gift of love and may Christ’s love compel us to worship with our resources. This week as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings may it be in response to God’s extravagant love.

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for Your unfailing love for us. We pray that the assurance of Your love drives us in all our actions, and we claim the promise of complete joy.

July 30, 2022. Local Church Budget

Support Comprehensive Mission

Appeal: Mark 6:37

But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

We worship with our offerings and donations because He invites us to care for others as He does. One day, the crowd noticed the movement of Jesus and His disciples and came to meet them. Full of compassion, Jesus spent the entire day teaching, blessing, and healing. It was a spiritual feast. As the sun was lowering in the sky, the disciples asked Jesus to send the crowd away to seek food (Mk. 6:36). The crowd would soon get hungry, and there was no bakery in the desert. But instead of attending to their quite sensible request, He invited them to “give them something to eat” (Mk. 6:37). This unexpected answer reveals Jesus’ concern for both the spiritual and the temporal needs of people. This is also our mission: “When we see human beings in distress, whether through affliction or through sin, we shall never say, this does not concern me.”—E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 504.

The story of Emilienne from Madagascar reminds us that we can put back a smile on people’s faces. Before 2015, Emilienne was always frowning. She was a single mother whose children were always hungry, and she could not afford to send them to school. Then, she joined the ADRA food security project in a town called Bikily. There she received training, access to farm tools, and drought-resistant seeds. As a result, she started her farm: planting sorghum, sweet potatoes, cassava, and pumpkin. Now, she has enough to feed and clothe her family, pay their school fees, and invest in the future. Above all, she now has a huge smile on her face.

Would you like to do mission work in the footsteps of Jesus and draw smiles on people’s faces? Giving is one means established by God to alleviate sufferings, express His love, and bring back hope. This week, we can practice Christ’s ministry method by worshipping with our tithe and regular and systematic offerings.

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for the love and compassion that You have for us. Please help us today to be channels of Your blessings to others.

August 6, 2022. Local Church Budget

Who Can Outgive God?

Appeal: 1 Chronicles 29:14

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”

Our generosity is inspired by God’s generosity. In preparation for the construction of the temple, the Bible reports about the generosity of Israel. First, King David gave lavishly out of his personal treasures. Then the other leaders gave willingly, following his example. Inspired by their leaders, the rest of the people gave “freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord” (v.9). Seeing such an expression of generosity, David burst into praise and mentioned the factor driving such a profusion in giving: “Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” David considered giving as a response to what God has already provided: Election, forgiveness, presence, promises and abundance. No one can outgive God. Even if someone chooses to give everything, God has all the means to replenish that person’s resources. This was the mindset of David, a leader-giver in Israel.

Abraham, a Masai man, had a similar mindset. He was the owner of 1,000 head of cattle and large herds of sheep and goats. Acknowledging that God was the Source of his blessing, he decided to be faithful to God. He placed his cattle in large pens and counted them as they walked through a chute. Each 10th cow, Abraham dedicated as tithe for God. His friends and acquaintances were amazed. In their culture, people’s wealth is measured in cattle. One doesn’t just give away his cows! They began to mock him, and many people declared him to be crazy. But the laughter abruptly stopped nine months later when 40 of Abraham’s cows gave birth to twins! In addition, many of his goats and sheep birthed triplets!

“Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?” (Num. 23:19). This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings let us reflect on the truthfulness of these words in our own life.

Prayer: Lord, Your generosity towards us has no limit and it embraces all aspects of our existence. Make us generous as You are.

August 13, 2022

Christian Record Offering

Appeal: John 6 :12

“When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.”

Christian Record Services, Inc. is a ministry of compassion of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to children and adults who are blind, with nearly 18,000 members throughout the United States and in countries around the world.

Christian Record offers an array 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 also have the opportunity to 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 their communities and embrace the Blessed Hope.

Prayer: Lord, You have designed us to enjoy an abundant life and to partner with You. Please give us the wisdom to manage our resources.

August 20, 2022. Local Church Budget

Offerings Speak Loudly!

Appeal: Exodus 29: 1

“This is what you are to do to consecrate them, so they may serve me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams without defect.”

We worship God with our offerings because they are sermons without words. After building the tabernacle from the freewill offerings of the people, it was now time to set apart Aaron and his sons for the holy ministry. Exodus 29 provides details about the ordination service of the first priests in Israel. Interestingly, Moses, the leader, did not deliver a special speech or preach a sermon for this occasion. But one thing was prominent, offerings of various kinds: Sin offering, burnt offering, and wave offering. What were the messages conveyed by these offerings?

The sin offering was for the atonement of sin. The priests were reminded that they needed God’s grace and forgiveness to qualify for their duty. The burnt offering was burned completely on the altar. It pointed to the total commitment that was required from those called to service. Finally, wave offering was presented in a waving-type motion, elevated and swung to and fro toward heaven. It symbolizes the priest’s dedication to God’s service and about God’s provision for those who sacrificed themselves in service to Him. Through these multiple offerings, they learned the true meaning of their ordination.

Do we have some doubts about the pertinence of worshipping God with our offerings? If a local church already has enough financial resources to support its ministries, should it maintain offerings as an element of the worship service? Offerings have a value far beyond monetary. Offerings are sermons without words. They represent acts of worship and convey essential spiritual lessons. Among other things, they remind us of God’s gift of salvation, His daily blessings, and our adequate response of total commitment. It would be unwise to silence God’s voice by renouncing from practicing offerings. This week as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings let us be attentive to God’s voice.

Prayer: Lord, we praise You for the multiple ways You talk to us, Your children. As we bring our offerings and tithe today, teach us the spiritual lessons we need.

August 27, 2022. Local Conference Advance

A Time of Spiritual Revival

Appeal: 2 Chronicles 29:3

“In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the Lord and repaired them.”

We worship God with our resources because we are in a time of revival. Ellen G. White wrote: “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs.”—True Revival, p. 9. Revival is an invitation to turn away from other gods and acknowledge Him as the sole Lord of our lives. The book of 2 Chronicles 29-31 tells us about the revival during the time of King Hezekiah: The temple was repaired. The worship services were restored. Passover was celebrated once again. Levites were reinstated to ministry. Restoration of true worship was at the heart of true revival.

The people’s response to the call to revival comprised of a concrete element: “Then Hezekiah said, “You have now dedicated yourselves to the Lord. Come and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the temple of the Lord. So the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all whose hearts were willing brought burnt offerings.” (2 Chr. 29:31). Spiritual revival acknowledges God as Lord, and one tangible means is to honor Him with our gifts.

The story of Zacchaeus in the New Testament presents giving as a result of true spiritual revival. Before welcoming Jesus as his guest of honor, Zacchaeus was the greediest man in Jericho. He was ready to betray his country, lose his friends, forsake his religion, and sacrifice his reputation for just a little more. However, when salvation entered his house, he was prompted to give more than what he owed: “I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount” (Lk. 19:8). That was his love response to the love he received from Jesus. We can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving.

The call for a spiritual revival is resounding loud in our churches. This week as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings would it show that the revival message has taken root in our hearts?

Prayer: Lord, help us to respond to Your call of revival through prayers, singing, giving, and dedicated life.

September 3, 2022. Local Church Budget

A Matter of Trust

Appeal: Malachi 3:10

“Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “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.”

We worship with our resources because it is a means of trusting God. God’s instructions about soil management in Leviticus 25:3-4 is an example of God’s invitation for His children to trust Him: “For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards.” We now know some of the benefits of putting the land to rest through knowledge acquired in Agricultural science. In those days, after receiving such an unusual instruction, the Israelites would surely wonder what they would eat in the seventh year if they did not plant or harvest. It was an invitation to trust. Interestingly, there are no reported instances where someone died of starvation for keeping this strange command. God’s order was backed up by a promise, “Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land.”

On one occasion, a pastor accompanied by an elder visited a low-income family of the church. They were gladly welcomed and had a great time fellowshiping together. At some point, the pastor opened the Bible and read Malachi 3:9-10, encouraging the family about faithfulness in giving. Upon completing their visit, the elder shared with the pastor that he was much uncomfortable about the text he read because this family was struggling financially. Gently, but firmly the pastor responded: “I wanted to make sure that they are not missing God’s blessings.”

Have you ever gone through situations where His instructions do not make any sense to you? Remember the words of the hymnal: “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus.”

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for the opportunity we have each new week to sharpen our confidence in You. Increase our faith and thank You for fulfilling Your promises.

September 10, 2022

World Budget (Emphasis: Radio Ministries)

Appeal: Genesis 2:16-17

“And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.’”

We worship God with our best resources because He provides instructions for life. In the garden of Eden, God was the Master Instructor to our first parents. According to our Bible text, He instructed them about the available resources and the danger of substituting another source of knowledge for Himself. Humanity was created with a manual to journey through the maze of life. The Divine Provider occupies the best position to instruct us about managing our God-given resources. He provides us with insightful guidelines through His Word and Holy Spirit.

Once a pastor was visiting a foreign country and had to go to the airport before sunrise. So he hired a taxi. The driver was not using any GPS but seemed quite confident about the direction to the airport. Then, he started driving around in the city, looking for the right exit. The pastor, looking at his watch, realized that “check-in” was now opened. Finally, on the highway, the driver explained that he had never been to the airport, but a friend had once given him the direction. Regularly, he was craning his neck to look for road signs. The driving was hesitant, and this made the pastor nervous. After 30 minutes, the supposed duration of the trip, the car had stopped on a narrow stretch in the middle of nowhere. The confused driver made several phone calls. ... Time was running out. Check-in was now closed, and the pastor was stuck with a driver who still did not know the direction to the airport.

It does not have to be so for our life’s journey. From the very beginning and until today, our God knows and gives the best directions. Those who follow His instructions are on track to reach their goals and the final destination. This week, as we worship with our tithe, and regular offerings let us remember the instructions of our heavenly teacher.

Prayer: Lord, indeed You are the Wisest Instructor. We invite You to lead us in our life decisions and the management of our resources.

September 17, 2022. Local Church Budget

The Blind Giver Attitude

Appeal: Romans 5:8

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

We worship with our resources because we follow the example of our God, who is a Blind Giver. When God gives, He rarely focuses on the nature of the recipients or even the outcome. He gives out of love. Faithful to this attribute, “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:45). In contrast, we are inclined to give exclusively to what we see and whose outcome we can control. As a result, some have withdrawn from participation in tithe and regular offering, not seeing the direct effect of their contributions. Others have resolved to support only local projects rather than a worldwide mission, far from their eyes. This is not the “blind giver” attitude.

We have a glimpse of what can happen when God’s people reproduce the “blind giver” attitude. Have you heard about “The Amazon of Hope,” a floating church? It is not known by most of us, and even fewer have visited this boat church. However, this project has materialized through the “blind giving” mindset. In 2016, God’s children from all over the world pulled funds together to support the 13th Sabbath projects, and one implemented project was the floating church, “The Amazon of Hope,” in Brazil. The result is inspiring. In the first 12 full months of operation of the boat church, two hundred and eighty-six people were baptized, and planted three churches in 2017. And this is the testimony of Pastor Reno, who served on the Amazon of Hope: “The boat church is God’s way of saving people who have been forgotten by political, economic, and health systems.”

God, our Example, is involved in a global mission towards those that we see and cannot see, towards those that we know and do not know. This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings we have another opportunity to demonstrate the same global mindset as our God.

Prayer: Lord, we are inspired by Your universal and blindfolded generosity towards humanity. Please help us be givers in Your likeness.

September 24, 2022. Local Conference Advance

Nuture Peace

Appeal: John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

We worship God with our resources as a means of nurturing God’s peace in us. Jesus recognizes His disciples’ need for peace. Peace, Shalom in Hebrew, conveys the idea of completeness, wholeness, and fulfillment. We usually go to two common sources to quench our thirst for peace, Jesus or the world. They are not the same.

The world encourages us to achieve completeness and fulfillment by striving for more material things. This leads both rich and poor to engage in this frenzied race for just a little bit more. Unfortunately, it’s like chasing a mirage or drinking seawater when thirsty. Material possessions are not real solutions to our insecurity, sense of powerlessness, and fear of insignificance. Socrates, the philosopher, while walking through the groaning abundance of the market in Athens, exclaimed to himself, “Who would have thought that there could be so many things that I can do without?” Do we really need more?

In contrast to the race to acquire more, the Bible exhorts the believer to embrace contentment (Phil. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:6-12; 2 Cor. 12:9-10; Rom. 8:28) to grow in peace. As Christians, our contentment does not mean that we settle for what is mediocre. We become content when we acknowledge that an all-powerful and loving God is taking care of our needs, material and spiritual. Ellen G. White recommends how to acknowledge God as Provider: He asks us to ACKNOWLEDGE HIM as the GIVER of ALL THINGS; and for this reason, He says, of all your possessions I reserve a TENTH for Myself, besides GIFTS and OFFERINGS, which are to be brought into My storehouse.” (Counsels on Stewardship, pp. 80-81). Cultivating contentment through giving is a great gain!

This week through the practice of tithe and regular offerings God is giving us another opportunity to nurture our inner peace in a troubled world.

Prayer: Lord, we praise You for being a faithful provider. As we are inclined to forget and become stressed, help us remember Your goodness by giving back to You and others.

October 1, 2022. Local Church Budget

Bear Fruits

Appeal: John 15:4

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

We worship God with our resources as a response to the call to bear fruits. John the Baptist appealed to those who were coming to him for baptism: “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.” (Matt. 3:8). For John, baptism and being part of God’s people were not sufficient. The Gospel of Luke shares some concrete examples of the “fruit of repentance” that John the Baptist gave to those who came to him. He asked the tax collector not to collect any more than was required. He exhorted the soldiers not to “extort money” and “be content with your pay.” And he commanded the crowd to share their second shirt and food with the one who does not have (Lk. 3: 10-14). These examples reported by Luke have something in common; they are related to one’s attitudes towards finances and material possessions. Fruit of repentance comprises being careful about the means used to obtain resources and using our resources to bless others.

The Bible tells the story of a man, Nabal, a son of Abraham who was heavily blessed but did not bear fruit of repentance in his material life. He refused to reward those who protected his flock and would harshly rebuke the servants of David who came to ask for some food. This attitude led his wife to call him wicked and to make the following comment: “He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him” (1 Sam. 25:25). Sadly, the following day, he had a stroke. Ten days later, he died.

As we reflect on the need to bear more fruits of repentance in our material life, let us apply the advice of Jesus: “Remain in me as I also remain in you.” The result would be beyond expectation. This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings we can bear fruits of repentance.

Prayer: Lord, we want to bear fruits of repentance in all aspects of life. Please help us to remain connected with You daily through regular prayer and bible study.

October 8, 2022

Union Designated

Appeal: Ephesians 5:25

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”

We worship God with our tithe, offerings, and donations because God loves His Church. The Church, as the community of believers, was founded by Jesus (Matt. 16:18). He “gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25). He is the Head (Eph. 1:22) and Chief Cornerstone of the Church (Eph. 1:20), which is His body (Col. 1:25). And she has the beautiful title of the “bride of the Lord” (Rev. 9:7,8). To her, He gave a special assignment, “to serve as the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1Tim. 3:15). Ellen G. White made this affirmative comment about God’s Church: “Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theater of His grace, in which He delights to reveal His power to transform hearts.” — Acts of Apostles, p. 12.

In response to God’s love for His Church, the believers of the Early Church supported both the local church community (Acts 2:45) and church communities far away. Following a severe famine throughout the Roman empire, Luke reports the compassionate response of God’s Church: “The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea” (Acts 11:29). In his writings, Apostle Paul regularly appeals for the collection of funds for the Church, the Lord’s people, in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:1-9:15; Rom. 15:14-32). Besides that, there is clear evidence of believers supporting with wages those “whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17-18). Paul endorses such practice by quoting Jesus: “The worker deserves his wages” (Lk. 10:7). The Early Church believers applied the general principle of love and generosity by caring for God’s Church.

The church is not without flaw; it has never been, but it is loved and has a unique purpose. This week as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings we can respond to the call to love and support the One that Jesus loves?

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for establishing the church in the world and our local communities. Please help us emulate the love that You have for the church by cheerfully supporting those who are part of it and its mission.

October 15, 2022. Local Church Budget

One Place... One God

Appeal: Lev. 17:5a

“This is so that the Israelites will bring their sacrifices they are now making in the open fields. They must bring them to the priest, that is, to the Lord, at the entrance to the tent of meeting and sacrifice them as fellowship offerings.”

We bring our regular offerings and tithe to church because it is part of true worship. Leviticus 17:5 gives instruction about the appropriate place to offer sacrifice in Ancient Israel. There was a central place to give, with no provision for alternatives. One may legitimately ask why the place was so significant. Interestingly, the text focuses not only on the place, the tent of meeting, but also on the One who received their sacrifices, the Lord. For the Israelites, the tent of meeting was the “tabernacle of the LORD,” the place where the Lord resides. Ultimately, the restriction about the place had to do with who they were worshipping. Relocating the place where they brought their sacrifices was typical of idol worship at the time. God designated one place for sacrifice because He wanted to be the sole object of their worship.

Today, the appropriate destination for tithe and regular offerings remains a frequently asked and debated question. The example of King David provides us with an answer: “I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows to you—” (Psalm 66:13). Ellen G. White applies this principle to God’s people today: “The time has come when the tithes and offerings belonging to the Lord are to be used in accomplishing a decided work. They are to be brought into the treasury to be used in an orderly way to sustain the gospel laborers in their work”—Manuscript Release, vol. 19, p. 376. She specifies that place as the church treasury with the appropriate agency to support God’s mission. However, this does not remove our social responsibility towards the poor and needy. We should apportion special donations for this purpose (Ellen G. White, Welfare Ministry, p. 275).

This week we have another opportunity to bring our tithe and regular offerings to God’s church. While we worship at God’s designed place, let us choose once again to make Him the sole object of our worship.

Prayer: Lord, we thank You for the instruction about the destination and usage of our tithe and regular offerings. Help us trust Your wisdom and remain faithful.

October 22, 2022. Local Conference Advance

In Appreciation of Spiritual Blessings

Appeal: Numbers 18:24

“Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the Lord.”

We worship God with our tithe and offerings because He has appointed spiritual leaders to minister to His people. The books of Moses mention two special groups of spiritual leaders and how they were sustained. We read in Numbers 18:2 “Bring your fellow Levites from your ancestral tribe to join you and assist you when you and your sons minister before the tent of the covenant law.” This chapter reviews the tasks assigned to priests and Levites. Priests were assigned at the altar and inside the tabernacle; Levites were to take care of everything else regarding the tabernacle. Each group had specific responsibilities although Israel as a whole was “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). Their ministry brought spiritual blessings.

How were they sustained in their needs? We read in Numbers 18:8b and 24: “All the holy offerings the Israelites give me I give to you and your sons as your portion... .” “Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the Lord.” God gave the holy offerings that were His to the Priests and His Holy tithe to the Levites. This transfer of resources was a means used by God to support the spiritual leaders in Ancient Israel. This provision was connected to the fact that their important ministries required total dedication. Both Jesus and Paul considered that the same principle should apply to support the appointed spiritual leaders of the Church (Matt. 10: 9-10; 1 Cor. 9:3-10; 16:2).

Pastors and other spiritual leaders are a source of blessings. Do my tithe or offerings pay for them? The answer is No. Tithe and offerings once returned become God’s property which He disposes as He wills. Yes, then after given to God, tithe supports the gospel worker. This is another good reason to give in order to partner with God to support the essential work of ministry. This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings we are enjoying the privilege of participating in God’s saving mission.

Prayer: Lord, in appreciation for the spiritual blessings we receive through your Church and designated servants, we bring our tithe and offerings to You. We are blessed to be part of Your plan.

October 29, 2022. Local Church Budget

Beware of Misplaced Hope

Appeal: 1 Timothy 6:17

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

We worship God with our resources because this protects us from misplaced hope. As humans, we tend to trust in something or someone bigger than ourselves. We do not control all aspects of our existence. In the absence of hope, our lives are overwhelmed by anguish and despair. One natural inclination is to put our confidence in the resources that we have accumulated. They are visible and measurable, leading us to think that they are sure. However, according to Paul, it is safer to place our hope in the Source of wealth than in wealth.

Mark, from South China, was deeply moved by a call for offering, and he brought 30% of his total saving as his offering. Unexpectedly, he experienced a severe financial crisis soon afterward. His new business collapsed, and he fell into debt. Life’s uncertainties! During this time, he heard an appeal for a new church building at the cost of 10 million Chinese Yuen. Mark realized that it was a rare opportunity to advance God’s mission in his province of over 60 million population. Impressed by the Spirit, he made a commitment of 400,000 Chinese Yuen, with no idea where the money will come from. Then something amazing happened: the shareholder of his former architecture company invited him to resume work with them. He accepted the offer and was promoted to be an executive officer and board director in a short time. Mark ended up contributing 1 million Chinese Yuen to the church building project. Looking backward at his life’s experience, he wrote: “The grace of the Lord is like endless running water.”

Mark demonstrated trust by giving His fleeting resources to worship the God who richly provides for everything. This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings let us make a statement about where our hope resides.

Prayer: Lord, we praise You for being a sure hope for Your children. Protect us daily from the deception of misplaced hope

November 5, 2022. Local Church Budget

Claim His Promises

Appeal: Psalms 34:8

“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.”

We worship God with our resources because this places us in a condition to claim His promises. The Bible is full of promises. Everett R. Storms spent a year and a half counting Bible promises and came up with 7,487 promises made by God to humankind. God’s promises have three characteristics: they are true, all can claim them, and they are often conditional. Paul wrote about his confidence in God’s promises: “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ.” (2 Cor. 1:20a). When God says, “Yes,” nobody can say, “No!” Several are conditional to faith and obedience as two essential requisites (Matt. 21:22; Isa. 59:2). About obedience, Ellen G. White writes: “All who obey Him may with confidence claim the fulfillment of His promises.”—Christ’s Object Lesson, p. 145.

An incident in the life of Fred Stirewalt, a farmer from Hollister, California, shows the value of obedience in claiming God’s promises. One afternoon Fred observed that army beetles had covered his field. Immediately, he realized the disastrous outcome awaiting: these small creatures eat until there is nothing green left. Feeling powerless, he had an insightful conversation with his daughter Helen:

Helen asked, “Daddy, you pay your tithe, don’t you?”

“Yes,” he replied.

“Then why not ask God to keep His promise and drive the beetles away?”

Convinced by these words, they knelt and prayed, claiming the promise of Malachi 3:10, 11: “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, ... I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,...” Right after praying, they saw a cloud of blackbirds descending on their fields. The blackbirds remained for a short time, but there wasn’t a beetle left when they flew away.

God has a heaven full of blessings for those who will cooperate with Him. This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings we are placing ourselves in a position to claim His promises.

Prayer: Lord, we are thankful for Your promises of spiritual and temporal blessings. We claim them over our lives. Remove all doubts and unfaithfulness that could be obstacles. Story of Fred Stirewalt adapted from <http://guidemagazine.org/pdfs/Guide-5-23-20.pdf>. PP. 12-14.

November 12, 2022

World Budget (Emphasis: Annual Sacrifice)

Appeal: John 6 :12

“When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.”

We can worship with our resources when we follow God’s instructions about the economy and savings. In several instances, God has taught the practice of saving to His children. He inspired Joseph, the son of Jacob, to advise Pharaoh not to eat everything during the seven years of abundance but to keep 20% for later. On the night the Israelites had to celebrate the first Passover, before leaving Egypt, God’s first instruction was for them to choose the right size of lamb according to the number of people in each family. At the end of the multiplication of bread and fish, the clear admonition was “let nothing be wasted.” “The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down” (Prov. 21:20).

This same message about penny-wise is pertinent in many places today. We are preparing and eating more than what we need daily, buying more than what we need to wear, and building houses with far more space than what we need to live. This consumption-oriented society influences us to adopt a criterion other than the need to acquire goods: affordability. If I can pay for it with available or borrowed money, there is no problem with purchasing it. This can be socially acceptable but is this good stewardship?

Saving will help us to prepare for life emergencies, realize major financial goals, prepare for retirement, leave a financial legacy, and in some cases, break the cycle of poverty. Furthermore, we will be in a better position to partner in God’s mission. Jesus and His missionary crew were supported by a group of women who used their own means (Lk. 8:3). The Early Church members, whose wealth was in the form of lands and houses, sold their properties to provide for the beginning of the Christians’ mission (Acts 4:34-35). Ellen G. White challenges us to properly channel our resources: “Each should keep a missionary box at hand, and drop into it every penny he is tempted to waste in self-indulgence.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 291.

Is it not time to identify and fix the leakages in our financial lives? This week we have another opportunity to use our savings to worship God by bringing our tithe and regular offerings to Him.

Prayer: Lord, You have designed us to enjoy an abundant life and to partner with You. Please give us the wisdom to manage our resources.

November 19, 2022. Local Church Budget

Regularity Calls for Regularity

Appeal: Lamentation 3:22-23

“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

We worship God through regular giving in response to the abundance and regularity of His care. While going through trials, griefs, and humiliations, the prophet Jeremiah uses the plural form to speak about God’s compassion and mercies. He was the recipient of God’s covenant, love, grace, goodness, kindness, compassion, and much more. Besides being multifaceted, God’s manifestation amid Jeremiah’s crisis was daily and regular, not occasional. He did not have to choose between a huge blessing once in a while or daily miracles. God provided for both. Israel responded to God’s regularity by adopting a regular pattern of worship and giving.

Numbers 28 and 29 report about regularity in worship and giving to God. The Israelites were worshipping daily, weekly, monthly, and during all annual festivals. Concerning their offerings, they brought “two lambs a year old without defect, as a regular burnt offering each day” (Numbers 28:3). Interestingly, what they brought during the weekly, monthly, and annual festivals were “besides” or “in addition to the regular burnt offering.” During the Festival of Tabernacles, they offered the largest number of special offerings, but there are eight mentions in the text, one for each day of the festival, that it was in addition to the regular daily offerings (Num. 29:12-38).

The above example tells us that the best practice is not to be a worshipper only during Easter week, the Christmas season, or special Sabbaths. A God who manifests Himself continually and regularly expects the same pattern of worship from His children. How does this principle translate into our giving practice? It is always a joy to participate in special offerings supporting some good projects or ministries. However it is appropriate that these occasional gifts and donations are besides and in addition to our regular offerings. The starting point for such practice is to decide in advance the proportion, a percentage, of our income to be dedicated to regular offerings.

Prayer: Lord, we are thankful for Your abundant and regular care. In response, we choose to worship You regularly and set aside a percentage of our income as regular offerings. Sustain our commitment.

November 26, 2022. Local Conference Advance

Don't Just Manage ... Produce Wealth

Appeal: Deuteronomy 8:18

“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.”

We worship God with our resources because He gives us the power to produce wealth. The parable of Talents tells the story of three servants who received a share of their Master's property and their reports about how they used them to produce more wealth. The three servants had this in common: They faithfully returned to the Master what belonged to Him. However the first two did something in addition. They produced wealth with what they have received, and they were rewarded for that practice. As God promises the “ability to produce wealth” to all His servants, it is unfortunate that the third servant fails in this area and was deprived of His master's reward.

As believers, we are responsible for what we have received and for what we can produce. Ellen G. White writes these words: “In making a profession of faith in Christ we pledge ourselves to become all that it is possible for us to be as workers for the Master, and we should cultivate every faculty to the highest degree of perfection, that we may do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable.—Christ's Object Lessons, p. 330. Growth in all areas of life and participation in the production of resources is a divine assignment. This responsibility often needs courage, strength, perseverance, and self-discipline. It is a daily uphill journey. However, no one has to be discouraged or to quit. God made a permanent promise: the ability to produce wealth.

The principle of doing “the greatest amount of good” is an invitation to reassess our giving. Today, through our faithful giving, we are a source of blessing. This week as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings let us reflect and pray on how to become a greater blessing by growing our resources to their real potential.

Prayer: Lord, we praise You for entrusting us with Your resources. In partnership with You, we commit to grow our resources and become larger channels of Your blessings to humanity.

December 3, 2022. Local Church Budget

Special Provider

Appeal: Psalms 145:15

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.

We worship God with our resources because He often makes provision for our needs even before they arise. In a dream, the Lord informed Pharaoh about the 7 years of severe famines that would strike Egypt. However, before the beginning of the crisis, he provided 7 years of abundance. Under the inspired leadership of Joseph, they could save the surplus and adequately prepare for the crisis. God provided before the need. Joseph told his brothers about the God who acted in anticipation: “But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance (Gen 45:7). Our needs and emergencies of today never take God by surprise or put Him off balance.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a family had witnessed how God acted in anticipation of their needs. Because they were staying in a foreign country, the wife had to renew her employment authorization. The process took much longer than expected. After some few months of waiting, her current work authorization expired, and she was terminated from her job. The family budget was not balancing anymore. At first, they thought that the authorization would come in a few days. It was not so. Interestingly, exactly 7 months before she lost her job, the week that many companies were closing down and dismissing employees, causing a record high unemployment rate, she miraculously held onto her job. This allowed the family to consolidate their emergency fund not knowing the challenge they would soon face. Regularly, they would check the status of her application. The waiting time grew from 3 months, to 4 months, 5 months, and finally up to 9 months. It was a testing time. During this extended time, their consolidated emergency fund kept them afloat. More accurately, it was the work of God who makes provision even before needs arise.

This week as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings let us show our gratitude to the Provider who already has solutions for our unforeseen crises.

Prayer: Lord we worship because you do not only know the future, but you have also already prepared a way for us. You are our special Provider.

December 10, 2022

Adventist Community Services

A man beaten down physically by rains came to our Food Pantry for clothes & food. He was wearing a thin jacket, no shirt or socks, and we were able to serve him. He was so happy to receive the clothes that he put them on in the parking lot. Then he sat in the parking lot and ate an entire 16 oz. jar of peanut butter. He left a little more full, dressed, and hopeful than when he arrived. Thank God for the Better Living Center. (Spokane, Washington)

This is only one story of many that is a result of Adventist Community Services Centers around the North American Division that commit to serving God's children.

Community Services is God's invitation to do amazing things with Him. Hard times come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, and Adventist Community Services is responding to individual needs, developing relationships, and committing to make a difference in people's lives.

ACS supports community outreach programs by funding development projects that make a major impact in your communities. A washer/dryer serves thousands of homeless to bring dignity and value to their lives. A shelter provides protection and offers hope. A portable shower trailer prepares someone for a job interview. And so much more.

"I love this facility (New Life Food Pantry, Fultondale, AL) because their Christian walk shows in their attitude of the volunteers and the way they treat the pantry participants." – Client A

"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them." Hebrews 6:10

Appeal: By supporting ACS, you can make a lasting impact and know that your dollars are going to something that is making a difference in someone's life.

Prayer: Lord in your infinite grace, you do not look down on what we have brought to you. We thank you for the privilege of participating in your mission

December 17, 2022. Local Church Budget

He Empowers Giant Killers

Appeal: 1 Samuel 17:37

“The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

We worship God with our resources because no one like Him empowers us to face life’s challenges. Saul and his army went out to fight the Philistines. The Philistines had crossed over the border of Israel. With Goliath on the battlefield, the soldiers in Saul’s army faced the prospect of fighting a giant. This challenge was extraordinary. After the first day, the first week, the first month, Goliath was persistently harassing and frightening the Israelites. But David, the little lad from Bethlehem, knew that the Lord could provide rescue against internal, unusual and persistent challenges. Empowered by God, he would be known throughout history as the giant’s killer.

Just like David, a young boy overcame his life’s challenges. He grew up with the dream of becoming a preacher but had to struggle with an acute form of stammering. This handicap was inborn, and the application of several remedial strategies was of no value. The issue dragged over many years. The challenge was internal, beyond ordinary, and persistent. However, empowered by God, he was healed of his broken voice and could live his life’s dream.

We all know the popular formula for a happy life: Parents send kids to school, kids study hard and pass their exams, embrace a well-paid career, get married, and live a long and peaceful life. Unfortunately, real life often fails to match this ideal. Unexpected troubles become lifelong companions. Nevertheless, in God, we can count our victories, those that were the most unlikely according to human criteria. Are they not sufficient reasons to worship God with our best resources? This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings let us recall the numerous interventions of God.

Prayer: Lord, we are thankful for the many rescue operations that you have performed in our lives. Your effectiveness leaves us without a voice. In response, we dedicate ourselves and our best to you.

December 24, 2022. Local Conference Advance

Cheers to the Royal Baby

Appeal: Matthew 2:2

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

We worship God with our resources because the royal baby, Jesus, was born on planet earth. The fascination for royal babies has transcended all ages. A search of the name “Archie,” a royal baby born to the Mountbatten-Windsor family in 2019, will give millions of results. The birth of a royal baby often creates a buzz in the media, and people feed on the most minute details out of curiosity and admiration. Likewise, seeing His star, the three magi left everything and everyone behind and embarked on a tiresome, time-consuming, and unsafe journey beyond the boundaries of their homeland. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they disclosed the purpose of their trip: we have come to worship the King, born of the Jews. The description that we have of this act of worship deserves attention.

Do you know any Christmas carols that the Magi sang to baby Jesus? Do you know the prayer that they made to the newborn King? Can you remember the words with which Joseph and Mary addressed them during their visit? Or any souvenir that they brought back home? Nowhere in the Gospel do we find such information. This silence is surprising and possibly significant! The focus was elsewhere: “On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matt. 2:11). They honored the royal baby by presenting gifts to him.

The celebration of the birth of Jesus remains a major event in most countries and for many Christians. This year won't be an exception. Listening to carols, enjoying some favorite seasonal food, blessing ourselves and our loved ones with gifts, and participating in some uplifting church services define Christmas for many of us. This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings let us remember how the Magi worshipped the royal baby: by giving of their resources.

Prayer: Lord, as we talk, sing, and reflect about the birth of Jesus. Help us dedicate time and energy to seek You and to use our resources to honor You as King.

December 31, 2022. Local Church Budget

Full Worship

Appeal: Romans 12: 1

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

We worship God with our tithe and offerings because it expresses our desire to offer our all to Him. In his letters to the believers in Rome, Paul explains extensively that salvation in Jesus is freely accessible to all by faith. Then, he mentions our adequate response to God’s mercy: “to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.” Christ died for us. In return, we live totally for him. We worship the savior by attending church services and returning our tithe and offerings, but true worship does not end at the doorstep of the church, it only begins there. These words of Jesus deserve our attention: “you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.” (Luke 11:42). Tithing and offering, though essential, are only one component of the life of the worshipper. They are part of a lifestyle of offering oneself to God and others.

Terry from Hong Kong gives us an example of life as an offering to God. In the 80s, he was on track for a brilliant career as an engineer. He graduated from Hatfield Polytechnic, UK, as an Electronic Engineer, and later was selected by the Hong Kong government to specialize in an advanced technology known by very few. In spite of his success, Terry realized that something was missing in his life. He found this missing piece when he met Jesus and was baptized in December 1988. Seven months later he dedicated his life to God’s service. He left his promising future behind to enroll in seminary to study theology. In his own words: “Nothing under the sun is more important than knowing Jesus and inheriting eternal life.” He is known as Evangelist Terry; Dr. Terry Tsui is currently serving as the president of Taiwan Adventist College.

This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings may our giving be an expression of our total dedication to God.

Prayer: Lord, who we are and what we possess belong to You. We pray that You lead us to experience a higher level of dedication as we step into a new year.



STEWARDSHIP

Seventh-day Adventist Church
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION