



Loving God, Serving Others, Transforming Lives.

Sacramento Japanese United Methodist Church, the Garden Church

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“What I mean is this: the one who sows a small number of seeds will also reap a small crop, and the one who sows a generous amount of seeds will also reap a generous crop.” 2 Corinthians 9:6, CEB

2023 GRATITUDE CAMPAIGN

Welcome back, friends! We know the Holy Spirit has been with SJUMC as we have thrived through all the adversity of the past two plus years! The “Praise Gods!” keep coming with too many chance moments and lucky breaks to be natural. Last year we asked all of you to open your hands and hearts and give with gratitude to the church. You came through as we very nearly met our budgetary needs. This year, as the scripture above states, because the church has sowed so bountifully, we have absolute faith in God’s promise that we will reap bountifully and surpass our needs!

We have launched two important outreaches, the Sports Ministry and Love Your Neighbor/Acts of Kindness, and continue to help charities such as Rise Against Hunger and the SSIP Food Closet. We donated school supplies to UMCOR and to the Bowling Green School. The Hybrid Worship Team improved our online presence with new technology and security. We hosted a very successful Summer Children’s Festival, held four basketball clinics and started the monthly Friday Night Live, bringing new families and vitality to SJUMC! Our Trustees repainted the garden interior woodwork and gates, are working on replacing our storage shed, purchased another container, purchased a tractor, refurbished our walk-in refrigerator for and with a grant from SSIP, installed a new flat screen TV in the sanctuary, added new security cameras and video display monitor, and repaired many overdue items at the parsonage. Although these works seem very different, hosting a festival is on equal footing with keeping the lights on as they are all in the service of God! All is necessary to do grow and bolster God’s kingdom and that is what our pledges, donations and tithes make possible.

The fundamentals or why we give

Giving is a wonderful spiritual practice. It grows as you nurture it and so does your closeness to God. Giving to the church, however, is not the same as giving to political campaigns or other non-profits. Church-giving begins with our primary identity as a child of God, with the fundamental understanding of God’s ownership of all and that each of us is a steward of God’s many gifts to us.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” Psalm 24:1

We were created by God *for* God. We were created to do God's work on earth. So, a perspective shift is required. It is not SJUMC but God who is doing the asking! The church is just reminding you! Through pledging, God is presenting you with an opportunity to live into the gifts God gave you. You demonstrate your trustworthiness with God's gifts with what and how you pledge. A pledge, a promise, displays your gratitude for the abundance God provides each and every one of us. It is you fulfilling the covenant you have with God.

While this is not new to many of us, we forget because we are human. God knows this! As humans, we look at our personal budgets and worry that we might regret giving too much or that we'll run short. We forget that God will provide! This is the very basis of faith. And those who are unable to give financially, God also sees the ways you contribute to the body of Christ through gifts of time and acts of kindness, works, charity and compassion in the name of God. God sees all and knows our heart!

Brass Tacks

Each year, all the church committees create the budget by raising, lowering, adding or deleting expenses they anticipate for the coming year. It's our best guess. We estimate it at \$337,650 for 2023. Then we match it against anticipated income based on the past year. Our income was generated from rental of our facilities, fundraisers, grants, and pledges and donations. We lost income received from fundraisers like the bazaar and the Sacramento Japanese Film Festival since the pandemic, but we were able to bring back most of our renters and received federal loans and grants. The biggest variable that can make the biggest impact is pledges and donations. This year our deficit between income and expenses is about \$27,947. That is higher than last year's but expenses have increased as well. SJUMC has an estimated 300 families/members. Of that, we only receive approximately 100 annual pledges. We are most grateful to these faithful folks who have been carrying the load. A few tithers (givers of 10% of income) have sadly passed this year and will be difficult to replace. And we have lost many of these saints over the past ten years. So what can we do now to boost the bottom line? That's what we're asking you. What are you willing and able to give to help SJUMC continue to do God's work? But don't think about it too much....what is your heart telling you? Prayerfully ask God for discernment. We trust that God will touch your heart and you will give in alignment with your personal level of spiritual discipleship, so no worries! Just listen to your heart, listen for God, and give thanks, with a grateful heart!

And if the spiritual aspect of giving still doesn't track with you, one of the best things scientists have discovered about giving and compassion is that we can cultivate it. Our desire to give grows the more we give. And it turns out that we're better off physically and mentally because of it. (<https://www.worldvision.org/charitable-giving-news-stories/5-things-happen-body-give>)

Praise God and pass the basket! May God Bless you!

Three ways to pledge: 1) Fill out and return the enclosed pledge arms before November 6, 2022 when they will be blessed during worship service, (2) fill out the online pledge form available on our church website, www.sacjumc.com, (3) for your convenience and security, pledges can also be made through the online giving platform. Whichever method you choose, many, many thanks!

Your Stewardship Committee: Joyce Oshiro, Wayne Shimizu, Curtis Notsinne, Gary Fujii, Lourdes Lem, Norio Iwase, Kimi Ronay, Jayne Muraki Rasmussen, Rev. Motoe Yamada Foor