


FEBRUARY newsletter



in view
of God's
mercy

CONNECT WITH PASTOR GOFF

Recently I got new glasses. As soon as I walked out of the optical office I knew something wasn't right. My vision was blurry. (I'm pretty sure that's not what's supposed to happen when you get new glasses!) It didn't take long for me to figure out what was wrong. I have progressive lenses but the prescription in the lenses wasn't lined up correctly. If I look straight out, my vision was blurry. But, if I tilted my head a certain way, then I could see clearly. I immediately went back and requested an adjustment. Whether you wear corrective lenses or not, you know that when your vision is blurry everything seems distorted.



Later this month, we enter the season of Lent. Lent is especially a time in the church where the focus of our vision is on repentance and self-reflection. However, as baptized people our repentance and self-reflection is done through the lens of God's mercy. With that in mind, our Lenten theme this year is **"In View of God's Mercy"** from Romans 12:1-2; *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God . . . be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ."*

Daily we battle with sin. We cannot, nor will we ever, defeat the enemy (the devil, the world, our own sinful flesh). But even as we struggle with sin, we deal with it **"in view of God's mercy"** because of the victory of Jesus given to us. For the six Wednesdays in Lent, we will look at our lives through the lens of God's love toward us through Jesus. Here are the individual themes we will focus on in our mid-week services:

- **February 22 – Ash Wednesday** ***"Repentance . . . In View of God's Mercy"***
- **March 1** ***"Relationships . . . In View of God's Mercy"***
- **March 8** ***"Betrayal . . . In View of God's Mercy"***
- **March 15** ***"Temptation . . . In View of God's Mercy"***
- **March 22** ***"Suffering . . . In View of God's Mercy"***
- **March 29** ***"Service . . . In View of God's Mercy"***

Two other notes about our mid-week Lent worship services:

- Each week there will be two worship times – **11:00a and 7:00p**
- On **Ash Wednesday, there will be a meal** at 12:00p (following the 11:00a worship service) and at 6:00p (prior to the 7:00p worship service.) Team Tandem, led by Mary and Jerry Nichols, will provide the noon lunch. The evening meal will be prepared and served by St. Michael high school youth and their parents. A donation is suggested to help cover the cost of the meal. Please take advantage of these additional times for fellowship.



Together we go through this season of Lent
"in view of God's mercy"
on our way to the cross of Good Friday.....
and the empty tomb of Easter Sunday.

CONNECT WITH PASTOR SHAWN

BEING CHRIST HANDS AND FEET

Matthew 25:25-46

"...For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me..."

If you're following our New Testament reading plan one of the first readings in February, Jesus shares how we can be a part of his mission by being his hands and feet to those around us. As we move further into 2023, we are working to identify ways that we as a congregation can be the hands and feet of Christ to those in need in our communities.

One of those ways is to help with the needs of the hungry. Fort Wayne has several areas that could be considered food deserts. These are places around the city where residents live more than a mile away from affordable groceries and nutritional produce. We have several food pantries and partners-in-ministry that assist with the need for food in these areas.



"in view of
God's mercy"



This year we will concentrate on two organizations that are tackling food crises in our city: NINE (Northeast Indiana Neighborhood Engagement) and New Life Lutheran food pantry. Both are looking for nonperishable food items. To learn more about NINE contact Dawn Buuck (804-1294 or tomordawn@msn.com) and to learn more about New Life Lutheran food pantry contact Jeanie Berger at (804-1013 jemberger@msn.com).

St. Michael is going to help these organizations during the months of **February, July, and November by collecting GREEN BEANS AND CANNED CHICKEN.** You can drop off food at the info desk or in the labeled basket by the office.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SERIES

Saturday, February 4, 8:30-10:00a in the Sanctuary

EVERYONE is invited to hear Pastor Robin Dugall speak on leading through living out God's plan for your life. Pastor Dugall serves at Emmanuel Lutheran Church and School in Loveland, Colorado. He is also a professor at Concordia University, Irvine, and Azusa Pacific University. **Pastor Dugall will also be guest preaching at St. Michael on February 4/5.** If you want additional information, contact Celine Newman, Director of Belonging, or one of the pastors.

NEWS FROM STEPHANIE

*O Lord, our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens!
Out of the mouths of babies and infants you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger. Psalm 8:1-2*

Can you believe that God uses the praise of babies to silence the enemy?! This past Sunday I was sitting behind twin, second-grade boys. They were so engaged in the message that when Pastor Goff asked "Isn't that amazing?" they responded "Yes!" As the congregation chuckled, the little boy hid his head in his mom's shirt, embarrassed. But why? I hope he continues to speak out, be engaged in worship, and sing out! This is what it means to worship like a little child; uninhibited, full of joy, focused! When we worship, Satan loses his grip on us. As we praise and acknowledge God as majestic, powerful, and present, our worries, fears, and idols fall away. *Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His mercy and grace!*

FEBRUARY MUSIC REHEARSALS

Monday – BELLS

4:00p Grace Notes

6:00p Harmony Ringers

7:00p Resound

Tuesday – BANDS

Life Song, New Song, King's Strings

Wednesday – CHOIR

6:30p Women's Choir (2/1, 2/15)

Men's Choir (2/8, 2/22)

7:00p Adult Choir

Thursday – BLUE GRASS

7:00p

ORCHESTRA REHEARSALS RETURN!

Mark your calendar now to join our orchestra as they prepare for Easter and Confirmation.

Dates and times: Thursdays, March 2 and 16 at 6:00p

Wednesday, March 22 at 8:00p

Saturday, April 8 at 9:00a



You are welcome to request a packet of music (hymns and songs to accompany the choir) by contacting our music director, Stephanie Maxson, at stephanie@stmfw.org. Thank you for passing this information on to instrumentalists you know!

ESM MUSIC AT ST. MICHAEL

Come support our ESM students as they share their musical talents at these upcoming events held at St. Michael:

March 3 TALENT SHOW at 7:00p

April 21 MUSICAL (Grades 4 and 5) at 7:00p

ACADEMY NEWS

Join us for our **ANNUAL FUNDRAISER DINNER AND CONCERT** on Saturday, March 4 at 6:30p. Cost is \$10. Our goal is to raise enough money to provide 10 scholarships (\$3,200) for the coming year! Check your parish notes for more details soon. Please register at stmfw.org/events.

SATURDAY BAND LINE-UP

February 4 Life Song **February 11** New Song **February 18** King's Strings **February 25** Life Song

BELONG BECOME BLESS

FAMILY MINISTRY FROM CARRIE

February is often thought of as the month for **love**. As Christians, we know that the **love** of Jesus is not just limited to one month out of the year! He **loves** us yesterday, today, and forever! February is a good month for us to remember to show **love** to others and to thank God for the **love** He gives to us. Families can use the month of February to help remind their children of God's **love** and the **love** within the family with some fun and simple crafts. Here are a few ideas:



- Make a love banner—Cut out pennant shapes and write the name of people that you love on them. Decorate with stickers and other fun items and hang it up somewhere in your home.
- Write love letters to Jesus telling him why you love Him and thanking Him for all He's done for you. This can also be done during your daily prayers if your children aren't yet old enough to write.
- Cut out paper hearts and decorate one for each of the first 14 days of February (or all 28!) Write Scripture verses about love to point out God's love for us and/or write reasons why you love your child on them. Hang one up each day on your front door or on bedroom doors so your children can be reminded of all the reasons why they are cherished and loved, not only by you, but by their Lord and Savior! Here are some verses to use: 1 John 4:7, 1 Corinthians 13:4, Romans 12:10, Luke 6:35a, John 3:16, Mark 12:30, John 13:34, 1 John 4:19, 1 Corinthians 13:13.



February 11 is our Family Fun brunch! We'll be having a pancake bar, a yogurt bar, and some fun crafts and games. Registration is required by February 5 so we can buy supplies and food. You can register at stmfw.org under the Family Fun Brunch! Don't delay as this event is capped at 15 families!

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL NEEDS

VBS is coming sooner than you think and we are starting to prepare for decorations and supplies! We need your paper boxes! If your company buys paper reams in bulk, please save the boxes and bring them to church for VBS!



Do you crochet? We are looking for some talented people to make and donate some dragon figures for VBS prizes. Contact Carrie at carrie@stmfw.org with questions!

COMMUNITY AWARENESS



February is American Heart Month! Understanding risk factors for heart disease and how to live a heart-healthy lifestyle are a part of practicing self-care for the body God gave you! Check out <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/education/american-heart-month>. While you're at it, care for someone else's heart! February 12-19 is Random Acts of Kindness Week. Acts can be informal and simple, share a smile, open a door, greet someone or share an act of kindness in your own home!

THANK YOU!

Thank you for all the cards and phone calls that I received for my birthday! God has blessed us with a caring church!

Dorothy Smith

February 2023

BELONG BECOME BLESS

THOUGHTS FROM CELINE

Recently, I was enjoying breakfast at Spyros, a nearby diner with delicious food and quality service. While enjoying company and conversation at the table I noted that my coffee cup was never less than halfway full. This wasn't due to my lack of drinking the coffee. Rather it was clear that the staff were trained to actively be on the lookout for anyone who needed a refill. If they had a pot of coffee in their hand and were walking across the dining room floor, they would take notice and approach politely to ask if we wanted more. Never forced or assumed, but always offered. We were never in need of more coffee.

What a beautiful and simple way of serving. Knowing that you have something to provide and as you go - being ready to give. Never forced or assumed, but always offered with kindness and respect. I began to wonder what it would look like if we were like that...if St. Michael was a place where we never let someone's cup go below halfway without offering to fill it up.



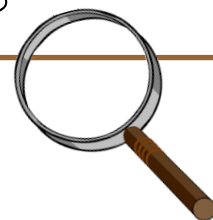
I do mean literal cups of coffee, but so much more as well. I also mean those metaphorical cups—self-esteem, importance, safety, belonging, value, connection, purpose. Those are big things and it is easy for us to think to ourselves, “I don't know that person. It might be awkward if I approach them.” But think about that restaurant again. It is a very acceptable practice to expect only your server to be the one who is serving you. After all, you have formed a relationship with them and when you leave your tip, they are the ones that will receive it. But then the customer's experience is completely reliant on the one server, and their skills, and the type of day they are having. Sometimes it will excel and sometimes it will fall short. If we allow ourselves to be dismissed from the responsibility of filling up someone's cup (because we don't know them or it's not our responsibility) then we are missing out on an opportunity to be the Church, the Body of Christ that meets the needs of those around and amongst us.

It is important that we remember that being amongst Christians doesn't mean that somehow magically and without cause, my cup is filled to the point of overflowing. It means that I am amongst a group of people that believe in the value of every person because of what Christ has done for them. It means that we choose actions that show we follow a teacher who, time and time again, stopped for those with low cups to fill them up.

At St. Michael, we have a mission to fill. To connect people to Jesus and to others. Let's continue and increase in our work to take notice when someone needs a hug, a smile, or recognition. Let's work towards remembering each other's names. Asking someone to join in for lunch plans. Let's take the time to learn about their families and their struggles and make a point of celebrating milestones and achievements. Let's be sure that they know where the bathrooms are and where to get the coffee and that they are invited to sit with us. Let's do this here at St. Michael as well as beyond these walls.

Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Based on the gift each one has received; use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. 1 Peter 4:9-10

St. Michael is creating a hospitality team that will foster a culture of welcoming people with respect and dignity, creating safe spaces, and providing rest and refreshment. If you are interested, please contact our Director of Belonging - Celine Newman, celine@stmfw.org.



“in view of God's mercy”

BELONG

J.O.Y. GROUP (Just Older Youth 55 and older!)

Tuesday, February 7/21

Pastor Bruckner leads us in Bible Study the first and third Tuesdays!

Tuesday, February 21 free lunch and Bible study

Join us for lunch at 11:30 in Luther Hall!

Tuesday, March 21

Join us at 11:30a for a \$5 lunch! Register with Janet and Jim Maxson at 438-7442. Bible study will follow.

Mark your calendar for Thursday, April 13 at 12:00p for Movie Day! Bring a lunch and enjoy snacks and drinks on JOY.

PRAYING FOR OUR NATION—February 1/15

Join us at 1:30p in the Lobby as we pray for our leaders and our nation. We will meet regularly on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Please connect with Christine Harrison for more information and to engage in this ministry (charrison75@comcast.net).

PURLS—February 7/21



This fun group meets from 1:00p-3:00p on the first and third Tuesday of each month. Everyone who knits, crochets or wants to learn is welcome to join! The St. Michael PURLS knit and crochet shawls that are available to give to a person who is ill, suffering a loss, or in the midst of a life crisis. A supply of shawls is available in the lobby for members to take and present to someone in need. Direct your questions to Pat Armstrong through the church office.

COFFEE BREAK WOMEN'S STUDY—February 8/22

New members welcome! We will meet the second and fourth Wednesday from 9:15a-10:45a in Luther Hall over coffee and God's Word as we study *Rediscover Jesus*. Questions? Contact Janet Olson at jmo11434@gmail.com. If you're planning ahead, mark your calendars for March 8/22 and April 12/26.



BOOK CLUB—Thursday, February 16, at 10:00a

Book club will meet the third Thursday of the month in the conference room. Join this fun group and discuss *Wish You Were Here* by Jodi Picoult.

WOMEN IN MISSION AT ST. MICHAEL—February 5 at 12:00p

We will enjoy lunch, fellowship, and a guest speaker, Kim Trombley, Executive Director of Shepherd's Hand. This event is sponsored by the LWML of St. Michael. Please register at stmfw.org/events.



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TURN IN YOUR LWML MITES—February 4/5

Lutheran Women in Mission collects mites for mission grants that benefit many ministries, including some in Fort Wayne. Along with giving cash, checks can be written to St. Michael with LWML mites in the memo line.

BELONG

CONNECT GROUPS

If you are willing to lead a group or have questions, please contact our Director of Belonging, Celine Newman. If you would like to get connected to a group go to <https://stmfw.org/connect>.

MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST—February 18 in the Gym

All men are invited to attend this group to share in breakfast, devotion, and prayer. We meet at 8:00a on the third Saturday of each month. For more information, contact Dennis Brink at 238-4046 or Dennis.Brink@att.net.

LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

The mission of St. Michael's Lutherans for Life (LFL) Team is to equip our Church to be a gospel-driven champion of life from conception to natural death. For more information, contact Dennis Brink at 238-4046 or Dennis.Brink@att.net.



The St. Michael Life Team works towards the mission of equipping St. Michael members and their neighbors to be gospel-motivated voices for life affirming messages from conception to natural death. We are thankful for them and their work! As they work towards this mission the Life Team asks that you take a few minutes to **complete a survey**, so that they can best understand how to serve our congregation and neighbors. You can use this QR code to get the survey online or pick up a paper survey at the information center.

EMMANUEL-ST. MICHAEL LUTHERAN SCHOOL

ESM KINDERGARTEN & PRESCHOOL INFORMATION AND ENROLLMENT SESSIONS

Are you exploring Preschool or Kindergarten options for your child? Do you have a friend or neighbor who is looking for an excellent school for their family? With a long history of academic achievement, Emmanuel – St. Michael Lutheran School exceeds the standard for excellence of education in northeast Indiana. However, at ESM we hope to provide even more. In partnership with families, that foundation of faith, academic excellence, and preparation for a life of service and leadership is formed. Come learn more! **REGISTER ONLINE** at www.esmeagles.com.

KINDERGARTEN Information and Enrollment Sessions:

- Wednesday, February 15
- 6:30p-8:00p | Getz Road Campus - 2131 Getz Road



PRESCHOOL Information and Enrollment Sessions:

- Thursday, February 2 | Getz Road Campus - 2131 Getz Road
OR Thursday, February 9 | Union Street Campus - 1123 Union Street
- 6:30p-7:30p
- Information session for parents



QUESTIONS? - Contact Erin Clark, Director of Admissions | 260.422.6712 | eclark@esmeagles.com | www.esmeagles.com.

YOUTH WITH EMMA

Some of you may be wondering...What is a DCE Intern? It's someone who is looking to work full time in ministry! The internship process is unique because it is a partnership between the intern and the church. During this year, I will be able to learn about full-time ministry, learn new management skills, and develop as a leader.

During this year, I will have quarterly goals. My primary goal for this quarter is to begin building relationships with members of the school, youth, families, and all members. Therefore, if you are interested in getting to know more about me or the internship process I would love to talk over coffee or a meal after church or during the week! Here is a link to my calendar to meet up: https://calendly.com/dce_intern_emma.

YOUTH NIGHTS

A time of fellowship and faith with friends!

High School
February 5

Middle School
February 19

Can you provide a breakfast casserole for High School Youth Night (February 5)? If you have any questions about dinner or recipes contact Lisa Schaefer at (260) 409-5662.

WINTER JAM—February 2

Winter Jam is an annual concert tour featuring several Christian artists. For middle school, high school, and parents, come and spend time with others praising God and singing! To RSVP, please contact Lisa Schaefer at (260) 409-5662 or Emma (emma@stmfw.org).

LOCK-IN—February 17

High School Youth, mark your calendars for 7:00p-12:00a! A night of fun and fellowship with food, games, and mystery! To RSVP, please contact Lisa Schaefer at (260) 409-5662 or Emma (emma@stmfw.org).

LENTEN DINNER—February 22

The youth at St. Michael will be helping prepare and serve the Lenten meal on Ash Wednesday, February 22. The main course is a walking taco! If you are able to donate, please consider beef, chips, and other toppings.

"in view of God's mercy"



ST. MICHAEL FOUNDATION

17TH ANNUAL FOUNDATION AWARD PROPOSAL REQUESTS ARE OPEN!

Requests for funds will be received until 6:00p on Saturday, April 1. Awards will be announced on the weekend of April 29/30. Awards will be made from designated funds and the general endowment to fund church and mission causes. Applications are encouraged to expand the mission and ministry of SMLC. Submit an explanation letter to the St. Michael Foundation in care of Ron Menze, Foundation Advisor (menzeron@gmail.com) (341-5289) or into the Foundation mail slot at church. Electronic submissions are encouraged. We encourage applicants to work with existing ministries and church groups to craft your application. Each foundation application is evaluated by our Pastors and six designated church officers. In the prior sixteen years over \$130,000 has been awarded by your foundation. Please make this year a success with your foundation applications and your financial gifts to the Foundation.

ST. MICHAEL FINANCIAL UPDATE

January to December 2022

<u>INCOME</u>	Actual	Budgeted	Actual vs budget
Offerings	\$ 1,477,814	\$ 1,632,730	\$ (154,916)
Facility	\$ 6,181	\$ 7,500	\$ (1,319)
Interest	\$ 6,442	\$ -	\$ 6,442
Grants ¹	\$ 36,122	\$ 51,985	\$ (15,863)
Fellowship	\$ 987	\$ -	\$ 987
ESM/CLHS Support	\$ 4,597	\$ -	\$ 4,597
Misc.	\$ 9,201	\$ 6,100	\$ 3,101
Total Income	\$ 1,541,344	\$ 1,698,315	\$ (156,971)
<u>EXPENSES</u>			
Missions	\$ 24,718	\$ 37,543	\$ (12,825)
Education	\$ 643,800	\$ 648,150	\$ (4,350)
Youth & Family	\$ 11,923	\$ 21,300	\$ (9,377)
Administrative	\$ 46,301	\$ 48,651	\$ (2,350)
Pastoral Support	\$ 6,240	\$ 9,120	\$ (2,880)
Worship	\$ 12,528	\$ 18,320	\$ (5,792)
Boards & Committees ²	\$ 19,109	\$ 12,450	\$ 6,659
Utilities, Maintenance & Supplies	\$ 170,314	\$ 177,018	\$ (6,704)
Salaries	\$ 474,207	\$ 536,447	\$ (62,240)
Taxes and Benefits	\$ 139,266	\$ 180,116	\$ (40,850)
Nursery, Gym Setup, Worship	\$ 6,397	\$ 9,200	\$ (2,803)
Total Expenses	\$ 1,554,803	\$ 1,698,315	\$ (143,512)
Net Income (Loss)	\$ (13,459)	\$ -	\$ (13,459)

1. St. Michael received the full amount of the budgeted grant amount for 2022. As a result of the audit, the accounting of the grant was changed.
2. In 2022, we celebrated Stephanie Maxson's 25 years of ministry and welcomed Pastor Dennis Goff as our Senior Pastor.

Thanks to the Lord for His abundant provisions and for your support of St. Michael ministries! In December, we received over \$182,000 in offerings—approximately \$60,000 more than previous months—which ends the year for St. Michael in a much more favorable financial position.

FAQ

How do I get my 2022 Offering Statement?

1. Check your email. Statements were emailed on January 12.
2. If you can't find it, check out the instructions in [January's newsletter](#) (page 12) or email jmlee3@gmail.com.

How do I increase my online offering?

You can email our financial secretary at jmlee3@gmail.com with the following information:

- The current amount and the new amount you want to increase it to
- The effective date of the increase



Why did my online offering remain the same even though my 2023 pledge was increased from 2022?

First, thank you for committing to support St. Michael Ministries. Your pledge does not give us authority to increase or decrease your offerings. We are happy to assist you, but we will need you to email jmlee3@gmail.com with the current offering, new offering, and effective date.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Tammy Bruns, Executive Director, at tammy@stmfw.org.

BELONG BECOME BLESS

BELONG BECOME BLESS

LWML NEWS

Plans are in the works for the **National Convention in Milwaukee, WI, June 21-25**. Indiana District has a bus reserved to pick us up in Fort Wayne, deliver us to the convention and bring us home. The cost of the bus is \$150, so if you want to reserve a spot, let Linda Chapman (417-3052) know as soon as possible. Online registration for the convention itself is now available at <https://www.lwml.org/2023-convention>.

The Indiana District Retreat will be April 13-14 in Brown County. **The speakers will be Lewis and Joy King, and their ministry of NINE** (Northeast Indiana Neighborhood Engagement). Contact Linda Chapman if interested in attending.

REDEMPTION HOUSE

St. Michael will provide meals for the ladies of Redemption House on February 4 / March 4 on Wayne Street and February 19 / March 19 at Fairfield. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Linda Chapman at 417-3052.

GAP MINISTRY—February 18/19

St. Michael believes in the importance of prayer. God Answers Prayer members want to pray for you and with you. Join them in the worship conference room after the services.

ST. MICHAEL MISSION

Connecting People to Jesus!

OUR MANDATE

“I appeal to you, by the mercies of God... be transformed.” Romans 12:1-2

OUR MOTIVES

We are to be Christ Centered , Discipleship Directed, Family Focused and Mission Minded



Camp Lutherhaven

Camp Lutherhaven wouldn't be the same without you! Some of the ongoing areas we can use volunteers include: Nurse of the Week for registered nurses; Office work including possible data entry, mailings, phone calls; Maintenance help is needed for various projects and ongoing maintaining of facilities and grounds; Housecleaning is needed for the many facilities Lutherhaven provides. Many other opportunities exist as well. To find out more information about helping in any of the above areas or crafting one that fits your gifts and the needs of Camp, please **contact Camp Lutherhaven**.

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES



God's blessings to...	Day	Years	God's blessings to...	Day	Years
Jeremy and Rian Faux	2	16	Jim and Karen Martin	17	50
Dick and Susan Fox	3	44	Bob and Vickie Scholl	23	49
David and Lori Hudson	6	52	Nathan and Bethany Wickert	23	21
Barry and Linda Chrzan	7	31	Dean and Christy Willson	23	32
Dan and Karen Clendenen	7	47	Jason and Renee Hoagland Mekus	24	16
Ron and April Cohen	8	20	Carlton and CaSandra Arthur	26	23
Dave and Amy Crow	8	20	Mike and Suanne Roemer	27	58

FEBRUARY BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

We will celebrate baptism birthdays on February 18/19. Please pray for: Brody Bienz, Ryker Bolinger, Owen Bostwick, Frank Cavazuti, Griffin Coe, Daniel Davis, Lawrie Risser, Nadelyn Roehm and Maggie Schwyn.



STEWARDSHIP

The following article was taken from the Christian Stewardship Network:



The start of a new year is always a great motivator to improve your finances. It's one of the top goals for Americans each year and a worthy one considering the state of our economy, a looming recession, and the growing uncertainty of the future. Regardless of where you find yourself financially, these two components will ensure you succeed in managing your money well.

1. PUTTING GOD FIRST

Money is more than a medium of exchange to get the things you need or want in life. Just like everything else you possess, money is entrusted to us by God for our good and the good of others. More specifically, he assigns us money so we can carry out our responsibility and accomplish His will.



When our perspective about money changes from our money to His money, that's putting God first. When we seek his Kingdom and his righteousness as we make spending and giving decisions, we're putting God first. Every financial decision becomes a spiritual decision because we're not managing our money; we're managing God's money.

A practical way to put God first in your finances is to make a plan that honors God. My wife and I adjust our financial plan at the beginning of every year or whenever our income changes, up or down. The main attitude behind the decisions we make during this process is to talk to each other and pray for God to guide our decisions.

Putting God first for us means the first category in our plan is giving. We commit to supporting God's work by returning to God the first portion, which we give to our local church. Equally important to us is giving to the poor and organizations that promote and expand the gospel message in various ways.

2. MAKE AND LIVE BY A WRITTEN FINANCIAL PLAN

You've heard this before, but the national statistics aren't improving. Most Americans (Christians, too) live paycheck to paycheck, have little to no savings, and don't operate by a written financial plan, so I will keep revisiting this until these stats improve.

I don't care how brilliant you are and how great your memory is; you can't manage your financial life in your head! You need to have a written plan. No, it doesn't have to be complicated. But, without a plan, and one that gives you the confidence to make informed and wise decisions, you're going to keep living paycheck to paycheck, lack savings, and think that half of your expenses are emergencies when they're not.

Your financial plan should prioritize saving for the future, reducing existing debt so you can regain more of your income, and dividing the rest of your income into your family's different categories and needs like housing, food, clothing, and transportation.

Many apps and financial courses will help you with the details of creating and implementing a good financial plan. If you've procrastinated and continued to try and do this in your head, or some other way that hasn't worked, let 2023 be the year that all stops, and you get on a solid financial footing.

We serve a generous and compassionate God. No matter what financial state you find yourself in, whether struggling or soaring financially, God wants the best for you, and he's committed to your well-being and success. He is faithful to do his part, but he needs you to do your part so that his protection, favor, and blessing can be poured into your life.

We are praying for your best year ever, spiritually and financially!

ELDERS

The elders would like to encourage everyone to pray for and reach out to people they have not seen in church for some time. The staff and elders certainly make an effort to reach these people but sometimes a contact from one of you is even better. So, if there is someone you have not seen in a while, please pray for them and look for a way to connect with them. We appreciate anything you can do in this regard.

WHO IS YOUR ELDER?

If you are not sure who your elder is, you may call the church office at 432-2033. You are encouraged to contact your elder any time you feel a spiritual need or concern! Find their email below and phone number in F1Go. They are also listed on the church bulletin board!

Craig Patterson

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LENTEN SERIES

AT ST. MICHAEL

- *February 22 – Ash Wednesday*
“Repentance . . . In View of God’s Mercy”
- *March 1*
“Relationships . . . In View of God’s Mercy”
- *March 8*
“Betrayal . . . In View of God’s Mercy”
- *March 15*
“Temptation . . . In View of God’s Mercy”
- *March 22*
“Suffering . . . In View of God’s Mercy”
- *March 29*
“Service . . . In View of God’s Mercy”