

Christ Is Risen! He Is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

We are in the midst of the Easter season in which we rejoice in the abundant blessings of our gracious, giving God! The Apostle Paul rhetorically asked the Christians in Rome, *“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all — how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?”* [Romans 8:31-32]

In Jesus, God the Father certainly has given us forgiveness of our sins, freedom from Satan’s accusations, freedom from condemnation under God’s Law, and eternal life! But, the Father, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, also gives us other things — material things — to use in both sustaining our earthly lives and in carrying out His mission of making disciples, followers of Jesus, of all nations including the people around us in metro Des Moines. That’s why God has gathered us together as Mt. Olive Lutheran Church and School. So we can worship Him with our lives of faith in which we make Him and His salvation for everyone known.

While being the body of Christ for the purpose of disciple-making is simple in concept, it is far more complex in execution. The Lord’s mission at 5625 Franklin Avenue, Des Moines, takes buildings, staff, and all of the supportive structures that go with operating a church and a school. All of that takes dollars to run, dollars that come from the generous gifts, tithes, and offerings that you give out of the material blessings God has given you.

Every year with the approval of the voters assembly, the leadership and staff prepare a budget to govern and guide the Lord’s ministry through Mt. Olive. This year’s budget conservatively anticipated **\$7,500 in tithes and offerings being received each week**. Now, 37 weeks into the fiscal year, **our anticipated, budgeted revenue should have totaled \$277,500**. Unfortunately, the **actual revenues received have only totaled \$232,374**. This means we have a current revenue deficit of **-\$45,126**. Put another way, **our giving to the Lord’s work is about 6 weeks behind budget expectations**.

Everyone recognizes that this has been a tough year. The pandemic has upended life. Worship attendance is down. Everyone’s costs are up. Uncertainties, worries, and anxieties pervade our lives. Our instinct is to pull in our horns, to be cautious and conservative. But, what does God call upon us to do? He calls upon us to trust Him and His provision and to carry on with His mission. Pointing to the birds of the air and the lilies in the field as examples of God’s loving care, Jesus told His followers not to worry about food, drink, clothes — material things: *“For...your Father knows that you need them. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be given you as well. ... Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted...”* [Luke 12:30b-31, 33a].

T Please prayerfully meditate on God’s Word T As the Holy Spirit moves you, step up and support the Lord’s mission through Mt. Olive. Consider giving a special Easter thank offering to the Lord for all His grace for you. Regularly – weekly – and proportionately return to the Lord a portion of His gifts to you. Truly trust His promises: *“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine”* [Proverbs 3:9-10].

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