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The Reporter

May 2022

The Reporter

Volume 20, Issue 01

“A Message of Awe and Wonder!”

by Pastor Proeber

There are many things in life which lead us to say, “that’s amazing!” From the birth of a child to the development of technology, we are left in awe. We are also left with a feeling of humility. To think something like that could have happened in our lifetime!

There is another area in our life where we are left in awe and wonder. It is with the work our Savior has done for our rescue. Take a look at any of the Creeds—Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian—what do we see and learn? The message is clear enough, but it leaves us with a sense of awe, wonder, and especially humility. It defies explanation that Jesus as the only-begotten Son of God the Father should choose to give up everything that was his. Power, glory, majesty, equality with his Father—all was sacrificed. What leaves us with an even greater sense of wonder is that this was done willingly. There was no coercion or compulsion required.

Jesus’ humiliation took him down a path which led to even greater indignities. He became a servant of servants. He subjected himself to cruel shame and mockery. He even endured crucifixion and rejection by his Father. All this he did because he loved us with an ever-lasting and undeserved love.

If anything leaves us with a sense of awe and wonder, it is this. Jesus’ work was done so we could be set free from the tyranny of the devil and the terror of death and the grave. This message leaves us with only one response, “How can I thank you, Lord, for all your loving-kindness.”

Still the amazing nature of what our Savior has done is only surpassed by the realization it has been recorded for our hearing, learning, and blessing. Think of it, everything Jesus did for our rescue has been written down. It makes us recall the words of John: “Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, did many other miraculous signs that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31). I’m sure we don’t think about it in this way usually, but the message of the Bible should fill us with awe and wonder.

From the very first promise in Genesis to the very last promise in Revelation, there is a continuity of thought and content. It is all about Jesus. From the assurance that God would send a Savior to the reality that Savior came, and will come again, every step and every act is faithfully recorded. What you and I have in the Scriptures is awesome. Even if you only considered the New Testament, it fills you with won-

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Awe and Wonder, from page 1

der. There is the incarnation and virgin birth of Jesus. There is the life and ministry of Jesus. There is the truth he taught and commanded to be proclaimed. There is the spread of the church through the world. Then there is the complete assurance of final victory. This is amazing! Everything we need for eternal life and to guide us there is wonderfully provided by our Lord and Savior. Tell me this isn't amazing!

Sadly, we must be aware of the dangers we face with everything that has filled us with awe and wonder. Even the most momentous experiences and inspiring inventions soon become common place.

Life can become dreary and unexciting because everything seems to blend together. There is only the drudgery of daily routine. Even the excitement of marriage and the birth of children may lose their luster over time. The same can also be said about technology. Initially everything was cutting edge and awesome. Computers, tablets, then cell phones—all kept improving and intriguing us with what they could do. Now everyone has one, and there is little which stimulates and excites. Things become common place.

What about the Scriptures? When we first learned them and knew what Jesus had done for us, we were excited. This was a new and uplifting message which filled us with awe and wonder. We rejoiced to know and confess Jesus as our Savior. We couldn't hear enough about his life, death, and resurrection—all for me! Now be honest, does that Word still thrill? Does it still fill me with awe and wonder? Has it been reduced to being common place?

You and I face a dangerous dilemma. We have had the pure Word for many years. We have had the privilege and opportunity to worship. We have even been blessed by our growth in our knowledge. At the same time the sinful nature is at work. We know the proverb, "Familiarity breeds contempt." This is the danger of which we always need to be aware. It is easy to assume, "I know all I need to know." It is just as easy to believe, "I don't have to be in worship or Bible study all the time." It is even easier to think, "I can always catch what I need online." Our flesh, together with the devil, rejoices in this kind of thinking, because it makes the Word become common place. What complicates this assumption is another. We tend to blame God's Word for not being more exciting, more thrilling, making us better people, or making us happier. In the end, we relinquish our grip on the Word, and we lose the one gift God has given which makes us worthy of eternal life and heaven. We have to be honest with ourselves when we allow the Word of our Lord to become common place, we put ourselves on a path which leads away from the Lord and to judgment.

There is too much at stake to let the Word become common place. We need to dig into it more deeply, and study it more frequently and with greater eagerness. We need to take the psalmists words to heart:

Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes. Then I will guard it to the end.
Give me understanding, and I will guard your law. I will keep it with all my heart.
Make me walk on the path of your commandments, for I take pleasure in it.
Direct my heart toward your testimonies and not toward material gain.
Keep my eyes from looking at worthless things. Give me life according to your ways.
Confirm your sayings to your servant so that you may be feared.
Take away my disgrace which I dread, for your judgments are good.
How I long for your precepts! Give me life in your righteousness.

Psalms 119: 33-40

“A Christian Response to the Plague”

By Al Todd

In 252 A.D., Cyprian (martyred in 258 A.D. for refusing to worship the Roman Emperor), an early church father, and Bishop of the church in the important North African city of Carthage, wrote a sermon (On Mortality) to encourage Christians facing a terrible thirteen year plague (probably smallpox, pandemic influenza, and viral haemorrhagic fever [filoviruses] like the Ebola virus) that was extant through-out the Roman Empire from 249 – 262 A.D. At one point, 5,000 Romans were dying daily in Rome alone.

A Christian blog (Wolfmueller) I occasionally read highlighted some of the chapters from this famous sermon and commented on their applicability to today. Here are a couple of excerpts from Chapters 1, 16, and 24 of that sermon for your consideration. Note, as the blogger remarks, the straightforward way Cyprian speaks of fear, and the hope of eternal life. You may guess from his form of writing that Cyprian was trained as a lawyer before entering the ministry. Does that remind you of a certain German Reformer?

Chapter 1

The kingdom of God, beloved brethren, has begun to be at hand; the reward of life and the joy of eternal salvation and perpetual happiness and the possession of paradise once lost are now coming with the passing of the world; now the things of heaven are succeeding those of earth, and great things small, and eternal things, transitory. What place is there here for anxiety and worry? Who in the midst of these things is fearful and sad save he who lacks hope and faith?

Chapter 16

What significance, beloved brethren, all this has! How suitable, how necessary it is that this plague and pestilence, which seems horrible and deadly, searches out the justice of each and every one and examines the minds of the human race; whether the well care for the sick, whether relatives dutifully love their kinsmen as they should, whether masters show compassion to their ailing slaves, whether physicians do not desert the afflicted begging their help, whether the violent repress their violence, whether the greedy, even though the fear of death, quench the ever insatiable fire of their raging avarice, whether the proud bend their necks, whether the shameless soften their effrontery, whether the rich, even when their dear ones are perishing and they are about to die without heirs, bestow and give something! Although this mortality has contributed nothing else, it has especially accomplished this for Christians and servants of God, that we have begun gladly to seek martyrdom while we are learning not to fear death. These are trying exercises for us, not deaths; they give to the mind the glory of fortitude; by contempt of death they prepare for the crown.

Chapter 24

We should consider, beloved brethren, and we should reflect constantly that we have renounced the world and as strangers and foreigners we sojourn here for a time. Let us embrace the day which assigns each of us to his dwelling, which on our being rescued from here and released from the snares of the world, restores us to paradise and the kingdom.

What man, after having been abroad, would not hasten to return to his native land? Who, when hurrying to sail to his family, would not more eagerly long for a favorable wind that he might more quickly embrace his dear ones? We account paradise our country. We have already begun

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Cyprian, from page 3

to look upon the patriarchs as our parents. Why do we not hasten and run, so that we can see our country, so that we can greet our parents? A great number of our dear ones there await us, parents, brothers, children; a dense and copious throng longs for us, already secure in their safety but still anxious for our salvation.

There is a lot more in Cyprian's sermon to think about as well. We recall Paul's proclamation to the Christians in Philippi: Yes, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Phil 1:21)

Food for Thought

By Al Todd

Consider this extract which may cause you to stop and ponder its meaning and applicability to today. It is from a T.S. Eliot play "The Rock", Chorus 7. Remember this was in 1934!!

*But it seems that something has happened that has never happened before:
though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where.
Men have left GOD not for other gods, they say, but for no god;
and this has never happened before that men both deny gods and worship of gods,
professing first Reason, and then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or Race, or Dialectic.
The Church disowned, the tower overthrown, the bells upturned, what have we to do
But stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards
in an age which advances progressively backwards?*

Easter Morning—Jesus Lives!

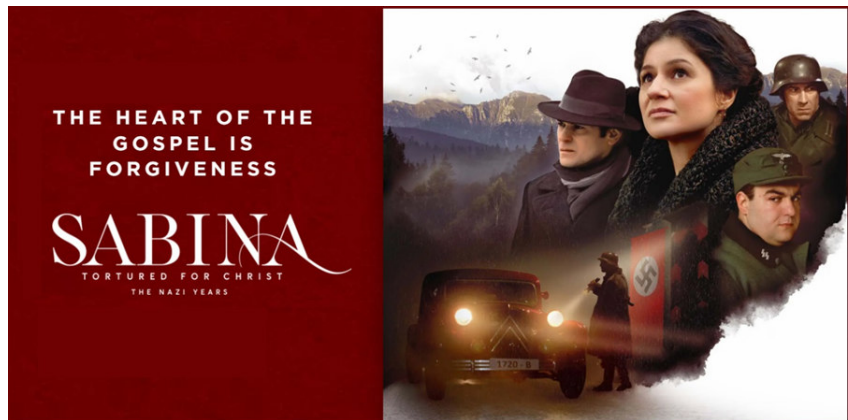


“Sabina: Tortured for Christ”

By Debbie Aitkins

Recently I viewed an online showing of the movie, *Sabina: Tortured for Christ, The Nazi Years*, which was produced by VOM (The Voice of the Martyrs).

According to their website: The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) is a nonprofit, interdenominational missions organization that serves persecuted Christians around the world. Founded in 1967 by Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand, VOM is dedicated to inspiring believers to deepen their commitment to Christ and to fulfill His Great Commission — no matter the cost.



The movie *Sabina: Tortured for Christ, The Nazi Years* is the story of Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand. Told in flashback, the story depicts a young couple who meet, fall in love, and marry in 1936 Romania. Jewish in name only, both professed to be atheist. Living only for themselves, they envisioned a pleasant, childless life consisting of all the pleasures their social standing and income could provide. This all changed for Richard, while in a tuberculosis sanatorium. As he faced what he thought was an inevitable imminent death, he began to question the purpose of life. The change for Sabina was met with more resistance. Richard had not only come to acknowledge the existence of God but had become a follower of Jesus, an abhorrent concept for Sabina. Eventually, through Richard's painstaking witness, Sabina was led to her own awakening when she was finally able to acknowledge her prior, purposeless and self-centered existence.

This conversion to Christianity while also being Jewish at a time when Nazism was sweeping over Romania, along with Richard's uncompromising witness to the Gospel of Christ as a Lutheran Minister, are the circumstances which led them on a journey which repeatedly tested their faith. Rather than leave the persecution of the world they now found themselves in, they remained in Romania. Determined to fulfill their mission to bring souls to Christ, they did so amidst imprisonment, torture, and threat of imminent death. Particularly striking is the movie's depiction of both Richard's and Sabina's capacity to show love to their enemies and forgiveness – most poignantly, Sabina's willingness to embrace and pronounce God's forgiveness on the man who may very well have been the one who killed her entire family.

The story told in this movie centers on World War II. All occurrences depicted are implied to occur during this time frame. Based on additional research, the Wurmbrand's remarkable story of persecution and imprisonment actually stretched beyond the scourge that was Nazism. It extended for two decades after when being Jewish was not the crime, but being Christian was under Soviet occupied Romania.

While I watched this movie, I found myself considering the current situation in Ukraine. Not because of any political or social similarities, or the justifications given for the war, or even because of the horror which is war and the reality that people can so easily slaughter other people when commanded to do so – but rather from the standpoint of how we, by nature, view the ones responsible. How many of us, were we Ukrainians under Russia's relentless bombardment and slaughter, would be praying for the souls of

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Sabina, continued from page 5

those responsible for destroying our homes and annihilating our cities? How many of us would embrace and forgive the one responsible for killing our loved ones? I doubt – in fact am quite convinced – I would not. Even at my safe distance from this conflict, I find sadly lacking, my ability to love those responsible for these heinous acts or to offer forgiveness, despite knowing Christ so generously pours out that forgiveness on all – even me.

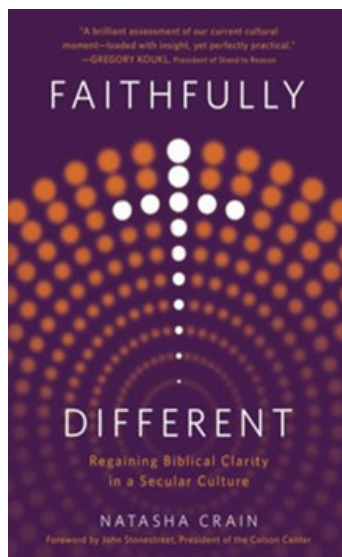
It is inspiring to know that such faith, as demonstrated in Richard and Sabina Wurmbbrand, can exist. If in them, why not me? I am left hoping and praying for such a faith.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Indeed if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? ... Do not even the unbelievers do that? So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Matthew 5:43-46a; 47b-48 (EHV)

“Faithfully Different”

By Al Todd



Faithfully Different – Regaining Biblical Clarity in a Secular Culture,
Natasha Crain
(Harvest House Publishers, 268 pp., \$16.26)

“Feelings are the ultimate guide; happiness is the ultimate goal; Judging is the ultimate sin; God is the ultimate guess.”

If you agree with these statements, then you are definitely not in the small minority, but rather you are in the very large majority of those in the United States (and most “western” countries) who hold to this predominant secular worldview. It is the “new normal”.

Natasha Crain’s new book is written primarily for Christians who view the Bible as “error-free and the only sufficient and authoritative source for salvation, faith, and godliness”. Needless to say, those who do not hold to this view will have major disagreements with this book. However, in the author’s own words, “if you seek to believe, think, and live according to a biblical world view” this book will encourage you to stand firm in “your convictions no matter the secular pressures and cultural hostilities that come your way”.

How small a minority is the biblical world view? Citing research from such prestigious research centers as: Pew Research Center; American Culture and Faith Institute (ACFI); Arizona Christian Uni-

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versity's American Worldview Inventory; and Barna Research, the author finds that just 6 – 10% of Americans are committed to a biblical worldview. However, to me, the most shocking finding was that just 17% of Americans who consider their faith important and attend church regularly hold a biblical worldview. That would mean that 83% do not hold a biblical worldview but a mix of secular and biblical views - with the secular being most predominant!

Here is the author's definition of a biblical worldview culled from Barna Research:

- Absolute moral truth exists
- The Bible is totally accurate in all the principles it teaches
- Satan is a real being or force, not merely symbolic
- A person cannot earn their way into heaven by trying to be good or doing good works.
- Jesus lived a sinless life on earth
- God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today.

I hope you would agree with me that this is very, very broad definition, but even so 83% of Americans who consider their faith important and attend church regularly do not agree with all of these statements.

It is with this baseline assessment that the author proceeds in Part One to clarify the secular worldview ("Secularism") and why it is so compelling—even for Christians. In Part Two, she provides information about strategies to regain a biblical worldview and strengthen beliefs when surrounded by secularism. In Part Three, she explores how what we believe should translate into how we think. And in Part Four, she discusses how Christians can be revitalized around Biblical justice (as opposed to social justice) and how we can be recommitted to the truth.

The truth is that most of the information presented here is not especially "new" (for example, see Francis Shaeffer's 1884 book "The Great Evangelical Disaster"). The true church militant has always faced trials and tribulations from the surrounding non-Christian culture. However, I found that the author is very good at explaining the challenges we face today and organizing her thoughts in a way that makes the book a compelling read.



¹Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard is coming and is already in the world. ⁴You are from God, dear children, and you have overcome the false prophets, because the one in you is greater than the one in the world. ⁵They are from the world. That is why they speak from a worldly perspective and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. The one who knows God listens to us, but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. That is how we can distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

1 John 4:1-6

Outreach Opportunities

Once again, we are adding more activities to our ministry. What is even more exciting it to see more people enjoying those activities. We pray the Lord will continue to work through these to help more people come and see the great things he has done for them.

Current Activities

Wednesday evening Bible Study at 7:00 pm. The class on the Divine Call is coming to its conclusion. There will be a new topic beginning on May 18th. While a subject has not been chosen, suggestions are always welcome.

Sunday morning Bible Study after worship. After a two month hiatus, the class is meeting again. The studies are typically based on one of the lessons from each Sunday. This offers the opportunity to get the larger picture of the theme for the day. It also provides a single unit for each class. Every week is a new study.

Spring and Summer Activities: The following plans are set for June through August —

June 10th at 7:00 pm—Ice Cream Social and Game Night. Bring you favorite ice cream and toppings for all to share.

July 4th at 4:00 pm—Movie, Barbeque and Fireworks. This year's movie is "Death of a Nation." It looks at the challenges we face to hold together our "constitutional republic." Please bring a salad for the dinner and a dessert for the fellowship later in the evening.

August 28th at Noon—Beach, Bike, Barbeque. We will meet again at Area C in Goleta Beach. Meat will be provided, so bring salads and desserts.

Last, but not least: While it helps to be able to invite a friend, neighbor, or family member to attend an activity, we should never forget what is most important. We can always invite people who do not know Jesus to our worship service, a Bible Class, or a general information class. We can also invite them to follow our live stream, or check out our website. Even more important, we need to be faithful and effective witnesses in all we say and do.

Quarterly Congregational Meeting—April 2022

The first quarterly congregational meeting of 2022 was called to order on Sunday, April 24th at 10:45 am by Chairman Greg Grunewald. Pastor Proeber opened with a prayer. Seven voting members and four guests were present from the congregation.

Unfinished Business: There was no old or unfinished business for the meeting.

Outreach Elder: Josh Schueler

Streaming of the worship service resumed in April. The equipment and sound system we have also allowed us to follow the worship service of Star of Bethlehem while Pastor was unable to conduct the services in February and March

Budgetary funds have not been used for 2022

Social media accounts are being evaluated to achieve a more effective use for several different audiences.

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Minutes, continued from page 8

Pastor's report: Pastor Proeber

There has been some progress in catching up with our shut-in members
 Attendance went down slightly through the course of February and March
 A private Baptism was arranged for the infant son of Kelsey (Grunewald) and Jonathan Meza.
 Now that Pastor is back, Bible Class for Sundays and Wednesdays will resume, as will other activities through the week
 Sonja continues to teach Sunday School for the younger children. We give thanks for her dedication and preparation.
 We thank the Lord for Pastor Foley and the members of Star of Bethlehem for the help they provided during the time Pastor was sick
 The Outreach-Fellowship Committee has met and plans are made for June, July and August
 Plans for a Family Fall activity will be finalized in July
 There are several projects around the church and the parsonage which will be addressed through the rest of this year
 Our Redeemer will host the 2022 Fall Rally of the Lutheran Women's Mission Society
 The congregation will need a delegate for the 2022 Arizona-California District Convention in Scottsdale.

Property: Now report was give due to Jim Brown being absent.

Financial Secretary: Jim Everson

General fund 1 st quarter offerings	\$ 28,863.36
<u>Cleaning / mowing / pass through</u>	<u>1,189.36</u>
Total offerings	\$ 30,052.72

Treasurer: Al Todd

General fund Balance January 1, 2022	\$ 28,512.00
1 st quarter offerings*	\$ 28,863.00
<u>1st quarter expenses</u>	<u>\$ 35,404.00</u>
General fund Balance March 31, 2022	\$ 21,971.00

* Less "pass-throughs" (e.g., extra Synod mission offerings)

Endowment Fund: Al Todd

Planned Giving

Beginning Balance January 1, 2022	\$480,656
<u>Change in Value</u>	<u>\$ 30,979 (-6.4%)</u>
Fund Market Value March 3, 2022	\$449,678

Church Improvements

Beginning Balance January 1, 2022	\$14,172
<u>Change in Value</u>	<u>\$ 913 (-6.4%)</u>
Fund Market Value March 3, 2022	\$13,359

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Minutes, from page 9

Family Assistance Fund

Beginning Balance January 1, 2022	\$4,400	
Contributions	100	
<u>Change in Value</u>	<u>\$ 184</u>	<u>(-4.2%)</u>
Fund Market Value March 3, 2022	\$4,216	

New Business

There was no additional business to conduct this Quarter.

Announcements:

Next Council meeting Tuesday, May 3rd at 7:00 pm
 Next Outreach meeting will be Tuesday, May 24th at 7:00 pm
 Next Voter's meeting Sunday, July 24th following worship service

The meeting adjourned with the Doxology at 12:00 pm

Editor's note

Congregational meetings are held quarterly after the Sunday worship service for attendee convenience. The Council invites all our members to participate: just raise your hand to be recognized and offer comments, suggestions or questions for the Council regarding our ministry, property issues or concerns and recommendations. Please consider setting aside time this July after Sunday service to attend. You'll still probably be able to have lunch not much past noon!

Notes & News

✝ Music Update

This year proved to be different. We did not have the ringers of the handbell choir, or the voices of the choir to add to Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. The good news is that practices will begin again in the Fall. If you are interested in participating in either choir, please contact Debbie Aitkins (handbells), or Pastor Proeber (mixed voice).

✝ Bible Class

Bible Class continues on both Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. The Sunday morning class will continue to meet after the worship service through the summer. The Wednesday evening class will be evaluated based on vacation schedules and other activities for July and August. Please watch for more information on the website, in the service folder, or in future newsletters.

✝ Sunday School

Sunday School is coming to a close for the spring. We thank Sonja Todd for her dedication to prepare the lessons for the children every second and fourth Sunday. There will be no Sunday School through the summer—June, July, and August.” However, it will start again in September.

**The FEAR of the
LORD is the
beginning of
WISDOM.**
Proverbs 9:10

Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?
Event report? Potluck-gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to two pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Hard-copy or email Pastor with your submission:
(pastor.orlcsb@gmail.com)

A simple and rewarding way to serve!

Thanks to Al Todd for his articles, as well as to Debbie Aitkins for her movie review. There is always a standing invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*. Throughout the past volumes, articles authored by members have really made every issue more interesting. We pray that every member will provide an article throughout the summer and fall of 2022. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber for advice. Thanks!

Meetings for May

Church Council	Tuesday, May 4 th at 7:00 pm
Committees	Tuesday, May 4 th at 8:00 pm

If you have a question regarding a specific area of ministry, please contact a member of the appropriate Board. He will be happy to supply you with the information you need.



We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly. Also, sincerest apologies for not recognizing the April Birthdays.

Editor's Note: If there are dates which are incorrect or overlooked, please share them as soon as possible—emailing, texting, or calling the church office.

May

21st - Kelsey M.
23rd - Wilma H.
27th - Wyatt D.
Joshua S.
29th - Dale K.

April

1 st - Margaret B.	18 th - Caroline P.
4 th - Pat F.	19 th - Jessica J.
6 th - Daniel G.	24 th - John F.
Lance S.	25 th - Penny G.
13 th - Pam S.	26 th - Ian S.

2022 Ministry and Funding Plan

By Al Todd

The congregation's 2022 Ministry and Funding Plan (Budget) is broken out into nine (9) categories as shown below:

	2021 Actual	2022 Budget	\$ Over/ Under Actual 2021	% Inc / dec
General Fund Income	138,527	151,666	13,139	9%
Total Advertising/Outreach	900	4,625	3,725	219%
Total Church Operations	17,154	16,290	-864	-6%
Total Church Utilities	8,053	8,729	676	9%
Total Education Expenses	796	935	139	19%
Total Fellowship	284	450	166	37%
Total Pastor Expenses	102,358	105,237	2,879	3%
Synod Missions	14,017	15,000	983	7%
Total Worship Expenses	221	400	179	30%
Total Expense	143,783	151,666	7,883	6%

In 2021 we saw a year over year decline in the General Fund by \$5,424. We ended 2021 with a balance of \$28,516 which is a 16% decline in the General Fund in the past year.

For the year 2022, we are planning for offerings to just cover expenses. In order to accomplish that the congregation will need to increase offerings by 9%. We realize that 2021 was another challenging year and we pray that 2022 will return to a more normal worship service attendance and more participation from members in the life of the church.

Please prayerfully consider the financial gifts God has entrusted to your stewardship and then help us meet the approved budget so we can continue to proclaim the gospel to a dying world.

If you have any questions regarding the 2022 budget, please don't hesitate to contact me or any member of the ORLC church council.

BLESSINGS
FROM
GOD