

Local Church Budget

October 1, 2022

John 15:4 says, “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

We worship God with our resources as a response to the call to bear fruit. John the Baptist appealed to those who were coming to him for baptism: “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matt. 3:8). For John, baptism and being part of God’s people were not sufficient. The Gospel of Luke shares some concrete examples of the “fruit of repentance” that John the Baptist gave to those who came to him. He asked the tax collector not to collect any more than was required. He exhorted the soldiers not to “extort money” and “be content with your pay.” And he commanded the crowd to share their second shirt and food with one who does not have (Lk. 3:10–14). These examples reported by Luke have something in common; they are related to one’s attitudes toward finances and material possessions. Fruit of repentance comprises being careful about the means used to obtain resources and using our resources to bless others.

The Bible tells the story of a man, Nabal, a man in Maon, who was heavily blessed but did not bear fruit of repentance in his material life. He refused to reward those who protected his flock and would harshly rebuke the servants of David who came to ask for some food. This attitude led his wife to call him wicked and to make the following comment: “He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him” (1 Sam. 25:25). Sadly, the following day, he had a stroke. Ten days later, he died.

As we reflect on the need to bear more fruit of repentance in our material life, let us apply the advice of Jesus: “Remain in me, as I also remain in you” (John 15:4). The result would be beyond expectation. This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings, we can bear fruit of repentance.

Sunnydale Academy

October 8, 2022

Today's offering is for Sunnydale Adventist Academy. Sunnydale's mission is found in Mark 16:15, "Go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to all people." In John 12:46, Jesus said, "I have come as a light into the world that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness." Sunnydale's goal is to connect children to Jesus so the students fulfill the Gospel Commission by Jesus' light shining through their lives.

Today's offering is for Sunnydale's campus lighting. The new lights for the campus sidewalks will light the path for the students as they learn and grow closer to Jesus. The physical light is a representation of the spiritual light that is needed in our hearts. The physical light illuminates our path so we may reach our destination safely and the spiritual light leads us to Jesus.

Sunnydale's campus is full with students eager to learn and to serve Jesus. Please give today to light the Sunnydale campus as Sunnydale continues to encourage students to let their light shine for Jesus.

Local Church Budget

October 15, 2022

Lev. 17:5 says, “This is so that the Israelites will bring their sacrifices they are now making in the open fields. They must bring them to the priest, that is, to the Lord, at the entrance of the tent of meeting and sacrifice them as fellowship offerings.”

We bring our regular offerings and tithe to church because it is part of true worship. Leviticus 17:5 gives instruction about the appropriate place to offer sacrifice in ancient Israel. There was a central place to give, with no provision for alternatives. One may ask why the place was so significant. Interestingly, the text focuses not only on the place, the tent of meeting, but also on the One who received their sacrifices, the Lord. For the Israelites, the tent of meeting was the “tabernacle of the LORD,” the place where the Lord resides. Ultimately, the restriction about the place had to do with who they were worshiping. Relocating the place where they brought their sacrifices was typical of idol worship at the time. God designated one place for sacrifice because He wanted to be the sole object of their worship.

Today, the appropriate destination for tithe and regular offerings remains a frequently asked and debated question. The example of King David provides us with an answer: “I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows to you”. Ellen G. White applies this principle to God’s people today: “The time has come when the tithes and offerings belonging to the Lord are to be used in accomplishing a decided work. They are to be brought into the treasury to be used in an orderly way to sustain the gospel laborers in their work”. She specifies that place as the church treasury with the appropriate agency to support God’s mission. However, this does not remove our social responsibility toward the poor and needy. We should apportion special donations for this purpose

This week we have another opportunity to bring our tithe and regular offerings to God’s church. While we worship at God’s designated place, let us choose once again to make Him the sole object of our worship.

Combined Youth Ministries

October 22, 2022

Combined Youth Ministries offerings go to support the youth ministries of the Iowa-Missouri Conference. 50% of the offerings you give today will go to support the thirteen Adventist elementary schools in our conference while the other 50% will be divided equally between Sunnydale Academy and Camp Heritage.

We are proud to announce that enrollment in our elementary schools was 296 students on opening day. This is the highest enrollment we have had in twenty years. Sunnydale Academy is also breaking records with an enrollment of 166 students. With increased enrollment and rising costs, contributions to this fund are more important than ever.

The 5th-6th grade students from each of our elementary schools recently had the opportunity to attend Outdoor School at Camp Heritage and had fun exploring the great outdoors while learning to find God in nature. Sunnydale Academy sent students and staff to help make this event possible. This partnership between our schools and the Youth Department help open the doors for new opportunities for our schools.

Consistent giving to this fund allows you to partner in the work of Adventist Education as well. If church members would commit to giving an extra 1% of their income to Combined Youth Ministries, our schools would be afforded the opportunity to hire more teachers and invite more students to be a part of Adventist Education.

Local Church Budget

October 29, 2022

1 Timothy 6:17 says, “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

We worship God with our resources because this protects us from misplaced hope. As humans, we tend to trust in something or someone bigger than ourselves. We do not control all aspects of our existence. In the absence of hope, our lives are overwhelmed by anguish and despair. One natural inclination is to put our confidence in the resources that we have accumulated. They are visible and measurable, leading us to think that they are sure. However, according to Paul, it is safer to place our hope in the Source of wealth than in wealth itself.

Mark, from South China, was deeply moved by a call for offering, and he brought 30% of his total savings as his offering. Unexpectedly, he experienced a severe financial crisis soon afterward. His new business collapsed, and he fell into debt. Life's uncertainties! During this time, he heard an appeal for a new church building at the cost of 10 million Chinese Yuan. Mark realized that it was a rare opportunity to advance God's mission in his province which had more than 60 million in population. Impressed by the Spirit, he made a commitment of 400,000 Chinese Yuan, with no idea where the money would come from. Then something amazing happened: the shareholder of his former architecture company invited him to resume work with them. He accepted the offer and was promoted to be an executive officer and board director in a short time. Mark ended up contributing 1 million Chinese Yuan to the church building project. Looking back at his life's experience, he wrote: “The grace of the Lord is like endless running water.”

Mark demonstrated trust by giving His fleeting resources to worship the God who richly provides for everything. This week, as we worship with our tithe and regular offerings, let us make a statement about where our hope resides.