

The Service and Mission Committee consists of a dozen individuals who are committed to social justice and to meeting human need. Our members are typically active in one or more ministries themselves as well as supporting the larger mission work of FPC. I am honored and grateful to work with this group, and I ask the current members of Service and Mission to stand. This group really inspires me with their commitment to helping others.

When we were encouraged by Stewardship to expand our mission budget this year, we were excited, to say the least. It is much more pleasant to think about growing our support than to figure out how to make cuts.

First, a brief word about how we create a budget. It is complicated and confusing, and many of you know that I am not the ideal person to explain it. For years, when it was time to create a preliminary budget, we would discuss how we think of missions at FPC, and whether the budget reflects that. We often debated whether to start with the previous year's budget or whether to start completely fresh. I think we end up doing both. Last year, we supported 23 organizations through the operating budget and six through the Human Needs Endowment. Some groups received funding from both sources. I told you it could be complicated.

As part of the budget process, we evaluate the work of each group and decide if we should continue our support. We try to balance among emergency and longer-term needs in such areas as housing, hunger, racial justice, mental health, families, prison ministry, campus ministry, world missions, and others. Typically, First Pres members are already involved with the organizations we support, as board members, volunteers and donors. Ministries affiliated with FPC receive substantial support, such as the Day School, Walk-in Ministries, and Iglesia Emanuel.

This year, we are increasing our budget for eight organizations and adding support for eight more. Much of this growth falls into two growing ministries at FPC: work for racial equality and work for individuals involved in the criminal justice system. We are adding support for our own Racial Equity Task Force as well as increasing support for the NAACP and the Campus Ministry at NCCU. We are also looking for ways to support others who advocate for racial justice. Likewise, we are support justice-involved individuals by supporting literacy training, re-entry programs, and Welcome Home Boxes, which are boxes of household goods needed by someone returning from prison.

Also this year, the Stewardship Pledge Cards have opportunities to pledge your time to local service efforts. We will provide more detail about getting involved later, but I can tell you each of these options make a difference. Tutoring children at Iglesia Emanuel, delivering Meals on Wheels, cleaning up a park in Durham, making someone's home safer, and working with Durham CAN to make big improvements in our community.

Our committee is excited about all the ways the FPC is helping to build God's kingdom. We would welcome some new members on the committee. We encourage each of you to pray for and support the ministries that are doing this work and to support this Stewardship Campaign.