

## Local Church Budget

***Consumerism or service?*** December is accompanied by holiday shopping anxiety for some of us. The holiday season implies spending and keeping up with “standards” that are self-imposed or copied from the proverbial Joneses. In November 2018, the American Research Group, Inc., noted that the average American would spend \$992 on holiday gifts. This number was up from the previous year (\$983 in 2017). Single-item purchases are becoming more expensive and larger.

But something is changing. Consumers are getting fatigued with the constant drumbeat of spend, spend, spend. Movements are springing up around the idea of consuming less and living more affordably. From tiny houses to skipping gifting entirely, our society is shifting priorities. More and more people are treasuring experiences, family, and opportunities to serve instead of purchasing objects with an arbitrarily inflated value.

The Bible reminds us that “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Before the holiday season begins, let us resolve to focus on people, needs, and opportunities to serve. Let us seek those in need in our local communities and cherish the opportunities God puts in our way. We have a choice: We can continue to be consumers, or we can be providers of vital services for those vulnerable and in need.

