

June 5, 2019

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ,

Yesterday, you received a communication but we recalled it because we received May numbers just moments after sending the message. I wanted you to have the latest information. Thank you for your patience on awaiting this letter.

I have been doing a lot of thinking, praying, and meditating these days. Last month, I shared information with the Council of Bishops regarding the apportionment collection rate. Since that time, I have felt led to pen this letter to you and various other constituencies.

Let me begin with a biblical passage I think is very relevant to the topic of this missive.

*13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. 19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

Romans 14:13, 19 (NIV)

As General Secretary of the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) and Treasurer of The United Methodist Church, I receive reports on general Church apportionment collection rates from GCFA's Chief Financial Officer. What we know is that through May, apportionment, the overall collection rate is down 9.5% from this time last year.

When I last reported to you, we were projecting full year 2019 apportionment collection rates for World Service and the Episcopal Funds to be 72% and 69% based upon April collections. However, May collections improved as we received funds from six annual conferences that had not previously submitted any apportionments through April. Based on the May results, that projected collection rates are now 81.5% for World Service and 80.7% for the Episcopal Fund. For the last several years, the apportionment collection rates have been around 90%. This is a significant decrease in funds available for ministries (Table 1).

In my discussions with annual conferences, bishops, local church leaders, and others, I have felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit to speak to the choices we as a church are making regarding apportionment giving.

There has been much discussion in the UMC about how annual conferences and local churches can show their support or non-support of the actions taken at the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference. Several large gatherings have occurred within segments of the UMC to discuss options on moving forward and being faithful to each constituent's interpretation of the Holy Spirit's movement through scripture, history, and present reality.

There are those who wish to leave the UMC. Some wish to extend their influence on more and more of church doctrine and discipline. Some want to remain Methodists but not united. Some want to not think about these discussions and just be left alone to do the ministry God calls them to do. These actions, however, leave us with more confusion for the whole body of believers. As a result, the whole body suffers. An eye for an eye leaves everyone blind.

Jesus was a protestor. Jesus preached, taught, healed, and protested from the margins but he also believed that the "good news" he carried was for both the margins of society and the centers of religious, economic, and political power. Jesus didn't abandon the synagogues and the Temple. The gospel was powerful enough to change an institution from within and from the outside. Having ears, eyes, and hearts to do better was a choice God left to them. We should do no less with our churches and denomination. As a church, working together, we are called to take a stand on issues to support our social principles through boycotts, divestments, and protests. The connectional structure of the UMC allows us to do more together than we can do separately.

While I am concerned with the apportionment collection rate, *what concerns me more is apportionment giving*. How are we treating each other through the action of giving? God has provided for the UMC's ministry through our giving. For example, if giving trends continue, the impact on the World Service Fund and the Episcopal Fund will be measured in the millions and the impact on the ministries they serve can be powerful.

To the point of my letter. I am encouraged by the May apportionment collections. However, if giving continues to decline for the year, how will the UMC meet the spiritual and physical needs of people in need? As believers, we give because we have been given much. As United Methodists, we know we are connected in a web of interdependence and love.

Now is a time for thoughtful, precise planned action with thoughtful, prayerful consideration to the collateral damage or friendly fire. Being a local church pastor reminds me every day that the UMC is important to the lives of living, breathing, loving, faithful United Methodists with identities, cultures, and pasts that influence their present.

Every day we send a student to college, feed and clothe the least of these, and bring souls to Christ. We do these things through faithful connectional giving.

I am always and every day grateful for each of you and how you have chosen to humbly answer God's call upon your life to lead in this body of Christ called The United Methodist Church. I am at your disposal for questions, concerns and/or prayer as we travel on this faith journey together as brothers and sisters in Christ and together as the body of Christ.

Grace be with you.



Moses

Apportioned Fund (Figures in Thousands)	2019 Apportion.	2018 Apportion.	2018 YTD Coll. Rate	2019 YTD Coll. Rate	YTD % Change in Collect.	2018 CR	2019 Proj. CR	Dollar Impact of Lower CR in 2019
World Service	\$ 77,761	\$ 79,218	25.9%	23.4%	-9.4%	89.9%	81.5%	\$ (6,568)
Episcopal	\$ 24,059	\$ 23,460	28.1%	24.8%	-11.9%	91.6%	80.7%	\$ (2,613)
Ministerial Education	\$ 19,698	\$ 20,067	25.2%	23.4%	-7.3%	89.7%	83.1%	\$ (1,295)
Black College	\$ 10,477	\$ 10,673	26.3%	24.2%	-7.9%	90.2%	83.1%	\$ (748)
General Administration	\$ 9,647	\$ 9,406	25.7%	22.8%	-11.5%	89.5%	79.2%	\$ (992)
Africa University	\$ 2,345	\$ 2,389	27.5%	25.4%	-7.7%	93.1%	85.9%	\$ (169)
Interdenom. Cooperation	\$ 2,054	\$ 2,093	26.1%	24.6%	-6.0%	89.4%	84.0%	\$ (111)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 146,039</b>	<b>\$ 147,305</b>	<b>26.2%</b>	<b>23.7%</b>	<b>-9.5%</b>	<b>90.2%</b>	<b>81.6%</b>	<b>\$ (12,474)</b>

Table 1