

Gifts to the King | Frequently Asked Questions

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Grace Church Family,

As we consider all that God has in store for us over the next several months, we thought it would be helpful to answer some of the questions that may come up as you review the Gifts to the King document.

We're going to continue to add to these FAQs over the next few weeks, so if you have any additional questions, please let us know. There's a good chance you're not the only one with that same question, and we want to provide as much clarity as we can. If you have any further feedback or input, we would love to hear from you.

-Team of Elders

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: During this season where COVID-19 is such a significant concern, shouldn't we be looking for ways to scale back and keep our expenses to a minimum?

A: This is a great question. As expressed in the opening letter that accompanied the Gifts to the King materials, this is something we've been seeking the Lord about for the last several months. Throughout this season, God has repeatedly given us a vision for flourishing and growth at a time when our natural instincts may be to pull back and do less instead of more. Barry spoke to this in his message on Sunday (11/22) as he talked about our desire to see the Kingdom of God advancing in the midst of turbulent times.

Throughout history, God's people have stepped up and stepped in to the challenges of their day, boldly proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and doing whatever they can to serve their communities in practical ways.

Through much prayer and wrestling, we believe God is calling us to move forward and advance his kingdom in the season ahead, becoming much more purposeful and intentional in our outreach while also addressing some practical and tangible needs over the next 12-16 months.

Q: Why not just do the minimum at this time and focus on additional needs at a later date?

A: This summer and fall, we've spent a lot of time figuring out what is needed in order to complete the renovations to the exterior of the building, many of which are long overdue. We also have some practical needs in a few of our ministries where those teams have been making due for several months now with equipment that has outlived its useful life-span. These are areas we consider 'essential' at this time, as they will ultimately need to be addressed in the next 12-16 months.

The updates to the exterior of the building and aging ministry equipment are things that have been delayed during past giving projects in order to focus on more immediate needs at the time. In many cases, these are areas that simply need to be addressed in this next season. In that sense, we've included them in the current giving project because we know that, one way or another, we're going to need to find a way to address these needs.

With that in mind, there are also some things that go beyond what is minimally needed at this time. Throughout this process, we've also tried to consider new opportunities over the next several months. We've worked through a variety of scenarios that range from what is absolutely essential to a broader vision that includes some things we would love to address if finances were not an issue. As with most things in life, we've landed somewhere in the middle, outlining the work that will absolutely need to be done over the next year, while also considering (within reason) a few areas that will allow us to take some new steps forward in terms of Discipleship and Outreach in this next season.

Q: Is there anything else we can do as a church to minimize our regular expenses to help cover these anticipated expenses over the next year?

We have been very diligent over the last several years to track every expense and minimize any/all additional expenses that are a part of our regular operating budget. We regularly review these expenses and make adjustments to ensure the faithful giving of the saints at Grace Church is both honored and stewarded to the very best of our ability. With that in mind, there isn't much more we can do at this time to 'tighten our belt' further, but we are once again reviewing each of our regular expenses with our accountant, Steve Johnston, and we will make adjustments wherever we can.

It's also important to note that, by not raising pastoral salaries for a number of years (and lowering them in some instances), all in all we are paying the equivalent of 15% less in salaries since 2010.

Q: What are we going to do if we don't raise all of this money?

A: We're committed to doing the very best we can with the funds that are available. Like each of you, our leaders will bring these needs before the Lord in the coming days/weeks and leverage whatever we can in this season in order to give sacrificially. As we get a better idea of what those in the Body feel they can commit to giving in faith, we will prioritize the most essential needs and make adjustments where needed. Since the church was founded, we've always trusted God to provide for our needs...and he has! In this new season, we are gladly looking to God and trusting in his provision.

Q: Who came up with this list or priorities?

A: The practical ministry needs have primarily flowed from those who are faithfully serving and leading in each of our ministries. The needs in terms of the exterior renovations and resurfacing the parking lot are things we've been aware of since we first purchased this property and the amounts we've budgeted are based on the cost of materials and previous estimates. The areas that are more strategic in terms of part-time staff members and outreach to the community are priorities our Leadership Team felt were important enough to share with the Body for consideration.

Q: Are you open to input and feedback?

A: Yes, absolutely! As you pray about the needs and opportunities ahead of us and consider these things in earnest before the Lord, we would appreciate any input or feedback you may have. We will continue to seek the Lord and refine these needs and priorities over the coming weeks. If you are aware of any additional needs that you believe we need to consider, please let us know. If you have questions about any areas in particular, we would be happy to answer those and give you as much information as we can.

Q: It seems like these needs are pretty well defined and set in stone at this point. Shouldn't you have asked for input before sharing these with the larger Body?

A: Nothing included in the current Gifts to the King offerings is set in stone and/or unable to be modified or updated. As mentioned previously, some of the areas in this current offering are things that will simply need to be done one way or another. That being said, this current offering is about more than just tangible, practical needs; it represents a vision for the next 12-16 months for our church. This vision will continue to take shape as more and more people join us in prayer and share their perspective.

In terms of getting feedback, we are (and will continue to be) open to feedback and every step of this process. We are more than willing to reconsider any of the areas outlined on our current Gifts to the King priorities. With that in mind, we also felt it was important as leaders to do some due diligence in order to bring a vision to the Body that incorporates the work that absolutely needs to be done, while also putting forth a broader vision that we can pursue together.

Q: It seems like we are doing just fine with staff we currently have in place. Do we really need to hire more staff?

A: Since the church was founded, we have been primarily a volunteer-driven ministry. As the church continues to grow, this will continue to be our model. With that in mind, however, there have been multiple times throughout the history of our church where we have felt led of God to make a strategic investment in some additional staff positions to (1) free up those who are serving faithfully so that they can focus more intentionally on the ministries they are leading and (2) allow us to take some new, intentional steps forward in those ministries.

In our early days, our ministry was largely supported by several 'staff' members who made about \$150/week at the church while also going to school and/or working part-time in the community. While this is, by no means, a liveable wage, it is enough to allow someone to devote more of their 'work' hours to discipling others, leading their ministries, and helping to grow the church. We have most recently seen the power of this on a little bit larger scale by bringing Ryan on part-time and freeing him to focus more on the work of the ministry.

Scott Koefoed was also another huge asset to our Leadership Team for many years as a full time staff member who focused on finances, community and campus relations, discipleship, answering phones, connecting with new members, premarital counseling, etc. Since his passing in 2013, all of those essential duties have been covered by others, both staff and volunteers.

Finally, we would also just add that the folks who would be considered for these part time positions are those who have been serving faithfully and sacrificially for a decade or longer. In that sense, the church has benefitted from their service for many years. The creation of a part-time staff role not only frees them up to do even more ministry, it also brings us a little more into reality and allows us to compensate them for some of the 'work' they are already doing on a volunteer basis.

Q: Do you have people in mind for these staff positions? How will you go about hiring people to fill these positions?

A: If we have support from the Body to pursue these positions, we will develop more specific descriptions about what each role will entail and share this information with those in each ministry area. Those who feel they meet the qualifications and would like to apply will be encouraged to do so. The Team of Elders will be in contact with each applicant and determine the best format for interviews.

As mentioned previously, the people who would be considered for a part-time staff role are those who have been serving in this role on a volunteer basis for many years without being asked/required to do so. These are people who are ultimately serving 'volunteer staff' already. In that sense, the interview process is a little bit unique because they are people we know very well.

It's been quite some time since we've hired for positions like this, so we definitely will need to develop some new processes to ensure those who would like to be considered for these roles have the opportunity to express their interest and talk with the leaders.

Q: Our finances are pretty tight right now, but we want to be a part of this. How else can we give?

A: This is one of the more challenging things for us as leaders when it comes to sharing a new giving project with the Body. The church has always been supported by the faithful, sacrificial giving of God's people. We are in a great place as a church when you consider the properties that God has entrusted to us and the updates and renovations that we've been able to do while remaining completely debt free. God has been faithful to provide for us as at each step of the way, and we are trusting him to provide everything we need in the season ahead.

With that in mind, we realize some of you are in a position to give at this time, while others are constrained financially, especially as COVID-19 has added to financial stress for some families.

First and foremost, if you desire to give in the season ahead, we would encourage you to pray and ask God how he's calling you to participate. He will lead you! Secondly, open yourself up as a conduit of God's blessing. Ask him to bless you so that you can be a blessing. And lastly, when his provision comes, be faithful to steward it! In particular, you may consider some of the financial blessings that we are anticipating in the season ahead in terms of Stimulus Money and Tax Returns. If you don't have room in your regular budget to give sacrificially, this may be a way for you to participate.

Q: I'm a Young Churcher. Does my giving really make a difference?

A: Yes, of course it does! As we've worked through this year's Gifts to the King, we've been reminded once again how God provided in the early days of our ministry, primarily through the sacrificial giving of High School and College Students who want to see the Kingdom of God advance among their peers.

For those of you in this Young Church demographic, we want to challenge and encourage you to stretch your faith over the next year and look for ways to invest your finances into building the Kingdom and equipping the church for the season of ministry ahead. God will bless you for it!

Even for those whose gifts will be relatively small, Jesus made it clear that it's our faith he is primarily concerned with, not the amount we are able to give.

Q: What about the remaining funds from the sale of the Crawford house?

A: Our plans for the funds from the sale of the Crawford House remain consistent with the plan we outlined at our Member's Meeting earlier this year. As we came into the home stretch of the sanctuary renovations this past Spring, we knew we were going to need additional funds for the next steps of the project. This included things like HVAC, additional security cameras, baptismal, and furniture, as well as funds to pay for new roofing materials on the exterior soffits at 1217. All in all, those expenses totaled about \$71,513. As Jason happily shared at the Members Meeting, we shifted these funds from the sale of the Crawford House to cover the remaining needs so that the Body would not have to bear the burden. The remaining funds have been used for the ongoing expenses related to our facilities. We have also supplemented a decrease in our General Fund during this extended COVID season. Lastly, we have set aside roughly 3 months of our regular operating expenses.

Q: Why not shift the remaining funds from the Crawford House sale into the current offering?

A: As we consider all available assets and funds for the current Gifts to the King Giving Project, we are seeking the Lord about the remaining funds and whether we should shift those funds to this current giving project or keep them in reserve.

As a church, we have traditionally operated on a 'Money in, Money out' basis, meaning that we've leveraged all available funds for the current needs of the ministry. Although we are more than willing to continue to operate this way, we've had a sense from the Lord for several years that we should begin to build up at least a few months' operating expenses in reserve for unforeseen circumstances and opportunities. This practice is very common among churches like ours.

Although this was something we had been slowly working toward for quite some time, we just weren't in a place to set aside a significant amount of funds aside due to the ongoing ministry needs and building renovations. With the sale of the Crawford House, our Leadership Team felt it was a strategic opportunity to set those funds aside rather than invest them back into the ministry right away.

As mentioned above, we are more than willing to leverage these funds for the current giving project, however we just want to be wise and know the Lord's will. Whether we choose to utilize these funds now or later, they are always available to be used/reallocated as the Lord leads.

Q: I am especially fired up about a few specific areas of the current Giving Project. Can I pledge/direct my giving over the next year toward these needs?

A: In short, the answer is: Yes! We understand that, in a giving project like Gifts to the King, different people will be moved and motivated to give sacrificially by different needs and opportunities. For example, some may be passionate about the need for a part-time Worship Leader or updated Children's Ministry computer, but less inclined to give toward a part-time Secretarial position or new vacuums to be used by the Cleaning Team.

In fact, when people step-up to give in this way, it helps our leaders discern between multiple ministry needs and opportunities. We firmly believe that where God leads, he provides; so when God's people rally around certain needs and opportunities, it provides further confirmation and direction. A great example is the covered trailer that Jason presented to the Body at a recent Sunday Gathering. The need was clearly shared and we felt, as leaders, that God was in it. In the past we have presented needs like this and the response has been limited, which helped us see that the timing wasn't quite right. In this case, the support was overwhelmingly positive. This gave us great confidence that God was in it and we were able to move very quickly. It has been an absolute joy to see a handful of individuals give sacrificially to equip the church with this strategic piece of equipment.

We understand that the current Gifts to the King represents a wide range of needs and possibilities. We've tried to narrow down the list to those things we feel are 'essential' for our Body to consider at this time, and we've spread the needs out over the next 12-16 months to make this as manageable as possible. We understand that certain areas may really resonate with some of you. If so, we encourage you to let us know! If we find the support is overwhelming for certain aspects of the Giving Project, we are happy to adjust our priorities to make sure those things get done, even if this means that other areas need to be put on hold.

We also feel it's important to share that, since the church was founded, all of our giving has always been to one common General Fund. Although individuals have given gifts at different times throughout our history to help with specific needs or ministry opportunities, these funds are always placed into the church's General Fund. As such, they are available to be used like all other funds in the event that other needs come up. Although we're happy to honor the wishes/desires of those who give to the very best of our ability, we also want to make sure those who give sacrificially understand that sometimes the needs of the ministry change unexpectedly. In the event that we have some unforeseen circumstances, we generally communicate with those involved and make sure they are comfortable with any changes being made.

Q: You've mentioned the church is in a great place in terms of resources, but it seems like we still have a lot of work to do. Could you explain a little more about why we are so blessed?

A: This is a great question. It's true: We ARE in a great place as a church! As leaders, we are so excited about what God is doing and we are grateful for his provision and blessing upon Grace Church. As we consider the work that still needs to be done, it would be easy to focus on what we don't have and lose sight of all that God has provided for us, but let's consider for a moment how blessed we are as a church.

This Spring we will be celebrating our 23rd Anniversary as a church. God has provided for our needs at every step of the way, initially blessing us with the use of the Hanger at Mt. Pleasant Municipal Airport, and later opening the door for us to use the Ward Theater on Sunday mornings before acquiring it for just \$100. In 2009, we were also able to purchase the old Embers Restaurant for a fraction of its market value, giving us strategic properties on both Mission and Main St. in Mt. Pleasant.

Along the way, some faithful saints donated both the Crawford and Glen Houses, shifting the full equity of these properties into the church's name. As mentioned previously, we've since sold the Crawford House and the funds from that sale are still providing for the needs of the ministry today.

As a church, we currently own three properties (Mission 1217, the Ward Theater, and 911 Glen Ave.). There are no remaining balances or loans on any of these properties and we are completely debt free as a church.

Through the faithful giving of our Body, we have also been able to renovate the old Embers restaurant one step at a time, transforming every corner of our building into a beautiful and functional ministry space for years to come. It's hard to believe, but we're only one year away from having Mission 1217 completely updated, inside and out.

We've shared a couple of needs for ministry equipment for our Children's Ministry and Cleaning Teams in this season, but these pale in comparison to the incredible investments that have been made over the last several years to outfit each of our ministries with the resources they need. When you think about all of the tools, technology, instruments, furniture, and equipment that our ministries have come to depend on, the collective resources God has given us to steward are absolutely incredible!

We truly are a blessed people and, as leaders, we invite you to join us in praising and thanking God for his goodness to Grace Church throughout the years. We are trusting him to provide all that we need in the months ahead.

Q: I understand that renovations for things like new roof shingles and siding will require some finances, but can't we reach out to the community in ways that don't cost money?

A: Yes, we definitely can and NEED to be reaching out to our community every day in creative ways that don't require any additional finances! These are interactions that happen naturally as we engage with people in our workplaces and neighborhoods and share the light of Christ through personal relationships. In fact, this is the most important type of outreach we can do, and it ultimately serves as the foundation for more 'formal' outreach in the community.

In terms of the finances we're trying to raise in this season for outreach (\$47,550), the vast majority of these funds are actually for equipment and materials to update the 'public spaces' at Mission 1217. Since we purchased the building in 2009, our focus has been almost exclusively on the interior of the building. Although we've done a few exterior repairs and made small investments in signage along Mission St., the exterior of our building has remained largely unchanged for the last 11 years. In the last couple of years, the exterior finishes have been pushed well past their useful lifespan.

Although this 'inward' focus has been necessary for us as a church, we truly believe that 2021 is a season of transition. As we've completed the sanctuary renovations at 1217, it has allowed us to begin considering 'What's Next?' In the coming year, we feel strongly that it's time to address the aspects of our ministry and facilities that are 'seen' by our community. We truly believe that

God is calling us to think, pray, and invest much more intentionally in getting the word out and inviting people to be a part of what God is doing at Grace Church.

On the exterior of the building, the finances we're raising for outreach will allow us to update the exterior facade on all 4 sides of the building, as well as the shingled roof along Mission and Preston St. We would also like to invest in a new sign that makes it clear that 1217 S. Mission St. is the home of Grace Church. If finances allow, we'd also like to update the windows in Baby Church, Ones Church, and Totz Church.

The remaining funds will allow us to do some limited promotion and outreach to the community, while also improving the 'public' spaces on the interior of our building. These improvements have been outlined further in the following question.

Q: I noticed that one of the areas on the current Gifts to the King is for new furniture and decor in the Twelve17 Coffee Roasters space. Is new furniture really necessary?

A: The outreach funds for improvements to the inside of the building will allow us to make some much-needed improvements to our Twelve17 Coffee Roasters Ministry brewing equipment. They will also allow us to update the furniture in the most public spaces of our building. This furniture and equipment was purchased nearly a decade ago and has been used every day by our church members and guests from the community.

Much of our current furniture is at the point where it is simply falling apart and needing to be replaced. We've actually started throwing some of this furniture away and repurposing furniture from other parts of the building. It's also important to note that nearly all of the furniture in Baby Church, Ones Church, and Totz Church gets moved twice a week, once on Saturdays into storage where it is stacked for the weekend, and again on Sunday after the service when it is moved back into these spaces to be used all throughout the week. This regular process of lifting, moving, and stacking this furniture has accelerated the wear and tear over the years. There are definitely still some items in good condition that can/will continue to be used.

The improvements outlined in this current offering are things we've been aware of for a couple of years now. These improvements will also allow us to revitalize these spaces with a reconfigured layout in some areas, as well as a fresh coat of paint and some new decor.

Q: Why are we raising funds for outreach in the midst of a pandemic when things are largely locked down and people are being encouraged to stay home?

A: In short, the improvements we've prioritized over the next 12-16 months will put us in a prime position as a church when things begin to open up more fully, students are able to return to in person classes on campus, and life is a little more 'normal' again.

Although we are in the midst of a very challenging time, we do know there is a light at the end of the tunnel. This giving project represents our sense from God about how he's calling us to lay the groundwork for the fruitful season of ministry ahead. As Barry has been sharing on Sundays, we've sensed God's leading to 'thread the needle,' being mindful of the challenges and stresses we are all facing, while continuing to follow God's leading and advance his Kingdom.

We certainly understand the natural inclination to step back in this season, but we believe God is calling us to move forward by faith, reaching out to people in the midst of these trying times while also preparing for the season ahead.

Q: Are there any funds available from the Twelve17 Coffee Roasters Ministry? If so, why don't we use those funds to pay for the renovations and improvements to this space?

A: The majority of the donations we receive through the Twelve17 Coffee Roasters Ministry are used to cover the ongoing operating expenses. Historically, any donations related to this ministry that are above and beyond the regular operating expenses have been used to repair or upgrade existing equipment or purchase new equipment, and 10% of all donations also go directly to those in need. Most recently, these funds have been used to bless our partners in Myanmar whose needs have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Things really started to pick up after the New Year, but these last several months since mid-March have been exceptionally slow. The number of guests who visit our building each day started to pick up again late summer and into the early part of this Fall, but as COVID cases have continued to surge, things have slowed down again recently. Even with things being a little slower, we've continued to reach new people in this season while also ministering to our 'regular' visitors and church members. We have had opportunities almost every day to interact with new people and share the blessing of this ministry with them. These ongoing donations have allowed us to cover our operating expenses in this season, but we do not have additional funds at this time for additional purchases.

Since this ministry was founded, the goal has always been that the ongoing needs of this ministry would be sustained by the regular donations we receive.

That being said, we also feel it's important to note that Twelve17 Roasters Coffee Ministry is a ministry of Grace Church just like all of our other ministries. It is 100% volunteer-run and it provides us with a unique opportunity to reach out to our community. As such, we feel it's especially important that we continue to equip this ministry to thrive, making sure our volunteer baristas have whatever they need as they continue to serve our members and guests.

If the dynamics change over the next several months and donations significantly improve, we will happily use available funds to cover the needs specific to the Coffee Ministry.