
From the Pastor

Every once in a while, when we as preachers are preaching, we stumble onto something that we didn't plan to say, it wasn't in our notes, and we are surprised by it ourselves. For me, that was last week towards the end of the sermon. I said something like, "The book of Jonah is really a book of grace. It's all about grace."

Honestly, I really didn't think of that before, but afterwards, the more I thought about it, the more I realized it was true. Jonah is a book that is really all about grace, so I thought we might look at it a little more carefully as we think about the sermons that are coming up.

First, as we saw last week, there was grace offered to Jonah in the first 3 verses. God would have been completely justified if he would have killed Jonah right on the spot for not obeying him, just as he gives us grace all of the time whenever we disobey Him and He does not kill us on the spot. Are we surprised by that? Does that sound a little harsh? Honestly, I understand that it might, but we must always understand how holy, righteous, and perfect God is, and how ANY, and I mean ANY disobedience towards His commandments is a cosmic sin that deserves nothing less than eternal death. As the saying goes, God does not grade on the curve.

Secondly, as will see this week, that even in God's discipline, he is gracious. Most of us probably know the story of how Jonah was thrown out into the ocean because of a storm and a fish swallowed him, but ask yourself, what if God had not done that, and simply went on to the next prophet to go to Nineveh? After all, He very well could have done that, but where would that have Jonah? He would have been living for the rest of his life in Tarshish, far away from his people, Israel, and living the rest of his life paranoid about hearing anything from his God. It would have been a miserable existence, but God, in his grace, disciplined him, keeping him away from a life of misery.

Next, we find the grace of God in Jonah 2 as well. After Jonah prays a wonderful prayer, the fish vomited Jonah onto dry land. Of course, as always, God gives grace and forgiveness to the one who repents, but here's the odd thing to me. I would expect something along the lines of Psalm 51, but from what I can tell, there is not much repentance, and in fact, we read

from Jonah 4 that Jonah's attitude really didn't change that much. Don't get me wrong, it's still a wonderful prayer, but given the circumstances, I would expect something more like, "Woe is me, for I have sinned greatly against you, God." So the astonishing thing is that God still gives Jonah grace, and that really shows the astonishing grace of our Heavenly Father.

Then, in Jonah 3, we have perhaps the most astonishing grace of the whole book, when all that Jonah said was "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." That was all it took, and the people of Nineveh had a remarkable turnaround as they repented from their sin and despite the announcement of judgement, God relents and gives them grace. This is an exact fulfillment of Jeremiah 18:7-8: "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it." These verses (and the forgiveness of Nineveh) show the stunning heart of God, how throughout history, he is more than willing to forgive for those that are repentant.

Now, you would think that would be the conclusion of the book, because as we will see, the Ninevites were horrible people, but there is one more chapter. That chapter shows Jonah despising God's grace. Now there is a lot that can be said about this chapter, but the most essential thing for us to understand is that somehow, somewhere along the way, Jonah did not really understand God's grace, and thus, showed that he did not understand the depths of his own sin and how much grace he had been given.

Now, as I mentioned last week, I think the author of this book of grace was probably Jonah, which showed that he eventually came to understand not only the depths of his own depravity, but also the very heart of God, which is a loving, caring Father who desires deeply to grant grace and forgiveness to those who would turn to Him. I am excited about studying this wonderful book of grace so that we might better understand God who is filled with love and compassion and gives grace freely to those who turn away from their sin and towards Him in faith.

Pastor Brandt



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Office Hours:
Mon, Wed, Fri: 12 - 3:30 pm
Tues & Thurs: 12 - 4 pm

Pastor's Hours:
Tuesday - Thursday
9:30 am - noon (flexible)

Pray for Uli's Ministry in Mexico City

We had the privilege to visit with Uli via technology during our Feb. 19 worship service. He requested special prayer for a major outreach on March 9 when their church family will be distributing groceries. They also have regular time when they distribute clothing.

Other prayer requests:

- Grace of authorities in their community who control things like special events and their building project. The church needs to have approval for community programming like outreach events.
- Finances.
- Wisdom and direction from God for the ministry.
- Ways to complete repairs for the water tank that is essential to serve the church building they are constructing.

Here are some photos that Uli sent us from their work:



Deacons

Please pray for your new slate of Deacons for the 2023 year. Though few in numbers, they have willing and giving hearts. Throughout the year, our Deacon hands touch many things:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Baskets of food | Encouraging notes and cards |
| Christmas gifts | Treats for college students |
| Meals to help | Sanctuary flowers |
| \$\$ for special needs | Serving Communion |

Hebrews 6:10 says - "God . . . will not lose sight of all that you have done nor of the loving labor which you have shown for his sake in looking after fellow Christians."

A big THANK YOU to outgoing Deacon, Diane White, and Deacon Moderator, Faith Willhoft, for their dedication, talents, and many contributions to members of the church family.

Wonder How to Minister to Muslims?

A ministering to Muslims event is being planned for a Sunday in May to be determined. Douglas Klotzbach, Joan Dermody's nephew, will present information on this important topic.

Many details still need to be resolved by the Evangelism & Mission Committee, but plan on a fellowship dinner after worship and then time to hear from Doug. His topic will be "How to love your Muslim Neighbor."

Lenten Offering Supports Outreach to College Students



Adrienne Willhoft ministers to students at Juniata College in Huntingdon, PA, through the Christian Coalition Outreach (CCO) and was selected by the E&M Committee to receive the annual Lenten Offering. The Juniata Christian Fellowship led by Adrienne offers Bible study, activities, speakers, and service

opportunities.

“I love coming alongside students to help them discover the presence of the Lord in their everyday lives, and the diversity of ways God longs to be in relationship with us,” Adrienne says. “I also see a huge part of my role as helping students learn how to be in authentic relationships with those around them—casting a vision for community and creating spaces to experience it together that I hope they will carry into their neighborhoods and churches moving forward!”

The CCO calls college students to serve Jesus Christ with their entire lives.

1. We share the Gospel with students and develop passionate disciples of Jesus Christ.
2. We serve together with the church and invite students into the lives of local congregations.
3. We give students a vision for serving Jesus Christ in their studies, jobs, communities and families.

Adrienne spent her first nine years on staff ministering with CCO’s Department of Transformative Opportunities as a member of the Experiential Designs team. She is passionate about pursuing spaces of both experiential education and spiritual formation with students.

Adrienne is the daughter of Rob and Faith Willhoft in our church family. She will be visiting Bergen on March 19. We will hear briefly from her during the worship service

and then in more detail about her ministry after a Fellowship Lunch. So mark your calendar!

You can contribute to the Lenten offering until Easter Sunday. You may make your offering online, in the offering boxes at both entrances to the sanctuary or by mail. Be sure to mark your contribution as Lenten Offering or Adrienne Willhoft.

We Host Foodlink on March 16

After three months of winter break, our Foodlink distributions resume on Thursday, March 16.

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.

Changes in payment of SNAP benefits by the federal government will reduce income for many families. We anticipate more neighbors than ever to come for free food.

We will need volunteers. Energetic young people are a real asset. Even if you can't stay the whole time, come for the time that you are available. We need people at the end to help with cleanup.

We are outside in the parking lot, so dress for the weather!

Foodlink has scheduled us monthly through the first half of the year. Our additional dates are April 13, May 18 and June 15. Please mark your calendars now.

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

Operation Christmas Child

Our shoeboxes from this past November have been delivered! While not all of our shoeboxes were tracked to their final destination country, we do know some of



our shoeboxes traveled to children in South Africa and to children in Columbia. Please continue to pray for the children receiving shoeboxes and their families.

Rising from the Ashes at EduNations

February was a tough month as EduNations students and staff in Sierra Leone experienced two disasters within two weeks of each other.

On Tuesday, January 24, a large storm in the village of Mayatta ripped the roof off of one of the school buildings, leaving the teachers' office, staff room, and Prep 4, 5, and 6 classrooms completely exposed to the wind and rain. The principal and teachers did their best to rush as many academic and teaching materials to another building as soon as they could, but many books, school and office supplies, and pieces of furniture were gravely affected.

On February 2, one of the dormitory buildings at our Senior Secondary School in Rokassa was completely destroyed by a raging fire. We were able to keep the fire contained to one building and thankfully, nobody was injured. However, the damage was catastrophic, leaving the building completely demolished and destroying all of the belongings of the 39 staff and students who lived in that dormitory.

We reached out to you, our faithful community of supporters, to help us recover our losses and raise \$50,833 needed to rebuild and restore our properties. And once again, you completely overwhelmed us with your love and support, exceeding our goal in just 5 days! With all the donations that have poured in over the last several weeks, we have been able to raise \$77,511.87!

Rebuilding efforts will begin promptly and in the meantime, the displaced students and teacher are currently being housed in other dormitories. They have also received replacements for some of their personal belongings.

We thank you for your partnership in this important work in Sierra Leone!

From our church's Tithe Fund, we were able to send \$500 to help EduNations rebuild and support the students and staff who lost everything in the fire. We also continue to support EduNations' mission with \$1,000 through the church E&M annual budget as well.

Two Bread Ministries

Recently, the E+M Committee officially approved two bread ministries to be under the umbrella of the church. (1) Bread Distribution: As you know, we have been distributing day-old bread to local food pantries, senior centers, homeschool groups, churches, and through our church Foodlink distribution. (2) PB+J lunches for Open Door: Open Door Mission asked us to hold PB+J events, making 70 bagged lunches that will be distributed to clients from Open Door. Each lunch consists of 2 sandwiches, 2 snacks, and a beverage.



On February 28, 2023, the homeschool group at church, along with members of our congregation, met to make 70 bagged lunches. The homeschoolers decorated the paper bags with drawings and friendly greetings. The children cheerfully made the sandwiches and filled the bags with goodies. It was a good time had by all. At the end of the lunch-making session, we prayed for the lunch recipients. We hope to hold future PB+J events on a regular basis, perhaps monthly.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to participate, please contact Sandy Partridge or Jennifer White. We are on the lookout for volunteers to drive the bagged lunches to Open Door, so that the task can be shared. There is no heavy lifting required for this task, as volunteers at Open Door will unload your vehicle.



Sewing With a Purpose

Eye Protections for the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) were made on Feb 1 in the Fellowship Hall. These eye protections are used when the 1 – 2 pound babies are placed under the Blue light to protect their eyes. In the past, the eye protections were a white piece of hard cardstock, which would easily slip off the infant. The eye protections we created are made of soft flannel material that does not easily slip off the baby should he/she move or wiggle.

We began our meeting with a prayer and then our guest



speaker, Nancy Palermo shared her experience with the NICU as her daughter, Amy, gave birth prematurely to Wesley James. Nancy described Wesley's journey throughout his stay in the NICU and the wonderful care and compassion he received while there. She said that medical items used to care for Premie babies is very

specialized and showed a diaper that was the size of a bar of soap. She shared pictures from a personalized book detailing the stages of Wesley's growth. One of the pictures showed our flannel heart on Wesley. Nancy concluded with a picture of Wesley (now 4 ½-years old) with his family and one would never know the journey this young lad had experienced all due to the love, compassion of his family, the doctors, nurses, child life specialists, and many more supportive staff at the Golisano NICU.

Nancy assisted in the creation of these flannel eye protections along with Joyce Coxeter, Sandy Partridge, June Hahn, Shirl Harris, Marty Hammack, Eleanor Bater, Faith Willhoft, Neva Lattimer, and Debbie McAllister.



Fellowship Time



We had a wonderful time at the loaded baked potato luncheon on February 26, 2023 and great entertainment with the 2nd Newlywed Game! Faith Willhoft was the MC for the game, assisted by Rob Willhoft and Donna Lacey as judges. The 'newlywed' teams were: Bill and Jodi Engle at 1 ½ years married, Brandt and Marty Hammack at 12 years, Ward and Judy Bailey at 55 years, and Tracy and Loretta Miller at 61 years. Thanks to all of the teams for being such good sports! Faith was wonderfully entertaining in her MC role! Faith also provided amazing gift baskets to ALL the contestants. The winners of the game were Brandt and Marty Hammack-congratulations! Many thanks to those that donated some of the food for the luncheon and especially to Paula Welch, who made the wonderfully beautiful and delicious 'wedding' cake dessert. In addition, thank you's as always to those of you that stayed and helped to clean up. It is such a joy to be part of a loving and giving church family!



On Sunday, March 19, 2023, the Fellowship Team, along with E&M will host a luncheon and mission program. We will serve goulash, salad, bread, brownies, and drinks. Adrienne Willhoft from CCO will speak about her mission and the work that she does. Please save the date!

We have begun serving homemade goodies, as well as packaged items during coffee hour. Please let Sandy Partridge know if you are willing to provide baked goods.



**Children’s Basketball
League
Grades K-2nd Grade
March 11-April 8,
2023
at 10:30 am
at Bergen Evangelical
Presbyterian Church**

See Pastor Brandt to sign up!

Anniversaries & Birthdays

March Birthdays

- 4 - Judy Ward
- 4 - Debbie McAllister
- 4 - Nancy Charcolla
- 8 - Susan Brownell
- 10 - Stu Freeman
- 18 - Kay Harmon
- 21 - Faith Willhoft
- 24 - Sue Kobel
- 26 - Jacob Buckland-Seward
- 26 - Matthew Foeller
- 29 - Paul Lattimer
- 29 - Allen Ruge

March Anniversaries

- 29 - Dave & Chris Wright (15 Years)

April Birthdays

- 12 - June Hahn
- 14 - Mason Buckland
- 14 - David Snell
- 15 - Jebidiah Buckland-Seward
- 18 - Alden Snell
- 21 - Christine Martz
- 22 - Sean McNear
- 23 - Julie Foeller
- 28 - Bev Rogers

April Anniversaries

- 4 - Ruth & Harvey Morse (53 years)
- 7 - Michael & Paula Welch (22 years)
- 12 - Garry & Wendy Hutchurson (54 years)
- 16 - Dale & Diane White (35 years)
- 23 - Bob & Kathy Cosgrove (23 years)

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 @ 6 pm

Other Goings-On in March:

- March 5 - Fellowship Meeting following worship
- March 5 - 6 pm: Lenten Study
- March 5 - 6 pm: TAG
- March 12 - Daylight Saving Time Begins (Spring Ahead)
- March 12 - 6 pm: Lenten Study
- March 16 - Foodlink resumes @ 4 pm / volunteers please arrive by 2:45 pm
- March 19 - Visit from Adrienne Willhoft from Juniata College in Huntingdon, PA
- March 19 - Luncheon following worship
- March 19 - 6 pm: Lenten Study
- March 26 - 6 pm: Lenten Study





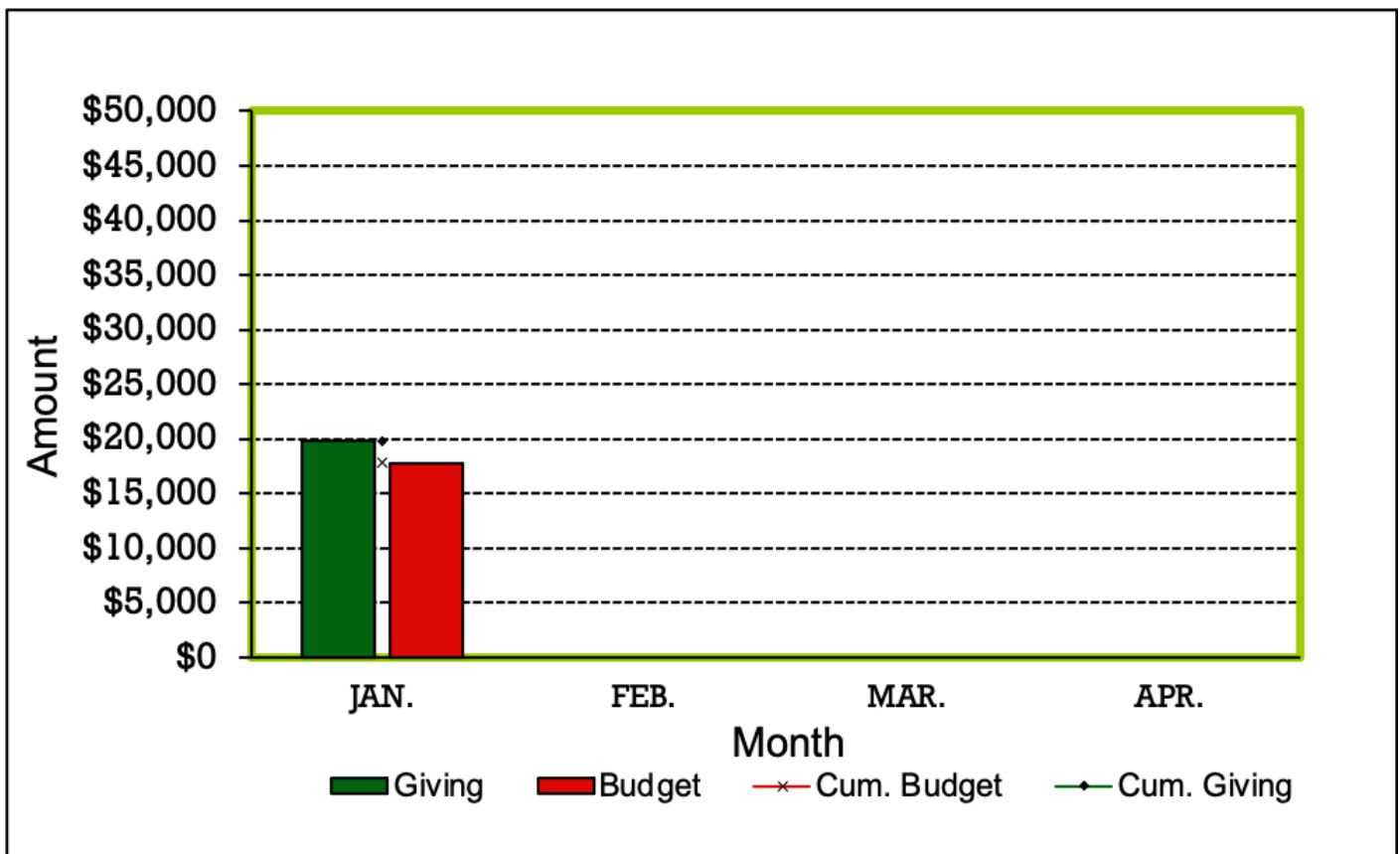
Church Finances

January 2023

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. [...] Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand and all of it belongs to you.”

I Chron. 29:14, 16

The first month of the new year was a very good month financially with giving of \$19,768, about \$2,000 above the budget goal. Expenses were quite low thus allowing all the bills to be paid without needing any funding from the AIF. Speaking of the AIF, \$33,000 was received in January for the AIF, thus bringing its balance well out of the small deficit at the end of last year. This was, overall, a very good financial start to 2023 for our church.



MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT – JANUARY 2023

OPERATING FUND

Income

Sunday offering:	\$15,913.00
Net Online Offering:	\$1,104.91
<i>*note – online offering reflects \$33.40 fee taken from gross donations from the vendor before deposit</i>	
Amortized one time gifts:	\$2,750.00

<i>Total New Receipts</i>	\$19,767.91
<i>Opening Balance (from previous month)</i>	\$4.25
Total Funds Available (opening balance + new receipts)	\$19,772.16

Expenses

Gross Expenditures for the month	\$13,740.17
Line Item Paybacks received this month that reduce expenses	
• Youth program cc return	\$30.36

Net Expenditures for the Month	\$13,709.81
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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	\$2,750.00

OPERATING FUND BALANCE **\$3,312.35**

DESIGNATED FUND

Opening Balance (from previous month)	\$14,341.66
New Designated Receipts	\$100.00
Total Designated Expenditures	\$633.76

DESIGNATED FUND BALANCE **\$13,807.90**

TOTAL CHECKBOOK BALANCE (Operating Fund + Designated Fund) **\$17,120.25**

OTHER FUND ACTIVITY

Accumulated Income Fund

• January Deposit	\$33,000.00
Current Balance (1/31/2023)	\$33,719.71

Technology Fund

• New projector and monitor	-\$4,953.00
Current Balance (1/31/2023)	\$7,606.83

