

First United Methodist Church of Olympia

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First United Methodist Church of Olympia

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Sacred Choices

Each fall at First United Methodist Church of Olympia, we remember the call to use God's blessings to strengthen the work of Christ's church. We talk about money, budgets, and giving, and we invite our members and friends to prayerfully estimate their support for the church in the coming year. Having these pledges of support allows the church to plan ministry with integrity. This season of stewardship also gives us an opportunity to share with transparency how your church's finances are managed so that you may be confident that your support is well used.

Sacred Choices is our stewardship theme this year because sacred choices are made at every stage of the church's financial program, from your first impulse to give a gift, to your decision to make a pledge and give regularly, to the Church Council's creation of the budget, to the way we safeguard the funds that are given, to the way each and every dollar is transformed from currency to ministry, to the way reserve funds are used and invested, to the growth of our endowed funds that perpetuate memory and mission into the future. Every single step in this stewardship journey involves sacred choices.

We want our lives to count. We want to make a difference. We want to use the minutes in our days and the dollars in our bank accounts to make the world a better place. We want to know that we are a part of



"The work of the church makes our lives matter more. It gives us hands that can reach and voices that can be heard far beyond the limits of any one individual."

something that is lovely and lasting and bigger than ourselves. We affirm that God can use each and every one of us for higher purposes than just our own survival and our own quest for holiness and happiness, and we affirm that God multiplies holiness and happiness when we partner together with others in service. The work of the church makes our lives matter more. It gives us hands that can reach and voices that can be heard far beyond the limits of any one individual. We are better together as we care for each other and the world, by sharing the love of God in Christ Jesus. This is a sacred choice we make as we share God's love by supporting the church with our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

Where Does Ministry Happen at First Olympia?

Most people probably think of **Sunday morning worship** as the place where ministry happens, and that is certainly a good place to begin. Our two morning services bring nearly 300 people together each week to

I support our church because I like the direction we're headed. From assisting with local food banks to participating in out of state/country youth and adult mission trips, I feel like we strive to do the work Jesus wants us to do, to be God's hands. I also like the way we're reaching out to meet the needs of people looking for different ways to "church" through Messy Church, etc. I look forward to seeing the many things we can do with Pastors Peter and Ruth's guidance!

- Debby Christopherson

Sacred Choices

This is the first of two mailings to the church family of First United Methodist Church of Olympia about stewardship. Within these pages you will read about many of the ministries of the church which we have chosen as a church family to create and support. Some of those ministries are relatively new. Others are things we've done together for a generation or more. Still others are foundational ministries of the Christian faith. But all of them are chosen... prayerfully and carefully chosen.

Each one of us, as members of the family of Christ gathered in this place, are given an annual opportunity to choose again how we will support these ministries. Ours is a sacred choice that deserves regular and repeated consideration. Our acts of stewardship are commitments to the ideals of our faith, both individually and collectively. May God bless your reading of this material and your decisions which grow from it.

When I was about five years old I received a weekly allowance of 10 cents. Every Sunday morning my mother gave me two nickels: one for the collection plate and one for spending money. I started young giving "first fruits" to the church. Since then I have never managed to give 50% of my income, but over the years I have grown to understand more about why I give to the church.

Tithing is a way to worship God; a way to demonstrate thanks for God's faithfulness; a way to remember that my resources come from God and are provided through grace. When I came to truly know that all of the blessings of nature, health, relationships, talents, work, income, community, and so much more come from God, then giving back 10% of that to support the spread of God's love in this world, is a small price to pay. I do it gladly and gratefully.

- Randi Moe

I pledge my support to the work of our church because it's simply what I must and can do! Being in worship centers and helps realign me from the ups and downs that are part of life. I see God's love and light shining here and know this is exactly where I need to be in my journey and my search for better understanding and growth in my faith.

- Myra Barker

I support First Olympia with a pledge of regular financial giving because unlike taxes, I easily see all of it going for the good of folks we care for! Folks such as each other, our community and beyond, and including our spirit, mind and body. It's a true pleasure to share my treasure with First Olympia, it makes a direct and very positive impact!

- Mae Wharton

pray and sing praises, to reflect on God's word, to share the sacraments, and to fellowship with friends. On any given Sunday, at least fifty volunteers are behind the scenes giving time and talents to our act of corporate worship. They serve as ushers, greeters, acolytes, liturgists, sound techs, musicians and choir members, communion servers, and more! Our two pastors and staff musicians put about 35 hours of planning into Sunday morning worship each week, and they are assisted by office staff and volunteers who create bulletins and slide shows, straighten the pews, vacuum the chancel, fill the oil candles. Worship is the most visible place where ministry happens and we invest a lot of time, energy, and money in making it happen each week. Our spirits are fed, as the Gospel both confronts and comforts us, as our prayers connect us to one another and to God, and as our fellowship gives us a sense of rootedness and a place of belonging. Every act of worship is a sacred choice to place ourselves in God's presence.

"Messy Church has reached several new families and is becoming well-known in the larger community as a place of welcome and acceptance."

New worship experiences provide newcomers with more opportunities to experience worship. Our **monthly Messy Church and weekly Vespers services** are two recent worship projects that seek to connect more people with God through new expressions of worship. Messy Church has reached several new families and is becoming well-known in the larger



Members of five faith communities gathered this summer for a BBQ in the park... a tangible sign of a new cooperative spirit at work!

community as a place of welcome and acceptance. As the name implies, this is a come-as-you-are experience of grace where children can be loud and life can be real. Vespers, on the other hand, is a quiet, contemplative communion service that blends prayer and song and bread and cup with the silence that wants to come at the end of a day. Many can meet God in that silence.

Sacred Choices and Deciding to Grow as a Faithful Steward

Like every other aspect of our life, our faithfulness as stewards is a growing and dynamic thing. We know that Jesus spoke about commitment frequently, and called even his most faithful disciples to grow daily in their walk with God. Our sacred choices about how we commit to our gifts of time, treasure, and talent build upon each previous choice we have made. There are some common decisions we all make through the course of our life with God.

The first sacred choice we make as persons of faith is to confess that everything we have comes from God. This affirmation that God is the source of life, love, vision, talent, meaning, purpose, and even possessions, is the foundation of our Christian life together.

The second sacred choice is recognizing that God wants us to glorify God, to know that we were made for this higher purpose. One important way we glorify God is by being generous stewards of our blessings. Our resources are God's tools! This includes our abilities, our time, and our money.

A very important sacred choice is deciding to give regularly to God's work through the ministries of our church. Making a promise of giving to the church is an expectation of church membership, but more than that, it is an opportunity to serve God and grow our faith.

Seeing one's contributions in relation to other uses of one's money is a tipping point sacred choice for most of us. Consider your giving in comparison to other expenses in your budget. Is your support of God's work through your church giving comparable to an evening out on the town once a month, what you spend on coffee and pastries each week, a car payment each month?

Giving proportionally to one's income is a sacred choice that commits us more fully to life-long stewardship. The scriptures tell us that God wants us to give the "first fruits" of our labor. The Biblical model was the tithe, or 10%, given to God's work. Tithing begins with a commitment to proportional giving.

Finally, many Christians who are approaching retirement or planning for the future decide to **make a sacred choice of stewardship by providing ongoing support for God's work after they are gone** through wills, estates, and gifts to a foundation or endowment.

So you see, there are many sacred choices that we can make over the course of a lifetime. They don't all relate to money, of course. For many **the sacred choice of donating a few hours is even more difficult than giving of our financial resources.** May God help you to make your sacred choice in your commitments of faith for 2019.

I give to the church for the same reason I make my bed in the morning and brush my teeth at night. It is just part of how I was raised. Growing up in a parsonage, I was aware at an early age that the pledges people made to our church paid my father's salary and put a roof over our heads. We were taught to appreciate that and to be good stewards of that blessing. In turn, I was also expected to tithe what I had, from my weekly allowance to my birthday gifts. (It's a good thing that a Bobbsey Twin book cost only \$.88, because I could tithe the birthday dollar from my grandparents and still buy a new book.)

As I grew, I learned the deeper meanings of giving to the church. Yes, we feed the hungry, provide disaster relief, and support people in times of need. But giving to the church is really more about who I am than where that money goes. My life has been one of deep faith and countless blessings. I feel God present in my life every day and I am in awe of his work in my life. Giving to the church is simply one way to say thank you for all that I have been given.

- Sue Sugarbaker

I give to First United Methodist because I strongly believe in the work being done in the immediate community. I so appreciate that we get regular feedback about how various community mission projects are progressing (i.e., progress with our refugee, gleaned 400 lbs. of carrots for the food bank; or, fulfilling all the school supply needs for 3rd grade at Madison). With most giving opportunities, you never hear from them again until they request another donation. I believe that we are fulfilling our mission to "Go and be the Church" by our actions. This church has provided me a loving community of friends who are engaged in this important work.

- Jane Collins

I choose to support First Church with my pledge, because it is my family's home. We gather with our larger church family to grow in faith and serve others. We find fellowship, guidance, support, and a welcoming place to ask tough questions and seek hard answers, serving our community, studying, and worshipping together. My pledge combines with others to maintain our home, support our staff, and reach beyond our doors in service to the greater community.

- Elizabeth Fontanilla

In my life I have experienced the presence of God and seen the love of God at work. In the church we are all about God's love in action. These times reveal our world's need for love and compassion. What else can we do except do whatever we can to meet the need. That means the commitment of body, soul, spirit and wealth to this cause that is ours in the world.

- Robert Bowers

We pledge because we want to, not just because we feel it is the right thing to do or because of pressure. We believe in the mission of the church and realize that it takes financial support as well as time and talents to minister to our church family, others in the community and reaching domestic and global missions. We also realize that the church, like any business, incurs personnel and facility expenses to keep running and carry out its mission. We feel blessed to be able to contribute through our annual pledge and by volunteering our time throughout the year. We are truly blessed by the staff and church family here at FUMCO.

- Ruth Barnard



The Timeline for Making a Sacred Choice

A pledge card will soon be mailed to you, along with information about the projected 2019 budget of the church. Pastor Peter will be speaking on Sundays in October about the nature of our sacred choices, encouraging us to choose life over death, community over isolation, and boldness over mildness. **On October 27, we will celebrate Pledge Sunday** and invite church members and friends to bring their pledges to the altar. If you cannot be present in worship on October 27, please try to get your pledge in to the office early or send it by mail. Remember, your pledges allow the church to accurately project the scope of our shared ministry in the coming year.

Some Scriptures about Sacred Choices

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
(Matthew 6:19–21, NRSV)

No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.
You cannot serve God and wealth.”
(Luke 16:13, NRSV)

Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.
(Matthew 19:21–22, NRSV)

From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.
(Luke 12:48, NRSV)



Ministry with children and youth engages entire families with the story of God's love in Christ, on Sunday mornings and throughout the week.

Ministry is also happening in a larger denominational context and the past year has seen First Olympia embrace the idea of **cooperative ministries with congregations in Tumwater and Lacey**. A new church start, funded by the Annual Conference, but housed here at First Olympia, is beginning to meet in the Steamboat Island/West Olympia area. We recently adopted the ongoing ministries of the Evergreen United Methodist Fellowship and will partner closely with St. Andrew's UMC to continue the work of the Evergreen congregation. Joint youth and education ministries have already begun, as well as opportunities for worship, fellowship, and mission between the congregations.

Ministry happens in classrooms, too! Did you know that in the past year there have been at least 15 classes for adult spiritual formation? Did you know that 44% of the worshipping congregation also attends these classes? Our **dynamic discipleship program** is a sign that First Olympia UMC teaches and preaches that God is not done with us yet, that we are all seekers after deeper truths, pilgrims on a journey of becoming more than we are and all God calls us to be. From *Faith Links to Living the Questions*, from *Bad Women of the Bible* to *Movies That Matter*, we are growing in our understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.

Ministry happens with our children and youth, too. **Children and youth are a visible and vital part of our church family**. Each year we distribute Bibles, train acolytes, celebrate milestones, and welcome families from all backgrounds into relationship with Jesus and our church. There are a dozen middle schoolers who will be confirmed as members of the church this spring. The new cooperative youth ministry is creating new enthusiasm among our teenagers. A new Children's Church has been added to second service at the request of our young families. Family fellowship opportunities are scheduled throughout the year. Outreach

“It is a sacred choice to decide to care about people as individuals with unique concerns and needs and to provide time and space for those people to experience the grace of God at work in their lives”

Dave and I met at the church and we were married in the church chapel. Our contributions are a way to lend monetary support for the many community activities that FUMCO is involved in. It makes us feel good knowing that our contribution helps others in the community, people in our church, Methodist organization, as well as around the world. Volunteering at church (ushering, committees, UMW, for example) makes us feel that we are showing our support. FUMCO is our family and we miss it while traveling.

- Chris and Dave Shipley

My pledge is an investment in a wonderful place of worship and community service. First UMC provides a variety of programs that serve many needs and I am happy to support it with a pledge. A fixed monetary commitment from me helps the church to plan for the future and continue to grow.

- Bob Adams

My favorite hymn is “Blessed Assurance”. With that “Assurance” I am convinced by scripture that we are commanded to make disciples of Jesus and to love our neighbor as ourselves. I rely on the structure of the Church to provide opportunities for carrying out those commandments. My parents modeled giving to our local church every week. That model has become a part of my life and I feel moved by the Spirit to financially support the Church and FUMCO as they assist me in following what I have been commanded.

- Jim Odiorne

I consider my pledge like any other bill I need to pay. I have a house, a car, food, and other essentials. My faith is important to me. I need a location that I can have fellowship with others and learn more about the faith I practice. That location costs money to run. There is the building itself, which occasionally needs repair, the staff that run it and other expenses. I pray each year about the amount. I do on-line banking and make my gift with my other bills. I found if I consider it among my bills, instead of giving what I have left over, I feel better. One year, I received the quarterly statement and was shocked to see I hadn't contributed anything, despite working in the office most Sundays. The moment I turned to on-line banking, the stress about my pledge left because I knew it was paid, just like my phone, Direct TV, and PSE bill.

- Donna Lowery

We donate our time and energy in gratitude for the many blessings we have received. Having a strong church community to turn to in times of celebration, of sadness and in everyday life is one of those blessings. First Oly is a community of people who want to make the world a better place in so many different ways. We want to be a part of that and have it available for future generations.

- Bruce & Julie Keough

We support FUMCO with our yearly pledge and through its various missions, including the Olympia Food Bank, and our Refugee program. FUMCO makes a difference through our socially conscious (Jesus conscious!) programs and outreach. Church members and their donations constantly provide loving role models of giving - such as our UMW Group donating Medical Textbooks to a hospital in

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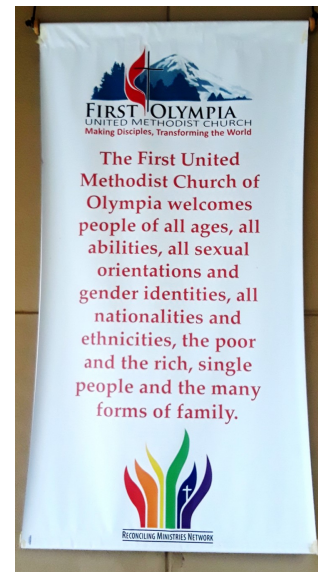
events, like Fall Festival, reach hundreds of community families. Families are making the sacred choice of bringing children and youth to God's house to make connections with God and God's family.

Ministry of **pastoral care is happening**, too. The Rev. Sandy Ward, who works ¾ time for Tumwater UMC as their pastor, and ¼ time for First Olympia doing visitation ministry, is helping Pastors Peter and Ruth regularly visit in hospitals, homes, and in the church offices with folks who are ill, who need spiritual counsel, who are grieving the loss of a loved one, or dealing with chronic physical and mental health issues, or just need to talk about things of the spirit. Our ministries of pastoral care also are seen in the work of Stephen Ministry and Health Ministries, our grief support group, caregivers support network, and Parkinson's support group. It is a sacred choice to decide to care about people as individuals with unique concerns and needs and to provide time and space for those people to experience the grace of God at work in their lives.

We make a sacred choice to take good care of our building, not only for our own use, but for our neighbors, too. **Community use of the church** is a special ministry we can share as a large church in a central location. Boy Scout Troop 48 makes extensive use of the building, and we extend hospitality to Sidewalk Ministry in their work to address homelessness in Olympia. Barb's Family and Friends operates out of our kitchen and fellowship hall, continuing their great tradition of holiday feeding ministries to the community. We rejoice to host meetings of United Way, People First, Concerned Clergy of Olympia, PFLAG, and more. Many of these groups could not meet if they had to pay market rental rates, and so we subsidize their activities by allowing the use of the buildings for whatever they can afford. When we are paying the gas and electric bills, we know that it is a ministry that does much more than just keep our parishioners warm. We are warming the community, too!

"...we are a congregation that welcomes all people into our many and varied ministries as we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Missions, Outreach, Fellowship, Nurture... our ministries are diverse, numerous, and always expanding. Ministry happens here when the United Methodist Women meet to discuss issues like immigration and hunger, when Kairos Prison Ministry and Lutheran Refugee Services use the building for training sessions, when Just Housing is a guest at a forum co-sponsored by First Olympia and the Concerned Clergy of Olympia, when a new Seventh Day Adventist congregation run by and for Samoan immigrants meets in our chapel, when we bring in Sunday speakers for programs between our services that invite our members to become informed about local and world issues and get involved in making the world a better place. Sharing our building is a sacred choice. The Sunday Light Lunch ministry provides a healthy meal and wonderful fellowship to old-timers and newcomers alike. Our kitchen gets used regularly to



The church's welcome statement is proudly displayed for the community to see.

the local missions like the Overnight Shelter, Camp Quixote, and Habitat for Humanity, as well as generous support for domestic and international disaster relief, all happens because the church is running smoothly. We host programs for Interfaith Works and Faith Action Network that engage our church family and the larger community around issues of justice.

Where Does Ministry Happen at First Church?

Ministry happens everywhere and everyday, in all we do. It happens because we make sacred choices about how we use our time, our talents and our treasure. It happens because we make sacred choices to try to love as we have been loved by our God. It happens because we make sacred choices about faithfully growing in our understanding of who and what God is calling us to be. It happens because we know that our faith is a journey, not a destination, and we are always growing and becoming with each sacred choice we make on the journey. Ministry happens as we make the sacred choice to share the journey with one another.

We invite you to make a sacred choice to generously support First Olympia in 2019!

prepare meals for the Salvation Army community dinners. We host programs for Interfaith Works and Faith Action Network that engage our church family and the larger community around issues of justice. We have made it perfectly clear that we are a congregation that welcomes all people into our many and varied ministries as we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Engaging the world in this way is a sacred choice that we celebrate by saying to all who come through the doors of the church, "You are welcome here."

Finally, it is important to note that support of the general operations of the church enable all of the second mile mission efforts we support throughout the year. Our Refugee Ministry, the Local Emergency

Assistance Fund, support for the local missions like the Overnight Shelter, Camp Quixote, and Habitat for Humanity, as well as generous support for domestic and international disaster relief, all happens because the church is running smoothly. We host programs for Interfaith Works and Faith Action Network that engage our church family and the larger community around issues of justice.

Ethiopia, our Refugee Group donations enabling a young adult refugee with a heart defect to seek care at the University of Washington; and FUMCO cares about children and adults who are homeless working with Help Us Move In, the downtown Overnight Shelter, Union Gospel Mission, the Salvation Army, Sidewalk, the Family Support Center, Community Youth Services, Habitat for Humanity, and the Domestic Violence Shelter, and we have a FUMCO special Local Emergency Assistance Fund. FUMCO through our pledges, donations, and time, is at work where it matters!

- Kim Brandt

By pledging, I allow the finance committee to better plan for the ensuing year. By giving to the church, I help pay for the many programs of the church. It gives me a feeling of belonging and being a part of a movement of which I believe.

- Vern Vannice

We pledge because we are thankful and blessed! As stewards of resources God has provided, we are able to financially support the church program and our talented and caring pastors, church staff, and volunteers. They lead and minister to us, and through spiritual guidance we join together to serve local community and neighbors around the world. Pledges help make the 2019 church program a promise.

- Jerry and Mary Ann Ayres

I see giving as an essential part of maintaining my spiritual health, the way diet, exercise, and sleep are essential to my physical health. Sure, sometimes I'd rather do something else with my time, energy, and resources, but I'm a responsible adult and I know it's good for me. Bonus: it's good for other people, too.

- Susan Freese Baker