

**Pennsylvania Southeast Conference  
2023 Spring Meeting  
TREASURER'S REPORT**

***The Parable of Talents***

Rev. Jessica Shine was ordained to ministry by the Seventh-day Adventist Church and continues offering spiritual care as a clergy member of The CHI Interfaith Community (based in Berkeley, CA). Originally influenced by what she calls “patriarchal evangelical theology,” she now draws on broader multicultural spiritual traditions.

Shine offers an interesting perspective on Jesus’ Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Reflecting on her spiritual biography, she realizes that her “former Christianity” used this story to propagate American capitalism, which for her meant that “I earn my worth by what I produce so of course bigger is better. For a while, that was my theology too. . . .” In other words, “If you snooze, you lose.”

Reflecting on the parable anew, Shine suggests that the master is not so much a capitalist mogul but a risk taker – someone willing to take a chance to achieve something valuable (according to what he believes is valuable). Leaving town after entrusting three slaves with substantial amounts of money does indicate a certain tolerance for risk.

The first two slaves do all right; their investments yield good returns. The third slave, however, is afraid of risk: afraid to risk investing and afraid to risk his master’s anger if the talent is devalued by a poor investment. In contrast to the master’s abundance mindset (there’s plenty out there) the slave operates from a scarcity mindset (I’ve got to hold onto the little I have). So to avoid losing money he buries the talent. No risk of loss, no risk of master’s anger, he thinks.

Yet if the third slave has preserved the master’s original investment, why is the master angry? Why doesn’t he express gratitude to the slave for not losing money? Shine observes that some scholars point to a lack of engagement or relationship among the characters: the master leaves town; there’s no relationship between the master and the third slave; no relationship between the slave and the talent. Perhaps burying the talent is as much an expression of apathy as it is of risk aversion.

Shine says, “When I read this, I see Jesus, again telling a story about a kin-dom that demands relationship **first**. Relationships are risk. Relationships are hard. . . . I think Jesus is calling forth a community who are able to engage with reality, risk, and each other. . . . Jesus is teaching that community is a reflection of our relationship to the “master” (whatever that is for you). That a good teacher/leader/supervisor turns over authority to others, not to profit from their hard work, but instead to give them an opportunity to interact with risk. Because Jesus isn’t afraid of risk here. It seems that, as in the most meaningful parts of life, in this story the true enemy isn’t fear, it’s apathy. No emotion. No concern. No relationship.”

Questions for us today:

Are we living from a risk aversion mindset?

Are we apathetic or fully engaged in Jesus’ community?

Are we willing to give abundantly as a sign and reflection of the love we have found Jesus?

### Financial Facts as of December 31, 2022 and 2021

	2022	2021
Total assets	\$ 3,704,111	\$ 4,251,834
Total investments	\$ 3,308,943	\$ 3,587,845
Cash at year end	\$ 327,248	\$ 449,485
Operating income	\$ 1,158,022	\$1,124,070
Operating expenses	\$ 926,985	\$856,148
Pass through giving *	\$ 234,124	\$ 191,481

\* Pass through giving includes the four special offerings (OGHS, NIN, etc.) as well as contributions to specific ministries such as Bethany Home and the Ukraine Disaster. All gifts sent to the conference are totally forwarded to the national setting or the organization for which they are contributed – hence, pass through giving. The 22 percent increase reflects in part the \$57,216 given to support Ukraine relief, which was a new ministry in 2022.

### Auditor's Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ (a nonprofit organization), which comprise the statements of financial position as of December 31, 2022 and 2021, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ as of December 31, 2022 and 2021, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

April 19, 2023

**Herbein + Company Inc.**  
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Congratulations to Tammie Wisniewski and her colleagues for their work  
that once again earned a clean opinion auditor's report!