

FCNC Financial Obligation overview and background

NCYM (under our previous structure) was not as transparent as we could have been. We didn't do a good job of communicating all the wonderful ministries that God blessed us with, nor did we promote them sufficiently to elicit proper funding from our membership, often relying too much on trust funds from the past. This meant that WE were not actually fully funding our ministries; they were actually partially supported by dead people. Though there were some obvious benefits, at the same time, we were not learning to sacrificially GIVE, nor to take responsibility. I hope this memo will serve as a step in fostering integrity, increasing transparency, and better communicating the good things that we (Friends Church of North Carolina) have and can accomplish together. My desire is that this document will help improve our unity and facilitate accomplishing God's work - work that we can accomplish together, that which we could not do individually.

Askings was a Quaker term for a member's financial contribution to our larger organization - now, Friends Church of North Carolina, and now referred to as "financial obligation". This mechanism is necessary to fund our financial commitments and Christ's ministries that we have corporately agreed to support. Friends Church of North Carolina is a member-supported organization.

Let's back up in time to better understand where we have been, where we are, and where we're going? A couple years ago, the annual amount, per member, of our askings, was \$118. In 2019, it's now \$62 (2020 proposed amount is \$63.25).

What changed in the last couple years? About half of the \$118 went towards helping to fund the pastor's retirement fund. The pastor's retirement fund was subsequently suspended and ultimately liquidated. Those pastors who had already accrued benefits were paid (lump sum or annuity) and that was the end of the NCYM retirement fund - it no longer exists. It is now up to each local meeting to fund their pastor's retirement - as part of each pastor's comprehensive compensation package. That's a big change. I strongly encourage each local meeting to review the pastor's compensation package because each pastor received a pay cut in 2017 by virtue of termination of the retirement plan. Note the pastors are also no longer have health insurance provided by the Yearly Meeting.

The annual financial obligation is currently \$62 (2019). Let me attempt to better define what this financial commitment represents (and also what it doesn't represent). The annual financial obligation of \$62 per member is not a financial obligation of your local meeting. The annual financial obligation of \$62 is the responsibility (I would argue opportunity) of each member - to support and contribute to the ministries that God has called us to. We are not a top-down organization - individuals make up our organization - we are the Church. (Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27)

The annual amount of the financial obligation is currently \$62. I prefer to look at financial matters monthly; I don't pay my mortgage annually, I budget and pay for it monthly. The monthly financial obligation is \$5.17 - that's really not a large number when you think

about it - especially considering that the Church is the only organization started by and supported by Jesus Christ.

Let's break down the \$5.17 monthly financial obligation and see where it goes:

\$2.81 per month goes to support our commitment to Quaker Lake and our portion of the financial manager's salary. I put these two together because they are not discretionary - they are part of the agreement when we divided NCYM into 2 organizations. NCFE members are also obligated to pay their portion (25%). I feel strongly about the great work that Quaker Lake does - each and every year, but even if I personally did not agree with all the great ministries that take place there, integrity and commitment would require me, as a Christian, to keep my word and fund these obligations.

\$1.52 per month goes to support FCNC ministries. This includes Friends Campus Ministries, young Friends, young adults, MOWA, evangelism, and others.

61 cents per month supports our FCNC web site as well as social media outreach. Technology has changed and our outreach needs to change as well and this is our attempt to use our website and social media to communicate with our members and to reach out to our communities to help our organization grow and thrive. I truly believe we need to improve our outreach and growth. A few years ago there were about 10,000 Friends in North Carolina, today there are about 4,000. Organizations are either growing or declining - it is clear which path we have been on for a number of years. Let's change that!

23 cents per month goes for mostly administrative items such as insurance (liability and casualty), an annual audit, office expense (e.g. utilities), ministers benefits (i.e., long-term disability and life insurance) and miscellaneous.

We have nothing in our financial commitments for staff or leadership, which I think is a serious mistake. Everything rises and falls on leadership.

\$5.17 per month per member. I don't think \$5.17 would even get you a large cup of coffee at Starbucks.

I want to conclude with a few questions for you:

Are you as an individual in prayerful consideration of your tithes and offerings?

Are you as an individual managing your personal finances in a Godly way - being a good steward of the monies God has entrusted you with?

Have you as an individual set a monthly budget that is in keeping with Godly priorities - supporting your family and the church (Malachi 3:10)

What is your giving percentage? The Bible encourages us to give 10% minimum to the church.

What is your attitude about giving - the Bible encourages us to be a cheerful giver.

Ministry is an opportunity not a burden.

We understand that there was a lot of faith lost in previous years. While this is a grave concern, members need to remember that this is a brand new day, and a new organization. If the people of FCNC do not support this organization it will never gain enough of a foothold to make an impact, and if it does not make an impact, it will become a detriment, and it will die. We will also remind you that the current level of financial obligation is only \$0.17 per day per reported member. Please be in prayer about our ministries and how each of us can individually, and corporately, answer God's call in both our meetings and communities.

We also submit the following suggestions to encourage growth and improve financial stewardship.

Each meeting should follow God's plan for growth and outreach in their respective communities. It is apparent that our meetings are struggling with growth and outreach. It is one of the primary purposes of the church; to spread the good news and disciple new believers.

Each member plays a vital role in funding God's ministries that we are corporately a part of.

Please also consider hosting and teaching a personal finance class in each respective meeting. One example is the "financial peace university" class; a Biblically based personal finance class that is DVD driven and easy to facilitate. This class, and others like it, serve several essential purposes: encourages church members to maintain a Biblical lifestyle, increases awareness of God's plan for our finances, reaches out to the communities we serve by providing a tangible ministry, and increases tithes and offerings as members adjust their priorities from the temporal to the eternal. Recent surveys indicate the average Christian gives about 2% to the church - the same level of giving that non-Christians give to charity. Let's change that!

Respectfully submitted

Your finance committee