

January 5, 2019

Local Church Budget

Negative inventory. At this time of year, many stores are involved in taking inventory as they prepare to file their business tax returns. One of the terms that has come out of this process is “negative inventory.”

As they attempt to reconcile their computer records between the goods they believe they have on hand and the actual amount, sometimes there is an unaccountable difference. Sadly, “negative inventory” reflects goods that are no longer there due to shoplifting or employee dishonesty.

This is a good time for us as Christians to take stock of our giving and lay good, solid plans to be faithful in this new year.

What does “faithful” actually mean? God’s Word in Malachi tells us: “Bring ye *all* the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. 3:10, KJV, emphasis supplied).

As we begin this new year, let’s ask God to help us be faithful in our return of tithe and giving of offerings. We don’t want any negative inventory in God’s house!

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January 12, 2019

Pennsylvania Evangelism

As the Pottsville Seventh-day Adventist Church made a few changes as they began preparing for their Faith for Family evangelistic series this year. After a hospitality seminar, they decided to change their outdoor signage to say “Bible Study” instead of “Sabbath School” so their community would better understand what happens in the morning. Within a couple of weeks, a woman walked into their church saying, “I’m here for the Bible study!”

She shared that she had seen their sign and wanted to see what their Bible studies were like. Since then, she’s attended several times, sometimes staying for the fellowship meal. She’s attended prayer meeting and a small group Bible study during the week, too.

Members have welcomed her warmly and are inviting her to their upcoming evangelistic meetings. Your gift to today’s evangelism offering helps local churches like Pottsville prepare for and hold evangelistic series that connect people with whom they’re building relationships to the gospel and Adventist message. Thank you for giving generously!

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January 19, 2019

Local Church Budget

MLK. My wife and I happened to be in Memphis, Tennessee, in early April of 1968, visiting friends. They took us on a ride to the motel where Martin Luther King, Jr., had just been assassinated on April 4. It was not yet a memorial; just a second-story room roped off with police tape. We stood there mute, thinking about the tragedy that had recently occurred. It was a solemn moment, and in our thoughts, we paid tribute to one whom we now consider to be a great hero of our nation, a victim of prevailing racial hatred.

Martin Luther King Jr. was an American Baptist minister and activist who became the most visible spokesperson and leader in the civil rights movement. He is best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights using the tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs and inspired by the nonviolent activism of Mahatma Gandhi. – Wikipedia.

So here we are more than 50 years since his death. We reflect on other heroes from many lands, such as Mother Teresa, Martin Luther, and Nelson Mandela. Our church has had heroes and special people as well and continues to have them.

Undoubtedly, the great majority of heroes remain unsung and unknown. Today, we have the opportunity to be heroes for Christ and His church, by being faithful to our calling. Please give generously today.

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January 26, 2019

Religious Liberty

Religious Liberty. Nothing is more important than liberty of conscience and religious freedom. We were created to serve by choice, and Christ came to free us from the result of bad choices. The good news of the Gospel is a message of freedom.

It is no accident that the Adventist church has championed religious liberty from its very beginnings. Early Adventists suffered steep fines and even chain gang imprisonment under abusive Sunday blue laws. Our prophetic imperative told us that even in a land of blessed freedoms, powerful forces will again try to compel all to worship falsely.

Our church early on opposed a national Sunday law before Congress. Our church for well over 100 years has sent *Liberty* magazine to legislators and community leaders to clarify the great issues of conscience. Our church has defended Adventists in the workplace. And by radio, television, and a myriad of member events and outreach events, it keeps the freedom bells ringing.

In this offering today, you are making all this a continuing reality. Give as if your very liberties are at stake. They are. If the watchmen cry not, who will give the warning?

—Lincoln Steed, editor *Liberty* magazine and associate director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, North American Division.

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February 2, 2019

Local Church Budget

Groundhog Day. Even Punxsutawney Phil has his day in the sun! As we consider this whimsical, legendary creature that supposedly makes his appearance each February and predicts the soon advent of Spring, we know that in some minds the groundhog or woodchuck is a nuisance, raiding gardens and leaving big holes in the ground. On the plus side, however, their abandoned dens provide homes for foxes and skunks that in turn eat mice and destructive field insects. And groundhogs are even used in biomedical research. Their susceptibility to a virus similar to human hepatitis B has made them valuable to researchers in finding a cure for the human affliction.

Who would have thought! But then, who would have thought that a church organization that began with a handful of believers in the mid-1800s would now number well over 20 million! This is all because of our wonderful Adventist message and our deep devotion to evangelism, both public and personal. And it is no doubt also due to our faithfulness in tithes and offerings, which fund the mission.

When you think about it, however, the early Christians in Acts 2 had no organizational infrastructure, but what they did have was lots of love for one another. They provided strongly for the needy among them, and they went forth preaching the Word in great faith.

Let us today demonstrate great faith and love as we return a faithful tithe and give liberally to the needs of our congregation.

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February 9, 2019

School Worthy Student (Elementary/Junior Academy)

Lorna* lived with her mom and sister in a low-income housing project. Her dad was in jail. Mom struggled to make ends meet. They began attending the local Seventh-day Adventist Church here in Pennsylvania. Members were intentional about connecting with children in their community—and through those relationships, ministering to the entire family. When the pastor told Lorna and her mom that a member wanted to pay for Lorna and her sister to attend the local Adventist church, they were excited. It changed the direction of Lorna's life. Mom began studying the Bible with a couple from the church. Her hard work paid off and she was able to move the family out of their neighborhood into a nicer apartment. At school, Lorna did well academically, made friends, and decided she wants to be a teacher when she grows up. She also decided to commit her life to Jesus and was baptized.

Your gift to the Worthy Student Offering today changes the lives of kids like Lorna. As you partner with families who long for more for their children, you enable them to provide an Adventist Christian education in one of our eleven elementary schools/junior academies possible for their child—an education with eternal impact.

Thank you for giving generously today!

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February 16, 2019

Local Church Budget

Christian Parenting Day. While we have been called to go out into the world and make disciples for Jesus, we can't forget that we have a mission field inside the walls of our own home. Ellen G. White wrote in the book, *The Adventist Home*, "Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home...There is no missionary field more important than this" (p. 35).

As parents, we play the most important role in the life of our children as we disciple them to be followers of Jesus and accept His free gift of forgiveness and eternal life. While we may teach them, it is much more important that we *show* them what it means to be a disciple.

When you set aside the tithe and offerings, write a check and put it inside the envelope, or when you go online to do the same, invite your child to sit by you and explain to them what you're doing and why. Your example of gratitude for God's goodness, of joyfully giving, and financial support of the ministry of the church is critically important as they develop these same traits.

Today is Christian Parenting Day. Give your child the tithes and offerings you have brought and let them place them in the offering plate. Since today's offerings are for the local church budget, take the time to explain to your child what that means and what the funds will be used for. You will be planting in their minds the importance of supporting the ministry of your local church.

—Claudio Consuegra, NAD Family Ministries

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February 23, 2019

Blue Mountain Academy

Blue Mountain Academy's ASSIST Team collected hats, gloves, and socks to help bring a little warmth to homeless people over the cold winter months. Students from the team took the collected items to the Opportunity House, a homeless shelter in downtown Reading, where they were given a tour and learned about the ministry of the center.

The mission of Blue Mountain Academy is to provide a Christ-centered Seventh-day Adventist education that leads students into lives of service for God. A Blue Mountain Academy education not only gives students the opportunity to learn in the classroom, but also teaches them to lead by example through focusing on our commission by God to minister to and help others.

Today you have the opportunity to partner with families in helping young people learn to be leaders and servants in their communities and churches. Please give generously to today's Blue Mountain Academy offering.

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March 2, 2019

Local Church Budget

The water's edge. Pastor and Mrs. James Hoffer once lived in St. Joseph, Michigan, just a mile or so from Glenlord Beach on Lake Michigan. When they moved there in 1989, there was a nice swimming area and sandy beach. Now, due to shoreline erosion, there is nothing. Over the years, erosion has claimed whole houses and radically altered the landscape. Barriers prevent people from venturing too close.

What causes erosion? The gentle and incessant lapping of water, the prevailing westerly winds, the action of rain and snow beating down—all have their effect. When roots or foundations aren't deeply secure, the elements slowly but surely wreak disintegration, and sand, rocks, and even structures topple into the lake.

This process is exactly what happens when little indiscretions and the world's influences begin eating away at our Christian foundation. We don't notice the erosion until it's too late. That is why we are encouraged with these words: "Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him" (Col. 2:6, 7). It is the daily commitment and attention to your root system that will keep your life standing tall and strong.

Today's offering is for Local Church Budget. Help us help others come to Jesus and stay close to Him. And prevent spiritual erosion!

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Pastor Ruben Ramos, Vice President of Multilingual Ministries for the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Columbia, Maryland, presented an 8-day evangelistic series titled, I'll Never Forsake You, at the Allentown Seventh-day Adventist Church, Allentown, Pa., this past fall.

Approximately 60 people attended the nightly meetings as Ramos offered messages of hope for families and youth and encouraged them to trust and surrender their lives to God. He also offered special prayers over attendees each night. At the end of the series, eight individuals publicly accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and became new members of the church.

Your gift to the Evangelism Offering makes meetings like these possible. Thanks to your generous giving, sixty people heard our Adventist message and eight are now new members, growing and serving Christ. United together, we fulfill the mission.

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Local Church Budget

God's care for His own. Swallows can fly 7,000 miles without a chart, compass, or radio beam and land at the place they left six months before.

Spiders can make a silken rope, creating materials in their own chemical laboratory, very fine but strong enough for their own transport through the air.

Beavers are engineers, constructing without the aid of tools, cement, or precision instruments, bridges, tunnels, roadways, canals, and dams that last for years.

Bees, wasps, and ants solve their housing problem by building well-ventilated, weatherproof, well-designed, and practical apartment houses.

A young squid travels by jet propulsion. He swims by pumping water through a tube along his thin, streamlined body. When pursued, he can gather great speed, and he always jets backwards. When he gets going fast enough, he can set his fins at an angle and take off into the air. He has been seen to fly as far as sixty yards with one takeoff, leaving his foes far behind.

Can a Creator God like that take care of you and me? Of course! And shouldn't we respond to His loving care, most of which we take for granted, by living just as close to Him as we can? Yes!

Let us praise God for His blessings and respond in loving gifts for Him today.

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March 23, 2019

Blue Mountain Academy

More than 60 years ago men and women across Pennsylvania had the audacity to believe that teenagers could change the world. With that firm belief they began to invest in the lives of the teenagers who have attended Blue Mountain Academy; an investment that continues to change lives—and the world.

Today those teenagers are impacting their communities through careers in law, medicine, education, labor, entrepreneurship, ministry, and more. Ellen White wrote, “With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world!”—Education, p. 271.

Your belief that teens can change the world along with your investment in their lives by making a Christ-centered Seventh-day Adventist education possible will impact young people and their world. Please give generously to today’s Blue Mountain Academy offering. Together we can help build that army of workers and fulfill our mission.

March 23, 2019

Local Conference Advance

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March 30, 2019

Laurel Lake Camp

Each spring, students from Pennsylvania Conference Adventist schools head to Laurel Lake Camp for a few days of “Outdoor School”—learn about nature, God and enjoying the beauty of the camp. Many of these kids are from urban areas and don’t get the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors in a setting like this. They haven’t hiked or skipped stones on a lake. Many aren’t too sure if they’re going to like a place without their video games and handheld devices.

During last spring’s outdoor school, one student was enjoying it so much he told his teacher, “I always thought nature might be kind of interesting but there really wasn't much to see. But, wow, this is really fun and there is sooooo much to see. I think that this is more fun than my video games!”

LLC is a fun place, but it is also a place where lives are impacted for eternity. Kids discovered new things about God as they explore His creation.

Your gift to the Laurel Lake Camp offering today helps provide this beautiful place of ministry for children, families, adults, and groups seeking to get away and discover God.

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April 6, 2019

Local Church Budget

Tax time! Through the years, the government has discussed whether to continue the deduction for charitable gifts. The day may come when this is no longer allowed. Questions in the minds of churches and other non-profits are, “How much would this affect their revenue?” and, “How much is this tax break an incentive in people’s giving?”

We are used to the idea of the charitable deduction because of the countries in which we live, but many other countries don’t have this benefit. Yet our people in these places are nevertheless faithful in their tithes and offerings.

A question to ask ourselves might be, “How does this affect *my* giving?”

Jesus tells us: “Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matt. 6:2-4, NKJV).

So, let us enjoy the deduction while we have it, but continue to be faithful regardless of what governments do or don’t do. Today’s offerings is for Local Church Budget.

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April 13, 2019

Pennsylvania Evangelism

Pastor Stewart Pepper opened the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation during the Midnight Cry Prophecy Seminar at the New Brighton Seventh-day Adventist Church, northwest of Pittsburgh, with 25-30 people filling the pews each evening as. What followed was a month of baptisms.

Two sisters, Shirley Emerick and Jeanne Tomasko, were baptized the last Sabbath morning of the series. The following Sabbath, Jim Leczek along with Donna and Mike DeSanzo were baptized. The next week, longtime member, Cindy Bennett rededicated her life to Christ through baptism.

Several months ago, Charlene and Kaili Finau began attending the Pittsburgh Seventh-day Adventist Church. Just prior to the beginning of the Midnight Cry meetings at the New Brighton Seventh-day Adventist Church, Charlene contacted Pastor Stewart Pepper, volunteering to help at the meetings in any way she could. Pepper asked her to be the registrar. She and Kaili attended faithfully and did just that. In talking with them after the meetings were finished, Pepper asked if they would like to join the Pittsburgh church and they both excitedly said, "Yes!"

Chrissy Bowman has been attending the Pittsburgh church for many years with her husband, Brett, and their four children. Since they live close to the New Brighton church, Chrissy decided to attend the meetings there. One evening while listening to Pastor Pepper's sermon, she made the decision to be baptized.

Nine people were baptized as a result of this one series at the New Brighton church thanks to members of the church who were committed to sharing the gospel, Pastor Pepper faithfully preaching and talking with attendees and everyone who gave to the evangelism offering. United together, we fulfill the mission. Today join us in making evangelism possible here in Pennsylvania by giving to the Evangelism Offering.

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Pennsylvania Evangelism

Pastor Stewart Pepper opened the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation during the Midnight Cry Prophecy Seminar at the New Brighton Seventh-day Adventist Church, northwest of Pittsburgh, with 25-30 people filling the pews each evening as. What followed was a month of baptisms.

Two sisters, Shirley Emerick and Jeanne Tomasko, were baptized the last Sabbath morning of the series. The following Sabbath, Jim Leczek along with Donna and Mike DeSanzo were baptized. The next week, longtime member, Cindy Bennett rededicated her life to Christ through baptism.

Several months ago, Charlene and Kaili Finau began attending the Pittsburgh Seventh-day Adventist Church. Just prior to the beginning of the Midnight Cry meetings at the New Brighton Seventh-day Adventist Church, Charlene contacted Pastor Stewart Pepper, volunteering to help at the meetings in any way she could. Pepper asked her to be the registrar. She and Kaili attended faithfully and did just that. In talking with them after the meetings were finished, Pepper asked if they would like to join the Pittsburgh church and they both excitedly said, "Yes!"

Chrissy Bowman has been attending the Pittsburgh church for many years with her husband, Brett, and their four children. Since they live close to the New Brighton church, Chrissy decided to attend the meetings there. One evening while listening to Pastor Pepper's sermon, she made the decision to be baptized.

Nine people were baptized as a result of this one series at the New Brighton church thanks to members of the church who were committed to sharing the gospel, Pastor Pepper faithfully preaching and talking with attendees and everyone who gave to the evangelism offering. United together, we fulfill the mission. Today join us in making evangelism possible here in Pennsylvania by giving to the Evangelism Offering.

April 20, 2019

Local Church Budget

Easter.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;
One lived and died for self; one died for you and me.
The Greek died on a throne; the Jew died on a cross.
One's life a triumph seemed; the other but a loss.
One led vast armies forth; the other walked alone;
One shed a whole world's blood; the other gave His own.
One won the world in life and lost it all in death;
The other lost His life to win the whole world's faith.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;
One died in Babylon; and one on Calvary.
One gained all for self; and one Himself He gave;
One conquered every throne; the other every grave.
The one made himself god; the God made Himself less;
The one lived but to blast; the other but to bless.
When died the Greek, forever fell his throne of swords;
But Jesus died to live forever Lord of lords.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;
The Greek made all men slaves; the Jew made all men free.
One built a throne on blood; the other built on love;
The one was born of earth; the other from above.
One won all this earth, to lose all earth and heaven;
The other gave up all, that all to Him be given.
The Greek forever died; the Jew forever lives;
He loses all who gets, and wins all things who gives.

—Charles Ross Weede

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April 27, 2019

Blue Mountain Academy

The Pennsylvania Conference and Blue Mountain Academy are committed to young people. We want to not only provide them with a quality academic, Adventist Christian education but we are passionate about preparing them not only for their future, but for also for eternity.

Unfortunately, many families cannot afford the to send their children to Blue Mountain Academy. That's where you and I can make a difference. We can partner with parents and invest in our young people—not only for their future, but for their eternity.

Let's show our students and their families just how much we care. Please give to today's BMA offering. Your gift will make an Adventist education possible for a young person who will be forever impacted by your gift and his experience here.

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May 4, 2019

Local Church Budget

Lest we also forget. When London was being blitzed during World War II, this article appeared in one of the British newspapers:

“We have been a pleasure-loving people, dishonoring God’s day, picnicking and bathing. Now the seashore is barred—no picnics, no bathing.

“We have preferred motor travel to church going. Now there is a shortage of motor fuel.

“We have ignored the ringing of church bells calling us to worship. Now the bells cannot ring, except to warn us of an invasion.

“We have left our churches half empty when they should have been well filled with worshippers. Now they are in ruins.

“We would not listen to the way of peace. Now we are forced to listen to the way of war.

“The money we would not give to the Lord’s work, now is taken from us in higher taxes and the high cost of living.

“The food for which we refused to give God thanks, now is unobtainable.

“The service we refused to give to God, is now conscripted for our country.

“Lives we refused to live under God’s control are now under the nation’s control.

“Nights we would not spend watching unto prayer are now spent anxiously in air raid precautions.”

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”- Ps. 33:12

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May 11, 2019

Worthy Student Offering (Elementary/Junior Academy)

The news broke teacher Julissa Boyer's heart. Several of her students were unable to return to their classroom at Huntingdon Valley Christian Academy this past fall because of finances. "If I had the money, I'd give it to them myself," she shares. One of her students was equally upset. "I'm mad that I can't come back to school," she told Boyer. "I miss my family! It's not the same at my new school."

More than 100 students were unable to return to the classroom this school year because their parents struggle juggling tuition and bills. We're doing everything we can to ensure that kids have access to an Adventist Christian education in one of our eleven elementary schools/junior academies, but we need your help. Join us in partnering with parents to give our kids an Adventist education that will prepare them not only for the future, but for eternity!

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May 18, 2019

Local Church Budget

Adventist Single Adult Ministries Sabbath. Look around your church and you will notice church members and guests who have never been married, who are divorced, or who have lost their loved one. They are as important to the church as anyone else, and yet, often they feel forgotten or neglected by the church.

The apostle Paul wrote to the unmarried in the church at Corinth that not being married provides some opportunities that those who are married do not have. “I want all of you to be free from worry. An unmarried man worries about how to please the Lord. But a married man has more worries. He must worry about the things of this world, because he wants to please his wife. So, he is pulled in two directions. Unmarried women and women who have never been married worry only about pleasing the Lord, and they keep their bodies and minds pure. But a married woman worries about the things of this world, because she wants to please her husband. What I am saying is for your own good—it isn't to limit your freedom. I want to help you to live right and to love the Lord above all else,” (1 Cor. 7:32-35, CEV).

Whether married or unmarried, we all can participate in the ministry of the church. Through our prayers, personal efforts, and financial support, we contribute and assume responsibility and ownership for the mission with which God has entrusted us. The offering today, which is designated for the local church budget, demonstrates our response to God's generosity to us.

—Claudio Consuegra, NAD Family Ministries

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May 25, 2019

Blue Mountain Academy

“If it weren’t for the sacrifice my parents made to send me to Blue Mountain Academy,” shares Jerome Edmeade, a 2005 graduate of Blue Mountain Academy, “I probably wouldn’t be a Seventh-day Adventist today. I probably wouldn’t even be a Christian.”

Jerome’s believes that the relationships he built at BMA with other students, teachers and staff made it easier to learn and grow as an Adventist. “They made it ‘cool’ to be a Seventh-day Adventist,” he says. Blue Mountain Academy will always have a special place in his heart because of the impact it had on his life. Today Jerome serves as an assistant treasurer and stewardship director for the Gulf States Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Your gift to today’s Blue Mountain Academy offering, partnered with the sacrifices of parents like the Edmeades, will make it possible for other students to build the relationships and learn about God in a way that causes them to commit their lives and careers to Christ. Thank you for giving!

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June 1, 2019

Local Church Budget

Summertime dangers. Mosquitoes, flies, poison ivy, ticks—these are some of the nuisances that we may have to cope with during the warmer months. More serious are the dangers associated with sunburn (or even skin cancer), drowning, and increased risk of automobile injury due to the crowded highways.

But we should be even more concerned with the spiritual dangers that abound in summertime. Summer is when many spend more time in leisure activities, and sometimes because of travel and vacations our normal schedules are interrupted. It is much easier to neglect our personal devotions and attendance at our home church.

This can have a lasting negative impact on some people. Any time the patterns of our lives are interrupted, for whatever reason, there is potential for profound spiritual change.

On the positive side, summer presents wonderful opportunities for sharing our faith. We can stock our cars with literature and leave tracts in strategic places (inside of motel Bibles, in restrooms, for example). We can make new friends for Jesus in parks and camping areas and tourist sites.

Faithful members mail in their tithes and offerings even when they are away, because they understand that their church's needs continue in their absence. Thank you for remembering the needs of your local church family even when you're away.

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June 8, 2019

Pennsylvania Evangelism

Total Member Involvement (TMI) is a key part of our Faith for Family initiative. During 2018's Faith for Family door-to-door outreach, more than 2,000 members from across the state convened in northeast Pennsylvania to visit homes.

By the end of the day, this army of workers had gathered 274 Bible study interests to add to the more than 100 in-home Bible studies that the Bible workers have already begun in the area.

"Many of our northeast members were moved by the love and support received from their fellow brothers and sisters," shares Lillian Torres who helped to coordinate the Faith for Family D-day. "Old and young ministered side-by-side, and many hearts were inspired to go back to their churches and do more for Jesus in their own sphere of influence."

United together we fulfill the mission. 2000 people united together to go door-to-door. Today we have the opportunity across our Conference to unite together in giving to our Evangelism Offering. Your gift makes a difference and is vital to the meetings held as a result of our Faith for Family initiative. Thank you for giving!

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Father's Day. A pastor recounts: "Several years ago, I received a phone call from Mary, one of our church members. She sounded quite excited and wanted my wife and me to come by her house to hear a marvelous story. Her elderly mother and disabled brother had been living with Mary and her husband for several years, but the mother had recently died. Now, Mary was visiting the Social Security office to report her mother's passing. Little did Mary know the surprise awaiting her:

"She handed over the death certificate and was going to make arrangements to halt her mother's monthly payments and change her brother's payments to herself. Then the lady said to Mary, 'What about the benefits from your father?' To which Mary replied, 'My father has been dead for many years.' Then the lady got a strange look on her face and said, 'No, dear, your father is very much alive.' Mary was totally shocked. Then the lady said, 'Listen, I am not allowed to reveal his whereabouts, but if you will write a letter, we will forward it to him.'

"As it turned out, Mary's parents had gone through a very bitter divorce when Mary and her brother were little, and her mother never told her about her father. Needless to say, a few days later her dad called from Chicago, and it brought an exceedingly happy reunion! And she was able to connect with half-sisters she never even knew about. God is so good."

On Father's Day weekend, let us remember our local church family needs, and look forward to one day seeing our heavenly Father face to face!

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June 22, 2019

Laurel Lake Camp

This past summer, several siblings visited Laurel Lake Camp for the first time in years. They had attended summer camp as children back in the 1960's. Now adults, they were amazed that the lake now seemed smaller. That lake held special memories for the two sisters—they were baptized there one summer years ago. Because of their life-impacting experience at the camp, they want other children to experience Christ in this beautiful setting, too. Their gift enabled more than forty children to attend summer camp. More than half a dozen of these kids were baptized as a result of this life-changing ministry.

The impact of just one donation is changing lives for eternity.

Won't you unite with us in reaching people through the ministry of Laurel Lake Camp? Your gift will impact the lives of children and others as they discover God through Laurel Lake's beauty, retreats, and youth programs.

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June 29, 2019

Local Church Budget

Hoarding. One of the most striking parables of Jesus has to do with the rich farmer, who was enjoying a bumper harvest one year. What did he do? He said to himself, “You know what? I’m going to have to build bigger barns for this harvest!” He certainly had visions of living the good life. Only problem was, he didn’t reckon with the fact that it was going to be his last day on earth.

Many of the Bible’s parables deal with one or more aspects of stewardship. The rich young ruler, the widow’s mite, Esau selling his birthright, Ananias and Sapphira—over and over we are given lessons about fixing our hopes on heavenly wealth, not on the earthly.

One of the saddest diseases is that of hoarding. One church member, who lived alone, was obviously a hoarder. In order for his pastor to enter his home, he had to turn his body sideways due to the huge stacks of newspapers and magazines in the living room, reaching to the ceiling. The place was a firetrap!

One of the roots to hoarding is a basic insecurity that causes him or her to store an inordinate amount of everything, and it hurts them greatly to throw anything away. In many cases, professional help is needed to overcome this disease.

When we learn to trust in Jesus, our great Provider, we can live a more wholesome life knowing that He will take care of all our needs—now and in the future.

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July 6, 2019

Local Church Budget

Independence Day. In the year 2000, the General Conference session was held in Toronto, Canada. On July 4, the people of the city went to work and the General Conference did its normal business. You see, July 4 is not a holiday in Canada. It was a good reminder for us that “this world is not my home.”

It may surprise you to learn that the United States is one of the few countries where the national flag is displayed in the church sanctuary. Adventists in other countries feel that that would be mixing politics with religion. Americans, of course, consider that they have a spiritual heritage received from the founding fathers of the nation. Their patriotism has almost a spiritual feeling to it.

I personally have no problem displaying the flag or honoring our country, but the faithful Adventist always has in the back of his or her mind that someday even here the situation will change. Right now, we are prospering beyond measure and way too comfortable. Hopefully, we are taking full advantage of these conditions to be faithful in our stewardship and in sharing the gospel with others around us.

Jesus told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world. As we celebrate the birth of our nation this month, let us also bear in mind our greater loyalty to Christ, and continue to strive for the coming of His kingdom. And let us support His kingdom work by giving to our local church this morning.

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July 13, 2019

NAD Women's Ministries

Women's ministries. Today's offering is for the North American Division (NAD) Women's Ministries, which was first established in 1898 at the urging of Ellen G. White. In the book *Evangelism*, we find her marching orders to the women of the church: "The Lord has a work for women as well as for men. They may take their places in His work at this crisis, and He will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty and labor under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance and will give them a power that exceeds that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed" (*Evangelism*, p. 464).

All 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 classes in English as a second language, 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. I invite you to make a generous gift today to affirm their work and ministry.

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July 20, 2019

Local Church Budget

The Clear Word. Several years ago, a pastor was preparing to officiate at his son's wedding in Minnesota. It was Saturday evening after sunset, and all were at the church going through the rehearsal.

The groom, the best man, and the dad were up on the platform awaiting the entrance of the bridal party. The flower girl proceeded, pretending to scatter flower petals as she went. Next came the Bible boy, empty-handed, pretending to carry a Bible. So, the pastor remarked, "Hmm, an invisible Bible." Without missing a beat, the best man quipped, "Yes, it's the *Clear Word!*" And of course, everyone had a good laugh.

Many thousands have been blessed by Dr. Jack Blanco's Bible paraphrase, *The Clear Word*, as well as by his life story as a little boy in Germany. How clear is God's Word to you and me?

God has made it clear in His Word about returning tithe and giving offerings. His desire is for us to remember that He is our Great Provider for all of our needs.

Today's offering goes to our local church budget. At this midpoint of the year, please make it a matter of earnest prayer regarding your giving. God has tremendous blessings in store for you if you are faithful!

July 20, 2019

Local Church Budget

The Clear Word. Several years ago, a pastor was preparing to officiate at his son's wedding in Minnesota. It was Saturday evening after sunset, and all were at the church going through the rehearsal.

The groom, the best man, and the dad were up on the platform awaiting the entrance of the bridal party. The flower girl proceeded, pretending to scatter flower petals as she went. Next came the Bible boy, empty-handed, pretending to carry a Bible. So, the pastor remarked, "Hmm, an invisible Bible." Without missing a beat, the best man quipped, "Yes, it's the *Clear Word!*" And of course, everyone had a good laugh.

Many thousands have been blessed by Dr. Jack Blanco's Bible paraphrase, *The Clear Word*, as well as by his life story as a little boy in Germany. How clear is God's Word to you and me?

God has made it clear in His Word about returning tithe and giving offerings. His desire is for us to remember that He is our Great Provider for all of our needs.

Today's offering goes to our local church budget. At this midpoint of the year, please make it a matter of earnest prayer regarding your giving. God has tremendous blessings in store for you if you are faithful!

July 27, 2019

Blue Mountain Academy

Paul Masaka is excited that when he graduates from Blue Mountain Academy, he will already have a portfolio of work experience that will equip him for his future. He is learning a variety of skills through the different jobs he's done during the school year. Students not only learn the value of hard work, being on time, and various skills, but also create resumes and participate in a career day each spring where they interview for jobs for the next school year—and are interviewed by various business and ministry leaders as they learn how to prepare for and do well in job interviews.

Blue Mountain Academy is committed to preparing students academically, practically and spiritually for their future. Your gift to today's BMA offering will help make this Christ-centered Adventist education possible for more students. Please give generously and invest in making a difference in the lives of young people not only for their future, but for eternity.

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August 3, 2019

Local Church Budget

Too early. A pastor in Ohio had a speaking appointment in Indiana one Sabbath morning. He calculated the travel time and left his home promptly to make sure of an on-time arrival.

As he drove into the church parking lot, he found himself to be the first one to arrive. So, he patiently waited, figuring that very soon he would begin to see other cars pulling in. As he waited and waited, he began to get upset. Where were the people? After a few more minutes, he became alarmed and then angry. Again, *where were the people?*

As his patience grew thinner, he considered returning home, when suddenly a few cars began to appear, and then more and more. He hadn't realized that he had crossed the line from Eastern time to Central time. He was an hour early.

How many times have you or I had to say "Oh!" when we have made a hasty judgment based on poor information? Sometimes it is better to be more patient and wait until we know the whole story.

Smooth human relations can sometimes be a challenge, but it is an important and necessary part of getting along as part of God's family. As decisions are made about important issues in the church, let us go with cooler heads and committed hearts, that God's work may go forward. Please give liberally to His work today.

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August 10, 2019

Laurel Lake Camp

John Kent spent five weekends driving kids back and forth to Laurel Lake Camp last summer. Children and teens from Carnegie, the area where John and his wife, Belinda, are pastoring and planting a church, were able to attend summer camp thanks to the generous donation of a family who wants to see young people discover Christ through our summer camp ministry.

These are young people growing up without fathers, surrounded by drug and alcohol abuse, where finances are insufficient and opportunities to experience genuine love and security are sparse. Nearly seventy-five percent of the children returned home requesting Bible studies or with a desire to be baptized.

Three of these kids were baptized while at Laurel Lake. Kent personally baptized three more campers after they got back to Carnegie. People who haven't attended church came to the baptisms and were deeply moved by what they experienced. Afterwards, three more individuals approached Kent and asked to be baptized. One donation is not only changing the lives of children, but the ripple effect is impacting parents, family, friends and siblings.

Imagine what God can do through the generous offerings of each one of us! You can make a difference. Please give generously to the Laurel Lake Camp offering today—your gift will do more than you can imagine.

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August 17, 2017

Local Church Budget

Anything for a buck. Commerce is an interesting phenomenon. There is a fine line between making money for our daily needs and making money because of greed. The human individual from day one is driven by thoughts of self-interest and self-benefit. It is in our very nature, and to some degree necessary for life but exploited by Satan to the extreme. From the baby crying because it is hungry to the business person pushing the envelope seeking to move upward, it is often about self.

Altruism and self-denial do not come naturally. Happy is the parent and blessed the child when by precept and example self-interest is suppressed and thinking of others is encouraged. A truly other-centered person is a miracle of God.

“The directions given by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul in regard to gifts, present a principle that applies also to tithing: ‘Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.’ Parents *and children* are here included. Not only the rich, but the poor, are addressed. ‘Every man according as he purposeth in his heart [through the candid consideration of God’s prescribed plan], so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.’ The gifts are to be made in consideration of the great goodness of God to us”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 80, emphasis ours.

Today we have another opportunity to demonstrate our faithfulness and the joy of altruistic living.

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August 24, 2019

Worthy Student Offering (Elementary/Junior Academy)

None of the students at the Wyoming Valley Adventist School, Mountain Top, Pa., had ever made or baked a pie before, but decided it would be the perfect way to raise monies for their school AND be a learning experience for them.

Together they chose to make four different kinds of pies: double crust apple, apple crumb, pumpkin, and peanut butter. They had no clue how big of a project it would be!

Over the course of seven days, along with doing their school work, they measured, stirred, peeled and cut apples, rolled pastry dough, measured, and baked seventy-three pies. Most of the pies were sold to people in their communities who received the delicious creations along with information about the school.

These kids recognize the value of an Adventist Christian education and are willing to step in and do what it takes to help make it possible. Let's join them in helping provide make school a reality for those who want to attend one of our eleven elementary schools/junior academies here in Pennsylvania. Please give generously to today's Worthy Student Offering! Your gift will change the life of a child.

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August 31, 2019

Local Church Budget

Moon Walk or Sabbath School? Astronaut James B. Irwin's wife gave a most impressive testimony on the importance of Sabbath observance and Christian responsibility on Sabbath, July 3, 1971.

Walter Cronkite, CBS news celebrity reporting on the moon shot, said, "Mrs. James B. Irwin did not watch her husband take his first ride and walk on the moon yesterday. She is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and she had a Sabbath School class to teach. She said, "He has his mission and I have mine."

This significant statement was broadcast and telecast to the United States., the Congo, Europe, South America, and Canada. What an eloquent testimony this was to our faith!

Of course, we all agree that there are legitimate reasons for missing church—illness, for example. And no one would have faulted Mrs. Irwin had she took the time to watch her husband walk on the moon. But sometimes we allow little aches and pains, rain drops, or other minor things to keep us from the joy of fellowship.

Each local church has a mission for its members and the larger community. This morning, we have another opportunity to lift up our wonderful church by contributing, in addition to our faithful tithe, a generous and sacrificial offering for our local ministries. Thank you for supporting the mission!

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September 7, 2019

Local Church Budget

Men's Ministry Day of Prayer. When Claudio Consuegra, the current Family Ministries Director of the North American Division, was a young man, he began attending the Seventh-day Adventist Church and was receiving Bible instruction by the local church pastor. When they studied what the Bible said about tithes and offerings, Claudio became concerned. He had not been careful about money management and had fallen into a bad habit. He would get paid on Thursday, but by Monday all his money would be gone. He would then borrow money from friends to hold him over until the next paycheck.

When he was taught that God expects that the first 10 percent of our income be returned, he figured that would not be possible. His paycheck now didn't even last a week so, surely, finances would be even tighter with 10 percent less to spend. When he told his pastor of his concern, the pastor challenged him to test God and claim His promises. Claudio prayed and put God to the test. The amazing thing is that the very first week he returned God's tithe, his paycheck lasted until the next paycheck, even after paying back his debts. Since that day, more than 40 years ago, he has been returning God's tithe and giving offerings faithfully, and God has shown His faithfulness and love to him and his family in many different ways.

His daughters witnessed their parents' faithfulness and now as married women they follow the same practice. His prayers and his obedience have shown them what it means to be a spiritual head of household, as men of God are called to be.

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September 14, 2019

Pennsylvania Evangelism

"Faith for Family is the best thing I have ever seen for spiritual readiness," shares Tony Garcia, who was the Bible worker for the Blossburg, Hillcrest, Canton and Sayre churches. "This whole district has changed! We started the 40 days of prayer just before the meetings and our members can't let it go. About twenty members have continued to meet and pray every night for more than 120 days straight. This district will never be the same."

Twenty-two people have been baptized as a result of Faith for Family in these churches with thirty-two more continuing to study. The Blossburg church alone had nineteen baptisms. Thanks to your generous giving, these churches are uniting together to fulfill the mission and God is changing them and their community as a result.

Join us today in making evangelism possible for local churches across Pennsylvania by giving generously to our Evangelism Offering. United together, we fulfill the mission!

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Local Church Budget

Grandparent's Day. Grandparents and grandchildren have a unique opportunity to learn lessons together across the generations. Grandparents have experienced the ups and downs of life, and can teach their grandchildren lessons of patience, planning, and perseverance so they can reach their goals in life.

Grandparents can teach their grandchildren about saving, investing, spending, and giving. Perhaps they have experienced the ups and downs of the economy, so they can tell them stories of what it's like to have more some days and less at other times.

Because many grew up and lived without much of the technology that surrounds us today, grandparents can teach their grandchildren how to communicate face-to-face and the importance of placing healthy boundaries around all of the technological gadgets that consume our time. Grandparents and grandchildren can do service projects together to help others make this world a better place. One way to accomplish this is by volunteering on projects or activities in your church and community. As you spend time together, you can share principles and life lessons that will help your grandchildren grow to be healthy adults and committed Christians.

The offering today is for the local church budget. The church can serve as the vehicle where people of different ages come together for the common goal of sharing the message of love from God to His children who don't know Him yet. Our generosity is a lesson to God's younger children and a tangible way to help others.

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September 28, 2019

Blue Mountain Academy

Friendships are an important part of a teenager's life. They influence and impact each other. Before attending Blue Mountain Academy, Diego Estrada struggled to find friends who were good influences on his life. At BMA, he's made friends who care about him and help him connect to God. His experience at BMA has also helped him discover what he wants to do with his life. "I want to be a missionary pastor and preach the gospel to people that need to be reached," he shares. "There are a lot of people who don't know about God."

A Blue Mountain Academy education is a Christ-centered Adventist education that prepares students for lives of service. But without your support, many kids aren't able to attend. Please join us in partnering with families and students by giving to today's BMA offering and help prepare our young people to share Christ with people—whether through ministry or their day-to-day life and careers. Together we can prepare teens for their future and for eternity.

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October 5, 2019

Local Church Budget

Tornado! Some of us have seen major disasters and lived to tell about it. On June 8, 1953, the west side of Cleveland, Ohio, was hit by a major tornado. Pastor James Hoffer was a teenager at the time. The Hoffers' house was not seriously affected, other than a two-by-four sticking through the roof, a garage leaning almost off its foundation, and a yard full of glass shards. But houses down the street were completely destroyed, and neighborhood after neighborhood looked like a war zone. A baby near us was picked right out of her crib and smashed against a wall. All in all, many either died or were hurt.

The signs had been there—an eerie greenish hue to the sky, followed by golf-ball-sized hail and a massive storm. Fortunately, the Hoffer family was safe and sound as they fled to the basement.

Then, three years later a fire caused serious damage, and the same family had to move out into rented quarters for several months.

Our possessions are precious to us, but in perilous times our lives are of much more value. What value do you place on your possessions, your home, your vehicles, your income?

Jesus is coming soon. Let us send our wealth on ahead to His kingdom. Today, we're investing in His kingdom by giving to the Local Church Budget.

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October 12, 2019

Worthy Student Offering (Elementary/Junior Academy)

When her oldest daughter turned four last year, one mom made the reluctant decision to send her child to one of our Pennsylvania Seventh-day Adventist schools. An educator herself, she had always planned to homeschool her children, but her mom and church kept praying she would choose the local school.

“We got her uniforms and her supplies. We met her teacher and the principal,” she shares. “I knew that they would take care of her during the day and that they hopefully would stop any bullying—I was bullied horribly throughout school. I didn’t expect that she would surpass the state requirements for kindergarten before the first semester was even over. I am so very proud of her and how she is learning and showing me new things all day. And the greatest part is not only is she able to share her talents and learn new things, she gets reminded every day that we have an awesome God that loves her! She gets to learn His word and will be able to freely express what He does in her life with her teachers and friends.”

An Adventist Christian education is about more than just great academics and enabling children to excel and grow, but also adds the benefit of teaching children about God and how to have a daily and life-changing relationship with Him. The verses they memorize, the lessons they learn, the songs they sing will forever be etched in their memories for the Holy Spirit to use in their lives wherever they go.

Your gift to the Worthy Student Offering will help make this life-impacting education possible for children across Pennsylvania—every dollar is spent right here in our Conference for our kids. Make a difference that has eternal impact! Please give generously.

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October 19, 2019

Local Church Budget

Working for Jesus. There is nothing in this world more wonderful than working for Jesus! This can be done vicariously, sustaining other workers with your prayers, offerings, and words of encouragement. But even more wonderful is to become a soul-winner yourself.

Perhaps you are picturing someone knocking on doors or preaching, and you can't see yourself in that picture. However, there are many more ways to win souls, and at least one of them is suited to you and your individual personality and gifts.

It can begin right in church, within the four walls of the building. How about this for a starter: "Everyone a greeter." Yes, we have our officially appointed greeters, and they do a wonderful job. But it was never meant for the rest of us to just fade into the woodwork. Each one of us should make a point of giving a friendly greeting to both visitors and fellow members. We should be proactive and intentional. And, where possible, even invite them to our homes for a fellowship meal or sit with them in church.

Instead of viewing church passively, we should think of it as an evangelistic tool; it exists to draw the lost into our fellowship, rather than being an exclusive club for our members. Let us faithfully give our tithes and offerings but let us also give of ourselves!

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October 26, 2019

Blue Mountain Academy

When Oscar Polanco began attending Blue Mountain Academy, he didn't know what he wanted to do after graduation. But thanks to the opportunity to work and try out different jobs at BMA, he's been able to try his hand at a variety of things and discover what he likes and doesn't enjoy, what he's best at, and how God can use him for the future.

Blue Mountain Academy is committed to preparing young people for the future—not only with careers, job skills, and friendships that will last a lifetime, but for eternity. Unfortunately, many families struggle to afford tuition on their own. That's where we can help. United together, we can fulfill our mission to reach everyone, everywhere, including our young people. By giving to today's Blue Mountain Academy offering, you are preparing students for the future—and for eternity. Please give generously!

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November 2, 2019

Local Church Budget

Divine counsel. “God is the source of life and light and joy to the universe. Like rays of light from the sun, like the streams of water bursting from a living spring, blessings flow out from Him to all His creatures. And wherever the life of God is in the hearts of men, it will flow out to others in love and blessing....

“So those who are the partakers of the grace of Christ will be ready to make any sacrifice, that others for whom He died may share the heavenly gift. They will do all they can to make the world better for their stay in it. This spirit is the sure outgrowth of a soul truly converted. No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus; the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. If we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and are filled with the joy of His indwelling Spirit, we shall not be able to hold our peace. If we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good we shall have something to tell. Like Philip when he found the Saviour, we shall invite others into His presence. We shall seek to present to them the attractions of Christ and the unseen realities of the world to come. There will be an intensity of desire to follow in the path that Jesus trod.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 77, 78.

Your giving today will help our church family remain a godly presence to those in our community.

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November 9, 2019

Laurel Lake Camp

Many churches across Pennsylvania help children attend Laurel Lake Camp and experience a week at summer camp. The Mifflintown Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of these churches. Mifflintown members are committed to sharing Christ with children and families in their community. Last year, they decided to do whatever it took to get 23 kids from their area to Laurel Lake Camp—16 attended teen week alone!

The community kids wanted to help them raise the monies for camp registration. They made sandwiches. Sold candies. And members donated. Generously. It was a life-changing experience for these children who are learning about Christ because of the generosity and commitment of people who care about them!

Your gift to the Laurel Lake Camp offering today helps make summer camp, retreats, camp meetings, Pathfinder and Adventurer campouts, youth events, and so much more possible. Thank you for partnering with us and doing what it takes to provide a beautiful place for people to encounter God in life-changing ways.

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November 16, 2019

Local Church Budget

Rescued! The Hagerstown Seventh-day Adventist church in Maryland has had an annual tradition: a fund-raising yard sale for the public. Members and others donate items, some provide baked goods for sale, and the proceeds go for a special church project.

The venue for the sale has always been a prominent location along the main road through town, known as Dual Highway or Route 40. The lot slopes gently down to the road. The church chose that vacant lot so that the many passers-by would notice it.

At one of these sales a few years ago, a folding table was with the children's items, including a large inflated rubber ball. Of course, that caught the eye of a three-year old boy. He grabbed it and began kicking it around the area. Unfortunately, as it rolled toward the highway the little boy was scampering after it. Most everyone was preoccupied at the time and did not notice the potential tragedy. Just then, the pastor saw this out of the corner of his eye and yelled "Stop!" in his loudest voice. Fortunately, the child stopped just in time, and the ball rolled out right in front of a rapidly passing car and was demolished.

That little boy is now a handsome young man in his twenties. You may not rescue one of our youth in such a dramatic fashion, but you can rescue some today, young and old, by your faithful giving.

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November 23, 2019

Blue Mountain Academy

Jader Leme was surprised by how quickly Blue Mountain Academy changed his life. He'd only been attending school for a couple of months when he realized how it had already impacted his relationship with God. "I have grown really close bonds and bonds I think will go past my high school years," he shares. "It's weird to think how it has impacted me just over a couple months. My relationship with God has increased incredibly. I used to not be able to pray to Him and He felt distant. And now every time I pray and read my Bible, I get lost in thought in what could be and how good God is to me."

Students like Jader who attend BMA grow academically, but they also grow in their relationship with God. We are committed to preparing students not only for this life, but for eternity.

Your gift to today's Blue Mountain Academy offering will change the lives of teens. Imagine spending time in heaven, hearing from people who just want to say thank you and tell you the difference you made in their lives through your generous giving! Thank you for partnering with us and with families who long to see their kids' lives changed like Jader's.

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November 30, 2019

Local Church Budget

Thanksgiving. In 1918, a Minnesota photographer heard a knock at his door. He opened the door and found a poor, elderly peddler standing there with a few articles to sell. The photographer, Eric Enstrom, said, "I am just ready to sit down at the table for dinner. Won't you come in and join me?"

The shy, aged peddler hesitantly stepped into the house and soon was seated at the table. Then Enstrom's mind lit up with a creative idea. "Before we eat our meal," he said, "would you kindly pose over here at the smaller table?" The peddler was happy to cooperate with this man who had shown him such warm-hearted, Scandinavian hospitality.

Enstrom placed the elderly man before a small table on which was placed a large family Bible and on it a pair of spectacles. Beside the Bible, the photographer set a bowl of gruel, a loaf of bread, and a knife. "There," he sighed with artistic satisfaction, "and now will you bow your head in prayer?"

The peddler did not need any coaching when it came to the matter of prayer. He folded his calloused hands together, rested his forehead on the thumbs, and silently returned thanks for the food set before him. When Mr. Enstrom developed the negative, he knew he had a very special picture—one that many of you have probably owned. It seemed to say, "This man does not have much of earthly goods, but he has more than most people—he has a thankful heart!"

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December 7, 2019

Local Church Budget

Spiritual Frostbite. Frostbite is dangerous. As the mercury dips below the freezing mark, we must take extra precautions to keep our extremities warm. *Spiritual* frostbite is even more dangerous, as it can cause eternal damage. We have all been exposed to spiritual coldness at times, so we need to protect ourselves. The symptoms of spiritual frostbite in the church are the same as physical frostbite:

1. You begin to feel extreme coldness. We usually think it's everyone else who is cold. So, we think the church is not as friendly as it once was. The choir is not as good, and the message was cold and empty. Brother Tom didn't shake my hand today, etc.
2. The sensation of tingling takes place. You still have some spiritual memories of warmer days. Oh yes, once in a while you get a warm feeling, but you notice you don't respond as quickly as you used to; you begin to slow down.
3. Numbness begins to set in. There's no longer a concern for lost souls to be saved or much time for Bible study. You say the church needs a revival. The people just don't care anymore. Someone needs to do something—someone else, that is!
4. Then comes the loss of all feeling. Spiritual frostbite has taken its toll. Now you need to visit the Great Physician and let Him examine your heart.

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December 14, 2019

Worthy Student Offering (Elementary/Junior Academy)

Why an Adventist education?

1. Spiritual Focus -- Seventh-day Adventist schools focus on preparing students not just for success in this life, but for eternity. The ultimate goal of each teacher is to see each student in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. Student/Teacher Ratio -- Our Seventh-day Adventist schools have a low student-teacher ratio. This allows for more individualized attention and instruction.
3. Academic Achievement -- CognitiveGenesis, a four-year study of 30,000 students enrolled in Seventh-day Adventist schools across North America found that students in Seventh-day Adventist schools achieve an average of half a grade above predicted ability in all subjects.
4. Tailored Curriculum -- Seventh-day Adventist schools benefit from a curriculum especially designed for single and multi-grade classrooms. The North American Division Office of Education has developed excellent, high-quality, standards-based materials for all classrooms. The curriculum is designed so that students are constantly connected with Christ and the possibilities He has for each life.
5. Emphasis on Service -- Students in Seventh-day Adventist schools are encouraged to become active members of the local community through various community service projects. From putting on a musical program at the nursing home to raking leaves for an elderly person in the school neighborhood, students are actively engaged in showing God's love to the world.

Adventist education makes a difference academically, spiritually and grows a world view of service for children. Your gift to today's Worthy Student Offering helps make it possible for kids right here in Pennsylvania to experience the excellence and family-atmosphere of our classrooms. Please give generously—it will impact the life of a child for eternity!

Let us give faithfully today, and especially uphold the work of our community service organization.

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December 21, 2019

Local Church Budget

The Christmas tree. Pastor James Hoffer reports: Several years ago, when I was pastoring a church in Michigan, I re-baptized a godly lady who in earlier years had been a faithful member but had fallen away. All went well until Christmas rolled around, and she learned that the decorating committee was going to place a Christmas tree in the sanctuary. She strongly objected and said she would not be returning to church until January. Sure enough, when January came she was back on a regular basis—until the following December! But we respected her opinion. We certainly don't have to think alike on every issue.

Does Ellen White say anything about this? Yes, she does: "God would be well pleased if on Christmas each church would have a Christmas tree on which shall be hung offerings, great and small, for these houses of worship. Letters of inquiry have come to us asking, Shall we have a Christmas tree? Will it not be like the world? We answer, You can make it like the world if you have a disposition to do so, or you can make it as unlike the world as possible. There is no particular sin in selecting a fragrant evergreen and placing it in our churches, but the sin lies in the motive which prompts to action and the use which is made of the gifts placed upon the tree"—*Adventist Home*, p. 482.

Whether or not we have a Christmas tree in our church, let us bring our special gifts to Jesus today.

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December 28, 2019

Pennsylvania Evangelism

Members of the Shamokin Seventh-day Adventist Mission Group have faithfully prayed for and connected with their community for years. They've had monthly meetings for kids throughout the school year. Filled their fellowship hall with laughter, stories and kids each summer during Cool Camp. They've invited the community to various events and persistently looked for ways to share God's love and the gospel.

This small congregation more than doubled in attendance in 2018 as a result of an evangelistic series taught by Pastor Mike Sady. Eleven people were baptized at the end of the series with more than half a dozen continuing to study and prepare for baptism. Their commitment and faithful work, Pastor Sady's series, and your generous giving united together is fulfilling the mission to reach everyone, everywhere in their community. Thank you for giving today to the Evangelism Offering and helping churches across Pennsylvania impact people in their communities with the gospel.

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