



Ginger A. Thomas, Co-Pastor
L. Roger Owens, Co-Pastor
Frank Newsome, Minister to Youth and Discipleship
Jill D. Newsome, Minister of Music and Children
Ann Stallings Smith, Minister of Nurture

Duke Memorial United Methodist Church

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Dear Staff Members, Committee Chairs, and Ministry Area Leaders,

The time to think about the church budget for 2009 is upon us. This process presents both challenges and opportunities. The process of budgeting gives us the opportunity to pray and to dream, asking ourselves, "What do we think God is calling us to do, and what do we need to fund in order to make this possible?" The challenge is to remain fiscally responsible as we attempt to be faithful stewards of the church's resources.

Over the last two years, the church has spent a great deal of time and energy discerning a vision statement that makes very clear the four areas Duke Memorial intends to focus on in order to be a "vibrant and vital congregation, a sign and foretaste of God's Kingdom." This year we will be using that vision statement to give direction to both our dreaming and our restraint. It will set the framework in which the budgeting process can take place.

Here's how it will work. During the month of September, each committee and ministry area should spend some time reflecting on these four areas of our vision. Then answer the questions: How does our ministry area support this vision? Can we identify a primary part of the vision under which our ministry area falls? Then spend some time dreaming and praying about what ministries God might be calling us to in this area to increase our faithfulness and effectiveness in supporting the vision. When ideas emerge, write them down—these dreams will be useful in the stewardship campaign as we try to paint a hopeful picture of what is possible. Also ask: Is there anything we are responsible for that is not helping the church to be increasingly faithful and effective in this area? Finally, look at the budget from last year and ask: What budget line items, if any, need to change in order to make possible the ministries we feel are essential for helping the church become increasingly effective and faithful in support of the vision? When your committee/team is complete, offer in writing a brief explanation for your complete budget request, including each recommended change and why that change is useful for helping the church to be increasingly faithful and effective in support of the vision. Following this process will help both the Finance Committee and the Administrative Board as they begin the task of refining and setting the budget.

The goal this year is to dream about future ministries and provide resources to continue important ministries and fund new ministries that will help Duke Memorial live faithfully into its vision while at the same time working to keep the budget from going up. This will require rigor and diligence in applying the church's vision statement. It will also require careful and prayerful discernment of God's will. Do not be afraid to dream, for when we dream *God's* dreams we will surely find a way to make them a reality. Please have your budget recommendations to the Finance Committee by October 3. The finance committee will work with the numbers and show "what ifs" to the Administrative Board in October. The Administrative Board will then listen to the committees and work areas, hear dreams and weigh ideas, and prayerfully set the budget it believes will best enable God's vision for Duke Memorial to become a reality.

Peace,

Linger - Roger