



**August 2020: ONLY FIVE LOAVES  
AND TWO FISH — TWELVE BASKETS  
LEFT OVER**

Written by Rev. Dr. David M. Wendel  
*Based on Matthew 14:13-21*

The most challenging time for congregations financially is often the end of summer. June, July and August usually find parishioners away from Sunday worship — away from the gathered community, which unfortunately means a drop in offerings. And what about this year, when in most places the gathered worshipping communities have not been “gathered —” at least, not gathered in the church nave for worship? And for those congregations who have been able to gather for worship for a few weeks, it generally means not passing the offering plates. It remains to be seen whether COVID-19, the summer months, social distancing and the lack of normal worship services causes congregational offerings to drop more than usual as the summer draws to a close. Some have been predicting a potential 20% drop in congregational giving since the pandemic began. Some have suggested giving to the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) will reflect a similar downturn. Some have taken measures to address fears of a serious loss of income from giving.

What are we hearing from our congregations in this regard? Surprisingly, and one might say miraculously, what we are hearing is that congregational offerings in some places seem to be **up** by 20%! How can this be?

As with the disciples gathered with Jesus and more than 5,000 people on the seashore, it seems that some of our members are responding to the need created by the pandemic by placing their resources in the Lord’s hands, that mission and ministry may continue and, indeed, be multiplied. This is the great miracle and message of the feeding of more than 5,000. In the Lord’s hands, as He takes our humble loaves and fish and blesses them, they satisfy human need yet still provide sufficient remains for the Church — a hint, manifested by the 12 baskets full left over — 12 being the number of the Church, founded upon the 12 apostles. What an encouraging message for us as disciples and followers of Jesus, for our congregations and the NALC!

By all indicators, we are not yet through the COVID-19 pandemic and there may indeed be financial stresses and strains within congregations and the NALC as a whole. And yet, let us be faithful stewards, as we are able, in this season of trial, uncertainty and challenge. In a time of great need and stress, the disciples of Jesus respond generously and sacrificially. Thanks be to God!



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