

U N I T E D
M E T H O D I S T
F O U N D A T I O N
O F M I C H I G A N

March 17, 2022

Dear Friends:

The investment climate is currently being disrupted. Inflation, rising interest rates, market volatility, and global tensions are creating economic shifts. All of these factors result in both new opportunities and risks for investors. Understandably, some people feel unsettled about the present investment state. You may be among those people! We experience firsthand the economic impact of rising gas prices, grocery store checkout totals, and consumer costs. We can easily be swept into an emotional spiral that causes us to fixate on market swings. A common visual reference to this impassioned response is the image of a roller coaster with investors riding the ups and downs. Our emotional response to the financial markets is not a new phenomenon. The challenge is to remain objective so that decisions are based on proven trends, solid research, and seasoned counsel.

However, the church faces even more complications. Church attendance in some churches has not fully rebounded to levels prior to the pandemic. Pastors have faced daunting leadership responsibilities for the past two years in the midst of the pandemic. Church leaders are realizing growing financial challenges as they seek to fulfill their mission and vision. We are met with inflationary costs and may feel pressure to realign the distribution of income to pay for required expenses. As this pressure grows, church leaders may fall victim to the cycle of scarcity. However, a faith-filled response is built on a belief in sufficiency and abundance. Jesus said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (II Corinthians 11:9)

We encourage church leaders to adhere to a consistent, long-term investment posture – one which follows a disciplined strategy and maintains a value-aligned, diversified portfolio. Now is a time to lean into the wisdom of investment advisors and fund managers who consistently urge institutional investors, like the local church, to hold steady and to offer a calming presence. We are reminded of a biblical witness to this effect. Jesus, the disciples, and others headed across the waters in a boat. As a storm arose, the disciples panicked and woke Jesus. He, in turn, calmed the seas and said, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40) May his questioning of the disciples cause us pause to recall the covenants of our Christian faith.

Above all, remember that the geopolitical tensions of our world are one of the primary reasons for the immediate, short-term market volatility. By international accounts, the invasion of Ukraine is taking a horrific toll on all aspects of human community, culture, and life. I implore you to pray unceasingly for the abiding peace of Jesus Christ to permeate our global community and for the promise of the Holy Spirit to surround the millions of men, women, and children who are impacted by the devastation of this violent conflict.

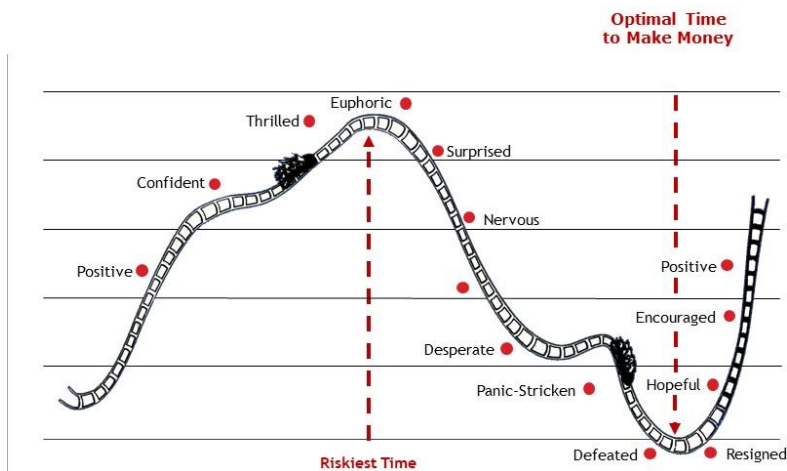
As always, the Foundation staff is available to assist with socially responsible investment options, generosity consultation, and stewardship coaching. Please feel free to reach out to us.

Blessings,



David S. Bell
David@UMFMichigan.org

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