

Guide for Developing a Plan for your Congregation's Stewardship, Health, and Connectional Giving

- Use SMART goals – Set goals/objectives by using S.M.A.R.T., which stands for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime, when the goals will be met.
- Keep your plan focused on achieving 100 percent of your Ministry Shares along with pension, health insurance, retiree health, and property insurance.
- Identify the person(s) to be responsible for the plan and report to each Church Council, Staff Parish Relations Committee and Finance Committee meeting on progress.
- Evaluate your plan quarterly and make adjustments as necessary.

Use the following questions to help you develop a plan to achieve your goals. (A small group should be able to answer these questions within one to two meetings. If you have further questions or if you would like someone to assist in completing the questions below, contact your district superintendent.)

1. Name the four to six people who should gather to work on a plan to address how your congregation will pay 100 percent of its Ministry Shares in the next one to three years? They should be leaders who understand the importance of financial stewardship and who are responsible for the finance ministry and can lead the congregation to give and grow. Choose a convener.
2. Finance Chair and Treasurer will prepare an assessment of your finances.
 - a. How does financial stewardship fit into your congregation's understanding of discipleship?
 - b. Have you used a stewardship campaign to solicit commitments for giving from individual disciples?
 - If yes, what were the results?
 - If no, what will you do this year to introduce a stewardship campaign?
 - Do you need an outside resource to help plan and lead a stewardship campaign?
 - c. What has been the total income for the church's ministry for each of the past five years? Has giving increased or decreased? Why?
 - d. Review your spending during the past five years? What expenses have decreased? Increased?
 - How is this impacting your ministry?
 - Is there anything in your budget that you can decrease?
 - What giving has there been to mission projects through your budget? How much?
 - How much of your Ministry Shares and/or direct bills did you not pay last year?
 - Are there sufficient adjustments in your budget to meet this year's connectional responsibilities?
 - Have you included mission giving outside The United Methodist Church?
 - e. We commend all mission giving, but our *Discipline* indicates that Ministry Shares are the first mission giving of a congregation and other mission giving should not be given until apportionments/Ministry Shares are paid first. What is your congregation's current understanding of this commitment?

3. As a team, analyze the results of question #2. Have you gained enough insight to understand how to make immediate adjustments in order to increase your connectional giving? If yes, meet with your church council and recommend a budget adjustment to meet your connectional responsibilities. Notify your district superintendent of how you will make adjustments to meet your connectional responsibilities.
4. If you are not able to meet your connectional giving with the steps in questions #2 and #3, then you will need to set a plan for how you will begin to pay your connectional ministries in full. Use these questions as a helpful guide for developing the next steps.
 - a. What is the difference between what you are paying and your total Ministry Shares and direct bill payments?
 - b. What is a reasonable additional amount you can pay this year?
 - c. How much would you need to increase each year to pay your full Ministry Shares within three years?
5. Meeting your full connectional responsibilities will require increased giving and perhaps budget adjustments.
 - a. Can your church afford your current level of pastoral/staff leadership?
 - b. What are the ways you can increase your giving? How much income will this generate?
 - c. Who will be responsible for planning and carrying out the activities?
6. Include in your plan the following:
 - a. When do you anticipate paying your full connectional responsibilities?
 - b. Have you discussed with your district superintendent any change in pastoral salary?
 - c. What further support do you need in achieving your plan?
7. Send your responses to these questions to your district superintendent within one month after meeting with him/her.