



Dear Church Family,

To borrow from a beloved internet meme, I am once again asking for your support with our annual stewardship campaign. With the return of fall, it is time for discernment as it relates to our even more beloved Lakewood Congregational Church. This year, we're viewing stewardship through the lens of abundant life. What does abundant life mean?

We already know that in a world where the mainline Christian church is getting smaller and fewer and fewer people ascribe to any kind of formalized religion, LCC is an anomaly. We are growing. Our pews are full, our livestream has viewers, and there are children running around the halls during social hour. Our congregation is active in programs and ministries. In many ways, we already experience abundant life at the corner of West Clifton and Detroit.

Abundant life goes beyond butts in seats and faith formation numbers on Sunday mornings. Abundant life is reflected in our new ESL program for Ukrainian refugees. It is visible in Joanna's Thursday morning coffee chats, Second Saturdays, and Pub Theology. It is felt by being a welcoming and safe space for AA meetings and Cleveland Pride Band rehearsal.

We are blessed to experience a life of abundance in this thriving community. It's important to remember abundant life is experienced and made possible through stewardship. Stewardship is, after all, a spiritual practice found in an abundant life. We give our time, our talents, and our treasures so we can continue to live in abundance.

This year, after leadership's own period of discernment, we set a total pledge goal of \$415,600. This number was not plucked out of thin air; it was carefully crafted based on rising costs and our projected budget for 2024. Our building is old, and inflation isn't going away yet. Now more than ever it is important to share in our abundance so we can continue to thrive.

The world needs more community, more compassion, more justice, and more love – and with your help, Lakewood Congregational Church can continue to provide these vital treasures, these signs and sources of abundant life. As each one of us generously gives, we know and trust the God of abundance will make more out of our gifts than we can even imagine. More community. More compassion. More justice. More love.

Enclosed you'll find a pledge card. Put it somewhere you'll see it every day, and when you do, try praying the prayer printed on it. Take time to discern what a spiritual practice of giving looks like for you. You can return the completed card to the church office in-person or by mail or instead choose to complete the online stewardship form, found on our website.

Thank you for living in abundance with us and for supporting our community.

With Joy,
Charlotte Petrie, Stewardship Chair