

Stewardship 2024

As we welcome the cooler weather and the changing colors on the leaves, it is time to begin thinking about the next year in the life of Trinity UMC.

As a Church Board, this is when we look at the financial picture and the overall wellness of our church. Each of you should have received a Giving Commitment card and an Interest Survey. I am speaking to you today about the importance of both of these. Personally, I know what it is like to stretch a dollar. But I want to share with you that once we began giving regularly to the church, our financial picture improved. I realize this does not make sense with the numbers - if you give more away, how do you have more? However, it is true for us. As we have given, more has been given to us. I realize it is scary to promise away money that you feel you need. But this is where you know God is involved. He will take care of each of you - and this church.

Addressing the financial situation is one half of the story - the other half is the potential we see to fulfill our mission of service to the community.

It is important that we all understand what is needed financially and what steps are being taken to help with this. One change that has affected our finances is the cost of insurance. Previously, churches in the conference were covered in a group plan. Last fall, the company that was covering the churches announced they would no longer insure churches. This meant we had to find coverage, which we did. However, after an intense search we went from paying less than \$10,000 a year in 2023, to a proposed \$56,000 for next year. The insurance and the salaries of our dedicated staff combine to total over \$170,000 for next

year. I want to emphasize the point that we pay a **minimum** salary for each of our staff positions. Nevertheless, our Church Board is working to address these expenses. One way is that we have applied for a grant that will pay one-half the pastor's salary. This could obviously help. We have also spoken to our other staff members, and they have agreed to take a reduction in their salary. This is hard. Trinity has a history as a strong church. That strength comes from us - the people.

According to district records, we have over 270 members. However, our average weekly attendance for September was around 34. The 40-50 regulars that attend worship here are mighty! This group has fed thousands of people in this community each month between our mission outreach programs of San Antonio Partners in Service and The Arbutus Place. Lives have been changed at the Narcotics Anonymous and the Parenting classes that meet here each week. We have provided household goods, blankets, and other necessities to the refugee population in San Antonio. We have provided needed goods to the homeless and those struggling to make it. Small businesses and individual families have been helped through the Farmer's Markets and the Saturday Sales. We are bringing a daycare center to this neighborhood that services children and families from all backgrounds. Individuals with intellectual disabilities are given the opportunity to do good deeds by assisting with our care package outreach. Families have hope after praying with our pastor and church members when they come here for assistance. Our prayer group and Bible studies expand the faith of their members and all who they encounter. All of this is above and beyond the blessings we receive through worship. The music and the message feed our souls, and give us strength to keep helping

those less fortunate. We are stepping out and trying something new with the Pumpkin Patch. Perhaps you have an idea you would like to see us try, please share. Good works are happening at Trinity UMC!

We want to be responsible stewards of God Almighty's many gifts he has given to each of us. It is with this in mind that the Church Board is working to help Trinity. The grant I mentioned earlier has some requirements. One of those is that we increase our weekly attendance to an average of 47. We need to see everyone in church as often as possible. Another requirement of this grant is that we pay our *apportions* in full for 2024. The total for that is \$33,000. If you would like an explanation of this, please speak to Bonnie, Liz, the pastor or other Board members. I also spoke of the insurance. We are needing the down-payment for our 2025 insurance by mid-December, and that proposed amount is \$12,000. So, the math tells us that by mid-December, we need \$45,000 above and beyond our regular needs.

The Commitment of Giving cards that were distributed asks that you make a statement of what you plan to give for 2025. After tweaking the budget and cutting back on anything we could, we are needing promises to total close to \$200,000 for 2025. As I stated previously, we have about 270 members. However, we have about 50 accounts for people who gave regularly this year. Many of those accounts are for couples, but that still leaves us with a large portion that do not give regularly. There is an old saying - "I am preaching to the choir" - meaning the people who are hearing this message are already here and involved. How then do we get this message to those who are not here? You know we need you to give and to be engaged in the life of our church. I am asking that you think of others that we could reach.

Perhaps you can call someone that is part of our church family, but that hasn't come in awhile. Reach out and see what they need and how we can help them. Many people today are thirsty for a group to belong to. Perhaps volunteering in the Pumpkin Patch just might be the refreshment they need to feel they have a place here. Please, invite someone to join you in worship, or an activity around this church.

Rest assured, the Church Board is working behind the scenes to lighten the load. We have so many good programs - from our music to our outreach. If you have been visiting, but you haven't taken the step toward joining the church as a member, please consider speaking with the pastor about making this officially your church home. We want each of you to find some places where you can serve. Yes, we need your financial tithes, but we need your prayers, your presence, your witness and your service as well. Thank you.