

# CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY

November 22, 2020 - 10:00 AM

## Living Springs Lutheran Church

4224 Hard Scrabble Road, Columbia, SC 29223

www.livingspringscolumbia.org

*On this final Sunday of the church year our gospel is Jesus' great story of judgment. In the end, the faithful are those who served Christ by ministering to those who are poor, hungry, naked, sick, or estranged. In the first reading God is the shepherd who seeks the lost, weak, and injured and feeds them with justice. We gather this day to celebrate the reign of Christ and his victory over death, yet we await the consummation of all things yet to come. Acknowledging Christ as our merciful ruler, we go forth that his reign may be known in our loving words and deeds.*



*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen... since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus... (Hebrews 11:1-3, 12:1-2)*

### WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### GENEROSITY MISSION MOMENT

*We give thee but thine own,  
whate'er the gift may be;  
all that we have is thine alone,  
a trust, O Lord, from thee.*

*Text: William W. How*

*We stand as able*

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

**Pastor:** Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved.

**People:** Amen.

**Pastor:** Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.  
*(Silence for reflection - we kneel as able)*

**Pastor:** Holy One,

**People:** **we confess that we are not awake for you. We are not faithful in using your gifts. We forget the least of our siblings. We do not see your beautiful image in one another. We are infected by sin that divides your beloved community. Open our hearts to your coming, open our eyes to see you in our neighbor, open our hands to serve your creation. Amen.**

**Pastor:** Beloved, we are God's children, and Jesus, our Beloved, opens the door to us. Through † Jesus you are forgiven, by Jesus you are welcome, in Jesus you are called to rejoice! Let us live in the promises prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

**People:** Amen.

We focus on the cross as it enters the sanctuary.

**GATHERING SONG**

"Oh, Worship the King"



1 Oh, wor - ship the King, all - glo - rious a - bove.  
5 O mea - sure - less might, in - ef - fa - ble love,



Oh, grate - ful - ly sing God's pow - er and love;  
while an - gels de - light to hymn you a - bove,



our shield and de - fend - er, the An - cient of Days,  
the hum - bler cre - a - tion, though fee - ble their lays,



pa - vil - ioned in splen - dor, and gird - ed with praise.  
with true ad - o - ra - tion shall sing to your praise.

*Oh, Worship the King; Text: Robert Grant; Music: HANOVER, William Croft*

**APOSTOLIC GREETING**

Pastor: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**People: And also with you.**

**KYRIE & PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Pastor: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

Pastor: For the peace from above  
and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



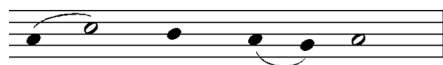
Lord, have mer - cy.

Pastor: For the peace of the whole world,  
for the well-being of the church of God,  
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

Pastor: For this community of faith,  
and all who offer their worship and praise,  
let us pray to the Lord.



Lord have mer - cy.

Pastor: Help, save, comfort, and defend us Gracious Lord.



A - men.

Pastor: O God of power and might, your Son shows us the way of service, and in him we inherit the riches of your grace. Give us the wisdom to know what is right and the strength to serve the world you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

*We are seated*

### **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**

Ashley Ramsey

*Children, youth, and young at heart are invited for a special message. You may collect your coins or dollars at home for the bucket collection and bring them to in-person worship, to the Parking Lot Communion Distributions, or drop them off at the church office. Current collection is for the Disaster Response Fund.*

***For-ward in faith! (clap-clap-clap)***

***For-ward in faith! (clap-clap-clap)***

***With our eyes on Jesus***

***WE'RE RUNNIN' THE RACE!***

### **MUSIC FOR REFLECTION**

*"A Time Will Come for Singing"*

*In the spirit of Isaiah, this song announces the promise of God's kingdom inaugurated in the first coming of the Savior, and one day fully revealed when Christ the King returns.*

*A time will come for singing when all your tears are shed  
When sorrows chains are broken and broken hearts will mend  
The deaf will hear your singing when silent tongues are freed  
The lame will join your dancing when blind eyes learn to see*

*A time will come for singing when trees will raise their boughs  
When men lay down their armor and hammer their swords into plows  
When beggars live as princes and orphans find their homes  
When prison cells are emptied and hatred has grown old*

*A time will come for singing a hymn by hearts foretold  
That kings have sought for ages and treasured more than gold  
Its lyrics turn to silver when sung in harmony  
The Lord of Love will teach us to sing its melody*

*A Time Will Come for Singing; Text: Daniel L. Schutte;  
Text © 1977 OCP Publications.*

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### **FIRST READING**

*Because Israel's kings proved to be bad shepherds, Ezekiel declares that the Lord will assume the role of shepherd in Israel. The Lord will also set over them a shepherd-messiah, "my servant David," who will feed and care for the people.*

Lector: A reading from Ezekiel.

***Thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.***

***Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.***  
*(Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24)*

Lector: Word of God, Word of life.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## PSALM 95:1-7A

Lector: Come, let us sing to the LORD;  
let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

**People: Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving  
and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.**

Lector: For you, LORD, are a great God,  
and a great ruler above all gods.

**People: In your hand are the caverns of the earth;  
the heights of the hills are also yours.**

Lector: The sea is yours, for you made it,  
and your hands have molded the dry land.

**People: Come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the LORD our maker.**

Lector: For the LORD is our God,

**People: and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand.**

## SECOND READING

*In this passage, God is praised for revealing ultimate divine power in raising Jesus from the dead. The resurrected, exalted Christ is Lord of both the church and the entire universe, now and in the age to come.*

Lector: A reading from Ephesians.

*I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*  
(Ephesians 1:15-23)

Lector: Word of God, Word of life.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

*We stand for the reading of the Gospel*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?



You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.



## GOSPEL LESSON

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

People: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46)

Pastor: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

*We are seated*

## MESSAGE

Rev. Eric Fink

## HYMN OF THE DAY

*"Rejoice, for Christ is King"*



1 Re - joice, for Christ is king! Your Lord and king a - dore;  
4 He sits at God's right hand till all his foes sub - mit



re - joice, give thanks, and sing, and tri - umph ev - er - more:  
and bow to his com - mand and fall be - neath his feet:

*Refrain*



Lift up your heart, lift up your voice; re -



joice, a - gain I say, re - joice!

*Rejoice, for Christ is King; Text: Charles Wesley; Music: LAUS REGIS, William E. Fischer*

*We stand as able*  
**NICENE CREED**

**People:** We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

**Assist:** Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

*+ A brief silence +*

**Assist:** Sovereign of all, train our ears to hear your cry in the needs of those around us. Bless all social ministries of the church through which we seek to serve others as we ourselves have been served. Hear us, O God.

**People:** **Your mercy is great.**

**Assist:** You cause rain to fall on the just and unjust alike. Direct our use of creation to provide for the needs of all people in ways that are sustainable for the earth. Hear us, O God.

**People:** **Your mercy is great.**

**Assist:** Bring peace to every place where conflict rages. Grant opportunities for ending divisions among us and usher in your reign of unity and reconciliation. Hear us, O God.

**People:** **Your mercy is great.**

**Assist:** Bring healing and hope to all weighed down by burdens of despair, fear, anxiety, addiction, loneliness, grief, or illness. We pray especially for *Wendy McKenzie; Will/Angelica/Eliana/Gaby Collins; Karl Schmidt; Jan Epperson; Elizabeth Maddox; Saundra Dixon; Henrietta Kaiser; Debbie Smith; Ed Brennan; Margaret Blank; Charles Kauffman; Bunie Talbert; Kelly Koziol; Bob Holmstrom; Lila Bell; Wilma Bracey; Charles Levitt; the Rodems family; the Carnahan family; and those we name before you now, either silently or aloud...* Hear us, O God.

**People:** **Your mercy is great.**

**Assist:** Pour out the gifts of your Spirit on children and youth throughout the church. Sustain those who work in children's ministry, youth ministry, and campus ministry as they nurture the gifts of young people. Hear us, O God.

**People:** **Your mercy is great.**

**Assist:** Thank you for saints now departed who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and tended to the sick. Inspire us by their example, that we may see your presence in those in need around us. Hear us, O God.

**People:** **Your mercy is great.**

**Pastor:** O God, as we face ongoing uncertainties around coronavirus, we continue to pray for ... Hear us, O God.

**People:** **Your mercy is great.**

**Pastor:** Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever.

**People:** **Amen.**

## SHARING OF PEACE

Pastor: The peace of Christ be with you always.

**People: And also with you.**

*We greet one another, with the words that the risen Jesus spoke to his disciples: "Peace be with you."*

## OFFERINGS ARE GIVEN

*Offering may be dropped off at the office during the week or sent through the mail. For those who wish to give electronically, you may use the secure Givelify app.*



## OFFERING PRAYER

Pastor: Let us pray.

**People: God of all goodness, generations have turned to you, gathered around your table, and shared your abundant blessings. Number us among them that, as we gather these gifts from your abundance, and give thanks for your rich blessings, we may feast upon your very self and care for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Servant. Amen.**

## THANKSGIVING FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Pastor: We have been made one as the body of Christ through the waters of baptism. In our journey of faith & life, we are fed with Christ's own body and blood. Even though we do not celebrate Holy Communion in this virtual gathering, we pause to give thanks for the gift of Holy Communion — as we anticipate, with joy, those times when we are fed at your table.

Pastor: O God most mighty, O God most merciful, O God our rock and our salvation, hear us as we offer our praise and give you thanks. When the earth was a formless void, you formed order and beauty. When Abraham and Sarah were barren, you sent them a child. When the Israelites were enslaved, you led them to freedom. Ruth faced starvation; David fought Goliath; the psalmists cried out for healing, and full of compassion, you granted the people your life. You entered our sorrows in Jesus our brother. He was born among the poor, he lived under oppression, he wept over the city. With infinite love, he conquered death and granted the people your life.

We give you thanks and praise for the gift of Holy Communion and for the blessing it brings to your people. Even though we abstain from your meal in this moment of worship, for reasons you understand, we still sense the power of your forgiveness and grace offered to us and the world through your Son. Awaiting those times when we share in this meal, we still cherish in our hearts the words which Jesus gave us:

**People: In the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of Me." Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of Me."**

*We take time for prayer and reflection as we sing together, giving thanks to God for all the times we have been fed with our Lord's body & blood—and look forward to the time when we gather with others around the Lord's Table.*



# COMMUNION REFLECTION

## "Set a Fire"

No place I would rath - er be, \_ no place I would rath - er be, \_  
 no place I would rath - er be \_ than here in Your love, here in Your love. \_\_\_  
 So set a fire \_ down in my soul \_ that I can't con - tain \_ and I can't con - trol. .  
 \_ I want more \_ of You \_\_\_\_\_ God; \_ I want more \_ of You \_\_\_\_\_ God. \_

"Set a Fire" words and music by Will Reagan  
 CCLI Song @ 5911299 © 2010 United Pursuit Music  
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# LORD'S PRAYER

Pastor: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**People: Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

# SENDING SONG

## "Soon and Very Soon"

(While we sing, a procession moves outside for the Planting of Disciple Commitments.)

I Soon and ver - y soon we are goin' to see the King,  
 soon and ver - y soon we are goin' to see the King,  
 soon and ver - y soon we are goin' to see the King,  
 Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, we're goin' to see the King!  
 Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah,  
 jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah.

Soon and Very Soon; Text and Music: André Crouch  
 CCLI Song #11249 © 1971 Bud John Songs, Inc./Crouch Music Corp.  
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## PLANTING OF 2019-20 DISCIPLESHIP COMMITMENTS

Leader: From the New Testament, hear the words of the apostle Paul:

"We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing." (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

"So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose .... For we are God's servants, working together." (1 Corinthians 3:7-8a, 9a)

*Shreds from our 2019-20 commitments are poured out as mulch for new flowers, with children/youth representatively adding soil, as we join in singing last year's Faith song:*

*Grow (clap 3x), Grow (clap 3x), Grow in Faith Together.*

*Grow (clap 3x), Grow (clap 3x), Grow in Faith Together.*

*Deeper in Grace, Deeper in Love, Deeper in Christ*

*Grow Stronger in the Lord!*

Pastor: Christ our King, the Spirit has planted the joy and hope of your kingdom:

**People: Using our commitments of worship and devotion.**

Pastor: Christ our King, the Spirit has planted the joy and hope of your kingdom:

**People: Using our commitments of witness and service.**

Pastor: Christ our King, the Spirit has planted the joy and hope of your kingdom:

**People: Using our commitments of study and faith growth.**

Pastor: Christ our King, the Spirit has planted the joy and hope of your kingdom:

**People: Using our commitments of time, talent, and financial treasure.**

Pastor: Now, in these weeks ahead, as we each engage in prayer over our Commitments of Faith and Giving Intents for a next year, let us pray together:

**People: O God, in gratitude for your abundant grace and in thanksgiving for your Church that touches so many lives, we offer with joy what you have entrusted to us, as managers of what is truly yours: our time, talent, and treasure, all signs of your gracious love. May your Spirit strengthen us in our commitments of discipleship: that rooted in gratitude, we might move Forward in Faith and Forward in Generosity - to be a flowering garden of your Kingdom Love for this hurting world. We give you thanks, O God, that you bless us to be a blessing for others. We offer you the best first-fruits of our lives, planted in the soil of your eternal love, to bloom hope for all in our community and the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior & King. Amen.**

Pastor: The blessing of almighty God, the Father of glory, + Jesus Christ our peace, and the Spirit of truth, be upon you and remain with you always.

**People: Amen.**

Pastor: Go in peace, with perseverance, to run the race and move Forward in Faith, Forward in Generosity, always living and sharing the Good News of Christ our King!

**People: Thanks be to God.**

### **NOVEMBER "ALTAR FLOWERS" - THANK YOU!**

The following have given monetary gifts in lieu of, or in addition to, the flowers at the altar for our Sunday and Tuesday in-person services:

**November 8:** In memory & honor of Eleanor Lummel's birthday by Karen Kranz & Jeff Lummel

**November 15:** In honor of our anniversary by Karen Kranz & Jeff Lummel



# God's Love Shared Through You ...



## One Life Deeper in 2020!

*Our prayerful goal is that God will work in every LS disciple to have an impact of faith and hope in the life of one person during 2020. **What shoes might they be wearing?** It may be someone you know already—at work, at home, at school, in the neighborhood, in your daily life. It may be a stranger whom God will bring to you this year. How will the Spirit work through you to bring someone deeper in 2020? **Deeper in Christ, Deeper in Grace, Deeper in Love!***

**BUILD RELATIONSHIPS: inviting, involving, mentoring, discipling relationships 1 person at a time!**

**BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS: for the work of God's kingdom in our community and world!**

**SHARING GOD'S LOVE: with those who are hurting, alone, marginalized, or feeling unloved!**

**SHARING GOD'S STORIES: so we do not remain silent about God's ongoing work in the world!**

### **CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY:**

#### *Action and Reflection*

The story of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 begins with the Son of Man on a throne. It is an image of a king sitting in judgment. In any era of human history, this image of an all-powerful ruler sitting in judgement would be consistent with our images of power and authority. What follows runs against all of our expectations. The king connects his presence to the people who are poor and oppressed. This does not fit our human practices of power. Even a benevolent leader is not seen in the presence of the least among us.

Though Jesus makes this connection, it is easy to read this story and get hooked into the power dynamics of judgment. We may wonder if we are a sheep or a goat and think about this status in an eternal sense as it relates to our relationship with God. This heavy reflection may lead us to think we might somehow have to earn our way into God's grace.

The theology of the cross finds Jesus exercising his kingship through the weakness of the cross. From the resurrection that follows this death, we receive the gift of life. This gift comes with the freedom to leave aside worries about eternity in favor of attending to faithful living today. If Jesus frees us from concern about our relationship with God, the story of the sheep and the goats becomes more of a checklist for grace-filled living than a scorecard for eternity. It becomes an invitation and a guide rather than an indictment.

Included in this invitation is an opportunity for reflection. Neither the sheep nor the goats realize how their actions have or have not been faithful. In this way the story gives us a simple gift by which to measure our path in faith and reflect on the ways we spend our days.

### November Book of the Month: Ecclesiastes & Jonah

# Forward in FAITH Forward in GENEROSITY



Did you know that that the average Protestant church member gives away about 2% of their income to the church? Another statistic shows that the median Protestant (person in the middle if lined up smallest percentage to largest) only give 0.62% of their income to the church.

For most people, the reason for this has less to do with their wealth or income - and more to do with intentionality and regular systematic giving.

Over the course of a year, \$1 per day comes to a gift of \$365, which for about 35-40% of Americans would be significant growth in their giving to the church. The average Starbucks coffee costs \$2.75. This amounts to over \$1,000 if one is purchased every day of the year.

Regular, systematic giving can help all of us become more generous. We get overwhelmed when we think about larger numbers like \$1,000. However, most of us can find \$2.75 per day. As you think and pray about your generosity this year, consider how systematic giving may help you become more generous.

### From a Living Springs Family - Our Generosity Journey!

*Like many young couples we started our discipleship journey when we joined our first church after marriage. We settled into a church that felt comfortable. Comfortable, but not challenging. A church where we could do as much or little as we wanted - and give as much or little as we wanted. So, we gave when we were at worship and didn't when we weren't. We also gave to special appeals and where "we" happened to see a need.*

*When our congregation held an appeal to pay off the mortgage for the church gym building, I was recruited to help with the campaign. As a result, we made our first real commitment for our financial stewardship and started on a more disciplined journey. Since then our stewardship has been planned annually and we have given on a regular basis. So, as a new year approaches, we re-visit how during the last year God used our gifts in ways that we could never have imagined. The discipline of regular giving, and making a commitment, allows us to be more generous and more involved in God's work of hope for others than we would have been otherwise. And it now helps remind us throughout the year that God is truly at the center of our lives!*

**Steve and Jeanette Bloss**

# Forward in FAITH Forward in GENEROSITY



## PLACE GOD FIRST IN YOUR BUDGETING AND SPENDING

The Ten Commandments stress that God must be first in our lives. And Jesus said, “Seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness - and all these things shall be yours as well.” (*Matthew 6:33*)

Many experience difficulty giving generously despite the desire and pledge to do so, because they attempt to give from what is left over at the end of the week or month - rather than from first fruits, from all they have received.

The simple practice of placing God, and God’s Church, first in budgeting and spending has helped many to experience joy in their giving – and a deeper joy in their lives! When you do this, you are giving from all that a good and loving God has provided. You are practicing stewardship, understanding that you are but a temporary trustee of what God has entrusted to you. And you are experiencing the miracle of a loving God who entrusts us human beings with all that we have, so that we too can experience deep, true joy – the joy of giving from our hearts to share hope with others, as we put God first!

