



November 13, 2023

Church of the Big Wood Family,

As I write my annual “stewardship letter,” my mind is once again drawn to Psalm 9, where we hear David proclaim, “*I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds!*” These words capture well the deep gratitude in my heart for all we are seeing God do in our church! I’ve summarized some of these things in the enclosed summary, and I hope you’ll take a moment to read it, as I think like me, you’ll be greatly encouraged!

Which brings me to the purpose of this letter. Because I believe God is at work here, I am not at all hesitant to ask you to once again ***prayerfully consider your financial support of our church.*** I’d like to ask for this financial support in two important ways:

**Generous End of the Year Giving:** We have a challenge as we come to the end of 2023. Because of some budget overruns due to our huge snow year (snow removal and building damage) and increased costs due to both inflation and growing programs, as well as some slightly below expected giving, ***we are currently running about \$125,000 behind in terms of our income versus expenses.*** While some of this was expected and is covered with reserves, it is clear we will need strong, above normal end of the year income in order to be in a strong position for 2024. The good news is that a large percentage of our income normally comes from end of the year gifts. Please keep this matter in prayer and ask God how you might help.

**Support of our 2024 Budget:** Our church budget supports our ongoing ministries, as well as facilities, deferred maintenance costs, and our staff salaries and benefits. In addition, 10% of what is given goes directly to local and world mission causes. While we are still finalizing the 2024 budget (to be presented at our annual meeting on Jan 28, 2024) ***we are anticipating an increase of about 10% from last year, meaning a target budget of around \$1,000,000.*** Some of this increase would be passed on to our staff as a cost of living adjustment, with the rest going to cover the rise in costs (insurance, utilities, supplies, programs, etc.). We are asking those of us in position to do so to consider an increase in our giving in order to cover this.

With all this in mind, ***I’d ask you to do the following:***

First, ***look over the enclosed sheet and thank God*** for what has happened in our church over the past year. Pray that God would continue to use us to make a difference in our valley and beyond.

Second, after taking some time to ***pray about your giving to the church,*** and after you have settled things in your own heart and mind, I’d encourage you to write it down on the attached sheet as your commitment for giving this year and next. This is for your records only - there is no need to turn it in to the church.

Thank you for the ways you support our church - and may God continue to use our giving for His glory!

Mark Inouye  
Pastor