THE BRIDGE

Issue 1 • September 2026

A Letter from UMFNE President Ted Crass

Welcome to The Bridge: Connecting You to Stronger Ministry



Dear Friends,

Everywhere I go, I love to talk about the Foundation's ministries! It's not uncommon to have folks ask me a variety of questions:

How can my church fundraise more for ministry, or secure a grant to support what we're already doing? What does it actually look like to partner with the Foundation? Would you ever sit down with our committees?

Those are the types of questions that drive our team. We come to work every day thinking about how we can best be a catalyst for your church's ministry and help you and your teams.

Because we want to make sure our ideas and learning reach you when and where you need it, this month we are excited to introduce *The Bridge,* a newsletter that contains short segments designed to stimulate your thinking and to convey news you can use.

Each issue, we will highlight a different aspect of church ministry that can help you more effectively organize and lead. This month our focus is stewardship.

We hope that as you read, you will also consider each issue an invitation to engage with us. Send us an email or call us with your questions, feedback, and experiences, so that we can share our collective learning together.

What has worked well for you? What would you do differently? Where have you and your congregation experienced God's presence as you seek to share the love of Christ?

We look forward to sharing this newsletter with you!

Yours in Christ,
Ted



Monthly Tip

Make Sure Your Numbers Tell a Story

“Tell me the facts and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. Tell me a story and it’ll live in my heart forever.”

This familiar proverb is especially true when sharing the annual ministry budget in the local church. While spreadsheets can look impressive, they don't share the missional stories shaping those numbers.

Sharing stories of impact is essential because that is what inspires generosity. Use a narrative budget and stories in worship, the newsletter, and devotions to share how God is at work in your context. For more about creating a narrative budget, check out our video library.

Watch Video

From the Vine to Foundation: A Full-Circle Story



A dentist named Thomas Welch had a problem.

It was 1869 and his Methodist church still served wine at communion even though he'd sworn off alcohol after watching what it did to families and communities.

Welch had been reading about Louis Pasteur's new theories on germs, and he wondered: what if he cooked the juice from the Concord grapes in his Vineland, New Jersey backyard, sealed it, and

heated it again? Would it stay unfermented?

Read More



“Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart.”

— 2 Corinthians 9:7

Stewardship as a Spiritual Discipline

How a Pastor Reframed the Annual Campaign, and Why It Worked

By Rev. Dr. David Abbott

As Rev. Victoria Volker of First UMC in Lincoln, Maine, participated in the Foundation’s Generous Church Leadership Program, she was also preparing for her congregation’s annual spring finance campaign.

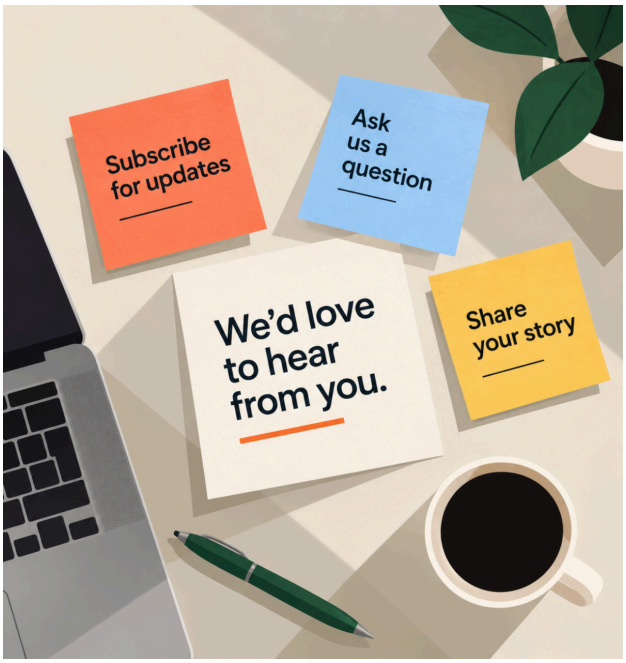
Prayerfully blending her own reflections on generosity with the program’s readings and conversations, she wrote a stewardship letter that began with an unusual confession:

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Our Only Ask to You: Subscribe. Ask. Share.

If someone forwarded you the newsletter and you'd like to get on our mailing list for future issues, **subscribe here.**

But don't stop there. We want to hear from you. Ask your finance, stewardship, or real estate questions. Share what's happening in your ministry: whether it's a special project or someone whose faith has stood out. You can reach us at **info@umfne.org.**



Upcoming Events

The Foundation offers programs for church leaders, clergy, and laypeople alike. Visit **UMFNE.org** for more information about upcoming events, programs, and opportunities to connect.

- **Putting Your House In Order: Next Steps and Investment Options:** September 15
- **Putting Your House In Order,** September 19 (Richmond, ME)
- **Innovate, Integrate, Elevate Extended**, October 10 – 12
- **Putting Your House In Order**, October 11 (Cape Cod)
- **Putting Your House In Order**, October 18 (Woburn, MA)
- **Office Hours with the Wesley Development Group,** October 20
- **Stewardship Preaching Institute Webinar**: Bill Lepp, November 4

United Methodist Foundation
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