



October 10, 2023

Our lives today may feel like we are living in a turbulent sea. We are battered by big waves and storms from time to time, and we may feel like we are being challenged like never before. Those storms can come in the form of grief and loneliness, societal division or hatred against “others,” gun violence, climate change, housing, food, job insecurity, or in daily stress.

At other times the seas are calm and we relish the peacefulness. Acts of love, prayer, working towards a common goal, a hard-earned achievement, good news, a well-timed hug, the beauty of nature, kindness from someone we don't know, and other events can bring us immense joy.

We are blessed to have support systems upon which we can rely in the toughest of times, and with whom we can share the many joys of life. Support systems include family, friends, neighbors, church, social groups, and pets. They can act like a personal flotation device, or PFD, when the seas of life are rough. With this in mind, this year we're pondering the ways that our faith and our MCC community have acted as a PFD in our lives. We even have a catchy phrase for our stewardship campaign:

**The MCC as your PFD.**

Throughout history we know many other generations have faced challenges which seemed insurmountable or intractable. This year we are hearing the stories of when the people in the MCC faced challenges, and how the MCC and their faith helped them through the challenges. We also are hearing about how MCC ministries and outreach efforts are helping to calm some of the turbulence we encounter in our lives.



Churches across the country face financial challenges, particularly post-pandemic. Through this time the MCC has remained in a strong position, even as we confront challenges. In 2023 we have a planned budget deficit where spending is expected to be greater than income, with this year's gap covered by the MCC financial reserves. Pastor Jen has indicated that if she were to accept the settled call for Community of Hope and the MCC, she would be interested in a ¾-time position. Even with increased costs from inflation and cost-of-living increases plus raises for the other MCC staff, we preliminarily project the 2024 budget expenses to be only 1% more than 2023 budgeted income. For those who are thinking of increasing their pledge this year, a 3-5% increase would help us meet our budget and prepare for any unexpected future costs. We know there are some who cannot increase this year, and others who have extra to spare—we are grateful for the pledge amount that works for your household!

Your time, talent, and financial support are vital to the MCC. They make many impactful things possible. Maybe you are uplifted working in the garden or on the land. Maybe you are uplifted in conversation over a cup of coffee. Maybe you are uplifted by a hospital visit. Maybe you are uplifted during worship by a sermon or from our talented musicians. Maybe you are uplifted in hearing about the outreach we do to the Lussier Center or in LGBTQIA+ efforts. We are able to do this together, and more easily as the MCC. Thank you for all that you do.

The MCC Stewardship Committee—  
Edd Hellmer & Corkey Custer  
Pastor Jen & Pastor Nick