
From the Pastor

We are finishing up the last sermons on the church, what that looks like as a community of Christians. Over the next several weeks, we will cover areas such as forgiveness, suffering together through life's circumstances and persecution, meeting others' physical needs, keeping Scripture as our only rule of faith and practice, and placing God's glory above all things.

As we are getting closer and closer to the end of the series, I hope that we will see all of these areas point to a vibrant church that is better equipped to share the Gospel. Out of all of these areas, I really think that the area of granting others forgiveness is the principal key to a vibrant, witnessing church. Why? Because forgiving other people is really a Gospel issue.

Matthew 18:21-35 show us this. From that passage, Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone, maybe seven times? As usual,

Jesus's answer was in telling a parable. Within the parable, a king forgave a servant ten thousand talents, but was not willing to forgive a hundred denarii. The king found out and sent him to jail.

To understand this parable better, we need to know more about denarii and talents. A denarius was estimated to be a day's wages, so 100 denarii would equal 4 months wages. For talents, according to deepttruths.com, 10,000 would equal \$142,436,571.48.

What's more astonishing is that a talent would equal 6,000 denarii, so it would probably have taken the servant 854,619,428,880 days or 2.3 billion years to pay it off, and yet, he says 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'

The point of the parable is not so much how much I should forgive, although we can and should take that lesson from the parable, but rather the point about is that if we are truly Christians, and we understand how much we have been forgiven, then we should be more than willing to forgive others' offenses against us, no matter how big.

There are many people in churches who just don't seem to get how much sin the blood of Jesus covers. They may not even be Christians. After all, the servant's delusional in thinking that he could possibly pay back all that money. In the same way, there are many people who are so delusional, they think that they can pay God back for all their sin, but our sin is so great, and God is so holy,

there is no way that we could ever pay God back.

Now, I realize that some of you have been hurt terribly, maybe beyond my

imagination, and like all hurt and suffering in the Bible, God's Word never belittles that hurt. After all, a hundred denarii was a lot of money, but in comparison to how much God has forgiven us? There can be no comparison.

There will be many issues that we will cover as a church leading up to the series on outreach. These will all be important because they make us more of a witnessing church to those that need it, but I think that out of all of these, forgiveness might be the most important one. Why? Because forgiving someone really shows not only do we understand the Gospel, but we are seeking to live it out.

Pastor Brandt



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You can also find us on Facebook.

Office Hours:

Mon, Wed, Fri: 12 - 3:30 pm

Tues & Thurs: 12 - 4 pm

Pastor's Hours:

Tuesday - Thursday

9:30 am - noon (flexible)



Community Christmas Concert

Over 60 musicians of all ages participated in the annual Bergen Community Christmas Concert on December 3. Jocelyn Rebisz coordinated the evening including band selections and songs by small groups and individuals. Mary Underwood led the congregation in carols between the various groups.



TAG: *Many kids performed in the Christmas Concert at the church on December 3rd, using their vocal and instrumental talents to spread joy and peace to all present. Three teens also helped with the sound and lighting for the event.*

Christmas Caroling

After pizza and subs, a large group of carolers braved the cold and ministered to some of the church shut-ins - Shirley Cudney, Fred & Eunie Ely, Katie Logan, Hank Haymon, and Loren Wolf - and to the residents of LeRoy Village Green.

TAG: *On December 11th over 40 teens, kids, adults, and even babies, joined Chris Wright's Merry Carolers to spread some Christmas cheer to shut-ins and people in nursing homes. My van was packed with excited teenagers driving from venue to venue and sharing the excitement of the season.*

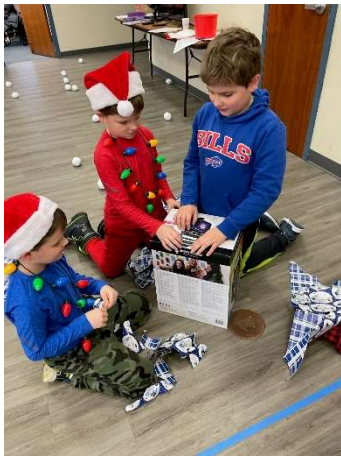


Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king!

Children’s Christmas Party



The children had a great time for their Christmas party on December 18th. They played a scavenger hunt in which they learned a lot of details about Jesus’s birth, they decorated cupcakes (and of course, ate them), and they opened a gift to the children’s ministry of Bergen Presbyterian, a really cool karaoke machine. Many thanks to Julie and Danielle Foeller who helped with the party.



Christmas Pageant

Chris Wright blessed the church again with a program of carols and readings involving children (and adults) from throughout the Bergen community. It told afresh the story of the birth of Christ from the announcement of the angels to the coming of the wise men.

TAG: *On December 18th several teens joined in the Christmas Pageant at the church. It was a memorable event and awesome opportunity to reflect on what really matters during this holiday season.*



Advent

Five Advent readings reminded us of the meaning of Christmas on a weekly basis during the season. Thank you to Delores Seward & Donna Lacey; Michael & Paula Welch; Kevin & Chris Hollenbeck; Brian, Julie, & Danielle Foeller; and Dave & Chris Wright for bringing us the five readings.



Christmas Eve

We gathered on Christmas Eve to share traditions of the season – singing of carols, “Oh Holy Night” as special music, children’s story, and a meditation on names of Jesus. The evening concluded with the lighting of candles and singing of “Silent Night”.



Teens After God (TAG)

Merry Christmas!!!!

TAG teens have been busy this month using their gifts to bless others during this Christmas Season. In addition to our regularly scheduled TAG youth group, they participated in three of the special Christmas events. *[Editor: See if you can find Joe's descriptions on the previous pages.]*

As I reflect on the year, I feel extremely blessed to be able to lead such a loving flock of teenagers, who are so willing to use their time, talents, and treasures to shine the light and love of Jesus into this world. "That's what Christmas is all about Charlie Brown!"

Our TAG youth group will be meeting on the following Sundays from 6:00-8:00: January 8th and January 22nd. Please keep all the teens of our group, and in Bergen, in your prayers. Continue to pray for God's protection and guidance in their lives!



SARDINES – December 2022

YouTube Reminder

If you missed any of the special services during the Christmas season, you can find them all on the church's YouTube page:

- Community Christmas Concert
- Children's Pageant
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services

You can get to the church's YouTube channel by going to YouTube and searching for "Bergen Evangelical Presbyterian Church" or just use the line on the website <http://www.bergenepc.com/media.html>

Deacons

December is a busy time for the Deacons --

- Decorating the sanctuary for Christmas
- Setting up the nativity in front of the church
- Shopping for gifts for children of a Byron/Bergen school family
- Buying groceries and other treats to distribute to those needing encouragement
- Picking up the poinsettias that add so much cheer to the sanctuary

Many hands make light work -- thanks go out to:

Kevin and Chris Hollenbeck
Bruce Partridge
Gregg and Debbie McAllister
Diane White
Chris Wright
Faith Willhoft

Fellowship

Happy, happy New Year 2023!

Many, many thanks to all that helped and donated cookies for the annual Christmas Concert on December 3rd. It was a wonderful celebration of music for the advent season. The church was packed and the cookies and cocoa were delicious!

We will again be serving a quick lunch before the Annual meeting on Sunday, January 22, 2023 (following the service). Bring your appetite for pizza from Ralph and Rosie's (along with salad, ice cream sandwiches and drinks).

Please enjoy your Christmas and joyously celebrate Jesus' birth.

Stay warm and please let us know of any other fellowship ideas for events that you would like to see.

Thank you,

The Fellowship Team

David Kuehl

Meet David Kuehl, Our Friend through the E&M Committee

During 2022, the E&M Committee selected David Kuehl to receive support for his work in Vietnam. David is affiliated with CCO, the same organization that Adrienne Willhoft works with. David is working for a tech company, and also does work with students on college campuses there. He and his wife, Melissa, have three sons.

With God's help, David met Pastor Brandt at a Presbytery meeting. From that encounter, we discovered many things and people (like Adrienne) that were common between our church family and David. Ask Brandt or Gregg McAllister for details of this great story of God at work.



We will have a chance to hear from David, through the wonders of technology, during our Jan. 15 service. Please remember to include the Kuehls in your prayers.

Here is a newsletter we received in late November talking about his work:

Hello Friends, we have now been back in Vietnam for 3 months, and it has been quite a 3 months! After the stop and go of COVID lockdowns during our first 3 years here we have been able to finally begin doing what we came over here for. It has been an exciting time of new opportunities.

Campus reboot: One of the main reasons we felt called to Vietnam was the opportunity to do campus work. We have not been allowed to be on campus since COVID landed. This fall we have been allowed to restart all of our on campus programs! We are also spearheading new clubs at a new campus as well! The start of these programs has gone exceedingly well and we are praying this will lead to fruitful opportunities with these students.

Thanksgiving: This week I organized a party for the employees and students in the company and shared with them the heart and soul of the holiday, as Lincoln said:

"I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a Day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens."

So what does it look like for us sojourners in foreign lands? Lots of yummy food, some raw fish, rabbit blood pudding, pizza, sushi... and the fan favorite beef stroganoff recipe from my mom (thanks mom!)

Family and church: Melissa has been busy schooling the boys and they are full of energy! We have begun hosting a weekly dinner in our home in the hopes of creating a community of like minded believers in our area. We are praying into what God has for us in the future in this area. The need is great here and we are praying for more workers, more believing retirees.

Giving: This is the season of giving. The first thing I would like to do is say thank you to all of you who are give up prayers and support to us! We CAN NOT be here without you! We are so thankful for your faithful steadfast support over many years.

During this season we would also like to invite any who feel called to partner with us financially. We are currently below our monthly fundraising goal due to some hikes in cost and fundraising goals due to inflation. If you are interested in knowing more about what that could look like please do not hesitate to contact me by replying to this email.

We love you all very much and would love to hear updates and prayer requests from you if you wish to share.

Blessings, from the Kuehls

Streams in the Desert

Recently in Adult SS we were studying the book of Nahum, which describes God's judgment on the city of Nineveh. One of the passages we looked at was 1:4-5 which reads in the ESV:

*He rebukes the sea and makes it dry;
he dries up all the rivers;
Bashan and Carmel wither;
the bloom of Lebanon withers.
The mountains quake before him;
the hills melt;
the earth heaves before him,
the world and all who dwell in it.*

We discussed that although God had delayed judgment on Nineveh (verse 2 says He is "slow to anger"), His judgment will surely come on the wicked. This passage points out that even those things that seem "eternal" to us – seas, rivers, hills, and mountains – cannot stand before the Lord. Three of the most fertile areas of the ancient lands in and around Israel were Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon. These were lush areas that Nahum says will wither in the light of God's judgment.

The warning to those who do not heed God's commands is clear from these words of the prophet Nahum. But there is another side to the story.

I was in a service of lament where Isaiah 35 was read. Verses 1 and 2 read:

*The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;
it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.*

Here we see the same areas talked about. However, in this case, God is promising blessing to those who are experiencing "desert" times. Instead of God's judgment on the wicked, we see God's love and mercy on His people, those who live in repentance and obedience. I hope these words are a comfort to those who might be experiencing a desert time in their lives.

Rob Willhoft

Sunday School 2023



the **GOSPELPROJECT**.

It's been an exciting year and half for the Sunday School program at Bergen EPC. Before the pandemic the children's classes had started a new curriculum called "The Gospel Project". This is a survey of the entire story of the Bible over three years. We just finished studying the history of Israel and Judah where we see king after king rejecting God's message through the prophets. This winter, through Easter, we will be looking at God's discipline of His people through the exile but also His faithfulness to continue to love them and, finally, to bring them back to their land.

There are classes for all ages. Dave and Chris Wright teach the children's class. Chad Caccamise, Seth McNear, and Brandt Hammack engage the youth in study. This class is also available on Zoom for young people who can't make it to church. Rob Willhoft coordinates the adult class, leading many interesting studies of God's Word and discussions of how to apply it to our lives. We invite you to share in our time of Bible Study each Sunday morning at 9:15.

Sewing With A Purpose

Sewing With A Purpose will be offering mending for our church family during the month of January. So check your pockets for holes, your favorite sweater for fixin or your hem needing restitching. If you have any questions – see Pam Patmore, Faith Willhoft, Shirley von Bergen or Debbie McAllister. Bring your item(s) to show them **by January 22** so we can plan appropriately.

We plan to meet Wednesday, **January 25 at 9:30 – 12:00** in the Fellowship Hall.

We also will be creating eye protections for the Strong NICU – Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and could use help clipping corners, ironing, turning right side out and pinning. You don't have to sew to help.





Berti & Adelina Berhami
ministry update



Dec 23, 2022

Christmas is here. God has entered the world, which he created, to redeem and restore it. We are grateful and excited to be part of God's wonderful plan of salvation in Jesus. Firm we stand in our hope: Jesus is coming again!

May his Spirit fill you with the joy and wonder of Christmas!

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord." Jeremiah 17:7



Merry Christmas! From the Berhamis



The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Glad to have you in our lives, and to partner together for the Gospel.
With much love, and appreciation for your faithful partnership,
Berti & Adelina Berhami
[Cru Albania](#)

Foodlink

No Foodlink Distributions Until March.

Our Foodlink distribution site takes a break during the winter months since we are not equipped to handle wintry weather in an outdoor setting.

We will resume distributions on March 16. The rest of the schedule for the first half of the year include April 13, May 18 and June 15. Please mark your calendars now.

Our time for the distributions will remain the same. The truck will arrive, and we will begin to unload at 3 pm. We should be ready for distribution by 4 pm. Traditionally, we have been complete by 5:30.

Thanks to all who volunteered in the past year. We are looking forward to serving our neighbors in need again this spring.

A Peek at the Church Calendar

Weekly

- Sunday, 9:15-10:15 – Sunday School
- Sunday, 10:30-11:45 – Morning Worship
- 2nd & 4th Sundays - TAG from 6 - 8 pm
- Wednesdays, 6:00 pm - Prayer for Door of Hope
- Thursday, 6:00-7:00 am – Son Risers (continuing to meet on alternating Thursdays for breakfast and on ZOOM)
- Saturdays, 11 am - Kid's Quest
- Newsletter Deadline on the 25th of each month
- First Sunday of the month - Food Collection
- Last Saturday of the month - Door of Hope Coffee House

Other Goings-On in January:

- January 2nd - no office hours
- January 12 - Jan 20: Susan on vacation - Sandy will cover the office
- January 22 - Congregational Annual Meeting
- January 28 - Door of Hope Coffee House @ 6 pm
- January 29 - Worship meeting @ 10:30 am

Annual Meeting

The Annual meeting of the congregation will be on Sunday, January 22. It is planned that the Annual Report should be available on Sunday, January 8. Be sure to pick one up and review it before the meeting. We encourage all members and non-members to come to the meeting on the 22nd.

Kid's Quest Upcoming Events

- Elementary Age Basketball League (Nerf) in late February to March
- Easter Activities
- Spring Field Trip

Anniversaries & Birthdays

January Birthdays

- 1 - Jim Wilson
- 4 - Collin McNear
- 7 - Rose Wilson
- 8 - Luck Hollenbeck
- 11 - Bruce Partridge
- 12 - Shirley Harris
- 23 - Eleanor Bater
- 26 - Michael Welch
- 30 - Lydia Hammack

January Anniversaries

- 1 - Chad & Wendy Caccamise (30 Years)
- 5 - Stu & Gail Freeman (60 Years)
- 8 - Brandt & Marty Hammack (12 Years)

February Birthdays

- 2 - Dave Wright
- 2 - Bill Engle
- 4 - Robert Cosgrove
- 5 - Nancy Alfes
- 7 - Emily Caccamise
- 8 - Rebecca McNear
- 9 - Joan Edwards
- 13 - Renee Berggren
- 16 - Danielle Foeller
- 18 - Christin Snell
- 19 - Wendy Hutchurson
- 20 - Marty Hammack
- 26 - Cyndy Jones

February Anniversaries

- 16 - Dave & June Hahn (60 Years)



CHURCH FINANCES

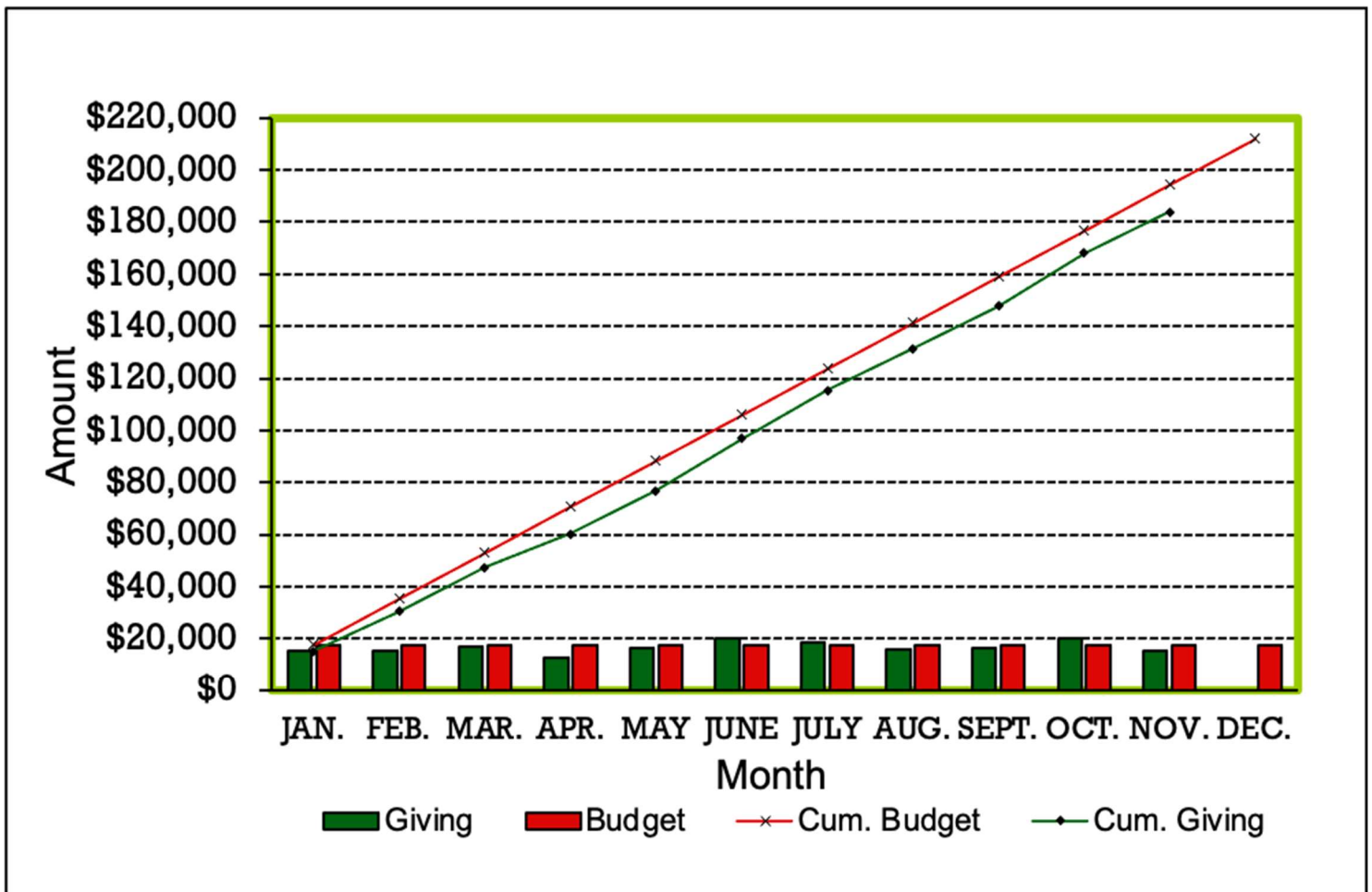
NOVEMBER 2022

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Luke 12:32-34

Giving for November was \$15,667, less than last month’s very big \$20,321, but still enough to keep us on track to surpass last year’s total giving by several thousand dollars. The total giving for 2021 was \$197,319, but this year’s total may exceed \$200,000.

Significant gifts to the Organ Fund were received in November and the total in the Organ Fund is now \$62,492!



MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT – NOVEMBER 2022

OPERATING FUND

Income

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Sunday offering: | \$10,721.00 |
| Net Online Offering: | \$1,055.92 |
| <i>*note – online offering reflects \$32.02 fee taken from gross donations from the vendor before deposit</i> | |
| Amortized one time gifts: | \$3,790.00 |

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| <i>Total New Receipts</i> | <i>\$15,566.92</i> |
| <i>Opening Balance (from previous month)</i> | <i>\$3,462.40</i> |
| Total Funds Available (opening balance + new receipts) | \$19,029.32 |

Expenses

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Gross Expenditures for the month | \$16,100.81 |
| Line Item Paybacks received this month that reduce expenses | |
| • Property – credit card refund | \$121.85 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Net Expenditures for the Month | \$15,978.96 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|

| | |
|---|------------|
| Accumulated Income Fund Transfer Needed to cover Expenditures | \$1,000.00 |
| Extra Monthly Amortized Gift Overdrawn from the AIF | \$0.00 |
| Monthly Amortized Gift Left in Accumulated Income Fund | \$2,790.00 |

OPERATING FUND BALANCE

\$260.36

DESIGNATED FUND

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Opening Balance (from previous month) | \$14,672.12 |
| New Designated Receipts | \$3,190.80 |
| Total Designated Expenditures | \$4,056.44 |

DESIGNATED FUND BALANCE

\$13,806.48

TOTAL CHECKBOOK BALANCE (Operating Fund + Designated Fund)

\$14,066.84

OTHER FUND ACTIVITY

Accumulated Income Fund

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| • November expenditures | -\$1,000.00 |
| Current Balance (11/30/2022) | \$10,522.50 |

Organ Fund

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| • November Deposits | \$2,920.00 |
| Current Balance (11/30/2022) | \$62,491.73 |

Memorial Fund

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| • Jean Claus – for new bibles | -\$99.93 |
| • Glenn Harris – for new bibles | -\$1,884.28 |
| Current Balance (11/30/2022) | \$11,526.83 |

