



REACH. TEACH. **PRAISE.** SERVE.
MATTHEWS UNITED METHODIST

December 3, 2024

From the Desk of Pastor Paul

As I announced my upcoming retirement for January 31, 2025, I had already been reflecting on almost thirty-two years of ministry as a second career. Entering ministry in my mid-thirties, married with two young children, with a mortgage and a car payment was daunting, to say the least. One of the biggest decisions we faced was not about how to pay our bills as I changed careers and returned to graduate school. The most daunting choice for us was challenging ourselves to move our financial contributions to the church to proportional giving. This was a huge leap for us, since neither of us came from families who modeled this practice and made this lesson a part of our formative years when church attendance was scattered.

Laura and I decided that if we had the courage to trust God and make all these changes to enter ministry, moving toward regular, proportional giving began to look like a simple matter. So, that's what we did. We gradually increased our giving from where we had been to where we needed to be. And guess what? We managed to meet all our financial obligations, clothe and feed our children, and live in a modest, comfortable manner.

I'm sharing this not to call attention to our family giving, but as a witness to God's ongoing provision. I say it because we committed to gradually increasing our contributions until we reached a better place that still allowed us to make some above-and-beyond gifts to Global Impact, ReFresh & ReNew, etc. If I could leave our church family with one piece of advice, it would be this: *Those whom God calls, God also equips with not only the means to survive, but to thrive!*

I invite you to help us to finish our fiscal year strong as we begin moving forward with our Beyond Hospitality capital improvement plans. Please review your giving statement and consider an extra gift to help your church reach our financial goals. Also, please review the Guidelines for Year-End Giving to MUMC.

Blessings,
Pastor Paul Craig