

This is a must read...

Please review this document, make sure you understand it, make use of the detailed budget info in this mailing (if numbers are helpful for you), and share this critical information with the people in your congregation—both before and after Annual meeting.

A 2010 Budget Explanation with No Numbers

Your local congregation relies on contributions from members and interest on investments (if you have them) to maintain a building, to support a staff and program, and to do mission and ministry for those who are in need. Both the Connecticut Conference and the United Church of Christ work the same way: in faith, members (churches) give to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) to support the staff, property and mission of those covenant partners. We agreed as a Conference that of every dollar that our churches in Connecticut give to OCWM, 37 cents stays here in Connecticut, and 63 cents goes on to the denomination.

Has your church had budget challenges recently? The Conference and UCC have, too. When local churches give less OCWM dollars, that affects the Conference and denomination, too. This past year the drop has been *large*—so large that to balance the 2009 budget, Conference staff had to take furloughs, some were let go, and many programs cut back. Our national offices report the same. *The drop has continued*, and in planning the budget for 2010, there was no choice but to cut more, dig into reserves, and propose a local budget that is hopeful and faithful—but may well require more cuts as the year unfolds. The hard news is that we've simply bought ourselves some time with this budget, because we just don't have the funds to be in this place again next year.

And so, there are **2 critical changes** to the budget process leading up to Annual Meeting:

The first is in how the budget numbers are presented this year. They're all there but this year we have divided the Restricted monies from the Unrestricted so you can see more clearly what OCWM, Per Capita and other Contributions support. The Restricted Budget is basically money that is to be spent in specified ways (like the portion that goes to the UCC). The Unrestricted Budget is the money that we control for the Conference budget. While the restricted funds are as important as always, the Unrestricted Budget is especially critical because it's here where your local church is immediately impacted.

You and your congregation need to know this: the locally retained, "unrestricted" portion of your church's gifts, as well as the per capita contribution, go *entirely* to support people, ministry and program that make a difference to local churches like yours— search and call, pastoral support, crisis management, new church starts, youth ministries, Silver Lake —while interest on investments covers *all* administrative costs. These ministries and programs will change *drastically* without each church making and keeping OCWM and per capita commitments. Plain and simple.

And, secondly, because OCWM has fallen so, you will be asked to vote on the creation of a Special Commission that will address some of these long-standing issues: can we keep going as a Conference as we are? What do churches like yours want and expect of their Conference, and of their denomination? The details are all there, and we'll talk about them. But the big picture is important to see, this year like never before.

Rev. Jonathan Lee
Finance and Budget Chairperson