



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (for Congregations)

** What is **The Future is Now**?*

The Future is Now is a capital fundraising campaign which seeks to carry out the mission of the Michigan District. **The Future is Now** provides a unique opportunity for the congregations and members of the Michigan District to bestow a wonderful thank offering for the blessings received from our Lord. Each of us should rise through our continuing challenges, and make a difference for the future that can only happen through shared purpose and common goals.

** What is the financial goal of **The Future is Now** campaign?*

The financial goal of **The Future is Now** is \$13,000,000.

** How will the campaign funds be distributed?*

- \$5,000,000 for mission planting within the Michigan District
- \$5,000,000 for professional church worker scholarships for students in Michigan District congregations
- \$3,000,000 for international ministries through our partnership with **Fan into Flame**

** Why do we need a capital campaign?*

In order to carry out the mission of the Michigan District, new money – over and above current funding levels – is necessary. The percentage of unchurched by county continues to increase – 16 counties in Michigan have 70% or more unchurched individuals. That means 7 out of 10 people you encounter at the grocery store do not know/have a relationship with Jesus Christ. As our forefathers before us fulfilled the early purposes to disciple the saved and evangelize the lost, this need continues to increase. The total cost of a single male attending the Ft. Wayne seminary is currently \$36,000. At graduation as this pastor receives his first call his seminarian debt could be more than \$100,000. This financial strain can cause stress to both the newly ordained pastor and his congregation. Now is the time to plant for the future.

** How can I get involved?*

Read **The Future is Now** brochure and familiarize yourself with **The Future is Now** goals. You can find the brochure on the Michigan District website (www.michigandistrict.org) or call the District Office (888-225-2111) and request that one be mailed to you. Then take the brochure to your pastor and a few congregation leaders to discuss your congregation's participation in **The Future is Now**. Ask your pastor and congregation leaders to consider participation. Regional workshops are currently being held for congregations to learn more about this historic campaign (through March 30, 2009).

** How can my congregation get involved?*

The first step is to present **The Future is Now** to your pastors, congregation leaders, and individuals who you feel have an interest in supporting mission work. A PowerPoint presentation is on the Michigan District website to assist you. **The Future is Now** Circuit Coordinators, Steering Committee members and staff are all willing and ready to help you with a presentation and to answer questions.

** When will my congregation participate?*

We are asking for participation decisions by congregations to be received by the District Office by Advent 2009. A congregation can pledge now and begin fulfillment of their pledge at a time of their choosing. We are seeking 5-year pledges for greater flexibility and to enable donors to make capital gifts to reach our goal.

** Why should my congregation participate?*

In order for us to reach our \$13 million goal, congregations are being asked to do their fair share to reach this target. The only way we can do this is by all of us walking together through an equitable goal setting process.

** We are a small congregation. What can we do?*

Jesus loves you as His children, and He can use your gifts to do wonderful things. He used the young boy's fish and loaves to feed the multitudes. He praised the widow for the gift of her mite. Your congregation is situated exactly where God would use you as an extension of His mission arm. Participate and see how He can use you! This school year, the Michigan District is supporting Concordia University Ann Arbor students with average scholarships of \$1,680. A commitment of \$7,000 would provide one student a scholarship for four years!

** We are a poor congregation; we don't have enough money to support something else.*

The Future is Now provides critically needed new dollars for future church workers, mission plants, and international ministries. By providing this opportunity to all congregation members, you provide the chance for them to impact the future of the Kingdom through a gift to **The Future is Now**. The district is not going to forget the needs of existing congregations, nor will it ignore the opportunities for growth. *When we return a portion of His blessings we will receive back new blessings a hundred-fold.*

** Our budget is already strained to the limit. So is each of our households. We are already having difficulty meeting our budget.*

When people are given the opportunity to hear what God is doing in His mission fields and how they can be a part of it, the Spirit can move their hearts in response. People who may not have contributed to the church's operation fund may be moved by the mission stories they hear through **The Future is Now**, renewing their passion for returning their first-fruits to the Lord. It's important to give God's people a chance.

** Now is not a good time for us to start something new. Can we wait until later?*

By choosing one of the four proven, intentional participation plans a small team of volunteers can implement an appeal in a few short weeks. These appeals are straightforward in their approach. There is no need to clear your entire calendar of activities to conduct the appeal. Each local appeal is meant to be crisp, mission-focused, and successful. It is also suggested that planning begin early, in the sense that your congregation can get appropriate approval to participate.

** I can't ask my congregation to participate now in these hard economic times.*

It is important to remember that over the long term, the economy will improve. Over the years, when we have seen recessions, giving to the church has remained the same or even increased. It is during these tough times that individuals are more generous, because the need is greater. We are asking you to provide the *opportunity* and *invitation* to your members to support this historic mission effort. Your members cannot help spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ if not asked.

** We have to take care of the home fires first.*

How true. The harvest fields are ready right around you. Attention needs to be given right at home. And since God says that the laborer is worthy of His hire, you get to partake of the first fruits of the offerings of God's people. You may hear cynics counter ***The Future is Now*** appeal by quoting the old saying, "charity begins at home." Quite true. However, the old adage does not say charity stops at home. From home we *begin* our sowing. My home congregation is the field upon which I can sow my offering to the Lord, which then in turn can sow in the community and in the Synod, which in turn sows in the world and back in our home congregation. The Lord's kingdom is a never ending, worldwide caring and sharing circle where He provides both the abundance and the privilege of sharing.

** If you are experiencing a pastoral vacancy you can still participate.*

There are lay leaders or other congregation boards that can be informed about ***The Future is Now***. Lay leaders are essential to participation. There are easy steps that lay leaders can take to ensure that the decision making and planning process continues. ***The Future is Now*** Circuit Coordinators, Steering Committee Members, and District Staff are all ready and willing to make a presentation to a council to discuss the best way to get your congregation involved.

** As a pastor, I support ***The Future is Now*** and its goals, but my elders/ board does not want to participate.*

What can I do to convince the leaders to take this important mission effort to the congregation?

Ask your elders/board if you can present ***The Future is Now*** to the congregation after a worship service. There are many wonderful resource tools on the Michigan District website (www.michigandistrict.org) that can assist you in introducing ***The Future is Now*** to the congregation. District volunteers and staff will help you come up with the best way to proceed.

** As a pastor, I have the support of all my elders/ board/ lay leaders except for one who is quite vocal. How can I acknowledge his concerns and yet move the decision making process along to the entire congregation?*

Have a private conversation with this individual and see what specific concerns the individual has. Typically, it is a misunderstanding about some aspect of the campaign that a conversation can resolve. If the individual maintains a negative stance, ask that the congregation be allowed to hear and decide for themselves and for the individual to pray for our success.

** We (I as pastor) are too busy to get involved in this process. I just won't inform the congregation of this process and opportunity.*

Need help? We stand ready. Conducting ***The Future is Now*** is a marvelous opportunity to receive help from those who see your parish as a mission outpost for sowing the seeds of the Word and beginning to reap the harvest. We have so many resources to share with you and such an exciting opportunity to include you in the worldwide harvest, but it is important to do so intentionally.

The options seem to be – give my members the opportunity or not participate. Is the fear really, “If I publish this giving opportunity, we will fall even farther behind in our budget?” Please realize that providing your congregation with the possibility to sow will also increase your home gifts and relieve your time pressures.

The best reason to sow is that Jesus promises there is no harvest without sowing.