

# North American Division 2023 Offertory Readings

Our mission is “to reach the North American Division and the world with the distinctive, Christ-centered Seventh-day Adventist message of hope and wholeness.” Stewardship Ministries is dedicated to helping members catch this vision.

Systematic giving is part of being a faithful steward. When we return tithe, we are recognizing that God owns everything. Giving offerings expresses our gratitude for what God has done for us. God loves a cheerful giver and He has chosen this method to support those who preach the gospel as they reach the world with His message.

You will find an extensive selection of videos emphasizing various offerings by visiting our website at [www.nadstewardship.org/videos](http://www.nadstewardship.org/videos). You can use them in conjunction with the offering appeals or in place of them. They average between a-minute-and-a-half and two minutes in length.

Faithful stewardship is a matter of the heart. We don't give to receive love and blessings from God. We give because we have already received God's love and blessings. We give because our hearts and lives are full of the joy of the Lord. We give because we want to live out God's character of abundant generosity—especially as exhibited through the giving of the ultimate gift: the life of His Son. Giving is a natural response for recipients of God's goodness.

God's blessings to you as you help others experience the joy of faithful stewardship.

Michael Anthony Harpe



Director

Stewardship Ministries

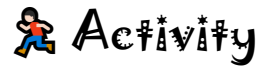
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

## Activity

You will notice this graphic in the readings for several Sabbaths throughout the Offering Appeals in 2023. What this means is that Steve Case wants some participation from the worshippers. Since Steve is trying to reach the youth and young adults of our church, he encourages participation to appeal to younger worshippers. Even if your church doesn't have young people, please try to apply the principles and adjust the activity for the circumstances of your local congregation.

**IMPORTANT:** Please read all the activity directions in advance and make the necessary preparations for that Sabbath. Some examples of activity preparation include a quote to be put on a power point slide or printed in the bulletin, a song to be played before the offertory reading for that Sabbath, cards to be printed for every worshipper to make a decision, and the list of the 7 T's of Stewardship to be printed in the bulletin on five Sabbaths. Please prepare in advance so these Sabbaths can be impactful.

January 7, 2023




## Local Church Budget

Happy New Year! Did you make any New Year's resolutions? Some people don't make New Year's resolutions because they have tried making resolutions before and don't want the discouragement that comes from repeated failures.

And yet we make commitments and re-commitments all the time. Vibrant relationships involve commitments and re-commitments, including forgiveness when we mess up. Weddings call for commitments, and anniversaries spark natural moments of re-commitment. The start of a school year launches commitments for students, staff, and families.

Beginning a new year provides a natural time to make a commitment, or a re-commitment, to Jesus. Today, I'm inviting you to acknowledge explicitly that "all you are" comes from Jesus and give all you are back to Jesus. Let's actively symbolize this.

Please stand at this time. I know you're not accustomed to doing this during the offering—unless you're a deacon. But I'm asking everyone here to stand to their feet today for the offering. Yes, you.

 *When the offering container comes to you, pass your tithe envelope or your cash around yourself from the front to the back and back to the front (demonstrate it in the front and have the deacons demonstrate it as well). (Alternate: place it over your heart and then raise it to heaven.)*

Yes, you can put your offering in the offering plate, but first symbolize your full commitment to Jesus by encircling your entire self with your offering (or placing it over your heart and then raising it to heaven). And then feel free to sit down after that time. Let's commit and re-commit ourselves to Jesus as we start this New Year!

January 14, 2023

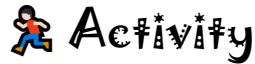
## Religious Liberty

Did you know that just 150 years ago, being a Seventh-day Adventist in the United States could be a risky business? Take the case of Pastor James Scoles from Springdale, Arkansas. He volunteered to help finish painting his congregation's newly built church and decided to complete the work one quiet Sunday morning. "I went over to the church," he said later, "and finished up a small strip of painting on the south side... and here I quietly worked away for perhaps two hours."\* For this act, Pastor Scoles was arrested and jailed—and it was just one of many cases where Adventists and other religious minorities were prosecuted under state Sunday laws.

Today, we may not be arrested for working on Sunday, but religious freedom must still be defended. As Ellen White reminded us, we must remain vigilant and hold high the "banner of truth and religious liberty" in these last days. Today, we have the opportunity to support the vital mission of *Liberty* magazine and the work of our Public Affairs and Religious Liberty leaders. With each issue of *Liberty* magazine that rolls off the presses, and with each visit to a legislator's office, or legal case argued, our religious liberty leaders are working to defend the precious, God-given gift of freedom for all people. With our offering today, we have a chance to raise high the banner of religious liberty.

\* A. T. Jones, *Civil Government and Religion* (Oakland, CA: American Sentinel, 1889), p. 114.

January 21, 2023




## Local Church Budget

In Christ's parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30), it seems God gives people what they have. We then develop and use these, and then we give an account to Christ when He returns. Not everyone receives the same talents or the same number of talents.

What talent(s) has God given you? Some might be obvious, while others could seem minor or even uncertain. Let's take a moment corporately to consider what God has given to each of us. You can do this on your own, as well. You might already have a clear answer or two from God, or maybe you need more time. Perhaps each of us should do this at least once a week.

However, the next question for us to consider would be, "What are you doing with what God has given you?" Yes, it comes from God, but He gives it to you to develop and to use for His glory and for the benefit of others.

Every member here present, please hold out your hands in front of you, cupped together, demonstrating that you are receiving talents from God (demonstrate this posture as you speak and encourage listeners to participate actively).

  *Holding your hands cupped together in front of you, pray a short prayer, asking God what talents He has given you. And ask Him how He wants you to use them. I will finish with a blessing on our tithes and offerings and the way God is going to use your talents to advance His kingdom.*

Now consider, "What are you doing with what God has given you?"

Let's pray together, thanking God for our talents, and asking His guidance for their use.

January 28, 2023

## Conference Advance

**STEWARDSHIP:** The word has received a negative reputation in the mind of many believers. It is introduced at the tithe and offering phase of our worship experience when it is much more than a liturgical segment in worship.

When you hear or think of the word “Stewardship,” don’t cringe and hide your wallets or purses. In prior presentations, the focus of stewardship was, not intentionally, transactional (about money only), instead of transformational (spiritually balanced).

The stewardship act of worship is part of the everlasting gospel to be preached to the world. This is relevant in these last days and also to prophecy. Rev. 14:7 says, “Fear God, and give him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, and the sea and the springs of water.”

I invite you today to make stewardship an act of worship. Look at your giving of tithe and offerings, not as a financial transaction, but as a vehicle for spiritual transformation.

Prayer: Dear Father, receive these tithes and offerings as an act of worship and bless our local Conference as it tries to reach our territory with the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. In Your precious name we pray, AMEN!

February 4, 2023

## Local Church Budget

We Seventh-day Adventists have a reputation of being faithful in returning our tithes to God, at least compared to most other Christian denominations. However, our tithing might contradict what's in our hymnal, and I'm talking about a well-known hymn. Either we need to change our giving or we need to change the lyrics in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, specifically song #309.

Here's how the revised version of this song should go: "10% to Jesus I surrender, 10% to Him I freely give." Join me on the chorus, "I surrender 10%, I surrender 10%, 10% to thee my blessed Savior, I surrender 10%."

Something about that just doesn't sound right, does it? Jesus never asked us for 10%; He's always asked for everything. That's why the hymn goes, "All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give."

Yes, the Bible talks about a tithe being 10% as a practice of worship and reminds us that everything comes from God, but let's remember that everything belongs to God, including the local church offering. With what's left, I buy food to take care of my body or to pay my bills; even this belongs to Jesus. When we bring our offerings to God, we acknowledge that EVERYTHING comes from Him and we can trust Him to supply everything we need.

Today I invite you to give everything to Jesus and allocate a portion of that to the offerings at this church as you actively worship God.

February 11, 2023

## **Adventist Television Ministries Evangelism**

The world we've come to know may never return to what we once referred to as normal if for no other reason than the precious influence of Jesus' time on earth, though it has lingered like a sweet perfume for 2,000 years, has lessened the impact on the lives of everyday people now because hearts are hardened. Nevertheless, you can make a difference in the lives of others whose hearts are still open to knowing Him by supporting Adventist Television Ministries in reaching the masses for Jesus.

One pastor recalls the day a woman came to church with her family in tow all because of a TV media ministry. Though he studied with her, she had apparently viewed our programming for so long that there was hardly anything left to tell her. What a wonderful day when she and her family were baptized.

Adventist Media Ministries undergird your local ministry and make it more impactful. Breath of Life, Faith for Today, Jesus 101, and It Is Written are each designed to reach a specific audience through a unique worldview.

Whether people know their Bible well or not at all, they must still be presented with the *Adventist* story. And yes, your offering can help reach around the corner or around the world through streaming, touching hearts and changing lives with a Christ-centered message of hope and wholeness. Please give liberally to advance our message through Adventist Television Ministries and broaden your outreach so Jesus can come and we can go home.



February 18, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

“Tithes and offerings.” What are they?

“Tithe” literally means one-tenth, or 10%. If you have \$10, one-tenth would be \$1. If you have \$1,000, one-tenth would be \$100. People who “tithe” take their income, like their paycheck or their profit when they sell something, and give 10% of it to God as their tithe. Malachi 3:10 says, “Bring ye” or “you bring.” For those in a relationship with God, this statement means, “If you love me, bring the tithe into the storehouse.”

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, tithes and offerings are received at the local church, and then the tithe begins its journey. There is an immediate benefit to the local church from the tithe in the form of a full-time or part-time pastor, teacher/principal, disaster response, and access to the Conference, Union, Division, and General Conference leadership and services. The journey continues and tithe is sent to the Conference (storehouse) where 75%-85% remains to fund ministries and workers in the territory. We follow the New Testament teaching that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14). The rest is sent to fulfill the mission of the gospel to reach the world everywhere.

“Offerings” are any donations you make beyond the return of tithe—10%. The majority of offerings remain at the church for various ministries and church budget operations which include church upkeep and special offerings important to your congregation, your community, or you personally.

Let’s be faithful with tithe and offerings so that none of these vital ministries are neglected.

February 25, 2023

## Conference Advance

**WORSHIP:** Stewardship worship is first about relationship! “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33). Stewardship is giving our all, lovingly, to the One who lovingly gave His all for us, and continues to give His all to us daily.

Worshiping God is a joy. The Father is the supreme Lover and Giver. Jesus is the greatest gift, as John 3:16–17 says. He’s our Example. The Holy Spirit is our ultimate Guide.

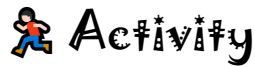
God’s generosity is revolutionary and relational. Because of our relationship with Him, we delight to partner with Him in funding the mission—the everlasting gospel to the world.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:19–20).

The Creator exhibits exemplary revolutionary generosity and is worthy to be worshipped.

**Prayer:** Dear God, bless these tithes and offerings that we give to You today. Help these funds to be used to teach people to observe all the things You have commanded us to do. And bless our Conference administration as they seek ways to follow the great commission to baptize people and get them ready for your soon return. In the name of Jesus we pray, AMEN!


March 4, 2023



## Local Church Budget

This is the time during the worship service when the person in front says something like, “Now is the time when everyone can participate in the worship service.” This implies all people present should take out a wallet to put something in the offering. It also suggests that the other parts of the worship service aren’t for everyone.

Let’s really do something today in which everyone can participate. Let’s all stand up and move to the aisle nearest you. That’s right; we do want everyone to participate in the worship service at this time! So please stand and make your way toward the nearest aisle (pause and encourage participation).

* Before passing the offering plate and expecting everyone to put in money, let’s go bigger. Instead of money, let’s give God what He really wants—ourselves. If you are willing to give yourself to God today as your act of worship to God, please come forward. When you get toward the front, you can kneel before God or stand or bow or raise your hands in praise to the Almighty Creator—the awesome One who made you.*

Money makes a great offering, but the best offering is to give yourself to God. Today I ask everyone to participate by giving not just money, but yourself, to God. This is true worship.

After we dedicate ourselves through silent prayer, return to your seats, and the deacons will receive the tithe and offerings.

March 11, 2023

## **World Budget - Adventist World Radio**

Just over a year ago, hardened assassins from the New People's Army in Mindoro, Philippines, laid down their guns and chose a new life—and baptism—after listening to Adventist World Radio and studying with local Adventist pastors. No longer “Former Rebels” but “Fully Reconciled,” these men and women wanted to get right to work in sharing what they had found with their family, neighbors, and friends.

Just after their big baptism, they declared that they would “each one reach one.” They decided amongst themselves that each of them would lead someone to Jesus so they would soon have 700 people ready for baptism! Only a couple months later, 700 more Former Rebels had given their lives to Jesus as a result of these converted friends witnessing to them. They had used the projectors and Bible study materials AWR had given them, and by February 2022, they had already reached their goal for the year!

AWR is currently working with these new believers so that each of their villages will have a church building. In addition, they are helping AWR reach into places like Mindanao to reach *current* rebels and assassins whose lives would also be changed with the love of Jesus! Please pray for AWR as its radio waves travel to some of the most difficult places on earth—including the Middle East and North Korea—to help reach every “nation, tribe, language and people” (Rev. 14:6).

March 18, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

When does Spring begin? That probably depends on where you live in North America. Most schools will take a “Spring vacation,” with students and families vacationing to warm climates.

Some places are already experiencing warmer temperatures and signs of new life on trees and shrubs—plants that may have looked lifeless during the winter months. Of course, many places in North America won’t have signs of Spring for another week or two, or maybe a month or two, but Spring will come, and the miracle of rebirth reminds us of the new birth Christ offers each of us.

What does this have to do with our call for the offering this Sabbath? At least two things.

1. Seasons change. Systematic giving to God remains a good practice for prioritizing God and living for Him on a regular basis. However, seasons can affect your giving pattern, sometimes resulting in smaller gifts and sometimes resulting in larger gifts. What season are you in right now? And when have your giving seasons changed?

2. God gives new life. We might think primarily about money when it comes to tithes and offerings—our gifts to God, but God continues to be the One who first gives to us. Even when it seems like we have little or nothing, God gives new life!

Whether Spring has arrived, or you hold to its promise to arrive soon, respond now to God’s gift of new life for you.

March 25, 2023

## Conference Advance

**REVOLUTIONARY GENEROSITY** demands that we change our perspective. We must gain a Kingdom vision of the nature of generosity. How does real generosity act, look, and feel in the context of our current reality?<sup>1</sup> When thinking of generosity, many people look at the size of the gift or the nobility of the cause. However, Jesus looks beyond the outward appearance and measures generosity by a radically new standard: the condition of the giver's heart. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also," (Matt. 6:21). Stewardship is a matter of the heart, a matter of the soul. This goes deeper than the value of a dollar. It is a spiritual matter of emulating Him and it is interactive.

A church group was kicked out of a park because of their interaction with the homeless. The police officer said, "You can't feed the homeless here; you need a permit!" The pastor replied, "We are not feeding the homeless, we are eating with them." This is the true heart of generosity, how it looks, acts, and feels.<sup>2</sup> Often, generosity is about something we do for an individual or group instead of something we do with them.<sup>3</sup>

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, on this Sabbath day we want to practice Revolutionary Generosity by giving not just our money but our hearts. Bless the loose offerings that will help our Conference to reach precious souls and bring them into your fold. In Jesus' name, AMEN!

1-3. (Thomas Nees. *The Outlook* (bi-monthly newsletter), September-October 2007).

April 1, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Happy April Fools' Day—a day of frequent pranks followed by someone gleefully spouting, “April Fools!” Has it happened to you already today? Did you do it to someone else?

The Bible mentions the term “fool” a number of times, but never in a glib or “happy trickster” sort of way. Twice in the Psalms we read, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Ps. 14:1 and Ps. 53:1). If you're in church today, you probably aren't the fool found in Psalms.

We're more susceptible to being the “fool” found in Luke 12. Christ's parable warns against the natural trigger called “greed.” In this story, a farmer realized some bumper crops, so he decided to enlarge his storage capacity, then take an early retirement so he could just “eat, drink and be merry” (Luke 12:19).

Sound inviting?

Jesus came down harshly, not because of what the farmer had, but because of what he didn't have. According to v. 21 (NLT), “A person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.” One way to have a rich relationship with God is to give offerings with a thankful heart.

Does this mean we're fools if we don't put everything we have into the offering? Not necessarily. It does mean that when we make our relationship with God our highest priority, the result is wisdom (Prov. 9:10) rather than being a fool—on April Fools' Day or on any other day.

April 8, 2023

## **Hope Channel International, Inc.**

God is using Hope Channel International, Inc. to transform lives for a better life today and for eternity. With 70 global networks and growing, broadcasting in over 80 languages, Hope Channel is fulfilling the mission to preach the gospel “in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14).

Hope Channel is also an evangelistic resource center. *Wake Up with Hope* is a daily morning program that nurtures viewers’ souls and their spiritual needs. *3AM: Morning is Coming* is a program that encourages young people to understand the Three Angels’ Messages. *Hope.Study*, an online Bible study course platform, continues to grow—within the first year of its inception, 144,850 people have started a course. People are searching for understanding and truth in this broken world. *Heroes II*, Hope Channel’s brand-new video game app, is inspiring a new generation to study the Bible. Imagine if we could reach every gamer with the gospel!

All these opportunities are made possible through your generous support of Hope Channel. Watch Christ-centered programming on DirecTV 368, HopeTV.org/Watch, Roku, and the Hope Channel app. We want the message of hope to reach people until there are no more people to reach. Only then can the end come! Your faithful financial giving will be blessed to do just that. “Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed” (Prov. 11:25).



April 15, 2023

## Local Church Budget

“Tax Day” is April 15 for U.S. citizens, while it’s April 30 in Canada, but when do you actually pay your taxes? Some do it ASAP, while others wait until the last minute, and still others file for extensions. Did you know that some people make quarterly payments throughout the year rather than a lump sum in April? Bermuda has no Tax Day, but it collects a payroll tax throughout the year.

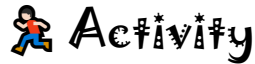
Do you view giving your tithe to God as a tax—something the government requires of its citizens to fund its services? Does God tax believers so His church has money to operate? Some might view it in this manner.

Today I invite you to view it differently—your voluntary gift to God. We include “offerings” during our worship service because giving to God is an act of worship. Sure, everything comes from God, and He doesn’t *need* our money since He already owns “the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps. 50:10). But giving enables us to participate in worship—like joining the congregation in singing or praying along silently during the main prayer of the church service.

When you give a birthday gift because you feel obligated, it’s rarely as pleasurable for you or the recipient as when you give a gift because you want to give.

Take that same approach as you give your offering to God. It’s your gift, and you’re giving it to God! Let’s worship!

April 22, 2023




## Conference Advance

**STEWARDSHIP OF TIME (T1 of 7):** We manage time for Christ and balance time for daily endeavors. Matt. 22:37 and 39 show us how to prioritize our time: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” then, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Time with Jesus comes first; our devotional life and personal commitment is essential to learning to love God and one another.

Out of one’s daily devotional life comes the strength to make it through the day. How is this done? Designate quiet time for the Creator—early morning is favorable; choose a Bible passage to read; meditate on it; then, in your prayer of needs, acknowledge and thank God for who He is, pause, and allow Him response time (prayer is a dialogue, not just a monologue); then acquiesce when He chooses to respond, via voice, another human, or circumstance. Keeping a prayer journal is an inspiring, powerful look back at how God answers and is a testimony to inspire others.

Before we can have financial peace, we must first have personal peace—seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven. The practical part of (T1) Time is Management: organizing time for family, your own life, and plans for the future.

 *Please include in your bulletin or a PowerPoint slide the 7T’s of stewardship:*

1. *Time*
2. *Temple*
3. *Talent*
4. *Treasure*
5. *Trust*
6. *Theology*
7. *Testimony*

April 29, 2023

## **Maplewood Academy**

My name is Laura Cummings, and I am both a graduate and a current staff member at Maplewood Academy.

When I first moved onto campus as a sophomore, I was blown away by the kindness of the people I met here. Teachers took the time to get to know me, encourage me, take me under their wings. The combination of Adventist friends, Adventist teachers, and an entire campus built around educating for a life in Jesus is what led me to a deeper, more beautiful relationship with God.

I would have never been able to attend Maplewood if it wasn't for the generosity of my parents, extended family, my local church, and for the many, many donors who gave to Maplewood's Worthy Student Fund. I grew a deeper appreciation for this when Maplewood hired me in 2008 to be the Development Director, and I got to see firsthand just how much the donations of our churches and alumni made it possible for so many of our students to be at Maplewood. I fell head over heels in love with the community and camaraderie of our Maplewood supporters. THANK YOU! I can tell you firsthand that these gifts make a difference.

I wish you could see what I see every day on this campus. God is working here in amazing ways! Our schools and camps are some of the best evangelism programs we have, and they are very worthy of our investment. The offering is being collected today for the Maplewood Academy Worthy Student Fund. These students are worth our investment. These funds made a difference for me, and so many others. As the offering is being picked up today, please prayerfully consider how you can help make a difference for today's generation of youth.

May 6, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

Perhaps the best-known text in the Old Testament book of Malachi is, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.” Malachi added God’s challenge: “Test me... and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it” (Mal. 3:10).

Today, some Christians promote the “Prosperity Gospel,” which draws on verses like this. Give to God (or my church or ministry), and God will give you more money than you gave. Forget investing in the stock market or real estate; give your money to God and watch your bank account surge.

While God wanted to illustrate His blessing through material prosperity to the Israelites in Old Testament times, Christ certainly didn’t exhibit lots of money. In the New Testament, Paul predicted that those who sowed sparingly would reap sparingly, while those who sowed generously would also reap generously (2 Cor. 9:6). However, Paul further explained that abundance would be in good deeds and righteousness (vv. 8–10).

Have you put God to the test when it comes to blessings? What did you “sow” in the past? What will you “sow” this year? Are you prepared to receive God’s blessings, whether they are financial or whether they come in another form—like faith, godliness, joy, fellowship, and love for God and others?

Let’s give to God and rely on him to provide the blessings in the forms He chooses and at the time He chooses.

May 13, 2023

## **Disaster and Famine Relief**

You've read the news and watched the footage—witnessed the aftermath from hurricanes, fires, floods, and other disasters tearing apart communities. Families are displaced, having lost their home, livelihood, and even loved ones. What happens next?

For many, the answer is Adventist Community Services (ACS) Disaster Response. The ACS network of trained volunteers respond across the North American Division (NAD), offering services, goods, and a caring heart.

Adventist expertise has traditionally focused on leading and operating the warehouses where donated goods are sent to be sorted, inventoried, and distributed to the affected community. Recent years have seen the Adventist role expand to meet a variety of needs such as sheltering, delivery of goods, rebuilding communities, and providing emotional and spiritual care.

Almost four months after Hurricane Ida swept through Louisiana, the Houma Nation was still in desperate need of help as many homes were damaged and winter was approaching fast. ACS Disaster Response leaders came to the area to learn how they could help those who had been overlooked. One resident asked in desperation, “What are we supposed to do?”

After assessing the situation, ACS was quickly able to bring blankets and other household items to share. In addition, the North American Division ACS Disaster Response sent funds to local teams who purchased space heaters to keep people warm while they rebuilt their homes. This money was from gifts like yours.

Today's offering is shared between Adventist Community Services Disaster Response, who responds to disasters within the NAD, and Adventist Development and Relief Agency's international disaster response work. Thank you for joining the teams that extend a hand of mercy to people in crisis.

May 20, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Sometimes when people go to visit another person or family, they take a gift for the host. Were you invited for a special dinner? Then take a pie or a bouquet of flowers. Were you invited on Saturday night for some table games? Maybe you'll take some snacks—sweet, salty, or healthy! This simply demonstrates good manners. The gift isn't more than the meal you receive, but it acknowledges a relationship that isn't merely one-way. Good relationships involve both give and take.

When David successfully took the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, he gave everyone in Israel gifts of food, with a much larger gift to God. David also gave his music leader a song, found in both Ps. 96 and 1 Chron. 16, which includes this modern way of singing it:

Bravo, God, Bravo!

Everyone join in the great shout: Encore!

In awe before the beauty, in awe before the might.

Bring gifts and celebrate,

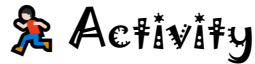
Bow before the beauty of God,

Then to your knees—everyone worship! (Ps. 96:7-8 MSG)

We have come to worship God at His house on this Sabbath. This includes bringing our gifts and celebrating in worship. No, we don't give as much as God gives us, but we give because that's part of the relationship we have with our great God and part of the worship we practice each week.

**Prayer:** God, please accept our gifts at this time. Bless our humble offering we give to you today in Jesus' name, Amen.

May 27, 2023




## Conference Advance

### STEWARDSHIP OF OUR TEMPLES (T2 of 7)

*Spiritual Element:* “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19). The individual is a temple of God, in comparison to the Bible sanctuary—living temples, “You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies” (1 Cor. 16:20).

*Practical Element:* Proper management of the body temple — mind, body, and soul via healthy living —is essential. Follow a daily health plan for the improvement of life. A good steward will consistently practice the eight laws of health: Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunlight, Temperance, Air, Rest—the Sabbath is included—and Trust in divine power. Our bodies are His temples, and He expects us to manage and care for them to His glory.

 Please include in your bulletin or a PowerPoint slide the 7T's of Stewardship:

1. Time
2. Temple
3. Talent
4. Treasure
5. Trust
6. Theology
7. Testimony

June 3, 2023

## Local Church Budget

It's that time of year when school graduations take place. You, or someone close to you, may have already celebrated this milestone, or perhaps it's just around the corner.

Graduations matter! They mark a significant accomplishment—the culmination of years of study, hard work, and hopefully, worthwhile education along the way. The regalia might look funny, but it represents something. For some, graduation is a miracle they once thought might be impossible. For others, it's the expected result from their investment.

And then what?

The day after graduation might mean starting a job or maybe continuing with more schooling. Time marches on. Even with photos and video clips of graduation, you must still face another day. As you look back, one question that often surfaces is, “Was it worth it?” Did all the time and money and study pay off, or was it merely a passing chapter of life with little to show for all the investment made?

That's true for all of us, whether or not we're formally graduating.

What do you have to show for the investments you've made? God repeatedly reminds us to invest in Him and in others for eternity. Is it worth it? It actually turns out to be more than a passing chapter of life. It *is* life—and eternal life at that. The investment of our time, temple, talent, and treasure (the pillars of stewardship) pays off when we take it to graduation and beyond.



June 10, 2023

## **Women's Ministries**

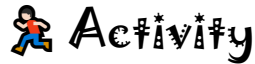
Women are specifically designed by God to meet the needs of other women. Women's Ministries is the best way to connect the church with unchurched women in your community and introduce them to Jesus Christ.

Across the North American Division, from the United States to Canada and from Bermuda to Guam-Micronesia, the women of the church are engaged in serving others. They give Bible studies, hold evangelistic series, and minister to those in shelters for battered and homeless women. They provide for the needs of families seeking refuge on our shores from oppressive regimes, teach English as a second language classes, tutor school children, and make bags of love for children who are displaced from their homes or their parents. The women of the church are making a significant difference in their communities and their congregations.

COVID didn't slow down ministry, it just moved it online. Local, Conference, Union, and Division women's ministries offered online and live webinars, retreats, and seminars. Zoom became the place to get together to talk, study, discuss books, and pray together.

Established in 1898 at the urging of Ellen White, the Women's Ministries Offering funds evangelistic outreach events and leadership training for women across the North American Division. These women partner with God in service through ministries that seek to encourage, equip, and challenge girls, teens, young adults, and women to grow deeply in God and serve Him uniquely with their gifts and talents.

June 17, 2023



## Local Church Budget

According to 2 Cor. 9:7, “God loves a cheerful giver.”

That raises two questions: 1. Does God love you? (wait for response); and 2. Are you a cheerful giver? (wait for response).


Hopefully the message you receive here each Sabbath is that God loves you. Are you also a cheerful giver each Sabbath? We’re about to give you the opportunity to be cheerful!

Some here may have grown up listening to Christian singer Steve Green’s children’s songs, including “God Loves a Cheerful Giver,” with the opening line being, “God loves a cheerful giver, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!”

 (Play song. <https://youtu.be/-UZ9td0LBpM>) (2-minute song)

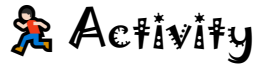
The lead-in to the song challenges the idea of “giving ‘til it hurts” by referencing 2 Cor. 9:7, “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Instead of “giving ‘til it hurts,” try “giving ‘til it tickles!”

 *Maybe we should try it this week. Instead of solemnly passing the offering plate, smile as you give. Or try laughing! Now that could be fun!*

Yes, God loves you! And God invites you to be a cheerful giver. Let’s give until it tickles—Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!

June 24, 2023



## Conference Advance


### STEWARDSHIP OF OUR TALENTS (T3 of 7)

*Spiritual Element:* God gives individuals gifts to do His work, and we are expected to use them. The Bible says in Rom. 12:6, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them...” (NKJV).

In *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 328, it says: “The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable [of the talents, Matt. 25]. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ’s service. In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men.”

*Practical Element:* God gives individuals talents and abilities to have gainful employment and the Lord wants us to share these gifts with humankind.

Care for our environment (Terra) is included under Talents since it is these God-given abilities with which we manage the environmental resources He gives us.

 Please include in your bulletin or a PowerPoint slide the 7T’s of Stewardship:

1. Time
2. Temple
3. Talent
4. Treasure
5. Trust
6. Theology
7. Testimony

July 1, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Happy Independence Day!

If you live in Canada, today is *the* day. If you live in the United States, it comes this next week. For both countries, independence came from no longer being under the British crown.

Some might compare this to a child growing up and becoming independent of one's parents—something pseudo or fabricated until there's financial independence as well.

Independence Day—for your nation or for kids who grow up and stand on their own—how does this compare to our relationship with God? When do we declare our independence from Him? Is this something we forge, or is it merely fictitious? Does our increase in responsibility release God to care for others who need Him more?

Consider ancient or more recent history, and you'll find throughout earth's orbits around the sun that our "independence" from God might find a place in our imagination, but not in reality. Can you change the earth's rotation, add 100 years to your life, make an actual sunset rather than just paint it on canvas, answer the individual prayers of billions of people each day, put your finger on sub-atomic particles, or change a heart of stone to a heart of flesh?

You don't need to. God remains in control and invites you to be "interdependent" with Him rather than "independent" of Him. Make this Sabbath your "Interdependence Day" by giving to God, who gives life to you.

July 8, 2023

## **World Budget**

Have you ever wondered what happens to the mission offerings you give each week or as part of your promise offerings? Think of your mission offerings as a vital river flowing through the entire world, providing life-giving support to build God's work in every mission field. But exactly where do our offerings go? What do they achieve? And what do they support?

Seventy percent of your weekly mission and promise offerings help support the work of about 400 missionary families working with the 13 world Divisions, plus the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission and the Israel Field, to help these regions build and sustain mission activities. The remaining 30 percent of your mission offerings help several church institutions such as the medical mission work of Loma Linda University, the outreach of Adventist World Radio, and the humanitarian ministry of ADRA, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

Thanks to your faithful offerings, millions of people from the most challenging areas of the world have found salvation in Jesus and have joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Thousands of new congregations have been established in unreached areas, and new believers are being trained in how to share their new faith with others in their neighborhoods. Your river of mission offerings helps grow and sustain mission work throughout the world. Please keep this life-giving river flowing.

July 15, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Can you outgive God?

This idea is that when you give something to God, He gives you more than you gave to Him.

But does it work? If you give God a dollar, or \$100, or \$1,000 or \$100,000, will you get back more than you gave to God?

For some of us, just paying our bills is a great accomplishment. Others have extra or prioritize investing in a retirement account, real estate, or the stock market, hoping they will get back more than they put into their investment. Often it works, although sometimes it doesn't.

Can you outgive God?

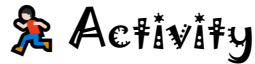
Remember, whatever we give actually came to us from God, the original Giver (James 1:17 says: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father..."). God started this by giving us something to give—like an older person giving a child something to put in the offering plate.

When Jesus told the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30), it seemed clear that He expected us to take what He gave us and put it to use—to yield even more than He gave. When those recipients gave an account of what their master had given them, commendation went to those who invested, and the master gave them even more.

Today I invite you to take what God has given you and give it to Him; then let Him give you more—whether that's money, opportunities, talent, heart, love, or life.

You can't outgive God, but it's great to try!

July 22, 2023



## Conference Advance

### **STEWARDSHIP OF HIS TREASURE (T4 of 7)**


*Spiritual Element:* We develop a relationship with God as we return our tithes and offerings.

Good Stewards will return tithe, the whole tenth of your income, for the world work, and give a liberal offering to support the local church's mission to the community.

*Practical Element:* Managing material possessions to His glory — money, property, investments, estate planning, and caring for the environment—means truly treasuring them.

A good steward will also learn and practice debt-free living. Getting out of debt is essential to be free from financial enslavement.

The Bible says: “Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2 NKJV).

 Please include in your bulletin or a PowerPoint slide the 7T's of Stewardship:

1. *Time*
2. *Temple*
3. *Talent*
4. *Treasure*
5. *Trust*
6. *Theology*
7. *Testimony*

July 29

## Local Church Budget

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).


The one thing that stands out in this Bible verse is that it doesn't give us an option NOT to give. The Bible takes for granted that we are going to give. The issue is how much have you decided to give? Zacchaeus gave 50% of his wealth. The poor widow gave 100% of what she had—two copper coins. Barnabas sold a field he owned and provided for the preaching of the gospel. The people of God have been giving for the Lord's work throughout history. God's children don't spend all their income on themselves but think of sharing their wealth for the preaching of the gospel.

We find three biblical principles of giving in this passage. First, you need to decide how much you are going to give. We need to plan in advance what we are going to give to God. Second, don't give reluctantly or under compulsion. The opposite of a cheerful giver is a sad and ornery giver. God doesn't want you to give because you are being pressured to give. Third, God loves a cheerful giver. God wants you to give from the heart, willingly and cheerfully. Are you happy that you can contribute to God's remnant church?

Today, I encourage you to provide for your local church expense and give, not reluctantly but cheerfully.

**Prayer:** Father in heaven, bless the lives of the people here today as they provide for our local church by giving cheerfully to preach the gospel in our part of the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.



 Activity - print cards for August 5  
(Choose either this version or the one  
on the next page.)

God

Today I give you my:

\_\_\_ Time



\_\_\_ Talent



\_\_\_ Treasure



\_\_\_ Temple



Name \_\_\_\_\_

To download a pdf to print, of either version, go to:  
<https://www.mnsda.com/ministries/stewardship>



God

Today I give you my:

\_\_\_ Time

\_\_\_ Talent

\_\_\_ Treasure

\_\_\_ Temple

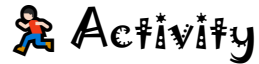


Name




\_\_\_\_\_

August 5, 2023



## Local Church Budget

At this time during our worship service, we typically collect money, whether that's cash or checks. Some people give each week as part of their worship to God. Others give once a month or once every pay period. Some give online, and still others do a combination, maybe planning in advance so they can participate at this moment rather than just reaching for some spare change or the customary dollar.

 *This week we're going to add more options! We have a simple card for each person. You can fill this out now and put it in the offering, or you might choose to think about it longer and give it at the end of today's church service. (Ask for the cards to be distributed at this time. You will need to plan in advance to have these ready now. Two different versions of the card are available.)*

The card lists the “4 T’s” of what God has given us and asks us to give back to Him—Time, Temple (body/heart), Talent, and Treasure.

What will you give to God today? Whatever you check, you'll need to ask yourself the specific amount(s) and how you will do that. Use this card to communicate with God about your relationship with Him and your gift(s) today.

August 12, 2023

## Christian Record Services

Imagine the scene recorded in Mark 10. A huge crowd was following Jesus. Voices buzzed around Him, clamoring for His attention. And then, a desperate shout reached Jesus' ears (or, perhaps, struck His heart).

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stopped in His tracks and called out to Bartimaeus. Immediately, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

Without hesitation, Bartimaeus declared, “Rabbi, I want to see!” Jesus answered, “Go, your faith has healed you!”

I love that we can share the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ with people who are blind or experiencing vision loss! Christian Record Services, a ministry of compassion of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1899, is serving nearly 18,000 members throughout the United States and in countries around the world.

Christian Record Services offers an array of services and programs, including Bible study lessons, books, magazines and Bibles in audio, braille, and large print from a library of more than 2,000 titles. Members can also deepen social, educational, and spiritual connections through PhoneFaith, scholarships for higher education, and National Camps for Blind Children.

These services and programs are free of charge to people who are legally blind. Your offerings will help further the mission to *empower* people who are blind to *engage* with their communities and *embrace* the Blessed Hope.

August 19, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

You have, at your control, the power to increase or decrease your love for God. The same can be said about your love for this church—you have the power to increase or decrease your love for it.

How?

Jesus stated it plainly in Matt. 6:21: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

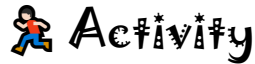
Here’s how the Amplified Bible explains it: “Where your treasure is, there your heart [your wishes, your desires, that on which your life centers] will be also.”

Let me explain it this way. God has set things up so that your heart will follow wherever you make your investment. If you neglect your friends or family, your love for them will diminish. If you invest more time and money with them, your love for them will grow! The same is true with your love for God and His church. Your love for God and His church increases as you place your treasure—your money, time, skills, and service—with God and His church.

I can testify today that it works this way for me. How about you? The amount of time you spend at work or school, on a hobby, or virtually anything will impact how important that is to you. Your heart follows where you place your treasure.

Today I’m inviting you to increase your love for God and for His church. And you can do that simply by giving at this time.

August 26, 2023




### Conference Advance

Today, we will cover the last three of the 7 T's of stewardship.

**TRUST IN GOD (T5 of 7):** “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5–6 NIV).

**THEOLOGY (T6 of 7):** Biblical foundations and study of stewardship lifestyle principles. “We are God’s stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God’s ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow human beings, and by returning tithe and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. Stewards rejoice in the blessings that come to others as a result of their faithfulness” [SDA Fundamental Beliefs #21].

**TESTIMONY (T7 of 7):** The Bible says, “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! ...I have been entrusted with a stewardship” (1 Cor. 9:16–17, NKJV). Verbalizing what God did, does, and will do (by faith) is not optional for a good steward. We are compelled to give our testimony.

 *Please include in your bulletin or a PowerPoint slide the 7T's of Stewardship:*

1. *Time*
2. *Temple*
3. *Talent*
4. *Treasure*
5. *Trust*
6. *Theology*
7. *Testimony*

September 2, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Labor Day Weekend is here—for the United States, Canada, Bermuda, plus Guam and Micronesia—throughout the North American Division.

Ironically, instead of working on Labor Day, most people have a holiday with no work! In other words, many “play” on “Labor Day.”

Does that seem wrong, or is it actually right—in a counter-intuitive way? Is it like:

Laughing so hard that you cry;

Letting something go and then finding it returns to you on its own;

Saying, “It doesn’t matter” when it really matters a lot;

Being groggy because you’ve slept so much;

Teaching people a lesson, but they learn nothing at all;

Hiding something from people so well that you can’t find it yourself;

Getting ahead because you helped so many get ahead of you;

Standing tall before others because you kneel before your Maker;

Giving away what you have and finding you have more than you had at the start.

Those who think Labor Day is for working need a new perspective because it’s the holiday given for the work you’ve already done. When we put it in spiritual terms, it means we give to God and others because we’ve already received so much from both God and others. Our offering today provides the opportunity for you to do it!

September 9, 2023

## **World Budget: Radio Ministries**

The Voice of Prophecy radio ministry began with an offer that founder H.M.S. Richards Sr. simply could not refuse. The *Los Angeles Express* newspaper promised Pastor Richards several *free* 15-minute slots of radio time each week if he would place weekly advertising for his tent meetings in their paper.

Always wanting to embrace new methods to reach souls, the 35-year-old Richards jumped at the chance. On October 19, 1929, only days before the Great Depression hit, Richards was on the air, sharing the hope of Jesus with the people of Southern California.

By World War II, the Voice of Prophecy had become the first religious coast-to-coast broadcast in North America on the Mutual Broadcasting Network. That same year, 1942, it launched a Spanish-language broadcast that would later be called *La Voz de la Esperanza*.

More North Americans access radio regularly than any other major media format. Eighty-eight percent of Canadians report having listened to radio in any given month, while 93% of Americans say they listen to radio every week. Online audio also remains a fast-growing market, as millions turn to digital platforms for more engaging content. As listeners tune in week by week, they are invited to go deeper with the Lord through the radio ministries' Bible schools and evangelistic events.

Day by day and week by week, the power of radio evangelism continues to change lives. Please join today in giving generously to support the ministry of the Voice of Prophecy and *La Voz de la Esperanza*.



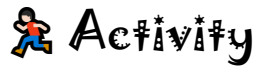
# Activity for next Sabbath

## September 16

Create a Power Point slide to show the congregation this statement or publish the statement in your bulletin:


“When you clench your fist, no one can put anything in your hand. A clenched fist won’t give, and can’t receive.” -Alex Haley (writer of the book *Roots*)

September 16, 2023



## Local Church Budget

Even though the Bible says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), sometimes it’s just not possible to give. Let’s illustrate this because it might help each of us when it comes to the part of our worship service where we can receive a blessing, but only if we give.

 *(You will need to have a collection of small objects in a sack with you to do this illustration. Invite someone to join you in the front for a “living illustration.” You can ask the person in advance or take a chance and invite someone on the spot. Often this makes a great opportunity to bring a young person on the platform to participate actively in the church service.)*

(Say to the volunteer who has joined you in the front of the church:) I’m going to ask you to hold out your hand and clench your fist (demonstrate for your volunteer). Good! Just hold it there as together we illustrate the statement, “When you clench your fist, no one can put anything in your hand” (Alex Haley quote, available as a PowerPoint slide). Another way of saying it is, “A clenched fist won’t give, and can’t receive.”

Let’s try it. I have something in this sack to give you. How does this work when your fist is clenched? (Pull out one of the objects, like a golf ball, ping pong ball, apple, etc.) With a closed fist, you can’t receive my gift.

Let’s try it again, but this time release the fist and open your hand. What a difference that makes! But I have more! Can you receive more? Let’s try. It might work only if you give what you have received.

Today I invite you to open your fist—to give. Only then will you be able to receive.

September 23, 2023

## Conference Advance

In the parable of the talents, the Bible says, “After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them” (Matt. 25:19). As we remember, two of the three were found faithful and invested their master’s talents; “Well done” was pronounced on them. We remember what was said about the unfaithful one. This idea of settling accounts is similar to the activity of the investigative judgment of our day. In other words, God simply asks His servants, stewards, and managers of His goods an obvious question: How did you do with My stuff? I left you in charge of it. Your life, employment, children, money, everything is in your care. Have you managed them to My glory, or yours?

Good stewards know that they have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous Judge. And they know they are wearing the Judge’s robe of righteousness.

The robe covers us because we give our cares to Him daily. We are not anxious about the judgment, because we know the Judge.

Prayer: Dear God, bless the tithes and offerings we return to you today. We pray that when you come back to take us home, we will hear the words of Jesus: “Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of the Lord.” In Jesus’ name, AMEN!

September 30, 2023

## **Maplewood Academy**

Hello, my name is Teigan Bauer. I am a graduate and new staff member at Maplewood Academy.

Growing up I always wanted to attend Maplewood, just like my mom Dena and Uncle Darin. My family has never been wealthy so only through God's blessing of my family and church family was my attendance made possible.

Maplewood has played a huge role in my life. I can honestly say that I wouldn't be alive without the true love and care I experienced here. The connections and individuals I interacted with daily got me through some of the most difficult times in my life. Both the memories and impact Maplewood had on me will remain in my heart the rest of my life.

My experience is not unique in the sea of student and staff stories at Maplewood. God has worked many miracles for His precious children to make their second home at MWA. He has used our church members, our families, and even complete strangers to make his plans come to fruition calling to us with His still small voice.

This past year through a series of events that only God could make happen, I became both the art teacher and assistant to the VP of Finance in a matter of weeks. I have learned so much and spent countless hours working with financing for families and working to keep Maplewood running. I have seen first hand the God-guided miracles I mentioned above, as well as students' desperate need for help financially.

Times are tough for many of us, but all the more opportunity for God to shine through His outstanding blessings that only He can give. For those who have had exposure to Maplewood it was a place where irreplaceable people and unforgettable memories were born. A safe place to be themselves, learn, and grow as God's specially chosen people. A rare beauty that schools such as Maplewood present.

It is a one of a kind adventure to be part of God's mission, in any capacity. As arguably the most giving centered time of the year approaches, please consider how God has blessed you. It is only possible through generosity shared by people just like you and I, that Maplewood keeps its doors open and lights on. God cares for the littlest sparrow in the dead of winter and in the height of summer, how much more will He care for us! Let us each converse with our Heavenly Father and trust that He is always taking care of us yesterday, today, and always.

October 7, 2023



## Local Church Budget


Some parents hand their young child something to put in the offering. When does that stop?

Let's try it today, but let's involve everyone! Do you have something to put in the offering plate today? If not, get something right now, even if it's an empty tithe envelope.

In a moment, I'm going to invite you to give your offering to someone else to put into the plate today, but first, I want you to think about what you are giving and the reason you're giving it. Some of you may have already given your tithes and offerings this month, or maybe you give online, so you aren't giving anything today during the church service. That's fine. You can explain that.

Let me repeat the two questions:

1. What are you giving today?
2. Why are you giving it?

 *Let's have everyone stand now (wait for everyone to stand). Please move into groups of two. If you see someone left out, you can form a group of three to make sure everyone's included. Once you're together, sit down together for a moment and share your answers to our two questions. (Pause and help people get together with others for this sharing experience.)*

Okay, let's take about 60 seconds for you to give the other person what you were going to put into the offering today and share your reason why you're giving as well. (Notify at 30 seconds and end around 60 seconds).

Now we'll collect the offering, and please give what has been given to you this Sabbath.

October 14, 2023

## Conference Advance

Revolutionary generosity means being interactive Christians. We must move beyond social programs, of which we are so proud, and move toward a hands-on, socially engaged lifestyle.<sup>4</sup> What would Jesus do? What did He do? If Jesus wanted simply to do something for us, He could have done it from Heaven. Instead, He chose to engage with us. He became flesh and dwelt among us. He stepped into first-century Palestine's culture. He invited people into His life and allowed Himself to be invited into theirs.<sup>5</sup>

They were not the right people with which to be generous;<sup>6</sup> they were what people of society considered the “unlikeables” and were treated as untouchable. These were people that many would “unlike” or “unfriend” from their Facebook or social media platforms. These people had nothing with which to repay Jesus. They were sick, blind, and lame, physically and spiritually, but these are the ones whom Jesus kept putting at the head of the banquet tables. Are you ready for that?<sup>7</sup> This is the true heart of generosity. Visualize how it looks, acts, and feels.

<sup>4,7</sup> (Thomas Nees. *The Outlook* (bi-monthly newsletter), September–October 2007).

October 21, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Happy Thanksgiving!

You might think I'm a bit confused. In Canada, Thanksgiving was the second Monday of October—the 9th. In the United States, it won't be until next month—the fourth Thursday in November, which will be the 23rd. Why say, “Happy Thanksgiving” today?

Of course, any day can be Thanksgiving. And Scripture gives us many reasons to give thanks, such as these:

“I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly...The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy” (Ps. 111:1, 7).

“It is good to give thanks to the LORD. . . . O LORD, what great works you do! And how deep are your thoughts. Only a simpleton would not know, and only a fool would not understand this” (Ps. 92:1, 5–6 NLT).

“Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him” (Ps. 28:6–7).

National holidays for Thanksgiving come from expected harvest blessings. Most of us aren't farmers, but we have experienced God's abundant blessings in so many ways. So today, join me in Thanksgiving—we aren't limited to one day a year. Let's give to God from an abundant heart of praise and thanksgiving today!

October 28, 2023

## Union Conference

“Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35).

There is more to farming than just picking the crop when it is ready. Orchards need to be pruned. Trees need to be netted so the birds don’t eat the harvest. Fumigation and fertilizers need to be applied or the bugs will decimate your crop. You water it by creating irrigation channels or by connecting pipes, making sure all your fields are watered. The farmer makes sure the plants don’t freeze by placing heaters or covering them with plastic. But the crop still needs to reach its destination; the market, the juice factory, or the place where they will package the vegetables. There is a lot of work in order for the harvest to be ready.

Just like in the harvest from the fields, timing is everything. Otherwise, the spiritual harvest goes to waste. Satan is always trying to spoil the harvest. The devil doesn’t want the harvest to reach heaven.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a very good system to preserve the harvest until it is ready for heaven. Our offering today goes to your local Union Conference. This is one of the levels of the church whose sole purpose is to support the local Conference to get the harvest ready for the second coming of Jesus.

**Prayer:** Father, we pray that you will open our eyes to see that the harvest is ripe and please bless our offering today so we can be ready to bring the harvest home. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



November 4, 2023

## Local Church Budget

Some people receive a regular income for their work, such as pastors and teachers, bank tellers and other hourly or salaried employees. They can plan accordingly. Their tithe remains constant, and their offerings might also be constant, even though some expenses might fluctuate while others remain steady. Other people might get paid in bursts with irregular amounts each time—like farmers who harvest their crops, salespeople on commissions, restaurant waiters, and Uber/Lyft drivers. Their tithes and offerings fluctuate, just like their income.

The Jews gathered for three major religious festivals each year in Old Testament times. According to Deut. 16:16-17, “no one should appear before the LORD empty-handed: Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.” Notice this last sentence, “Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.”

How much has God blessed you? Bring God a gift in proportion to His blessing. Tithing makes that pretty simple—one-tenth of your paycheck. The same can be said of your offerings—give in proportion to the way God has blessed you.

Maybe we need to pause and count our blessings! Don't give what you “can't” or merely give what you “can.” Instead, give according to God's blessings to you.

**Prayer:** Thank you, God, and please accept our gifts to You today, just as You have blessed us. In Christ's name, Amen.

November 11, 2023

## **Annual Sacrifice Offering for Global Mission**

If you could make a difference in someone's life by giving up something for one week, would you do it? What would you give up? The latest issue of your favorite magazine? A pizza? A new pair of shoes? Think what you can give up this week so someone you don't know can be introduced to Jesus, and then put that amount in an offering envelope marked *Annual Sacrifice Offering*.

Your gift might sponsor a seminar about healthful living or help support a Global Mission pioneer in a city where most people have never heard about Jesus. Just think! One day you could meet the person you sacrificed for in heaven.

If you have courage, ask God how much He wants you to give Him by giving beyond your regular tithe and promise offering. If you agree to give God what He is asking, He will provide what He has asked you to give.

This is your opportunity to sacrifice and share God's love with someone who doesn't know Jesus. Your gift will help reach every unreached person. What would you sacrifice for that individual?

**Prayer:** Lord, we humbly accept the advice that the Apostle Paul gives us in Heb. 13:16 where he said, "Sacrifices are pleasing to God" (ESV). So, Lord, we ask you to bless our offerings of sacrifice so that they might multiply and help Global Mission pioneers reach the unreached. In Jesus' name, Amen.

November 18, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

At grocery store check-out lines, you'll find an array of items for impulse buying. They hope you will add additional items to your cart while you wait in line.

The same thing happens with online purchasing. When you select something, SHAZAM! everyone else who made that same purchase ALSO bought this item or these two items. Just "click here" to add them to your virtual shopping cart. How many times have you purchased more than you intended simply because of impulse shopping?! Me too!

While impulse shopping might be fun (or hazardous), the Bible suggests a different way of giving. Don't base it on how well I do the offering call. Paul instructed the believers in Corinth to make plans and take action each week, at the start of the week. We call this "planning" or "systematic benevolence"—giving regularly as a lifestyle.

Paul wrote, "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come, no collections will have to be made" (1 Cor. 16:2). Because Paul didn't come by the Corinthians' church each Sabbath, the people started each week by putting God first with their personal giving. You might have a container where you put your offering as you start each week, and then bring it to church on Sabbath and give it to God, just as you planned.

November 25, 2023

## Conference Advance

A generous steward is a life manager. Therefore, in the realm of spirituality and practicality, we manage God's goods. God is the Owner and He has given us dominion over His possessions. Thus, we must remain in a close relationship with Him for guidance. Faithful management of His stuff is relevant and woven into every aspect of life.

Stewardship executed properly allows us to breathe. Trust God and seek His help daily. David implied this trust in this way: "...I'm leaping and singing in the circle of your love; you saw my pain, you disarmed my tormentors. You didn't leave me in their clutches but gave me room to breathe" (Ps. 31:6-8 MSG).

- Smothered by life's challenges? Breathe!
- Tough finances? Breathe!
- Health issues? Breathe!
- Family challenges, Breathe!
- Abused? Breathe!
- Stressed by current local and world events? Breathe!
- In earth's final prophetic hour? Breathe!

Managing life God's way gives us room to breathe when we face challenges. I invite you to become a radical disciple for Jesus and revolt from past selfish practices and start a revolution. I encourage you to practice "Revolutionary Generosity" and breathe!

**Prayer:** Dear God, we thank you that you give us room to breathe. Help us to become radical disciples of Jesus and teach us "Revolutionary Generosity." Bless our tithes and offerings and bless the Conference Treasury Department as they distribute wisely the funds given to preach the Adventist gospel. In Jesus' name, AMEN!

December 2, 2023

## **Local Church Budget**

December starts off the Christmas season in earnest for many people, even if merchants have been pushing the need to buy gifts for weeks already.

What makes the Christmas season special for you? Is it the music, the decorations, special foods, family gatherings, or the gifts—what you might receive, as well as what you might give?

Gift-giving can be problematic. What if someone gives you a gift, but you don't have one to give in return or vice versa?! Which matters more: the amount of money you spend on the gift or giving a "perfect gift" to a particular person? Let's reverse that; what if someone gives you a gift and it's not something you've ever wanted or will ever use? Should you put on a happy face and say something like, "How can I ever thank you enough for this gift?"

Each Sabbath we collect an offering as you give your gifts to God. We don't limit this to the Christmas season because Christmas happens every time we come to church. We come to worship the greatest gift of all time—the gift of God coming to this earth in the form of Jesus Christ.

Our gifts, whether they are wrapped in beautiful Christmas paper or given as cash or checks or through online giving with a credit card, show our thankfulness to God.

So, "Merry Christmas!" And let's take this opportunity to give our gifts to God.

December 9, 2023

## **Adventist Community Services**

People come in all shapes and sizes, and so do their needs. Adventist Community Services offers diverse services tailored to fit the needs of the vulnerable in their community.

David walked into Joseph's Storehouse Food Pantry, an ACS center in Oklahoma. The staff soon learned that he had recently been released from prison and was saving money to rent an apartment. At the time, he was living in a tent near a creek just outside of town and had no way to cook. David chose food that was ready to eat out of the package.

Realizing that more was needed, a volunteer invited him back the next day to pick up cooking items. The volunteer went shopping for items they didn't already have at the center and soon, David received a small cook stove, fuel, can opener, and cookware when he returned. ACS continues to assist David with food when he runs low, and prays for his safety and for God's continued presence.

Whether giving food and cooking gear, dental care, clothing, after school tutoring, or English language skills, your ACS offering paves a pathway forward for somebody in need.

Ellen White shared, "The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'" (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

Adventist Community Service's ministries mingle in our communities, bringing Jesus' goodwill to the people. Join us and become the practical hands and feet of God in our world.

December 16, 2023

## Local Church Budget

The Christmas story of Christ's birth in a stable includes visits by local shepherds and Wise Men from far away.

The shepherds, although the low-class people of Bethlehem, played a vital role for God's people. Jerusalem, located only five miles (eight kilometers) from Bethlehem, needed "spotless lambs" for daily sacrifices and many more during festivals like the Passover. These shepherds took care of the little lambs to ensure they would be pristine enough for sacrifice. Maybe that's why the angelic host appeared to the shepherds in Bethlehem, giving them a personalized invitation to visit the spotless Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. However, the shepherds had no gift for Baby Jesus. Instead, they joyfully proclaimed His arrival to the world (Luke 2:16–18).

The Wise Men represented the other end of the social and economic spectrum. Even though they were part of the wealthy intelligentsia, they still found themselves drawn to something far greater than themselves. Following the star, they came to Jerusalem (Matt. 2:1) and directly to the temple (*Desire of Ages*, p. 60), asking, "Where is the newborn King of the Jews?" Prejudiced and defensive religious leaders could point the Magi to nearby Bethlehem, but they refused to go there themselves. However, the Wise Men went. In fact, "wise men still seek Him." And they worshiped and gave gifts.

This Sabbath you're invited to worship and to give gifts, just like the Wise Men thousands of years ago.

December 23, 2023

## Conference Advance

Through the spirit of generosity we partner with God in funding the mission; God loves a cheerful giver. Returning tithe and giving offerings are part of our worship relationship, a joyful expression of our praise, love, and gratitude.

“‘And now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, Lord, have given me.’ Place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before him. Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household” (Deut. 26:10, 11).

“God imparts His gifts to us that we also may give, and thus make known His character to the world. Under the Jewish economy, gifts and offerings formed an essential part of God’s worship. The Israelites were taught to devote a tithe of all their income to the service of the sanctuary. These were the means for supporting the ministry of the gospel at that time. God expects no less from us than He expected from His people anciently. The great work for the salvation of souls must be carried forward. In the tithe, with gifts and offerings, He has made provisions for this work” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 300).

I invite you today to participate in this “essential part of God’s worship” as you faithfully return to God what belongs to Him.

**Prayer:** Dear God, today we want to partner with You as we provide for Your work of saving souls in this Conference. In Jesus’ precious name, AMEN!



December 30, 2023

## Union Conference

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away...” (1 John 2:15–17).

One of the items most of us have in our medicine cabinet is a thermometer. It shows the condition of our health, whether we are fighting an infection or not. Is there a thermometer to measure “the love of the world?” Is there a sure way to know whether “the pride of life” has infected me?

If you find yourself shopping for things you don’t need, if you have luxuries that are beyond your means or are getting in debt to live a lifestyle that impresses others, then you may be “loving the world.” If you find yourself giving excuses for not returning a faithful tithe and you are not giving any offerings to support God’s work, that is a sign that you have the fever of materialism.

Adventists believe that “the world is passing away” and that “the pride of life” begins to loosen its grip on us when we place God first by returning our tithes and offerings.

Our offering today is for our local Union Conference. Let us support the Lord’s vineyard in our local field.

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, keep us away from “loving the world” and materialism. Help us keep spiritually and financially healthy by returning our tithes and offerings into the storehouse. In your name, Amen.