

## Budget Update

Finally, I want to share information with you as members of our community of faith about our stewardship for 2018. As our campaign for pledged stewardship has ended, you all know that pledges for UPC are down from the year prior to this one. While we know there are many rational and understandable reasons for this, Session confronted the reality of this fact as we looked at the proposed budget for 2018 in our January meeting. Accordingly, the members of Session asked that I speak about that reality with you.

Session members were presented at the last Session meeting with two draft budgets—let me stress here that neither has been adopted and that it will be in this next month of February that Session members will adopt a final official church budget for 2018. But up front, let me tell you that one of the proposed draft budgets we saw in this month's meeting essentially had programs cut across the board at by 10% and the other proposed budget put those cuts at 16%, with both proposals capping raises for our employees at 2%, less than an actual cost of living raise for this past year in this economic climate and in the this part of North Carolina. While noting the exceptional work and extraordinary efforts of our stewardship team this year, I don't think either of those draft proposals were a shock to anyone on the Session because of projected numbers already made known.

And while we might not have been surprised, it was particularly hard for the members of Session to hear that night. Because when the new class of elected Session members came to their first meeting in January, we did what is often done in gatherings here at UPC: we went around the room and shared with the Session something at UPC that we especially value and treasure.

Not one of you will be surprised by the responses—they were, as you would guess, the extraordinary music program, including the quality of our organist, Tom Brown, and the excellence of the adult choir he leads and the children's choirs that Beth Visser leads; the myriad and broad-based programs for children and youth led by Nancy Myer and Kim McNeill; the programs Kate Fiedler offers to young adults for social and educational gatherings—not to mention our own Campus Ministry led by John Rogers; the programs for parents of young children; the circle gatherings for women; the men's gatherings for conversation over breakfast; and the broad-based outreach programs we have, both local and global.

What dismayed the Session members gathered in that meeting is that as we turned from that litany of excellence, we had to immediately see the black and white numbers reflecting the financial projections. We had to specifically note that there would be less money for mission trips and for youth gatherings; we spoke internally about the fact that there would be less money for the local programs that address hunger and homelessness here in Chapel Hill and Carrboro, as well as less money for the Haiti educational and medical projects abroad we have so long supported.

That said, do know that all of us are grateful for extraordinary generosity of those who have pledged and given and are continuing to give. But if we're to continue to grow and support the excellent programs we are so enormously grateful for and dependent on and if we are to continue to attract and keep the excellence of our exceptional program staff, we need to ask for your continuing help and for your prayerful consideration. If you have the opportunity to encourage a friend or a new member who may not have pledged yet, please do so. Remind them of how much this community of faith means to us and to so many people. And, if I may use a very southern euphemism said by my father who worked tirelessly in his life for public schools that always needed more money from a rural farming community that did not have extraordinary resources—when my dad needed more money for the school system at large, for teacher raises, or for funding for textbooks, he would advise his board of trustees that they “needed to go back and sharpen their pencils.” That just meant that the bottom line in the revenues column needed to be bigger. So before Session finalizes its budget process, if any among us have the resources and abilities to “sharpen our pencils” just a little—and if many and most of us do just a little a bit of that sharpening—then we will continue to move on the road we have been traveling at the speed we have undertaken and in the direction we hope to go.

As I finally conclude this morning, the good news of the SESSION UPDATE is this: as the Session works in February to craft a viable, prudent and yet vital budget for our community of faith, as the Mission Study Team begins its thoughtful work of listening to you, the Church, and as we have transitions in ministers going and coming, we can all rest assured in the knowledge that the Lord will guide us. And we may we live in the confidence that He will help us move forward.

~Carolyn Karpinos, *UPC Elder*

## How to Pledge

1. Fill out a pledge card (located in the narthex and in the church office) and place it in the offering plate on Sunday.
2. Email your pledge to the finance office ([finance@upcch.org](mailto:finance@upcch.org)).
3. Mail your pledge to the church office (P.O. Box 509, Chapel Hill, NC 27514).
4. Visit the stewardship page of the church website at [www.upcch.org/stewardship](http://www.upcch.org/stewardship) and pledge securely online.