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May 8, 2018

GREETINGS!

Since our last FINANCE NEWS, we have had some changes in our Finance Office. In March, we welcomed Jason Rasa as our new Accountant! And now we are introducing a different website for churches to pay apportionments (more info below). For those of you who were wondering about the 2017 Apportionment Tags, they will be mailed this week to churches who paid 100% of the apportionment covenant. Please email TreasurerOffice@WisconsinUMC.org with questions or suggestions for future issues of this e-newsletter.

Tamara Wims

Conference Treasurer & Director of Administration

UPDATES

New Apportionment Payment Website!



In June, our Conference will begin using the [Ezra website](#) (same website as used for submitting statistics) to accept apportionment and Advance project giving. The apportionment payment website that we used in the past is outdated, and will no longer be supported. But no worries, Lisa Adler will be working hard to get all of our churches transitioned over to the new website! She will even be available at the Finance Table during Annual Conference to answer questions, and show churches how to log on. Please email LAdler@WisconsinUMC.org if you have questions, or need help getting into Ezra.

GuideStar Profile for Churches



For churches who actively apply for grants from foundations, you probably already know that it has been difficult to verify your church's nonprofit status because we are a part of a group ruling under The General Council of Finance and Administration (GCFA). Fortunately, GCFA has worked out a free and easy way for churches to be listed on GuideStar. GuideStar is the world's largest source of information on nonprofit organizations. Your church will be searchable to 9 million users a year, and tens of millions more on more than 230 philanthropic websites, including AmazonSmile, Facebook, and Network for Good. [Click here](#) for

more information on GuideStar.

To get started, visit The General Council of Finance and Administration's website, UMGroupRuling.org, and follow the steps to request a group ruling letter. You will be given the option to check the box, "Yes please list me on GuideStar".

2018 Tax Changes For Clergy

According to Betty Mennenga, tax professional for [Mennenga Tax & Financial Services](#), here are the 2018 tax changes that apply to clergy (line number references apply to 2017 tax return):

- New Standard Deductions (Line 40)
 - Single = \$12,000 (plus \$1,600 if 65 or older)
 - Married = \$24,000 (plus \$1,300 if 65 or older)
- No Personal Exemption Deduction (Line 42)
- Itemized deduction for home equity interest no longer allowed, unless the loan is used to "buy, build or substantially improve" the home that secures the loan (Schedule A Line 11).
- Itemized deductions for miscellaneous category no longer allowed (Schedule A Line 27). Examples include employee

business expense, tax preparation costs, etc.

- Moving expense deduction no longer allowed (Line 26). Please note that moving expenses paid by the Conference will be subject to tax; and there is no offsetting expense deduction.
- Child tax credit increased to \$2,000 per qualifying child (Line 52).
- Income tax rates are reduced.
- No changes to Social Security tax computation.
- No changes to housing exclusions at this time. The court case is in the appeal stage.

Betty Mennenga serves on our Conference Joint Board of Pensions, Insurance and Equitable Compensation. She has prepared clergy taxes for over 30 years. She teaches a clergy tax seminar for our Conference each year in January, and is available for questions via email at BettyM@mtfteam.com.

Clergy Benefits Corner

Reminder to all clergy and spouses enrolled in the Conference Health Insurance Plans (active – not Retired!). Sign up for your **Blueprint for Wellness** test during Annual Conference on Saturday or Sunday, June 15-16, 6:30-10:30 a.m. in salons B&C of the Madison Marriott West. Please go to Wespath.org, click on **HealthFlex/WebMD**, log into your account, and then select **Quest Blueprint for Wellness** to register. Or, you can call 1-855-623-9355, and mention your employer group: HealthFlex or United Methodist Church.

Those who participate receive great information about your health, and a **cash incentive of \$100 PulseCash!**

DID YOU KNOW?

Search Global Ministries Advance Projects

You can visit the General Board of Global Ministries' (GBGM) [Advance Project Search](#) webpage to find active advance ministries, missionaries and projects. You will be able to view a description of the project, as well as the budget. Also, you can search for a list of your church's gifts to the GBGM advance projects on their [Gift Tracking](#) webpage.

UMData Website

This website hosts statistical data, graphs and reports for your Church, District and Conference. This could be an excellent source of information for your church leadership to review historical data and trends for your church on the basis of membership growth, worship attendance, and even apportionments paid.



UPCOMING TRAININGS

May 10th - How We Handle Money in the Church (6:30 p.m. Webinar)

Every church that has ever had a crisis of financial impropriety thought what they were doing was fine, until the day it was discovered. What's your church's policy for handling the gifts people entrust to you? [Click here](#) to register for this Discipleship Ministries webinar.

June 18th - Clergy Benefits 101 (9:30 a.m. Middleton, WI)

Answers to questions, such as "What do CRSP, CPP and UMPIP stand for; and how do they work?". This training will help clergy and lay leaders of local churches to gain a better understanding of the various benefits available to pastors appointed in the Wisconsin Conference. [Click here](#) for more information on this, and other Learning Day workshops being offered.

June 18th - Security and Emergency Preparedness (1 p.m. Middleton, WI)

This session will enhance knowledge and bring awareness to potential security threats at your facility involving your staff, members and guests. Learn about A.L.I.C.E. and Firestorm principles in response to acts of violence, and action training tactics that will help save lives. [Click here](#) for more information on this, and other Learning Day workshops being offered.

July 23-26th - What About Our Money? A Faith Response (Wisconsin Rapids, WI)

This United Methodist Women's Mission Study explores how we relate to money within the context of our faith. Through this connection between our faith and our money, we will discover together how to live closer to God and God's people. [Click here](#) for more information on Mission u and to register.

Anytime - The Church Audit: You Can Do This! (Webinar Recording)

Every congregation needs to do a church audit, but it doesn't have to be a big expense, or an insurmountable obstacle. The Local Church Audit Guide is available to take you step by step; and this webinar provides more help going through the process. [Click here](#) to access the webinar.

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