

Local Church Budget

January 4, 2025

The first Sabbath of the New Year is an opportunity to press the reset button of our lives, goals, and relationship with God. If you keep a prayer journal, take it out sometime today and reflect on how God has led in your life and your family's life. During this self-evaluation, ask God what changes you need to make for the coming year. Then pray for the Holy Spirit to give you strength to transform each area of your life that needs a fix.

Jesus emphasized the great principle of life when He said, "But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33, NKJV). The key word is FIRST. Many people seek the kingdom of God, but they allow the cares of this life to dominate and consume them so they don't have anything left to give to God.

Let's put Christ and His kingdom first. Jesus didn't say not to ask for other things like as happiness, security, success, or even money. When God comes first, He will reorder our lives and show His power by blessing us in all ways according to His purpose. Sometimes He will even bless us through trials.

Let's ask God to empty us of self and fill us with the Holy Spirit each day of this year so we can do what He wants us to. Our offering for today is for the local church budget.

Religious Liberty

January 11, 2025

It's often said that religious liberty is in the DNA of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. From the very start of the Advent movement, we stood for an idea that was radical for its time—that religious freedom was for *everyone*, regardless of who they were or what they believed.

What shaped this belief? It was our conviction that God doesn't want forced obedience. As Ellen White wrote, "God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character."

And so, in the very first issue of *Liberty* magazine, which rolled off the presses in 1906, the editor described this unique Adventist understanding of religious liberty. He wrote: "We believe no power but the power of love can rightfully compel the human conscience."

Today, almost 120 years later, the culture around us has changed dramatically. But our commitment to religious liberty as a reflection of God's character hasn't changed.

As students of prophecy, we know that a time will come when our freedom to worship will be taken away. But until then, God calls us be His ambassadors of liberty—to faithfully reflect His character and His love within our communities and our nation.

Today, let's continue in the footsteps of our early Adventist pioneers in generously supporting the religious liberty ministries of our church.

Local Church Budget

January 18, 2025

It didn't make sense. When I was young, I was confused about why there was an offering call every worship service. I really did not understand why a church who worshipped the God who owns the universe and galaxies would let His people beg for funds. I rationalized that perhaps God could not afford to take care of His children, or He wants His children to be poor. But why doesn't He just provide for their needs miraculously? He could.

Then when I read a passage in Psalms I began to understand why, "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all its fullness. Offer to God thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." (Psalm 50: 12,14-15, NKJV).

This is where I learned that God wants His children to trust Him for their needs. Through this experience God wants a RELATIONSHIP with His children, not a donation. This giving, however, builds the relational experience where we learn to glorify Him in all things in our lives. As we give, God blesses so we can bless others and grow His kingdom.

Let's glorify the Lord with our offerings. Our offering for today is for the local church budget.

Combined Youth Ministries

January 25, 2025

God is the Creator and Owner of everything, and we're created for His glory and honor. In His divine design God's purpose for us is to be His managers on earth. As we work closely together with Him, we take part in His divine nature, His mercy and love. After sin entered, this relationship became vital for God's work to restore His divine image and character in us.

God uses the church for our restoration process. Giving offerings becomes more than just a religious obligation. It's a personal journey of growth, learning, and transformation. It's a way of life that brings us closer to the God's divine image and character. Giving and sharing is participating in this larger purpose, our worship and relationship.

This is the main reason for giving offerings. God wants us to participate actively in helping people restore their relationship with their Creator.

God designed tithing to be a blessing to His people who carry it out to the end of time. "Our heavenly Father did not originate the plan of systematic benevolence to enrich Himself, but to be a great blessing to man. He saw that this system of beneficence was just what man needed" (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p.67).

Everything we have is a blessing from God, and in return, we are to be responsible stewards and pass it on to others.

Today, let's not hoard our blessing but instead, let's share it to bless the young people of our Conference. Our offering today is for Combined Youth Ministries.