

Good Morning!

For the past 3 years we on the current finance team and Congregation Council have tried to be as open and transparent as possible when it comes to Zion's finances. When we proposed this year's Operating Budget, we included a line by line explanation for every budget line. We included a modest 5% increase in giving, based on giving and attendance trends in 2019 and we expected this would be the first year we did not need have to tap into reserves to meet our operating budget.

I don't have to tell anyone that 2020 has not gone as anyone expected. Giving has been below budget and below 2019 levels for reasons that we all know. Businesses have suffered, people have lost jobs or had their hours cut. I experienced this first hand when I was furloughed for a few weeks in April, only to be brought back early when my VP and half my staff had their positions eliminated.

Thanks to the Council's ability to work as a team, we were able to reduce expenses almost immediately once Zion had to move to remote worship and the Nursery school closed. The heat was turned down, cleaning was suspended, all but emergency lighting turned off, office hours were reduced and even the hot water heaters were turned down. Even after resuming in person worship our new cleaning contractor follows CDC protocol at a lower cost. These moves allowed us to save nearly \$13,000 on cleaning costs, with additional savings on heat, electricity and other expenses.

When I gave the mid-year finance update we were basically holding our own. Decreases in giving were offset by an equal and in some months a greater amount of cost reductions. Unfortunately things have changed and that is the reason for me speaking to the congregation today. Some sizeable quarterly giving that was routine in the past and was expected in August and November did not happen. That leaves us with an estimated shortfall of between 12 and 15 thousand dollars by year end. I will have full details when we have our annual finance reviews in January.

Please keep in mind this is related only to the expenses related to the Church's operations. The Long Term investing that the congregation approved in February is safe and continues to do

well, and while the building campaign officially ended, thankfully giving has continued and we have enough money in that dedicated fund to make our mortgage payments through MAY.

Over the past few months Zion has shown an amazing amount of charity toward The Neighbor, starting with a very successful fundraiser at Ort Farms, to the ShoeBox Drive and last week's Giving Tree donations. I also thank Harry Bullock, Pastor Ingrid and everyone that has provided a pledge for next year – I think this is the highest number of pledges we've ever had. If anyone is wondering, it's not too late to get your pledge in.

Here is what is for me, the difficult part – asking for help, even though it is for the congregation and not for myself or my family. I don't think anyone likes to ask for help, but for someone who's idea of fun is to go off into the mountains alone for 2 weeks carrying everything I need it's especially difficult.

I am here today to ask you, if you are able, to reach down and contribute any extra that you can towards our operating expenses. If you've been waiting to make year-end charitable donations, I think Zion is a worthy cause, and now would be a good time. The same goes for anyone that might still get a year-end bonus or even their planned annual Christmas donation. Timing is important. If those are received in the next week, they will help us close that gap this year, rather than rolling forward into 2021. Thank you.

Larry Salvatore  
Finance Chairperson