Apportionments and Building the Church*

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(First United Methodist Church of Sunnyvale, California, celebrates its centennial this year of 1998. To celebrate this, I, as chairperson of the Administrative Council, will read this devotional at the beginning of the February meeting.)

At its February meeting, the Finance Committee decided to pay the church's budgeted apportionments monthly rather than just at the year's end. In this article, I will briefly sketch the Methodist connectional and apportionment system. Then, I will show how the church has benefited from apportionments since the construction of its first sanctuary.

1 The Methodist Connectional System and Apportionments

In the late eighteenth century, John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist denomination, referred to the scattered Methodist societies throughout England as "the connexion." Today, the Methodist connectional system connects Christians throughout the world. For example, United Methodists support eighty-four four-year colleges, sixty-five hospitals, Africa University, and missionaries throughout the United States and the world.

The costs of these ministries are apportioned, or portioned out, to the individual churches. Our Sunnyvale church's annual portion is about $35,000, but this year's budget allocates approximately half of that amount, ensuring payments to Carl Thomas's pension plan and giving to the World Service

Fund. We did not budget money to pay for several apportionments, e.g., support of United Methodist seminaries and the fund to build new churches in California.

In previous years, the church paid its apportionments at the end of the year.[1] This year, the Finance Committee instead decided to pay one-twelfth of the budgeted apportionments each month so the recipient ministries can use the money now rather than waiting to next January.

To illustrate the type of ministries apportionments support, we need only look back to the beginning of our own church.

2 Church Extension Support of Our Church

To help pay for the construction of the first sanctuary, the Trustees applied to the Church Extension Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for a $250 donation. The Society, financed by apportionments, continued its support for our church through the years. For example, in 1908, the church received $140, equivalent to almost one-fourth of the minister's salary. In 1923, the growing church desired to add a social hall and Sunday school classrooms. The Board of Home Missions and Church Extension (the Church Extension Society's successor) paid $4000, leaving only $1000 of debt. In addition, the Board paid over ten percent of the pastors' salaries, between 1920 and 1933.

The Methodist connectional system continues its support of this church when needed. For example, last year, the Northern San Jose District Church Extension Society supported our church's Senior Nutrition Program. The program, faced with a 17% budget reduction imposed midway through its fiscal year, received a $5000 matching grant from the Extension Society.

For more information on the ministries supported by apportionments, see http://www.umc.org/benevol/apportion/.

3 Opening Prayer

Dear God, we thank you for the opportunity to join together today to work toward implementing your will in this world. We also thank you for the people who have come before us, spending their time and money to support this church. Amen.

[1] The church must contribute to the pension plan on a monthly basis.

4 Closing Prayer

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5 Acknowledgments

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