
From the Pastor

I eventually want to return to different methods of evangelism (I think the next one is service.), but as we continue in Exodus, we will come upon God's law, and I think it's important that we consider a popular misconception about Christianity.

"You shall have no," "You shall not," "You shall not," "You shall not," "You shall not," "You shall not," "You shall not," "You shall not," "You shall not," "You shall not," "You shall not," and "You shall not." All of these are quotes from Exodus 20, what we popularly call the 10 commandments. Within these 10 commandments (15 verses), God gives 11 negatives.

Honestly, when one sees this, it is understandable as to why people often view Christianity as only a list of rules. This is often the perception that I get when strangers find out that I'm a preacher. There is an automatic assumption that all God really cares about, and thus, all I really care about, is correcting one's behavior.

What's missing is the context of the 10 commandments. As with all areas of the Bible, the surrounding verses are vitally important in understanding what the 10 commandments meant for the Old Testament Israelites, and what they mean for us today.

So, what's the context? Exodus 20:1-2 states, "And God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.'" The context of these wonderful commandments is that God gave them to a people He rescued, that He redeemed, from the bondage of slavery, and this was completely out of His grace and love, not based on any merit of the Israelites.

So, does this mean that the 10 commandments do not apply to us, as Christians, since God has not rescued us out of the bondage of slavery from Egypt? Of course not. Part of the reason why these 10 commandments are given are so that we understand this is God's will for humankind.

This is seen quite easily in how much each of the commandments are emphasized throughout the Bible.

Also, on this side of the cross, as New Testament Christians, do we have a reason to obey the 10 commandments the way the Israelites were supposed to? Of course. If anything, we have more reason to obey these words from God than the Israelites did. While they were rescued from the bondage of slavery, we were rescued from the bondage of slavery, and from the very depths of Hell itself.

Now, the problem with Israel is that they never did seem to appreciate what God had done for them in bringing them out of the bondage of slavery in Egypt. Moreover, we will be able to see that as they not only grumble how much better Egypt was, but how they continually disobeyed God in so many areas of their lives.

In the same way, we can often gripe and grumble about our circumstances, and show that we don't appreciate what Christ has done for us on the cross by our willful disobedience to God and His law that was given to us. That is why it is so important that not only do we clearly understand the cross of Christ, but we deeply value the sacrifice that Christ has made for us. In doing so, we will love Jesus more and more each day and take to heart His words from John 14:15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

Finally, when we talk about these 10 commandments to non-Christians, it is vitally important that we share the context of not only when God first introduced them, but more importantly, the context of the Gospel, and how our hearts long to obey Him because of what Christ has done for us. In doing so, we will hopefully show that Christianity is so much more than a religion of dos and don'ts, but a deep relationship where we have gained an eternal friendship where we long to obey our Heavenly King.

Pastor Brandt



Christmas '23

Bergen Community Christmas Concert



The Christmas Concert was coordinated by Jocelyn, Krysta, Christin. Twelve different individuals and groups presented music of the Christmas season.



Advent Wreath Readings

Four different families and the Youth Sunday School class participated in Advent Readings during each Sunday Service in December and on Christmas Eve.



Christmas Caroling

Over 30 singers visited 5 homes and Village Green on December 10th after the service.



Pageant

Chris helped us continue a 50+ year Christmas tradition with the Pageant on December 10th during the morning worship service. Both children and adults participated in this simple telling of Christmas stories with carols.



Advent Intergenerational Sunday School

Judy and Julie lead a Sunday School time on December 17th when adults and children learned together about the meaning of the Advent Wreath.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

The Christmas Eve service concluded with the traditional singing of Silent Night by candlelight.



See the website for some videos and more pictures ... <https://www.epcbergen.org/christmas23>

Sewing With a Purpose

Sewing With A purpose received a beautiful 8 inch square donation which would have been discarded.



One of our team members crocheted a prayer shawl using accent colors around the edge to tie all the colors of the donated square into this special project. A lining was designed to match the size of the square pocket. Pictured here is the prayer shawl, pocket, and lining of pocket.



Then the pocket lining and crocheted square are attached to the prayer shawl to make the lined pocket!



Repair Services Available

Sewing With A Purpose is again offering to fix or mend items for our church family for the month of January. So if you have a favorite sweater with a hole or a pair of pants needing hemming, bring you item to church with a note attached having your name on it and what needs to be fixed. Place your item in the box outside the church office or give it to Debbie McAllister after church.



*Mending!
Darning
Clothing*

**Annual Meeting is scheduled for
January 21, 2024**

**Committee Reports will be due by
January 2, 2024**

Thank you!

Sewing With A Purpose-Year's Accomplishments

2023 provided many items to bless local people:

- 300 flannel eye protections were delivered to the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) at Strong Hospital
- 252 Flannel hearts were also delivered to the NICU.
- 16 Prayer shawls were delivered with love
- 14 Knitted hats were made for the veteran ministry
- 12 Port cushions were distributed to add comfort for patients having a port
- 11 Hand crafted bags were made for the veteran ministry
- 83 Finglerless gloves were readied for distribution to homeless veterans
- Teddy bears were delivered to the Genesee County Domestic Violence Safe House for children

Thank you to all the people who graciously shared their time and talents to make the above donations possible. Sewing with A Purpose has the Best Team of dedicated volunteers who so freely offer their assistance. Thank you Susan Miller for all your assistance too!

Fellowship News

We hope that you all had a wonderful Christmas, celebrating our Lord Jesus coming to earth, as part of God's amazing plan to bring us closer to Him

Many thanks to all that contributed cookies for the Community Christmas concert in December, and thank you's to those that have been bringing food for our fellowship lunches after Sunday service each week.

Starting in the new year, we will take a few minutes after the service to fellowship in the sanctuary with those that are not staying for the lunch. So, enjoy visiting and please give us about 15 minutes to get the food ready before lunch begins

Please join us for the annual meeting on Sunday, January 21, 2024. We will have pizza, salad, and of course-ice

cream sandwiches, after the service and before the meeting.

And on Sunday, February 4 at 6pm, there will be a special dedication of the refurbished organ and a hymn sing, followed by a cookie and drinks reception in the fellowship hall. We are looking for donations of cookies. Please let the office or someone on the fellowship team know if you would like to donate cookies.

As always, if you have suggestions for events to bring us all together, please let any of us know.

Thank you,

Fellowship Team

Christmas celebration for Eagle Star Shelter in East Pembroke, NY



We delivered 12 gift bags to Eagle Star.



We celebrated Christmas with a new game and holiday snacks. Joy filled our time of fellowship. Some are ready to transition. Joan and I will miss them. We are thrilled for their success in the program.



TAG ~ Teens After God

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, many teens performed and/or helped at the Christmas Concert at the church on December 2nd, using their talents to spread joy and peace to all present. On December 10th over 30 teens, kids, and adults joined Chris Wright's Merry Carolers to spread some Christmas cheer to shut-ins and people in nursing homes. On December 17th our TAG group had a huge Christmas bash. Over 20 teens were present and enjoyed an evening of fellowship, food, games, and reflection. It was a memorable night and awesome opportunity to reflect on what really matters during this holiday season. And, as Linus would say, "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 7th and January 21st. 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!

E & M

Many Partners with Our Church Send Christmas Greetings

During December, we received many messages from around the world offering Christmas blessings and

thanks for our annual support. We are trying to figure out an efficient way to share these messages and photos with the church family, so stay tuned.

In the meantime, here are some summaries from messages we received:

From the Berhamis, serving in Albania

We are thrilled by your generosity toward our ministry. Thank you for your faithful support! It is a tremendous help to stay focused on what God has called us to do.

May you be surrounded by God's love and grace each day!

Christmas reveals the loving heart of God, who became Emanuel to bring us to him. He made the impossible, to make our salvation possible. May we reflect the loving kindness of Christ, and joyfully trust him to do what may seem impossible for us! May we have a Merry heart, bringing the joy of the Lord to those around us! We are blessed to partner with you!

Berti and Adelina

From Open Door Mission, Rochester

Here at Open Door Mission, people come in from the cold to receive a hot meal and they are relieved to be here. Everyone enjoys a traditional Christmas dinner, served with a smile. And as they finish their meal over coffee, staff and volunteers take a walk around the tables and join them in conversation. Even at this happiest of holidays, I hear stories of pain, loneliness, abuse and loss.

People are hurting, right here in our community. But a friendly greeting and a plate of food give some relief. Often, we share how Jesus came for those who need Him: the sick, the broken, those disappointed with life. Trusting Him helps overcome our pain and fill our empty hearts, not just today, but every day. These Christmas conversations can warm hearts as we share the hope Christ brings to the world.

You are part of sharing the true joy of Christmas with men, women and children who have lost so much. Some decide to stay, wanting to turn their life around and walk with God. His light has come into the world, and we no longer need to walk in darkness. Merry Christmas!

Sincerely,

Anna Valeria-Iseman, CEO

Merry Christmas from EduNations (Sierra Leone)

I want to take this opportunity to wish you a blessed and joyous Christmas season as we commemorate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. It is because of His mercy and His great love for us that we have reason to celebrate.

As we reflect on the year together, I am filled with gratitude for the ways that you have partnered with us to ignite hope in Sierra Leone. Thank you for being part of the EduNations family and for giving of yourself and your resources to meet the needs of our beloved students, teachers, and staff.

Gratefully,
Dana Kaltenberger
U.S. Director

From David and his family in Southeast Asia

This fall we had open doors on campus and started to implement our refined strategy, which involves many levels of engagement with our students both from me and partners. The first step was to create English clubs off campus led by believers as the next step to what I am doing on campus. We praise the Lord for the successful launch of one and have one more ready for the spring! We have had the favor of the leaders of the Universities here and prayerfully and carefully step into more opportunities as they arise. We got to celebrate the salvation of one of our students this fall.

Fundraising Update: It's time for some celebration because, for four years, through COVID, and being far from fundraising opportunities, God has provided! We are so thankful for those who make it possible for us to be here! You have been our steadfast and faithful supporters, both in finances and prayers. Your unwavering backing has allowed us to stay here. We will need to spend time fundraising in the near future, so pray as we prepare for this. Thank you!

From Sarah Speer (Congo)

My Precious Brothers and Sisters,

TRUST in the LORD with ALL your HEART, [Proverbs 3:5](#)

LOOK at Mary, [Luke 1:26-38](#)

Her obedience to God was complete. It cost:

- * Her reputation (and almost her marriage except for God's intervention)
- * Her dignity (who believed her report other than her aunt who lived in another town)
- * Her comfort (a hard, bumpy ride on a donkey's back many miles/km to reach Joseph's home village, while she was close to her birthing date)
- * Her expectations- no room in the inn, just a stinky stable with animals as company while having her baby!
- * Her hopes- Jesus, her son, was to save people from their sins--- HE was beaten, nailed to the cross and left to die as she watched!!

BUT..... HER OBEDIENCE has, is and will bring ETERNAL LIFE to the WHOLE WORLD!!!

WHAT will YOUR 100% OBEDIENCE do by God's power? Let us follow in her footsteps. GOD will take us to the Cross and the Resurrection and peoples' lives will be saved.

Strong Courage for what your obedience will cost.
With love and prayers,

Sarah



*Please join us for a
Concert Series
 celebrating restoration of our
 1907 Viner & Son pipe organ!*



Sunday, February 4, 2024
 6pm:

**Organ Rededication and
 Hymn Sing**



Sunday, March 10, 2024
 6pm:

**Roberts Wesleyan Brass
 Quintet**



Sunday, April 14, 2024
 6pm:

Jaclyn Breeze, flute



Saturday, April 27, 2024
 6pm:

Special Door of Hope event
 featuring
George Collichio, guitar



Sunday, May 5, 2024
 6pm:

Organ recital featuring
 students from the
Eastman School of Music



Calendar Online calendar: tinyurl.com/29zhbnbr

Weekly/Monthly

- First Sunday of the month - Communion
- First Sunday of the month – S A Food Collection
- Sundays, 9:15 am - Sunday School for All Ages
- Sundays, 10:30-11:45 am – Morning Worship
- Each Sunday following worship (unless there is a committee luncheon) is “Fattening the Flock” coffee & snack time.
- Alternating Sundays @ 6 pm - Preaching Class
- Mondays, 1 pm - Tech Class
- Tue & Thurs - Homeschooling Co-op
- Alternating Tues @ 2:00 pm - Women’s Bible Study
- Wednesdays, 6:00 pm – Prayer
- Thursdays, 6:00-7:00 am – Son Risers
- Saturdays, 11 am – Kid’s Quest
- Newsletter Deadline on the 25th of each month
- Last Saturday of the month – Door of Hope Coffee House @ 6 pm (January 27th this month)

Other Events in January

- January 1 - New Year’s Day - no office hours
- January 2 - Annual Reports due in to Susan
- Jan 6 - Deacon meeting following the un-decorating of the church
- Jan 7 - Fellowship meeting at 12:15 pm
- Jan 7 - TAG @ 6 pm
- Jan 9 - Women’s Bible Study Class @ 2 pm (Chapt 7)
- Jan 10 - Session @ 7 pm
- Jan 14 - E&M meeting @ 12:15 pm
- Jan 14 - Finance Committee meeting @ 12:15 pm
- Jan 14 - Preaching Class @ 6 pm
- Jan 15 - Martin Luther King Jr Day - no office hours
- Jan 16 - Deacons meet @ 7 pm
- Jan 20 - Private function in the Fellowship Hall @ 10 am
- Jan 21 - Annual Meeting following worship
- Jan 21 - TAG @ 6 m
- Jan 23 - Women’s Bible Study Class @ 2 pm (Chapter 8)
- Jan 28 - Worship Committee meeting @ 12:15 pm
- Jan 28 - Preaching Class @ 6 pm

Thank You from the Pastor & His Family



Marty and I want to thank the church family for all the love we have felt throughout the year, especially during Pastor Appreciation Month. We look forward to spending 2024 with you!

Pastor Brandt

Anniversaries & Birthdays

January Birthdays

- 1 - Jim Wilson
- 3 - Debby Newmark
- 4 - Collin McNear
- 7 - Rose Wilson
- 8 - Luke Hollenbeck
- 11 - Bruce Partridge
- 12 - Shirley Harris
- 13 - Joe Heukensfeld
- 23 - Eleanor Bater
- 26 - Michael Welch
- 28 - Denny Gillett
- 30 - Lydia Hammack



January Anniversaries

- 1 - Chad & Wendy Caccamise (31 years)
- 5 - Stu & Gail Freeman (61 years)
- 8 - Brandt & Marty Hammack (13 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 - David & June Hahn (61 years)



HAPPY NEW YOU!

Changing the calendar each January is a reminder that God makes all things new.

Directions: Use the clues and the calendar code to complete 2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV.

JANUARY 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	God	night	word	in	love	Jesus
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
glory	therefore	speak	give	light	Christ	a
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
saw	beginning	anyone	waters	help	is	many
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
he	again	through	earth	made	while	back
28	29	30	31			
new	if	and	creation			



- The second Monday _____
- The last Monday __
- The 16th _____
- One day before the 20th __
- The day before the first Friday __
- The last weekday of the second week _____
- The day after the 20th __
- The day after 18th __
- The first day of the second weekend _
- The last Sunday __
- The last day of the month _____

Answers: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.



Church Finances

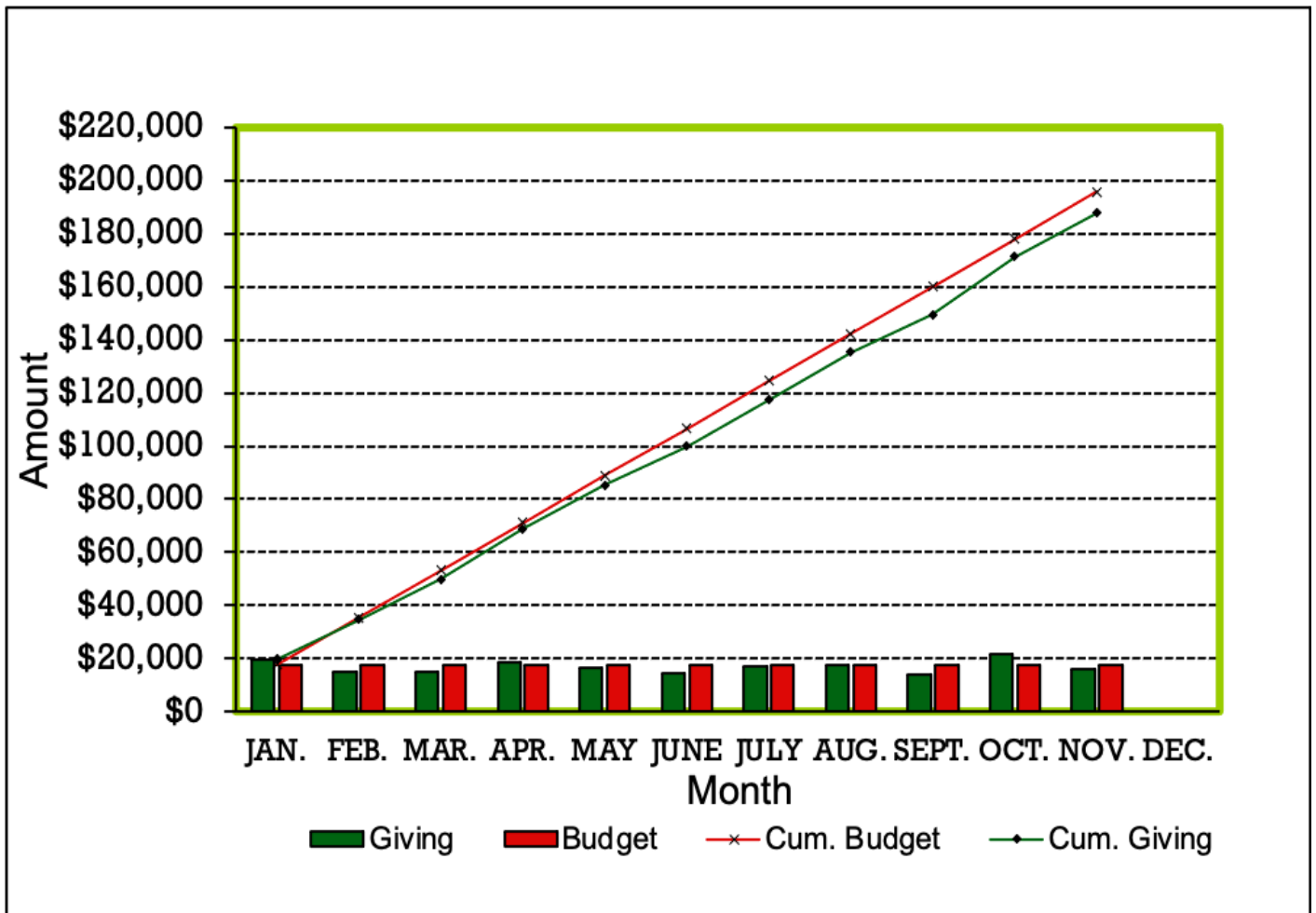
November 2023

"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."

Malachi 3:10

November was a good month for giving, \$16,395; not as good as October's extraordinary total of over \$20,000 but at about the average for this year in total. Expenses were low at about \$13,000. No funds at all needed to be used from the Accumulated Income Fund (as was the case in October), and we are running \$4,000 in giving ahead of last year's giving with only one month to go.

We are heading to the year's end in good shape with about \$6,000 balance in the operating fund checking account and a five-Sunday month to look forward to.



MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT – NOVEMBER 2023

OPERATING FUND

Income

Sunday offering:	\$13,144.00
Net Online Offering:	\$243.57
<i>*note – online offering reflects \$7.43 fee taken from gross donations from the vendor before deposit</i>	
Amortized one-time gifts:	\$3,007.00

<i>Total New Receipts</i>	<i>\$16,394.57</i>
<i>Opening Balance (from previous month)</i>	<i>\$5,876.85</i>
Total Funds Available (opening balance + new receipts)	\$22,271.42

Expenses

Gross Expenditures for the month	\$13,319.10
Line Item Paybacks received this month that reduce expenses	
• None	\$0.00

Net Expenditures for the Month	\$13,319.10
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Accumulated Income Fund Transfer Needed to cover Expenditures	\$0.00
Extra Monthly Amortized Gift Overdrawn from the AIF	\$0.00
Monthly Amortized Gift Left in Accumulated Income Fund	\$3,007.00

OPERATING FUND BALANCE **\$5,945.32**

DESIGNATED FUND

Opening Balance (from previous month)	\$12,412.29
New Designated Receipts	\$574.40
Total Designated Expenditures	\$2,584.91

DESIGNATED FUND BALANCE **\$10,401.78**

TOTAL CHECKBOOK BALANCE (Operating Fund + Designated Fund) **\$16,347.10**

OTHER FUND ACTIVITY

Accumulated Income Fund

• November Withdrawal	-\$0.00
Current Balance (11/30/2023)	\$3,772.76

Organ Fund

• Parsons Organ Builders	-\$8,983.80
Current Balance (11/30/2023)	\$3,786.69

Property Reserve Fund

• Triple O Mechanical	-\$5,101.04
Current Balance (11/30/2023)	\$646.85

