

FROM THE PASTOR'S HEART

No one would want to underestimate the importance of finances in the Church. But as the following article points out, it is possible to be so focused on money matters that other important matters get short shrift. I'm reminded of Jesus' statement to the Pharisees about tithing. "You tithe mint, dill, and cummin, but have neglected the weightier matters . . . justice and mercy and faith." (Mt. 23:23)

When God heals us and our congregations, God heals comprehensively. One area of health creates other areas of health until the whole Body is strong and vital. Praise God, this we have seen at APUMC. Our finances have shown good improvement as a result of the good leadership in this area, but also because we are all doing a better job of being God's Church in all other respects. Waytogo!

Finance Chair, Paul Agather, has done a great job for us for about five years. He has announced his "retirement" from this position as of July. Give a word of thanks, folks. And remember, Vi Nagley bailed us out and returned as our Church Treasurer for this year only, and we will need to replace her, too. Please pray about these key leadership positions. And don't be shy, God is calling people to these and other leadership positions. The right leader could be you. Let us know if you will consider serving.

See you in Church, APUMC!
Carl

Pastor

What Report is First on Your Church Council Agenda? **by [J. Clif Christopher](#)**

When I started out in ministry nearly 35 years ago, I wandered into my first church board meeting with wide eyes and my mouth firmly shut. I did not know much about running a church business meeting. I watched as the chair called for the first report. It was the report from the Finance Committee. The finance chair handed out a detailed budget and went over the status of the church's finances.

I quickly learned that if the budget was balanced, then everyone seemed to be happy. If it was not, then there was considerable consternation and insistence that "we must do something about it." All the other reports seemed to be secondary to this one, not only in sequence but in importance. To a young neophyte it was very clear that the priority was to balance the budget. One would have thought that finances held the keys to the kingdom given the inordinate attention focused on them at each meeting.

Since that time, I have been a part of business sessions in congregations of widely varying denominations. Consistently I still see that the first report often given is from the finance committee, and that report seems to be the one that most persons want to discuss. The economic events of the last two years have only heightened this preoccupation with finances. Managing the money given to ministry through the church is important, and we need to be good stewards of every dollar given. But I do question whether it should be the central focus of our church lives and oversight.

We should be starting our church council meetings with how we are doing with what we exist to do. How have we done since our last meeting in making disciples of Jesus Christ? How many new disciples have begun their faith journey? What evidence have we seen that persons are growing in their relationship with Christ from what we are doing? How are we doing in reaching persons through worship, education, and small groups? How are members giving their lives to others through mission?

If Boeing concentrates on making better airplanes than Airbus, they will sell more planes and make more money. If General Motors concentrates on making better cars than Toyota, they will sell more cars and make more money. One of the best things you can do to raise more money for your church is to give evidence to your donors that you are focused on why you are in business — making disciples — as a first and only priority. If you do that well, chances are that the budget will also do well.

[J. Clif Christopher](#) is founder of [Horizons Stewardship Company](#) and author of *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate*⁺, Abingdon, 2008. Purchase at [Amazon.com](#) and [Cokesbury.com](#)