



July 10, 2024

MESSENGER

QUOTE FOR TODAY

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."

Isaiah 43:18,19

INFO

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Faith Is a Journey

During the 40 years I have been at ABC, I've seen many cycles of restriction and expansion in the church. I prefer the latter. But faith grows more in the former. This year we find ourselves facing budget limitations. We did not vote on a yearly budget at our annual meeting in March, setting that task aside until the July Quarterly Business Meeting. July is now upon us.

If we had an overflowing abundance, it would be an easy matter. But our limitations require us to be more strategic. A "church-as-a-business" financial model would automatically slash all the outward giving (Global Outreach/Missions) so that we can focus all our resources on the church's internal needs. That would allow us to meet all our immediate needs. But we have never done this in lean years, and we don't intend to start now.

Our Global Outreach Partners/Missionaries have responded to Jesus' transformation in their lives, with the desire to share Jesus with others who do not have a chance to know him. People around the world rely on our giving. We have partners focused on:

- at risk children, youth and young adults,
- slum populations in North African cities,
- forgotten tribes in SE Asia,
- equipping Asians to reach other Asians for Christ,
- providing relief to war-torn refugees in the Middle East, etc.
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Taking our precious treasure of the Gospel to far away people and places, and giving it away, fulfills the last mandate of Jesus before his ascension: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of **all nations**..." (Mt. 28:19). We believe that faithfulness to God includes doing our part to fulfill this mandate, which for us is sending and giving to our Global Outreach Partners.

Giving sacrificially to missions does not make fiscal sense. It really is a matter of faith. I've heard the argument to be 'fiscally sensible' in different ways over the years. Early in our marriage, when Robert and I put together a will/trust to secure our family's future, we wanted to give a tithe of our estate to God's work. Our non-Christian lawyer's eyes widened. "10% is a lot," he said. When we were working a yard sale for the purpose of sending the proceeds to the Amazing Grace School in Ghana, I overheard some Spanish speakers, "Church people sure will do a lot of work just to give the money away." There was puzzlement in their voice.

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In my own experience, giving a tithe, and then giving above the tithe for our Faith Promise* didn't make much sense when our family went through years of unemployment. I knew we were on the right track when we were audited by the IRS for our charity giving. Apparently, it didn't make sense to some federal agent at their computer either. My trust in God as we gave, was that he would provide for our needs and that he would take our children through their higher education years. I can now say, years later, that God comes through every time. But it sure stretched my faith.

Giving to Global Outreach/Missions is a must for any church. In my mind, at least 10% of a church's budget should go to Global Outreach. For many years we have been able to give more, because of Faith Promise. Last year, Global Outreach accounted for 15.1% of our budget. Faith Promise givers accounted for 6.4%. A bequest for Missions through Jo Wilson's estate accounted for 8.7%.

Sadly, this year we must cut our Global Outreach giving to just over 10%; fiscal responsibility requires it. At the same time, meeting the new proposed Outreach budget will require faith and buy-in. We'd love some interaction on this proposal. You may request an email copy of the "Global Outreach Report July 2024." Or printed reports are available at church. As it stands now, these measures give us a two-and-a-half-year window for our giving to come back before we must make new cuts. As always, Faith Promise may be increased at any time with or without designations.

Pastor Connie Larson DeV Vaughn

*Faith Promise is a gift above and beyond the tithe trusting God to provide. Fourteen ABC giving units give to Faith Promise, allowing us to increase our Missions giving and to take on new partners.