

January 25, 2023

Dear member of the Epworth United Methodist Church family,

Thank you for your faithful support of our church during 2022, which allowed our worship and ministries to reach hundreds within our walls and far beyond. The year brought new church programs and groups, and our youth ministry has greatly expanded. We welcomed a couple dozen new members. We adjusted our worship schedule and now have one “blended” service; what a thrill to fill the pews again while continuing to have a consistently strong online presence! And ... We had a wonderful celebration of Epworth’s 125th anniversary that enthusiastically engaged our church family as well as our neighbors.

Our anniversary was the perfect time to look back and also look ahead. Epworth has grown and evolved with the times, blessing generations of church members and many others from our community along the way. **Our church has weathered difficult, lean times. We are in one of those times now as our income since the summer has lagged while expenses have increased. We need your help to maintain our church home and keep our ministries strong, which we hope will sustain the momentum and energy that have been building in recent weeks. If you have been planning an extra gift to the church, now is the time.**

Our income has fallen short of our projected budget by more than \$17,000 per month on average since the current fiscal year began July 1. Giving is the main component of our income. Rental income is an important part, too, and we are thankful it is higher than last year though below projections for this year. Economic pressures on households have affected financial support of our church, and we expect it will take some time for giving to rise to pre-pandemic levels. Many other churches are experiencing this same challenge; we are not alone. We are grateful for those who have been able to increase their giving, and for the active participation of our new members in supporting the church alongside our longtime members. THANK YOU!

As of Dec. 31, 2022, expenses were \$6,700 over year-to-date projections. We anticipated a total monthly outlay of more than \$10,000 for our mortgage, HVAC system lease and installation of the new roof – and we greatly appreciate your gifts toward defraying those costs. We remain hopeful that the mortgage will be paid off by the end of this fiscal year. What we didn’t anticipate was building repair expenses of several thousand dollars toward the end of 2022, including work on the sprinkler system, exterior lighting and air ducts. Many of us still think of our building as new, but it is 15 years old. Our staff and ministry leaders have been instructed to curtail all but essential spending, and expenses continue to be closely monitored.

We have been blessed by your spirit of generosity and pray that further measures to stem costs won’t be needed. Thank you for all you do in God’s service!

In Gratitude to God,

David Hagelin and David Streit