



Money and the Church: For the Life of the World

Conference Better Together Summit

Fall 2018

To the faithful in the Rocky Mountain Synod:

I believe with all my heart that we are Better Together as Christ's Church.

While it goes against everything in our current age of individualism to suggest that we need each other, it is part and parcel of our gospel life to engage deeply with one another. Five years ago we began inviting leaders in each of our conferences to meet together for fall "Missional Gatherings" to build relationships, to learn, to network, and to strengthen our ministry—together.

This year we will gather face to face to talk about money and the church. This isn't a presentation about stewardship campaigns or financial policy. It's foundational conversation about our beliefs and habits with respect to money: how and why we keep it, spend it, share it. I ask that you not only participate in these important conversations, but that you take the time in your congregational/ministry groups to prepare to engage together using the materials provided.

In the first century, the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth about the people of Macedonia. He told of their gratitude, sacrifice, commitment, sharing, joy, and generosity. Paul recognized these principles as life-giving traits in the community of faith.

I give thanks for you, and for your own commitment to our life together. I look forward to gathering together this fall for our Conference Better Together Summits in eleven Rocky Mountain Synod locations.

Yours in Faith,

Bishop Jim Gonia

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

2 Corinthians 8:1-2



PREPARING FOR THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SYNOD Conference Better Together Summit

In the fall of 2018, eleven conference gatherings take place in the Rocky Mountain Synod around the theme, “Money & Church: for the Life of the World.” In advance of the summit, each individual is asked to take some time to reflect on their own “Personal Money Autobiography” and then meet with the others attending from the same congregation for congregational reflection.

1. Write a Personal Money Autobiography

Writing a personal money autobiography is an important step in expressing one’s stewardship journey. The process reveals one’s attitudes, behaviors and feelings about money. How does one go about writing a money autobiography? In this activity it is important to on different points in your life (childhood, adolescence, young adult, mature adult, etc.) Take a sheet or two of blank paper and write out your responses to the questions below. Reflect on these experiences and how specific understandings developed. After reflection you may want to write this into a chronological or topical sequence. Always be aware that money is only one aspect of being a steward.

1. What is the earliest experience with money that you remember?
2. As a child growing up, did you feel rich or poor? Why?
3. What was your attitude toward money as a teenager? How was this influenced by peers or siblings?
4. How were your attitudes and behaviors about money shaped by your mother, father or grandparents?
5. What role did money play in your life as a young adult? How was this influenced by a spouse or co-workers?
6. If applicable, how did your relationship with money change when you became a parent?
7. What is your happiest memory in connection with money?
8. What is your unhappiest memory in connection with money?
9. How does your faith guide you in your use of money?
10. How do you feel about your present financial status compared a the past status?
11. How have you discovered that financial health is an expression of faith?
12. Are you generous or stingy with your money? In what ways?
13. How do you practice proportionate giving and tithing?
14. When are you willing to give to the church and other causes with no strings attached?
15. What kinds of risks are you willing to take with your money?
16. What will you do with your money as you approach the end of this life?

2. Meet with your congregation attendees for conversation

Your congregation also has its own story about money. Meet with the others from your congregation who will be attending the Summit to reflect on the questions, below.

OPENING PRAYER

Abundant God, we give you thanks for the fruitful earth, which produces what is needed for life, with seed and soil, water and sun. Grant that we may cherish the earth, our home, and live in harmony with this good creation. Open our eyes to see that all that we have is yours, and that it is in giving, that we receive. Amen.

INTRODUCTIONS

Introduce each other with this prompt. "My name is _____ and if I had a million dollars I would..."

CONVERSATION

These questions focus on the attitudes and practices related to the teaching and management of money in your congregation. Come to some conclusions about your congregation's story about money, and write down questions that come to mind as your share in conversation with each other.

1. What has been your most positive experience with money in the life of this congregation? What contributed to making this experience so positive?
2. What has been your most negative experience with money in the life of this congregation? What contributed to making this experience so negative?
3. How would you describe the financial status of your congregation?
4. Is your congregation generous? If so, in what ways?
5. How does your congregation encourage people to have open and honest conversations about money and giving?

SUBMIT QUESTIONS ONLINE (see below)

CLOSING SONG

Sing or say together: *Praise and Thanksgiving*, ELW 689

3. Prior to the summit, submit questions from your group

In advance of the summit you are attending, submit the questions that your congregation group raised in the previous exercise. Use the form at this address to submit your questions:
www.rmselfca.org/fall-summit