

## **A Tale of Two Months**

*by Tom Wilkinson, Vice President, Development*

With apologies to Charles Dickens, “It was the best of months, it was the worst of months.”

If your church is like many Florida Conference United Methodist churches, the months of December and January represent opposite ends of the giving spectrum. At many churches, people give more in December than in any other month of the year (this is true for most other charities too). Why?

- People “catch-up” on lagging pledges that were not fully paid during the previous eleven months,
- The Advent and Christmas seasons are times of year that inspire people to share their gifts with others who are less fortunate,
- People look ahead to April 15 of the following year and attempt to maximize the tax advantages of giving, sometimes by pre-paying a portion of their future pledge, and
- Church attendance is high in December, which leads to higher giving too.

Then comes January. The heady days of the holidays are past, it’s back to normal, and yes, those credit card bills start to turn up, reminders of December’s gift-buying extravagance. And in 2004, even that great American secular holiday -- the Super Bowl -- doesn’t happen until February.

So giving declines in January, unless your church has a significant number of northern winter visitors (more on that next month).

How can we respond?

- Consider paying your pledge over ten months instead of twelve – accelerating giving during the leaner months leading to the giving surge in December.
- Make stewardship a year-round emphasis. Communicate ministry successes that are made possible by the giving of church members. Say “thank you” whenever possible.
- Prayerfully listen for God’s call on your life and the resources God has given you. What is God calling you to give in response to the grace of Jesus Christ in your life and the life of your family?

The Florida United Methodist Foundation is available to help- from professionally run stewardship and capital campaigns, to planned giving and endowment programs. Please call, click or write us at 800-282-8011, extension 106, [www.fumf.org](http://www.fumf.org), or P.O. Box 3767, Lakeland, FL 33802-3767.