

# Local Church Budget

**January 3, 2026**

There is something special about the beginning of a new year. It's the energy and the excitement. It's the opportunities that it offers. It provides the chance to forget the past and its challenges, while we embrace the possibility to start over. The New Year offers the opportunity for us to look at the future with optimism and gratefulness. For this reason, I like new, don't you?

Paul liked the idea of new also. That's why he encourages us to look towards the future instead of looking back. In Philippians 3:13 and 14, he says, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead", we should press toward the goal to win. The encouraging part is, when Christ is in the lead, we must succeed. For this reason, we can embrace the possibilities of the new year— striving to be better stewards for God.

So may our goals this year include spending consistent time in worship and developing a relationship of steel with God. May we take care of our wellbeing, both physically and psychologically, and witness about His love by using our talents and gifts. May we faithfully return to God the designated portion of our wealth and take care of our world and the environment.

Let's determine to make 2026 an exceptional year of sacrificial generosity, in our local church and worldwide.

# Religious Liberty Sabbath

**January 10, 2026**

Seventh-day Adventists have stood firmly for religious liberty—for everyone—for more than 150 years. But do you know the reason why?

Part of the reason is that, when our church was founded, almost every American state had Sunday-keeping laws on the books. Adventist pastors, farmers, laborers, and others were arrested, jailed, or fined for doing “secular work” on Sunday. Even Wille White, son of James and Ellen White, was arrested in Oakland, California, in 1882 for keeping the Pacific Press Publishing presses operating on a Sunday! But that’s not the full story. The deeper reason why we continue to stand for religious liberty—in the courts, before legislatures, and through the pages of *Liberty* magazine—is because we want to reflect the character of the God we serve. He’s a God who created us in His image and who has given each one of us the freedom to choose whom we will worship. He’s a God who, in the words of Ellen White, “desires only the service of love,” which “cannot be won by force or authority”. This quotation is found in the *Desire of Ages* on page 22.

Today, please help support this vital ministry of religious liberty. It’s a ministry that defends not only the rights of individual conscience, but also the ability of our church to continue to do its mission. And as we face uncertain days ahead, your prayers and support are needed now, more than ever.

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**January 17, 2026**

You may have heard it said, and it is true that patience is a virtue. What is also true and closely linked to patience is found in the opening verse of the parable of Luke 18:1-8. Jesus told his disciples that they should “always pray and not give up”. In today’s fast paced, instant, and have-to-get-it-now world, learning to be patient and not lose heart or become discouraged is surely a quality that is desirable. The widow in this parable showed the importance of being patient in one’s petitions and pursuits. In her attempt to get the judge to defend her against her enemy, who seemed to have been making her life difficult, she kept on asking for his defense. Finally, the judge yielded to her persistence and vindicated her.

The same is true of God. When we are diligent in our prayer life, longsuffering when we are seeking to invoke Christ’s intervention, and faithful in honoring Him in our stewardship, He will move to positive action. Let us remember that unlike the judge we cannot wear out God.

Today, as we worship Him through the return of our tithes and giving of our offerings, let us practice being persistent in honoring Him with our substance and the first fruit of our increase.

# Combined Youth Ministries

**January 24, 2026**

The Conference leadership is tasked with guiding the churches in proclaiming the gospel in their areas. They do this in at least four ways. First, they provide pastors and specialized personnel like Family Ministries. Second, they encourage conference-sponsored evangelism activities done through pastors and members. Third, the conference supports and supervises Adventist schools. Fourth, they collaborate with the local congregations to build churches, schools, and other facilities.

For much of this work, the Conference depends on the local church and its members for their financial contributions, as the tithe only covers the salaries of the pastors and other specialized conference ministries and personnel. To finance the remainder of these projects, most conferences collect an offering once per month. The name for this offering may vary but in the Iowa-Missouri Conference it is called Combined Youth Ministries. While each giver must decide for themselves how much to give, it is recommended that each of us give the equivalent of 1.2% of our income. When this offering is collected, the local treasurer will then forward it to the local conference.

Thank you for your committed support to the conference initiatives through your giving and for not becoming “weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” as it says in Galatians 6, verses 2 and 9. May you receive the bountiful blessings of God today.

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**January 31, 2026**

This wonderful world in which we live came from the hand of the Creator in new and pristine beauty. Thus, in Genesis 1:31, God declared it was “very good”. The creation was flawless and perfect. There was no discord in the universe. However, every day since Adam and Eve chose to eat the forbidden fruit in disobedience to God’s instruction, our planet has been ebbing away. We observe the impact of this deterioration in physical diseases that plague humanity, psychological stress that is at its peak, social displacements resulting from broken relationships, and geographical tensions playing out in wars and commotions. But there is hope in the midst of this chaotic puzzle.

In Revelation 21:1-5, John speaks about Christ, the great puzzle solver, who will make a new heaven and a new earth, for the old ones will pass away. In this new heaven, you will find the holy city, the new Jerusalem. And in this city, God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away”. Affliction will not rise again. As C.S. Lewis once said, “Joy will be the serious business of heaven.”

As we give to our local church budget today, let us make it our utmost goal to invite others to enroll in the new kingdom of God.