

# *Extravagant* GENEROSITY

**TODAY IS  
COMMITMENT SUNDAY!**

**By Pastor Taylor Fuerst**

Today we offer our commitments to grow in generosity and support of First United Methodist Church through our gifts to the Ministry Plan in 2017. This will be the culmination of Extravagant Generosity, this season in which we have focused on the elements that make up a generous life.

Commitment Sunday has both spiritual and practical components. Some say that how we handle our finances is evidence of our faith in God. Perhaps there is some truth to that—perhaps our finances follow our faith—but experience has often shown me that my faith grows when I take a step to risk trusting God and giving more of myself away. Through that practice of stretching through giving, I learn to trust God with what I have, and as a result of my giving, I reshape my lifestyle to align more closely with what I believe.



Perhaps over these last weeks, you have sensed God nudging, calling you to take a step in faith through your giving. For you, that may mean pledging for the first time. It may mean making a shift from putting something in the plate “every so often” to intentionally setting up a regular gift online or through your bank. Maybe you hear God calling you to move, step by step, toward tithing 10% of your income. Wherever you are on this journey, Commitment Sunday is the day to say, “I’ve heard you, God, and I’m ready to respond. I’m ready to take another step.” We consecrate our commitments—we make a “holy promise” to give financially as a practice of faith.



All are invited to celebrate our commitment and growth in generosity at our church-wide picnic on the Capitol lawn after today’s 11:00 a.m. service. Come enjoy fellowship and fun with your church family!

More practically, your commitment to support the mission and ministry of First Church enables our leaders to be good financial stewards and to accurately plan a budget for the year. Commitments to give help us to know how to handle the church’s financial resources. If you indicate your desire to grow your giving and grow the ministry of the church, your commitment enables us to make those changes to our budget with confidence in your support.

Hopefully, you have your Commitment Card and you have prayed about your commitment, asking how God wants to use your gifts to change the lives of others in ministry. So far, we have 96 families who have made a commitment totaling \$864,778 for 2017. I encourage you to come forward with your pledge during worship to mark this important day of Commitment.

Following worship, I hope you come enjoy fellowship and fun at our Extravagant Generosity Church-wide Celebration Picnic!

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## VISIONS AND HOPES FOR MY CHURCH

Thank you for accepting the invitation to write down your visions and hopes for First Church. Your feedback illustrates the desire for stronger connections with each other, new programs, more service opportunities, and retirement of debt. Below are some highlights.

### CHILDREN

*Olivia*

That more children will get to experience Sunday school.

*Eliza*

Loving all people.

### YOUTH

*Anonymous*

I hope that our youth group becomes a place where everyone enjoys being and wants to come to. I hope everyone looks forward to it and has fun at it.

*Devon*

We go on more mission trips and do more mission stuff.

*Kennedy*

I hope that youth group continues to be a place that everyone feels welcome and that we can be pushed in our faith and to do more mission work.

### ADULTS

*Anonymous*

Service days and opportunities geared toward single adults.

*Bergan*

That our church is the voice, structure, reputation and instrument of change in the way people view Christianity as something wonderful, happy, hopeful and accessible. A new movement.

*Brooks*

A vibrant congregation that fulfills our potential to be examples of Christ to downtown, the capital, and beyond.

*Caroline*

More diversity of membership: unchurched as well as church folk; ethnic, economic, experiential diversity; and a prophetic spirit for change in the UMC and the world.

*Daviss*

TO BE DEBT FREE! To make operating 100% debt free a goal for the future financial administration of First Church! Imagine what we could do with the money we spend annually on our debt service.

*Kathleen*

Marriages for LGBT people in our church, with our pastors officiating; interaction with people who live downtown; music ministries expanded; and pay off the FLC debt, freeing money for ministries of love and justice.

*Leslie*

An abundant children and youth program and an adult singles program.

*Michael*

Healthcare and retirement benefits for all our staff; house groups in neighborhoods to study, serve, and grow; a ministry that helps people and puts payday lenders out of business; for the UMC – welcome and affirmation of LGBTQI persons; and growth to more than 500 in average worship attendance.

*Tom and Robbie*

More culturally diverse membership. Truly be a symbol of God's grace through our witness by having weddings for ALL, including our LGBT brothers and sisters, on our premises and by having our clergy doing weddings for ALL, including our LGBT brothers and sisters, without facing charges.