

How Much Should You Pledge? Some Ways to Decide

Members sometimes ask for guidance on how much to pledge. Pledging (and paying) is a condition of membership in the Fellowship, although exemptions are granted for reasons of financial exigency. Here are some ideas on how to set the amount.

- Start from the average and work your way up or down. The average pledge is about \$2400 per year. There might be a “reverse Lake Wobegon psychology” (nobody wants to be above average!). But consider what would happen if **everyone** were to pledge **below** average! Still, the average is a good place to start.
- Consider giving a percentage of family income. Percentages vary according to income level and degree of financial commitment to the Fellowship.
- Another income-based guideline is the **Liberal Tithe**. In contrast to the traditional Christian tithe of 10% of income to one’s church, the Liberal Tithe is 5% to one’s church and 5% to all other charities.
- The needs of the Fellowship, including but not limited to paying fair wages to our staff, continue to increase. Consider increasing last year’s pledge by a percentage, say 10%, especially if you have been giving the same amount for a few years. I have noted a tendency to get “stuck” on round numbers like \$50, \$100, or \$200 per month. If you have been giving \$100, could you consider \$110 or \$120? If everyone were to increase by \$10 or \$20 per month, that would have a huge impact on the total.
- If you are uncertain of your financial situation for the next year, remember that you can change your pledge at any time if your situation changes. We are grateful to those who have continued their pledge, even when temporarily unemployed, but this is not expected.
- If you are currently having financial difficulties, consider making a small pledge, say \$10 per month. Such a pledge shows your commitment to the Fellowship, is enough to pay your dues to the UUA, and maintains your status as a member in good standing.

We wouldn’t be making such an effort to increase the pledge income if it weren’t needed. With new minimum UUA recommended pay guidelines out this year, we are paying our staff less than those minimums (with the exception of our minister). To increase salaries to meet UUA recommendations and to increase spending in areas of high priority, we are hoping for an increase in pledge income and for increased income from other sources, like our annual auction.

Some Budget and Pledge Statistics

- The Fellowship is self-supported and self-governed; the UUA does not fund the Fellowship at all. Indeed, the UUA is funded by the congregations they serve.
- About 65% of the expenses are staff salaries and benefits; much of the rest are fixed costs like utilities and the mortgage.
- Over 80% of our income is from pledges, with the rest coming from many sources, including plate collections and the auction.
- There are about 200 pledges. The average is about \$2400 per year. The largest is \$30,000; the smallest is \$60.

Created by Wayne Itano, Former BVUUF Treasurer 2020; updated by Pledge Team January 2023