

153rd Session of the Kentucky Annual Conference
Quinn Chapel AME Church-Louisville, Host Church

Bishop Jeffrey Nathaniel Leath, Presiding Prelate
Dr. Susan J. Leath, M.D., Episcopal Supervisor
The Reverend William R. T. Hale, Associate Presiding Elder, Commonwealth
District
The Rev. Dr. William W. Easley, Host Presiding Elder, Louisville District
The Rev. Kenneth J. Golphin, Associate Presiding Elder, Bluegrass District
The Rev. Troy I. Thomas, Host Pastor

Committee on Stewardship and Tithing

*“Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply
and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the harvest of your
righteousness.”*
2 Corinthians 9:10

During what are unprecedented times for most of our society, as many struggles with health, social distancing, and economic issues, one of America’s mainstays, the church, is suffering as well. With so many church services being cancelled due to the novel coronavirus, and with many church members having lost jobs or income, several congregations across the nation are facing budgetary difficulties. This is especially true of small churches, which are maintained almost completely on weekly tithes and offerings from congregants. In fact, according to an article in the Washington Post, “Some experts think the coronavirus could

reshape the country's religious landscape and wipe out many small houses of worship.”¹ God forbid!

It is incumbent upon church leadership to remind their members that despite the pandemic or any other hardship, God is still in control and that giving remains a form of worship. In fact, it is in times like these that God's faithfulness is best proven. As He states in Malachi 3:10: “....And try Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” For those who desire to remain obedient in giving, God will provide the means. Many people of God will give testimony to the fact that God has provided for them without fail during this pandemic; however, people in real need cannot receive help from churches' benevolent ministries if there is no help to be given due to a lack of funds.

Another contributing factor to congregations experiencing financial issues is that some have not made it convenient for their members to give when there are no services being held. Forty-nine percent of all church giving transactions are made with a card.² Older congregations may not yet be “up to speed” with digital or online giving, but providing this alternative might help members, though not all,

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2020/04/24/church-budgets-coronavirus-debt/>

² [https://mobilexcept.com/2019/07/23/church-giving-statistics/#:~:text=1\)%2049%25%20of%20All%20Church,within%20the%20last%20few%20years.](https://mobilexcept.com/2019/07/23/church-giving-statistics/#:~:text=1)%2049%25%20of%20All%20Church,within%20the%20last%20few%20years.)

who have no other way of assuring their offerings are made. This method of giving is particularly attractive to younger members. Consideration must be given to and arrangements made for older members and those who have no way to contribute by any means other than cash, yet still have a desire to give.

Aside from the effects of the pandemic, there are several other factors reported to affect church giving. According to Vanco Faith, only about 10-25% of a normal congregation regularly tithes. This does not account for one-time contributions or any other offerings that are given. While nearly 50 billion dollars were donated to churches and other non-profits around the country annually, pet owners in the U.S. spent almost 70 billion on pet products in 2017!³ As church membership declines on the whole and more and more Americans are not affiliated with a particular church, and because of social media and mass marketing for their organizations, other non-profits have become big competitors of churches for charitable giving. With limited resources, people are likely to give to a charity that appeals to them, dividing their contribution with that they give the church. Many people prefer donating directly to a soup kitchen rather than donating to a church that supports a soup kitchen. The church's stance on some social issues, such as abortion and birth control, may also have an impact on an individual's giving depending upon his/her belief. Women are shown to tithe more so than men,

³ <https://www.vancopayments.com/egiving/blog/church-giving-trends-online>

however, they generally earn less than men. Other people state they don't give to their church because they have no idea where the money goes. Although no two churches are alike, all are affected when giving declines.

As we can see, there are many factors to be considered regarding the causes of reduction in church giving. Whenever possible, church leaders must remind members of their responsibility to God and to their church to continue giving and to be good stewards of all His blessings, especially our money. We are commanded to give, and God most certainly honors our gifts. Although for many it may be sacrificial, no greater sacrifice was given than that Jesus gave for us on the Cross, as stated in Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Humbly Submitted,

The Committee on Stewardship and Tithing

Rev. Sherry Gay Green, Chairperson

Rev. Deirdre Ellis

Rev. Veda Stewart

Rev. Donzella Lee

Rev. Ralph T. Johnson

Rev. Louis Haynes

Sis. Rose Embry

Sis. Michelle Carter

Sis. Katherine Parker

Sis. Cecelia Tinsley

Bro. James Stanley

Bro. Joe Thompson