

BOARD DETERMINES TO BALANCE CHURCH BUDGET

(Union: Sunday, Nov. 2/08) In a Special Congregational Meeting held after Church last Sunday, we were asked to put our money where our faith is.

The après coffee-hour meeting had been called to draw attention to the ongoing plight we, like so many Church communities, face today – the need to live within our means, covering all operating expenses out of operating revenues. We want the institution called Union to be here throughout our retirement years and beyond. To do that will require increased revenues, some revenue-generating inventiveness, and if all else fails, a reduction of expenditures, even staff salaries, to balance the budget by 2010. In fact, the Board has resolved to do just that by passing a special motion on Sept. 24th, with an interim objective of reducing the annual deficit to 10% or less of the expenditures for 2009. The purpose of this special meeting to get us thinking about our role in upping revenues as we approached Stewardship Sunday, today.

FINANCIAL RESERVES EVAPORATING

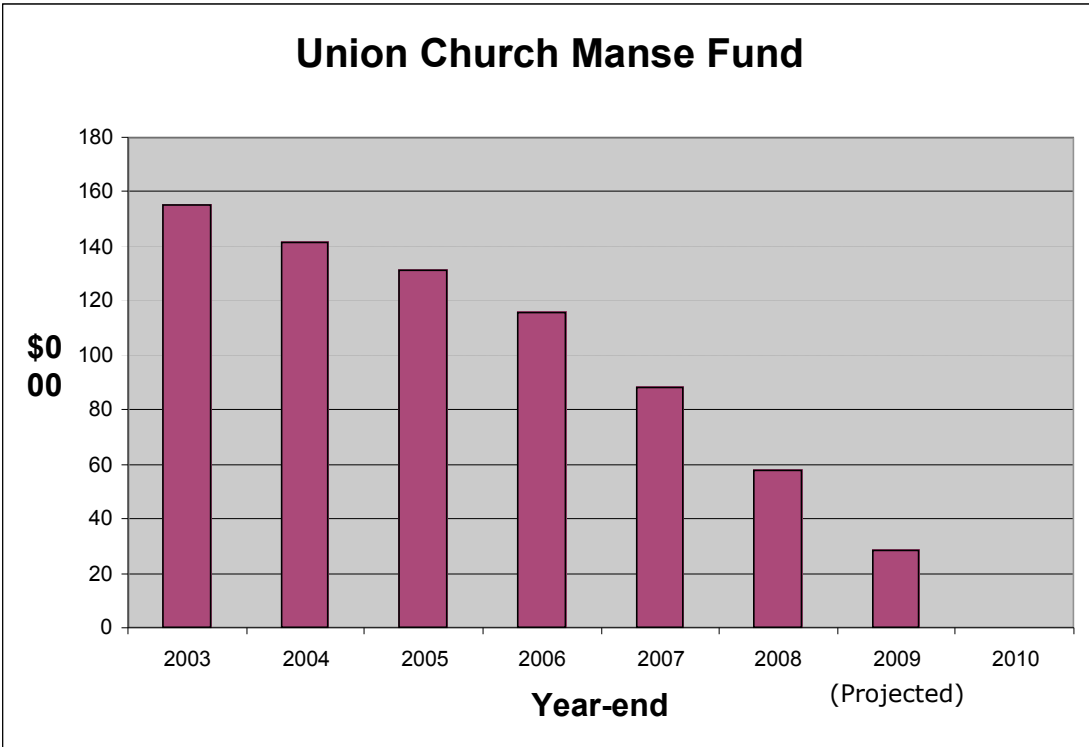
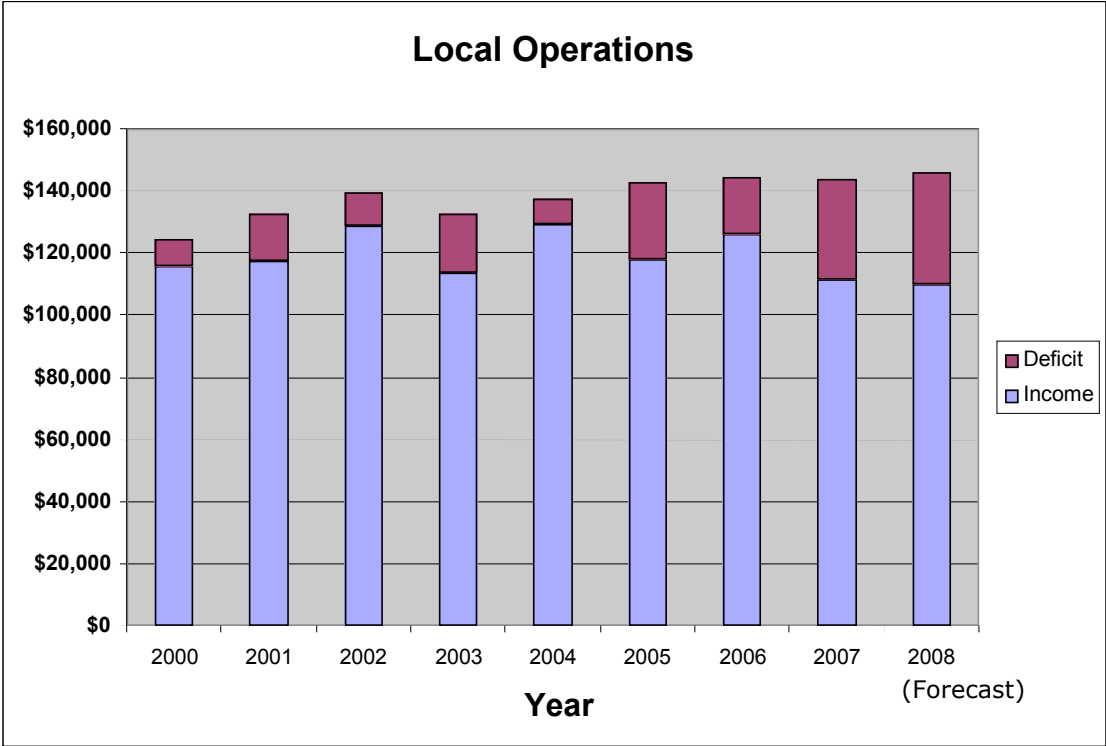
For over a decade, we have been drawing down increasing amounts from the so-called Manse Fund, a fund valued at around \$150 000 as recently as 2003, now worth \$90 000, and projected to disappear by 2010. Living within our means requires we either scale back on the “draw-downs” from this reserve fund before it is totally exhausted – it was intended for use in capital projects like infrastructure, not operating expenses anyway – or burn it all at the current rate and have fewer options when the crunch hits.

Congregational Board chair Judy Cooper kicked off the Sunday meeting after Church on an upbeat note. We have several thousand dollars in new rental income from neighbouring John Abbott College. She pointed out the signs festooning Adair Hall walls to tell the students some new “F” words – “faith, food, fellowship. Then she asked us to focus on the ‘F’ words of this day’s meeting: facts, figures, and funding.

HOW TO LIVE WITHIN OUR MEANS

So what ways do we have of increasing our income? If we have to cut expenditures more, fine. The board is resolved to do so, but there are ways to bring in more money too. Geoff Quaid, the Task Force Committee chair who has delved most closely into this in recent years, explains.

Since the time of his task force report two years ago, we had not arrived where we’d like to be despite successful fund-raising and some increased giving. Among the reasons are the passing of generous benefactors and the actual decrease in the number of parishioners. He methodically laid out the essentials of our dilemma with the aid of Powerpoint presentation and the Church’s new multi-media projector. Overleaf is a chart illustrating the deficit in local operations and a second chart tracing the resultant decrease in the Manse Fund.



Here were some of the ideas on how to bring in more funds:

- **INCREASE GIVING**
- **EXPAND CONGREGATION**
- Blockbuster fund-raiser
- Find major tenant to share the building
- Reduce the ministry
- Share the ministry
- **USE FUNDSCRIP**

In the short term, the bolded areas above will receive special emphasis. In the long term, building a strong financial base may just simply come back to building a larger contributing congregation.

A GROWING CONGREGATION – THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION

How can we give more? We need about \$34 000 more in collection pledges by 2010 to balance our books. Ultimately, said Geoff, we need to increase the number of people pledging. The surest way to ensure Church funding is through “PAR” (pre-authorized remittance) from our individual accounts to the Church each month. He suggested we need to reach out and sway people to our own conviction that this is a unique and very contemporary Church.

FUNDSCRIP – A PAINLESS WAY TO SLASH THE DEFICIT

One promising development is “FundScrip,” the fundraising system that consists of each parishioner simply putting their regular grocery, gas, renovation, entertainment, and other purchases on the FundScrip cards. Geoff projected this chart on the screen to show us how much some sample expenses would return to the Church:

Use FundScrip for:	% return	\$/week	Annual \$ to Union
Gas	2%	\$40	\$40
Groceries	3%	\$110	\$165
Total		\$160	\$205

With 50 households, Union would receive over \$10 000 per year!

FundScrip holds massive potential – he had just signed up himself and was surprised at its ease of use. We could generate an extra \$10 000 per year to the Church if 50 households used it!

THE CURRENT STATE OF PLEDGES

It seems that most of us are not giving till it hurts: **the average weekly donation is \$16.63**. Of the 84 regular donors to our Church, 57 are on or below this level, and the remaining 27 are above:

2007 TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO LOCAL/CAPITAL		
Range of Donations	Number of donors	Average Donation
\$100 to \$250	9	\$152 (\$2.92/week)
\$251 to \$500	16	\$348 (\$6.69/week)
\$501 to \$750	12	\$496 (\$9.53/week)
\$751 to \$1000	8	\$564 (\$10.84/week)
\$1001 to \$1250	12	\$904 (\$17.38/week)
\$1251 to \$1500	8	\$1094 (\$21.04/week)
\$1501 to \$1750	3	\$1266 (\$24.35/week)
\$1751 to \$2000	3	\$1400 (\$26.92/week)
\$2001 to \$3000	9	\$1754 (\$33.73/week)
over \$3001	4	\$2973 (\$57.17/week)
TOTALS	84	\$865

If all 84 of us increased giving by \$2.00, we'd make \$8700 more each year. For the price of a weekly coffee and doughnut, we'd make even more!

A BETTER RETIREMENT WITH UNION CHURCH HERE

Jim Fyles ended the day's presentations pointing out that it was a good week to be trying to bring our financial and spiritual lives into a more coherent picture without the usual disconnect, and added in passing, "It's a heck of a month to be talking finance, isn't it?" The Church is not the church building, and we are not consumers of some faith-based consumer product. Last Sunday's sermon focused on how a transformative Christian experience of life depended in part on the overall "coherence" of our lives. Are our material and spiritual lives in sync?

Looking out over a considerable number of greying heads, Jim pointed out that he was feeling his own retirement plans were under siege right now. "What's our future?" he asked. "I've been putting money into RRSPs since I was 20 years old, but I'm thinking that my earlier expectations of quality of life – dollars in the bank, trips to Florida – may not hold. A lot of my retirement will be spent in Baie d'Urfé! Not a bad thing, and you know what? My retirement will be way better with Union Church here. If I put a thousand dollars into a GIC at 4% right now, do you know what I'd get out of it at year's end? Forty bucks! Wow! I get a LOT more than \$40 per year out of Union.¹"

"Maybe my contributions to this Church are in themselves part of retirement planning., and more relevant still. So I'm going to try and put an extra \$1000 into Union Church – luckily, my family is already clothed out of Boutique 24 (the Church's nearly new shop,)" quipped Jim.

"If Union Church went down the drain, I'd wish I'd sought a payback on THIS investment. This Church is at the cutting edge of where Christianity should be in future. Union challenges me about my life. I'm in science. Where my science is taking me is I gotta pay more attention to my spirituality. New ways of seeing things are happening here. I don't see them happening elsewhere."

"I think we are starting to have the feeling this Church is going somewhere. It's something good. Life is complex. There are no silver bullets, instant solutions to complex problems. We each have some explanation to these problems. We have to go back and think what each of us can do without throwing wet blankets on ideas with stuff like, 'Yes but we did that in 1957 and it didn't work.' Maybe things have changed since 1957.

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Judy: "We (alone) are not the board. We are not alone. We have love for each other. In January we will have a further meeting on this. "

Jack: " The church may look the same outside, but it is not what it was in our parents' time."

¹ Editor Al's note: And you might not even have much of your original \$1000 left either, if in the bank – but there's the average 45% tax rebate on charitable donations, making Union Church an even better investment!