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Dear Pastor Curt and Mapleton, St. John's United Methodist Church,

God's grace and peace to you! I shared my gratitude with Pastor Curt during his professional interview, but I would also like to directly thank your congregation for your faithfulness and generosity in your apportionment giving – you are on track to be a 100% Apportionment Congregation for 2023!

I am so proud of your congregation's longstanding faithfulness to the work of the United Methodist Church. It is our distinct Wesleyan understanding that our congregations are connected to each other: we support each other in good and lean years, we know we are not alone in our work of transforming the world and growing as disciples, and our collective witness in pooling our financial resources helps us do so much more greater good locally and throughout the world than a single congregation could ever hope to do on their own.

I want share two of the many examples of how our UM connection and our faith in Christ have worked resurrection miracles in our district. This last year in Harlan, the disaffiliation process painfully split the church. Even as we blessed that original congregation to leave the denomination, the Harlan United Methodist Mission Congregation launched in February. We celebrate that over 30 folks are committed to being a United Methodist presence in Harlan. In Ogden, where the disaffiliation vote failed by a very small margin, the remnant congregation of 25 folks has grown in the last year to over 80 people in attendance. They have reclaimed their passion for being United Methodist, and their passion for being the church for their community.

Your apportionment giving was a great part in the re-birth of these congregations: by supporting the Office of Congregational Excellence and Circuit Ministry, we were able to scaffold the leadership in both places with our local circuit pastors and congregations. We were also able to deploy Annual Conference staff for practical encouragement, vision and leadership. By supporting Parish Development, funds were available at a critical time to ease the immediate financial stress. Because of your giving, we have two new vibrant and vital communities of faith, where we were in danger of having no United Methodist witness in the community. Because of your example, both of these congregations, which came from a recent heritage of withholding apportionments have now pledged their commitment to also pay their apportionments in full out of their very real gratitude and witness to how life-changing our connection is in our local communities.

I thank your congregation for helping to make this happen. I am proud to be your District Superintendent.