

Dear Friend:

Imagine for a moment that you had to plan your personal budget each year with only a vague idea of how much money you'd have available.

OK, maybe that often *is* the case for some of you. But we expect you would feel most comfortable knowing how much you could spend without exceeding your resources.

The church is no different in that regard, which is why we run a pledge campaign every year in hopes of determining how much our members believe they'll be able to contribute.

It's not hard and fast. Some members may find that their circumstances will change, for the better or the worse, over the course of the year. Unexpected church revenue and expenses may turn up. But pledges give our financial team their best chance of soundly planning for our next program year, and for how we can maintain our aging building.

The good news is that after recent years of upheaval in our membership and our leadership - not to mention Covid -- our future looks brighter than it has for years. The sometimes painful soul-searching we've done has cleared the air for a genuine sense of optimism about the kind of church we can be.

Membership has stabilized, worship attendance is up, and the pre-school is growing again. The alternative worship service is moving back into Fellowship Hall. We added the important new Family Promise ministry. And of course, we continue to work through the recommendations that emerged from the Lombard process and prepare for the Mission Study that will allow us to begin searching for a permanent head pastor.

One important Lombard recommendation was to focus on Membership, Belonging, and Community, including conducting a membership census and seeking ways to promote members' engagement in the work of the church and in growing their personal faith.

The census has been completed, and a team of church members is hard at work on ways of encouraging more of us to share our spiritual gifts and grow our faith. This will be a year-round effort, not just a fall campaign, and you can expect to hear and read stories of members' faith journeys in the weeks and months to come.

It's no coincidence that our theme for this program year is about Doing a New Thing. We are.

We hope you will prayerfully consider the importance of using your financial resources to support your church and its work and make a pledge to help our leaders plan our budget. This annual pledge campaign is a good opportunity for all of us to practice the spiritual discipline of taking inventory of our lives and considering how God might be calling us to use our money, time, and gifts.

Whatever decision you make, please know that we at FPCA are interested in more than your money. We are dedicated to equipping you to use your personal gifts and passions to help you Do a New Thing in your faith journey.

Bill White Kevin Heier
Elder Co-Chairs of the Annual Pledge Campaign