



Stewardship 2021

Giving & Stewardship at Westminster A Guide to Discernment

Scripture calls on us all, as followers of Christ, to offer a significant portion of what we are given in service to God. This act of faithful discipleship carries the power and the promise to prepare a place for God's Kingdom here in our world and in our lives as we grow in the teachings of Jesus.

Why Do We Give?

We were created by a generous God to be a generous people. When we give, it is good for us and bolsters our spirit. Giving increases our trust in God, as we lean into God's promises for abundant life. Giving transforms who we are and connects us to the broader work for God's kingdom.

All that we have, and all that we are, comes from God. – Psalm 24

"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it."

We live out our faithfulness, not out of worry, but in trust. – Matthew 6:25-30

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body..."

Acts of stewardship, of shared living, have long been a part of the Christian church.

"Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul... everything they owned was held in common." – Acts 4:32-34

How Much Should I Give?

Our Christian life is an offering of ourselves to God. In the Lord's Supper, we are presented with the self-offering of Jesus Christ for the life of the world. As a people who have been claimed and set free by Christ's grace, we respond with gratitude, offering God our lives, our spiritual gifts, and our material goods. We give our tithes and financial gifts as an act of thanksgiving and a sign of our trust in God and God's perfect will.

In Deuteronomy 26, Moses reminds the people of God's faithfulness to them in bringing them out of slavery. In grateful response, as they come into the land, the people are called to offer their first fruits (the first portion of their harvest) to God, one-tenth (a tithe) of their income. These gifts sustained the life of the temple from the earliest days of the Israelite community. The biblical model of the tithe – 10% of one's income – should be our goal.

What Was Giving Like for 2020?

Westminster relies on your pledges to plan, budget, and provide the resources that allow us to build faith, worship, community, and Christian service to our neighbors in Durham and across the world. Our total budget for 2020 was \$1,246,176. Last year, **254** families/individuals made pledges, which constitutes **56%** of WPC households. Approximately **88%** of Westminster's 2020 operating budget was secured from your pledges.

How is the Church Operating Budget Created?

In the early fall, Westminster's treasurer reaches out to all committee chairs and church staff requesting information on expenses they anticipate for the coming year. The Finance Committee then compiles all of those requests and – after Stewardship season concludes in October – reviews the funds pledged in light of the budget needs for the coming year. Adjustments are made as additional pledges come in and as we get a sense of what the church can reasonably afford. The new budget is then finalized and sent to the Ways and Means Commission, then on to the Session for review and approval at its January retreat. Westminster's budget is based on the calendar year and has remained steady at \$1.1 – 1.2 million for the last five years.

Given Faithfully, Managed Faithfully

Amidst the many opportunities to give generously and to many good causes, consider for a moment how your gift of faith multiplies across the love and mission of God to be carried out at Westminster. Here is a breakdown of how our pledges help fund Westminster's missions and ministries:

- 31% Worship** Music, pastoral leadership, audio-visual needs, nursery/childcare
- 17% Outreach** Local and global missions, mission trips, Presbytery support
- 16% Property** Insurance, utilities, building and grounds maintenance
- 16% Education & Nurture** Church School, Bible studies, youth ministry, congregational care, new members
- 20% Administration** Technology, phones, office equipment and supplies

Remember... Your pledge allows Westminster to direct much needed funding to 20+ Durham organizations that provide vital services and support to our neighbors in need. As we have for many years, we send those payments out first, at the beginning of the month, so those organizations have what they need.

Special Considerations for the 2021 Operating Budget

We are uncharted territory, aren't we? Yet even in this time the structure of our budget remains similar to previous years. We have had a lot of variability over the last few years in terms of staffing transitions, but with all of our new staff in place, we don't expect much change in personnel-related costs. We continue to work on improvements to our campus, of which we need to remain good stewards of for that time we can gather again. The Local Missions Committee is meeting with our community partner agencies to determine their needs for the coming year, and we hope to be able to respond generously. There are so many critical needs in our community, and we **must** be in a position to step forward in response. With your help – with everyone's help – we can.

A Guide for Discernment: How is God Calling You to Give in the New Year?

We invite you into prayerful discernment of how you are called to respond to God's generosity and to Christ's teaching to love God and neighbor. Take some time to consider...

- What elements of Westminster's mission and ministry touch your life most deeply?
- How are you called to strengthen the kingdom of God through faithful tithes and offerings?
- What motivates you to give to the church?
- Do you give as a percentage of your income? If not, what keeps you from doing so? If so, why might taking the next step be difficult?
- Will you covenant to pray about your 2021 pledge of giving and to reflect with yourself and/or family members about what you feel called to give in the coming year?
 - ◇ To begin to give as a **First-Time Giver**?
 - ◇ To plan what percentage of your income to give for a year as an **Intentional Giver**?
 - ◇ To increase the percentage of income you give toward a tithe as a **Growing Giver**?
 - ◇ To begin to give 10% of your income as a **Tither**?
 - ◇ To give an offering beyond 10% of your income as an **Extravagant Giver**?

After your discernment, please complete a 2021 Pledge Commitment Card. Or, you may submit your 2021 Pledge Commitment online using your [myWPC account](#) ([download instructions](#)). Please kindly turn in your 2021 Pledge Commitment to the Finance Office by October 30 to help keep the church's 2021 budget development process on schedule.

Questions?

Do you have a question about your 2020 pledge or contributions you've made over the last year? Would you like to find out how much is remaining on your pledge to the Making Room Capital Campaign? Please contact [Sharon Morgan](#), Business Manager. If you have a question about Westminster's budget or budget development process, please contact [Amy Simonson](#), Church Treasurer.