

Methodist giving rises despite member loss: Contributions up over \$4 million

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Giving to the United Methodist Church in the United States was up nearly 4 percent in 2004 despite a net membership decline of more than 69,000, church officials said.

Methodists contributed \$116.8 million to the church's seven main funds, up \$4.4 million from 2003. Combined with their contributions to other funds, the church members' giving totaled \$159.3 million for various church programs.

The church counted just under 8.2 million members in the U.S., a drop of 69,141 from 2003. The church has an additional 1.9 million members in Europe, Africa and Asia, with the highest-reported growth in Africa.

Of the \$159.3 million in total giving, about \$1.6 million went to relief efforts for South Asia tsunami victims. Because the disaster occurred late in the year, church officials said much of the relief effort will be reported in 2005 figures. *-Religion News Service*