



*By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.’ Luke 1:78-79*

One of the joys of the past few months has been getting to know the people and ministries of this church! Each of you has a beautiful story to share and I love hearing about how God is at work in your life and what this church means to you.

I have heard from people who have been a part of this church for decades and from people who have only been here a few months. A consistent theme in these conversations is how much people love this church's faithfulness in making the greater community a better place and the deep sense of commitment through our welcoming statement to make a place for all people to feel at home. What a beautiful expression of God's tender mercies.

I have also met with ministries leaders who steward so many of the activities that help people feel welcome at this church or reach out into the greater community to make a difference. We have a refugee committee, a women's group dedicated to raising money and giving volunteer time to local concerns, United Women in Faith who raise money each year to support both local and global concerns, Kids' Church Party happening each month, youth group, plans for a youth mission trip next summer, a team of people forming a new congregational care team, grief support ministries, depression support groups, the Anti-racist Film Club working every month towards equality for all, Younger Adults group, Rainbow Fellowship, and more.

That is a long list! And it didn't include all of the ministries of this church or the community partnerships that we have with organizations such as the Girl Scouts, Sidewalk, Madison School, Quixote Communities, Interfaith Works, Thurston County Food Bank, and more. This church helps build tiny houses, collects food for the food bank, funds school supplies for three classes (WOW!), hosts scouting groups, provides laundry vouchers for families at Madison School, and...you guessed it...more!



All of this has been on-going during the tumultuous years of a global pandemic. I know that there are times when it feels as if time stood still during the pandemic, as if we have so far to go to get back to normal. It is reasonable to feel like that after the years of upheaval and grief of the pandemic, coupled with an almost entire turnover in church staff within just six months.

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I am here to tell you, as someone new to FUMCO, this church has and is doing amazing things! The list of on-going ministries and community partnerships would be remarkable in regular times. But during pandemic recovery? You, my friends, are phenomenal. This church has a deep well of faithfulness that saw it through the pandemic and will continue to be a resource for years to come. I am so proud to be serving with you and dreaming about the new day that God has in store for us.

God has walked with this church through the darkest valleys and on the brightest mountain tops.

One of my favorite meetings since starting at FUMCO was with our church archivist, Sandee Bloomfield. Like all of the volunteers here at FUMCO, she is so good at her job. When we met, Sandee took me into the archive room and showed me the documented history of this church. Since 1852, when this church was started in a saloon, it has been serving God and the community.

I don't know everything the church has been through over the last 170 years, but I know it has seen good times and difficult times. It has witnessed dramatic changes to the way people relate to each other, what the community of Olympia looks like, and how people perceive church. But here we are, still going strong, still serving God, still serving the community. None of this would be possible without the tender mercies of God.

God has walked with this church through the darkest valleys and on the brightest mountain tops. Through the people of this church, God has provided abundantly and given us the ability to bless well beyond our walls.

Throughout the decades, throughout the generations, people like you have partnered with God to bring goodness and mercy into the lives of others. God has not abandoned us through the trials of pandemic, and the God who remembers and redeems us is the same God calling us into the future. If we doubt that, we only need to look at the work God has and is doing through this church.

Our annual stewardship series is a time for us to do a few things. First, let us give thanks to the God who is with us, who leads us, and who shepherds us. Next, let us give thanks for the faithful generations that have come before us and who have heard God's call to share tender mercies with the greater community and who have answered that call.

Then let us pray about our own call as individuals and as a church, to look towards the new day dawning, trusting that God is leading us to a future where our cup overflows and we continue to be a light to our community.

The financial gifts of past generations have given us the opportunity to be faithful stewards of this church in our own time. Let us continue the legacy of this church for today, tomorrow, and long into the future so that we can continue to bring God's tender mercies to our world.

With gratitude for God's tender mercies, and with hope for the new day dawning,

Pastor Heather



***We are a community of faith, seeking connection to God,
each other, and the wider community.***

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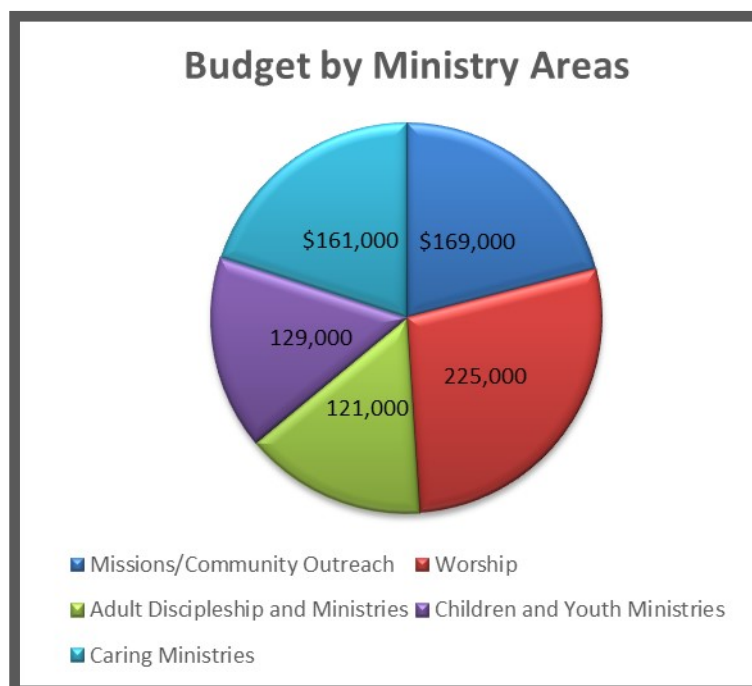
A Look at the 2023 Proposed Budget

A church budget, like a family budget, reflects both fixed costs and line items that reflect the values, and hopes, that we hold in common. The budget is a document filled with numbers, but behind each number is an intention to spend our resources in a manner that reflects our commitment to love God and love our neighbors.

We recognize that each dollar of the budget represents a gift entrusted to us by the congregation and community. We take the budgeting process very seriously and exercise good stewardship over the resources of this church. The proposed budget for 2023 is \$804,236..

Below is a chart that highlights the budget in terms of the church's values and priorities. Every budget dollar spent is a part of supporting our core ministries which include:

- Worship
- Adult Discipleship
- Missions (Community Outreach)
- Children and Youth
- Caring Ministries



The actual line items on the budget might read:

Electricity or Staff Wages, but the intention behind all of those line items is to support our on-going mission of sharing God's love with each other and the world.

Gifts That Give Again and Again: Planned Giving

By Pastor Heather

Giving to the church comes in many forms. When I was a child, attending Sunday School with friends, each week I put a coin in an offering envelope to give during Sunday school time. I was so proud of that coin. I imagined that with that small gift, the Sunday School teachers were able to purchase craft supplies or crackers for snack time. More than that, my offering was a sign of my love for the church.

Elsewhere in this mailer, we are inviting you to prayerfully consider your regular giving to the church as gratitude for God's tender mercies. Another means for showing your love for this church, and your trust that God's faithful work will continue through the people of First United Methodist Church of Olympia, is through estate planning.

The gifts given through estate planning become part of the permanent endowment fund and bless not just this generation, but generations to come. In just seven years the endowment fund has grown from just \$70,000 to over \$500,000. The interest from this endowment realizes income each year of about \$25,000. The endowment is meant to be a fund that will provide for this church long into the future.

In the past, grants from the endowment fund have provided for a multi-media staff position which enabled us to begin live-streaming worship, cameras for the sanctuary to make streaming possible, and cooperative youth ministry to disciple the next generation. Future grants are designated for new ministries that will carry this church into the new day that God has planned for us.

For more information about the Endowment Fund, please contact the church office or your pastors.

What Our Giving Does...

These are just a few examples of how your generosity impacted our church and community throughout the past year!		1000 hours of community groups meeting in our building.	52 live-streamed worship services reaching people who cannot attend in person.
29 children and youth discipleship events.	110 prayer emails containing over 870 unique prayer requests.	300 Zoom-based prayer meetings have been held.	1,200 hours visiting or calling church members for pastoral care.
\$17,000 given in budgeted support to partner organizations.	1,560 pastoral care hours including visiting, phone calls, and prayer.	\$52,000 shared in second mile giving to local and global mission partners.	\$18,000 given to help families in our local community.



Shadows and Guideposts

by Angelina Goldwell



In our house we play a game with flashlights. I stand at one end of the hallway, my spouse stands at the other, and our child stands with one of us. Alex and I hold our flashlights and shine the beams so that there is a patch of carpet where neither light reaches. Percy will go to the edge of one light, delightedly yell "yikes!" and jump over the shadowy patch of carpet to the safety of the next flashlight. He trusts that the light is there and that he can reach it from where he is. Sometimes, he misses the jump and lands in darkness. When that happens, he closes his eyes and jumps again. He does this because he trusts who is holding the light.

The two scriptures that ground us in this season, Luke 1:68-79 and Psalm 23, provide us with a rich array of descriptions of God: merciful, promise keeper, rescuer, light bringer, guide, shepherd, comforter, anointer. From your childhood to now, you have likely encountered these attributes of God made flesh in people around you - friends, neighbors, people who made an impact on your life. And chances are, you have embodied God in the people in your life. You have been gifted with guideposts of hope and have been a guidepost to someone else. God's faithfulness to our ancestors can be a guidepost when we feel uncertain about what the future holds. Our faithfulness to each other is a guidepost.

When we show up for each other the Holy Spirit is right there with us.

When I feel the shadows weighing on me, I recall some of the moments and people who have been guideposts for me in recent months. I recently had dinner and devotional time with our youth. I listened to them as they bonded over how between school schedules, extracurriculars, jobs and homework, their lives are full of demands on their time, talent and presence. And yet, they still showed up for this gathering and at the end were making plans to see each other, to show up and attend each other's concerts and games and performances. We have new people coming into the life of the church on a regular basis who are hungry to make friends and experience the welcome, love, and connection that many of our more established members enjoy. Every time I see people reaching out to find that someone else is reaching out to them, I feel the dawn breaking on high and shining light into the shadowy patch we find ourselves in. When we show up for each other the Holy Spirit is right there with us. This season my prayer is that we will continue to commit to show up and trust that the light is there.



To Be a Church of Tender Mercy

By Pastor Alexa

Rodney Stark is a sociologist of religion, and wrote in his book *The Rise of Christianity* about Christian women who tended to the sick while plague ravaged their European communities, offering basic nursing to those abandoned by the rest of society. Stark makes the claim that these acts of tender mercy are responsible for an exponential 'rise' of Christianity.

Enduring plague ourselves, it is reasonable to want to look beyond it, to plan for a future without plague; to imagine a society which effectively supports the health of the people in it, a world in which we can exhale, a world in which people have deep and abiding faith both in God AND the church, a world in which what the church does is an additional blessing upon the already fully-functioning world. But that is not where we are.

A friend of mine went to one week of classes to pursue social work before quitting. She said, "I didn't realize I'd most likely be working with people coming out of prison, people in addiction, families whose children are in the custody of the state. I want to be a therapist!" I asked, "...for healthy people?" It is unrealistic, but understandable, for her to want to be a therapist to healthy people, and for us to want to be a church in a world without challenges to the church. I want that too! That would mean the world was in a better state than it is.

In reality, the world is in disarray. Our neighbors are in pain. People are enduring chronic illness and disability caused or exacerbated by COVID-19, are attempting to process both the mass death event of the last three years as well as the death and loss within their own families and communities, and are working more hours than ever for less pay. There is deep suffering within arms reach of us at all times.

What our neighbors need, and what we ourselves need, is tender mercy.

There are few places in the world, in our community, where tender mercy is available. The church has the corner market on being a place people *might look for tender mercy*. *The church, historically, has been the place people go to for help, for refuge, for mercy.*

I think it's fair to say that tender mercy is hard to do when we perceive resources as being scarce - when we are afraid that we won't make ends meet, when we are afraid that our own needs will not be met. And, at the same time, the stories of faithfulness we love to tell are the ones about people who had little, and were always willing, and somehow able, to stretch their meals for a hungry soul knocking at the door.

Meals can be stretched today when you can count on your neighbor for a cup of rice tomorrow; wounds can be tended to by salves today made from herbs grown last summer by farmers down the road; someone can nurse you in your illness if we prevent the deaths of, and preserve our relationships with, others.

The tender mercy the church can offer is only possible, in seasons like this one, if we do it together.

Your pledge to First United Methodist Church of Olympia is an investment in, and a sign of your commitment to, further cultivating a church of tender mercy. I am hungry for, thirsty for, aching for a church that accepts the tender mercy of God, and shares that tender mercy with one another, and with the wider community. This is the work of evangelism; this is proclaiming the gospel. May it be so!



What Is In The Budget?

The Budget Basics (see right) gives an overview of the multi-paged proposed budget that our staff, ministry leaders, and finance committee have developed for the coming year. The detailed budget lists each source of income and expense line by line and helps us track both income and spending throughout the year. The proposed budget is presented to Church Council each year for approval. A copy of the full, detailed budget is available by request from the church office.

The budget for 2023 is \$804,000 up about 5% from the 2022 budget of \$768,500. This slightly higher budget reflects the church's on-going values. First, we are continuing to re-open the building after COVID. This means an increase in utility bills, staff time, and cleaning expenses. This also means that our ability to serve our community is increasing! Many non-profits use our facilities. What a blessing to be able to offer low cost space to many organizations that make our community better!

We are also seeing an increase in building use by our own ministries. Grief support, caregivers support, Kids' Church Party, UWIF, our choirs, and more are all back in the building. We have restarted coffee hour, and many of our Committees meet in a hybrid format allowing people to be in person or on Zoom based on their comfort levels. The increase in building use allows for greater connection between our people, strengthens relationships, and helps us stay engaged in our faith life.

For the first time, our budget is fully funding a full-time position in our Multi-Media and Communications Director. As our online congregation grows in number, this position is especially important to support this new area of ministry!

Putting together the budget can be an exercise in detailed number counting. It matters that the funds of this church are stewarded with care and diligence. But the budget is also a document of hope and trust. It captures our trust that by God's tender mercies a new day is dawning and we are ready for the future that God has in store for us!

The Budget Basics

Income	
Pledged Giving	\$480,165
Additional Giving	\$239,571
Other Sources	\$84,500
Total Income	\$804,236
Expenses	
Clergy and Staff	\$593,682
Facilities	\$138,125
Apportionments	\$85,279
Discipleship & Missions	\$37,150
Total Expenses	\$804,236

STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT FOR 2023

I/We plan to support God's work in the world through the ministries of First United Methodist Church of Olympia with my/our financial gift of:

\$ _____ (annual total) to be given
☐ weekly ☐ monthly ☐ single annual gift ☐ other

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Many church supporters give online. Visit www.fumcoly.org/give for information on how to arrange automatic credit card payments of your pledge. Or please return your Commitment Card to: **First UMC Olympia, 1224 Legion Way SE, Olympia, WA 98501**



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*First UMC Olympia welcomes people of all ages, all abilities,
all sexual orientations and gender identities, all nationalities and ethnicities,
the poor and the rich, single people and the many forms of family.*



BY GOD'S

TENDER MERCY

THE DAWN WILL BREAK UPON US

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