

**The following is a summary of an update which was shared by the Maranatha elders on Sunday, October 29:**

**Our current situation: Tim Countryman, elder**

Earlier this year, we asked you all to pray for the Deacons as they were faced with a difficult task since at that time we were not seeing giving come in at the level needed in order to meet our budget needs for the year. This makes the management of the church's finances extraordinarily difficult and means watching the bank balance at least weekly to be sure we have the cash on hand to meet our obligations. I've watched this occur this last year and let me tell you, we are being very well-served by our Deacon board. If you see a Deacon, be sure to thank them for the diligence with which they act as stewards of the church's resources because they do an absolutely outstanding job at this.

Unfortunately, I'm standing before you now because that situation has not changed - and in many ways has actually become more acute.

In the last few weeks, we have had a couple of... very difficult meetings. First with the Deacons as they presented their latest version of the budget. The second even more difficult meeting was just this last week with the Missions committee.

I'm going to use very rough numbers here and please understand these are still subject to a bit of change as the Deacons move to finalize the budget in the next couple of weeks.

This year, 2017, we had a budget with a projected income of around \$535,000, which was a decrease from the previous year. Our goal as a church body is to provide 25% of our budget to Missions. While we haven't yet gotten to the 25% level, we have been increasing it as we've been able and we did finally reach 24% a few years ago. With the decrease in budget last year, we were still able to keep our giving to Missions at the same percentage - 24%. But to be clear, it still represented an overall decline in real dollars to the lower overall budget number. Due to this decrease we were also unable to provide raises for the staff last year at all, which was not a decision anybody on the Elder or Deacon boards was happy with. Finally, in order to make this decrease work, most ministries in the church had their budgets cut fairly significantly.

So, now to our situation this year. Based on current giving, we're looking at a projected 2018 budget of right around \$500,000. This is a decrease of \$35,000, and unfortunately with the cuts made last year to other ministries, there are simply no other places left in the budget to cut. The three largest expenditures in the budget are staff salaries - at about 54% of the budget; Missions - at 24% of the budget; and the general operating expenses (electricity, gas, insurance, office supplies) - at about 15% of the budget. Add all this up and this is about 93% of the overall budget. In order to find \$35,000 you either have to zero out all other ministries (Sunday School, Youth, Adult Ministries, etc.) or you have to impact one of these large items.

Which brings me back to the very difficult meeting we had with the Missions committee this week. The Missions committee is faced with a decrease in their budget of over \$32,000. To put

some perspective on that, this represents a reduction of over 25% from 2017 to 2018. Remember, we have this goal of allocating 25% of our total budget to Missions. In order to make 2018 come out balanced, the allocation for Missions now represents only 18% of our budget. This is clearly moving in the wrong direction.

Needless to say, this puts us as a church body in a very difficult and painful situation, in having to either significantly decrease our support to our missionaries or simply removing support for some of them completely. This is real impact to real people, some of whom we've been supporting for many, many years - that many in this body consider family. This is what made our meeting with the Missions committee so difficult. But I want to be clear here, while nobody is happy with the situation, and we definitely did not enter that meeting unified, after much discussion - and above all, prayer - we left that meeting with a definite spirit of unity and with a commitment to together continue to lay this problem before God through prayer.

I'd very much rather be doing anything other than standing here giving you this message. But, while I have no idea how to solve this, I also know that no matter how big this problem seems and no matter how 'unsolvable' it is - I know our God is bigger than this problem. I have seen Him do amazing things in my life and in the life of this church.

Let me leave you with this from 2 Samuel, when David finds out he won't be the one to build the temple for the Lord. He got news he didn't want to get, but David prays to God and thanks Him for all He has done. And then David closes his prayer with these words: "Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, 'I will build a house for you.' So your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. Sovereign Lord, you are God! Your covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant. Now be pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever in your sight; for you, Sovereign Lord, have spoken, and with your blessing the house of your servant will be blessed forever." I know that no matter what happens, wherever this leads, He will be glorified. I don't know how or when - or even why we're in this situation - but I do know who He is and He is trustworthy.

**Our response: Gerry Barker, elder**

Thank you, Tim for showing us that MBC has a serious budget problem—too little income to meet our commitments, especially to our missionaries, but also to several other ministries here at MBC. I'm here to address our opportunity to be involved in resolution of this, should I say it, "financial crisis"?!!

First, let me make an important point—We are focusing mostly today with an overall shortfall in giving with the "missions budget item—a single item on the overall MBC budget. One item, not very personal, but we need to be fully aware that this one item is really about 22 organizations and that it directly impacts at least 57 people. These people are real flesh and blood, they are our friends, in some cases our relatives, but they are all our brothers and sisters in Christ. Bottom line, the impact is to real flesh people, God's servants, and the impact will be great.

So we have a financial crisis, a physical problem, but we believe it has a spiritual solution. No, I don't believe the Spirit of God will come down and print money, but I do believe that the Spirit of God will show each one of us what our part will be in its resolution.

Let me read from 1Corinthians 2:9-16.

There is one phrase in that passage that stands out, "But, God" That two-word phrase is used at least 43 times in the Bible, many times showing the power of God in situations that seemed hopeless. "But, God" when viewed in relation to the worlds challenges of life is

What Up is to down  
What Life is to death  
What In is to out  
What Can is to can't

The world says no, "But, God" says yes!

The world says can't, "But, God" says can!

The world says won't, "But, God" says will!

The world says stop, "But, God" says go!

The world says don't, "But, God" says do!

The world says defeat, "But, God" says victory. "But, God" climbs the highest mountains, crosses the darkest valleys, and sings songs of victory. "But, God" exclaims "I'm going to the enemy's camp and I'll take back what he stole from me"! "But, God" is courageous, confident and conclusive. "But, God" looks at things from God's perspective.

What is often our perspective?

I need to work out

I need to diet

I need to stop yelling at my kids

I need to give more

retirement fund.

**but I** am so tired.

**but I** have no will power.

**but I** am so frustrated.

**but I** have so many wants—cars, clothes, bigger

The question is, "How big is your BUT?"

How about this but, Romans 5:8 "But, God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"?

Too many times we look at things through our own eyes and can see only failure and frustration. "But, God" suggests that we view them as God sees them. We all need to put on our spiritual glasses and see problems as God sees them. Practically, how do we see a solution to our 'crisis'?

1. In a minute Aaron is going to come up and we plan a time of prayer in which each of us can seek the face of God and ask how we can be part of the solution.

2. Then this week we ask each of you-and us- to be in prayer and ask the Spirit's guidance in what our part will be. We are asking that specifically you set aside Tuesday as a day of prayer and fasting seeking God's desire for you.
3. Next week we will offer an opportunity for you to give a special offering, or pledge to give above and beyond your regular giving, dedicated to the 2018 budget. That offering will be used to offset the cut to the missions budget for 2018. I would like to call it "The But, God" offering.

Frankly, \$32,000.00 seems impossible. It reminds me of the situation Noah must have felt he was in. He had spent months aboard a big boat with lots of animals and maybe worse, with his family. All surrounded by a flood of water and no land in sight "But, God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock that were with him on the ark, and He sent a strong wind over the earth and the waters receded". We need to stop thinking, 'It can't be done and remember that God can'. Like it or not His solution is us.

**Corporate prayer time: Pastor Aaron**

Let's read Matthew 9:27-31. Do we believe that God is able to solve our problem? (v.28). That's what each of us must settle for ourselves first. We do believe God has a solution, but we also believe He's going to accomplish it through us.

Think first of all the different times and ways God has provided for your own needs, and give Him thanks for it: *I praise You, Lord, for the time You met my need for...*

Then, let's pray that He will meet this need in a way that sends everyone home glorifying Him (v.31): *Lord, we pray You will meet this need so that...* (He is glorified, our missionaries' needs are met, the kingdom will grow, our faith will increase, our church will be stronger and even more unified, etc.).