

February 1, 2010

Dear First Church Members and Friends:

In the late 1990's our congregation determined that we wanted First United Methodist Church to be known as "a church in the heart of the community with the community in its heart." Accordingly, we made a deliberate decision to remain on this site and truly become a downtown church.

Shortly we began taking tangible steps to realize our dreams. The church building was expanded in 1999-2000 to accommodate our growing ministry on this site. Then, in the midst of the building expansion, our congregation had the opportunity to purchase the city block across the street, presently the site of the US Post Office. When the congregation approved the purchase of this land in February 1999, we gave clear notice that our future was in downtown Bloomington.

During this first decade in the 21st century, our growing commitment to being a visible and strong Christian presence in the downtown has been demonstrated in many ways.

- In 2004, we launched an alternative worship service at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater. This service has been an important initiative for a church with a downtown identity and mission, as it is aimed at a population underserved by (and not attracted to) mainstream "church."
- Our Parent's Day Out program has served the community since the 1970's, and it remains a vital program and affordable service to working families.
- The Wednesday Food Pantry is an important part of our ongoing mission to the working poor and others who are in need of food for the week ahead.
- We spawned what is now the Shalom Community Center, Inc. in 2000, and we continue to provide free space and monthly financial support to "Shalom."
- We make our facilities available to non-profit groups, 12 step groups, service clubs and other organizations in the downtown. We provide space for about 800 meetings or events each year.

To remain a church in the heart of the city is not easy. As a result of our building expansion and property acquisition, we incurred an onerous and growing debt. Over the past several years we have carefully watched our spending, while concurrently increasing our programming; a delicate balance.

I can report to you that we had balanced budgets with small carryover surpluses each year from 2003 until 2009, when we had a relatively nominal deficit, due primarily to reduced non-pledge giving and equipment repairs that were out of the ordinary. These balanced budgets have included principal payments against debt and complete payment of our yearly tithe to the United Methodist Church. (Enclosed you will find a financial summary with more detail about our 2009 budget.)

Everyone has been affected by the economic downturn that began in the fall of 2008 and continues to this day. Since churches depend on the generosity of their members to fund their

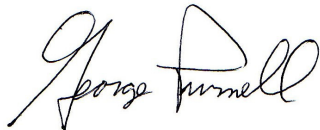
budgets, it is not surprising that churches face the same financial stress that other organizations do in these times.

We now know that our annual campaign results fall short of our being able to fully fund staffing and programming at current levels without additional income. The anticipated shortfall is significant; in the neighborhood of \$180,000. The proposed budget currently before the finance committee holds all ministerial and staff salaries at 2009 levels. All program budgets will also be maintained at their 2009 levels. Some items – such as utilities, property & casualty insurance, medical insurance, and interest payments, to name a few – are not totally within our control, but these are being carefully monitored.

We cannot operate on the forecasted income for 2010 without reducing both program and staff, which in turn will impact what we can do and thus our identity as a vital downtown church whose presence enhances the quality of life in our city.

But we can remain a “church in the heart of the community with the community in its heart” if we will each step forward in these uncertain times to make a statement of faith by either increasing our previously submitted estimate of giving for the 2010 budget, or by completing an estimate of giving card if we have yet to make that commitment. **Please respond before February 15 so that we may have complete information to present to our Finance Committee. An Estimate of Giving card is enclosed, or you may submit your estimate online at www.fumcb.org.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Purnell".

Rev. George Purnell
Senior Minister

Encl: Financial Summary
Estimate of Giving card and return envelope