

PASTORS BLOG

May 24, 2018

Tonight at the pastor's class, as things were winding down, we then experienced a whole other side of what it means to be church. We surrounded a couple who are going through a difficult stretch in their lives, the kinds of challenges that can feel overwhelming. We laid hands on them. We prayed for them; for healing and hope, to be filled and empowered, to be surrounded and filled by the Spirit of God, and to feel the presence of our love for them. To say we invested ourselves in them; in the relationships, in the love, and trust wouldn't be overstating. It was church in its purest form.

I could tell story after story of the lives that have been transformed spiritually, emotionally, and even physically because of Aldersgate United Methodist Church. As I write this, 50 of us are preparing to head to Lazy F to invest ourselves in helping prepare the camp for summer, in bringing clothes to some of the needy in Ellensburg, and in assisting in building for the future of the camp which in turn invests in the potential future of every person who will attend a function there. We offer that with the hope that they will feel the presence of God, in relationships, and in creation. Also at Lazy F will be six of our youth who have committed themselves to explore what it means to be a part of this church; to potentially confirm the vows that were made for them at their baptism. They've invested their time and energy in this time of exploration. And while some are at Lazy F, here at home, Vince and Karen will bring a message of hope and encouragement to those attending worship at Aldersgate. They are investing in you as they bring this message. Investing in each other, in others we don't yet know, in being Christ in the world, and being transformative in actions, this is what we do as a church. I think of those places in the surrounding community, and even in the world where people we don't even know have been strongly affected by the work we do here at Aldersgate. It is simply who we are, and it's what we do.

We invest ourselves on so many levels in so many places, and a part of that investment is the financial pledges we give so that the work of the church can continue. But I have to say, it's not about giving to some budget. That's not who we are. It's about making sure that there are financial resources for our ministries with children, with youth, with young adults, with adults, with discipleship, with worship, and with outreach, toward which we invest. It is the investment in the continuation of the deep relationships that are already formed here. What we give is an investment.

A huge percent of our investments in this church goes toward supporting the staff. It is a remarkable staff. But if you compare what this staff earns to what the average salaries are around us, the imbalance could be overwhelming. Most of those beginning in the tech industry begin their careers at \$70,000 or more. Within three to five years they have often moved into six figure incomes. It's simply a part of where we live. I share that simply to say, for those on this staff at Aldersgate, they aren't doing it for the money. None of us are. We do what we do out of a call of God to help people make their lives better, fuller, deeper, and more wondrous. Without exception those on this staff see their first purpose as serving God, and what immediately follows is serving you. They work hard and I'm so proud to be working alongside them.

In addition, please remember that many of the items you may see in the budget are there to provide the means for the ministries we, as staff, seek to guide, support, and direct. Wendi, Jen, Laura, Dorothy, Jill, Griffey, Jason, Roger, Marie, Pam, Hanae, Dave, and I each are here to serve God, and in turn serve you. We continually seek to be the best stewards we can be with the money you provide. We seek to provide excellence in every aspect of what we do. We seek to provide all kinds of opportunities for growth in faith, in creating opportunities for the deepening of the love of each other here at the church, in provide opportunities for increased health, and in offering

opportunities so that we can be in service to others. We seek to bring moments and lifetimes of transformational experiences. That's what we seek to do. The only way any of that can happen is by you investing in Aldersgate. You are the sole providers of the financial needs of this church. Without you, this church would falter, will falter.

So let me reiterate and say it another way. I am not asking that you support a budget. A budget doesn't change lives. A budget doesn't feed the hungry. A budget doesn't lay hands on and pray for a friend. A budget doesn't help us worship or know God, or understand what Jesus provided for us. A budget is simply a piece of paper that explains what we hope we can offer as a church; a copy of where our investment goes. It is a bunch of names and numbers that offer a glimpse into the financial needs required to support and expand the kinds of relationships that can move and build and transform and deepen. What I am asking is that you pledge; pledge so that lives can be transformed and relationships built and outreach can be offered. And as you see on the attached graphs below, we don't yet have enough to do what is needed, to provide what is needed. On the positive side we have new pledgers, a fair amount of them. We have some who have increased their pledges, and even a few who have increased their pledge by a lot. We have many who have stayed at the same level as last year and others who have reduced their pledges, and for each it is understandable. We also have those who have moved away, and some who have moved to other churches that better fit their needs. Those pledges are gone. And, yes, we also have those who have yet to pledge – there are quite a few- and thus this note.

Let me close with this. The average pledge of those currently involved in the church is right around \$3500 per year. Some give more, some less. Some of our largest givers, and by that I don't mean those who give the most money, are a few who pledge \$2 a week, or about \$130 a year. They give sacrificially out of their own scarcity of funds. Others also give sacrificially out of their abundance. What makes a church vibrant and alive is when each part of the body, no matter where they may be on the financial spectrum, gives to this place as an investment. It is an investment in transformation; whether that transformation is the recognition of the power of God, the food a homeless person receives, a place of safety for a family who has been abused, a youth group where friendships grow and support is given, a place where we can come together in worship, in fun, and in fellowship. There is so much more but I believe you've gotten my point.

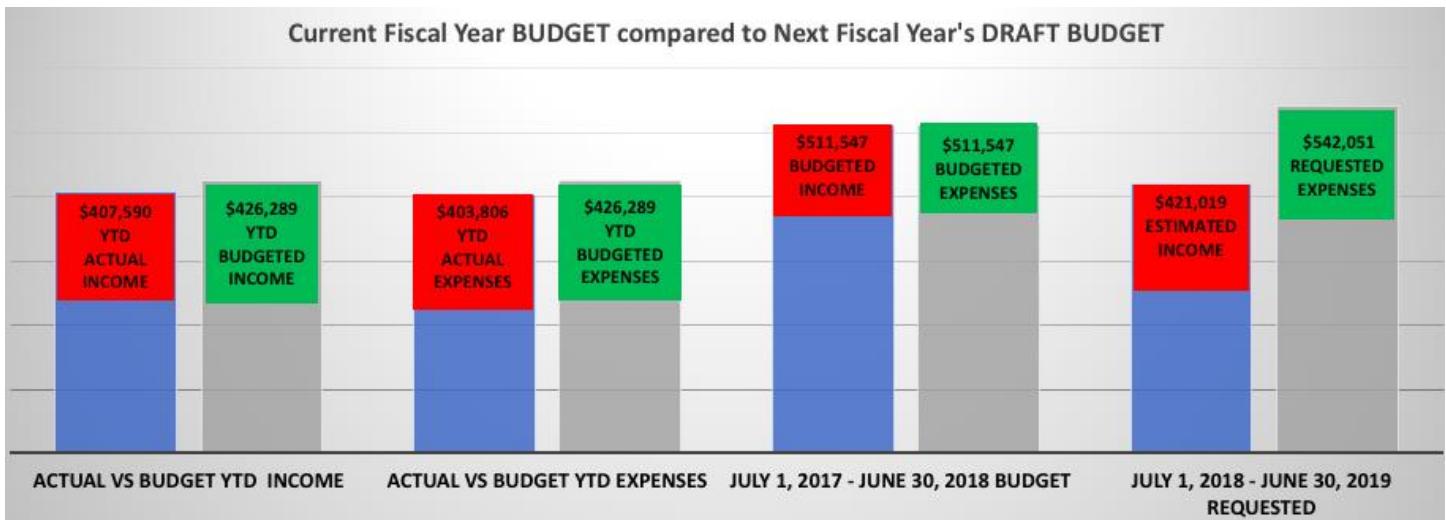
At this point we are over \$100,000 short of our goal; and our goal isn't the budget. The goal is to provide ongoing, excellent opportunities for God's transformative power to permeate not only those of us inside this church, but to work through us to transform our communities and world. So, friends, I humbly ask that if you haven't already, that you pledge. What I mean by that is fill out a pledge card and turn it in to Wendi in the office. Pledging is not a contract. It is simply something between you and God and the church. The Bible asks that we offer a percentage of what we receive in income.

Please consider that. And by the way, I don't care what percentage it is. For those who have already pledged, I simply ask that you prayerfully consider potentially increasing what you give. And please don't forget that we continue to pay off the kitchen remodel; something that was done to offer more opportunities for outreach to the community. Together, I know that we can reach our goal.

Thanks for reading the whole thing, and let me know if you have any questions. And, just a reminder, if you ever want to see the specifics of the budget, there are always copies available in the church office.

Sincerely,

Pastor Brad (one who also pledges)



Capital Campaign/Kitchen Remodel Loan Payment

