



Dear Church of the Redeemer UMC Member and Friends.

This is the third stewardship letter I send as your pastor. The Finance Committee has created a financial vision statement for the coming year, sometimes called a budget — and we ask members and friends to participate in that vision by pledging to give regularly to the church in 2024.

We continue to be conservative in our financial vision, but the operational continues to grow. The budget for 2024 is 3% higher than for 2023, mostly due to increased utility costs.

Our mission continues to the community. We continue to serve meals as the Luke 3:11 Ministry. We partner with Greater Cleveland Congregations in a fight for a more just society. We are meeting for worship, for prayer, for Bible study, and for book club. We are part of Faiths Alive, a community of religious groups and organizations committed to support the work of social workers in CHUH schools. This year we have been able to support UPCaM, the Protestant Campus Ministry in Case Western Reserve, Cleveland State, and Tri-C.

There are continuing challenges ahead, and we need to be prepared.

- The building needs to be cared for. We have dozens of children in the building every weekday, and we want to be certain that the building is up to standard, not only for us but for those that we share it with.
- Work needs to be done to make the building accessible for people with limited mobility.
- All costs of the church, apart from a modest rent, are paid by pledged and unpledged giving.

Please prayerfully consider your pledge for this coming year. And know that whatever you are able to pledge will be used to make our mission stronger, our people cared for, and help get our building in better shape.

Let us each commit to the ways we can show our gratitude for God's continuing work through Church of the Redeemer UMC with the pledge of our time, talents, gifts, service, and witness.

*May all that we do together, be for the bettering of all of God's people.*

**Peace, Justice and Joy.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Halldor Gudmundsson'.

*Pastor Halldor Gudmundsson*



## **Withholding Apportionments**

*Information to members of Church of the Redeemer*

The Leadership Committee and Vision Team of Church of the Redeemer are committed to continue withholding our apportionments in light of the fact that the United Methodist Church has not resolved the following issue.

In 2019 the United Methodist General Conference voted to:

1. Declare that marriage is only between a man and a woman.
2. Openly gay pastors/ministers would no longer be ordained and could not lead a church.
3. Pastors/ministers would be severely disciplined for presiding over a gay marriage.

**This decision is counter to the values held and proclaimed by the Church of the Redeemer. For over 25 years the Redeemer has been a Reconciling church, welcoming the LGBTQ community.**

In response to the decision by the General Conference, the congregation voted to withhold apportionment funds from the East Ohio Conference. These funds are held in a special account that is not used for church expenses. The amount was in September 2023 around \$72,000.

During the summer of 2023, nearly 1/3 of churches in East Ohio Conference, left the United Methodist Church. Nearly all of the churches that left were conservative churches protesting the potential welcome of the LGBTQ community to the Methodist community. However, even though 237 churches in East Ohio decided to leave, the decision from 2019 is still the formal policy of the UMC.

However, some changes are coming. General Conference of the UMC will meet and address LGBTQ rights in April 2024. We can be hopeful the conference will take important steps in the right direction, even though it might not fully reverse the current policy regarding LGBTQ rights.

After the General Conference in April 2024, Church of the Redeemer UMC will revisit the decision to withhold the apportionments, based on the outcome of the conference.

Please contact Phil Holland if you have questions or ideas about this decision.