

Friends in Christ,

We are here today to talk about Discipleship and what it means to us as a Leadership Board.

Manchester UMC is a congregation of over 2,600 members and while the board has grown from 9 to 15 members in recent years, we are still just a few representing many. That's a duty we don't take lightly. With that responsibility comes tough decisions, most recently a decision to approve a budget for 2022 that affected the jobs and salaries of some wonderful clergy and staff members. It wasn't an easy decision and one that required multiple conversations and much discernment.

In Pastor Andy's most recent Backstage Pass event on February 9th, and learned more about that budget approval process and why Manchester UMC is facing some of our current financial challenges. If you were unable to participate or just need a refresher, you can find that video at manchesterumc.org/generosity.

As you've heard over the last few weeks, we were encouraged to reflect on our own financial Discipleship and by doing so hopefully increase our commitment. Manchester UMC has a legacy of leading by example and so, to honor that heritage, the Leadership Board has made its own, unified commitment to Discipleship.

"This year, the members of the Manchester UMC's Leadership Board are committed to increasing their financial giving to the General Fund. For some, this means adding church giving to their budget, or increasing their weekly giving by \$25, or setting up automatic giving. For others, it means increasing their giving by 1% or more of household income to move closer to a 10% tithe. For those already tithing, it means increasing their above and beyond giving at Christmas, Easter and beyond. Several board members also feel inspired to increase their presence in weekly worship by attending more in person or virtual services. Most importantly though, we all share a commitment to be intentional in showing love, compassion, and grace to all of God's children."

We have all been drawn to Manchester UMC for different reasons and are all called to make a difference for Christ in different ways. We are supported and guided by the work of our clergy, staff, and leadership and frankly that requires financial giving.

Everywhere churches are changing and adapting. Things that once were, may no longer be, but from those changes new ideas are formed. The past few years have been challenging, but they have presented us with a choice. We have an opportunity to lead and to fulfill our promise to Manchester UMC and its vision. Our mission statement says we are called to be an inclusive community of people who love Christ deeply, worship Him passionately, and serve Him boldly. We fulfill that mission by giving generously of our presence, prayers, gifts, service, and witness.

Our board is excited about the future. We are a church filled with pride and promise. Reflect on the wonderful experiences in your own lives that have been cultivated because of this church.

Memories of mission trips, riding with MO-Hab, nights at the bistro, warm days at VBS, building with Habitat for Humanity, shopping Fair Trade Market, volunteering for ELS classes, packing lunches for kids, reading for book clubs, healing conversations in small groups, picking out your Christmas tree, dropping off or repairing a bike at bike rehab, knitting a prayer shawl, or feeling supported by a Stephen minister. Perhaps even a time you walked into this building feeling the weight of the world but left with a smile and little more faith than you had walking in. Those memories are built from our talented clergy, staff, generous volunteers, and our financial giving. We ALL need to support what has been created so that it cannot only continue, but it can thrive.

We are honored to be a part of this church and to serve on the leadership board. We hope that those who will be asked to lead in the future will do so with glad hearts. As we prepare to begin Century 3 of our ministry together as a church, please join us in committing to ensure the programs and leadership that fuel our congregation are here for years to come and for those you have yet to find us.

Thank you,
2022 Leadership Board

Beth Hunyar, Leadership Board Chair
Jeff Haupt, Leadership Board Lay Leader