

# THIRD CHURCH NEWS

THE SEASON OF LENT 2023



March 16, 2023

Volume IV No. 11

THIS COMING SUNDAY,  
MARCH 19:

*"On Our Side"*

*Rev. Dr. Ryan Boes on  
Hebrews 4:14-16*

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# Holy Week Schedule

We have a full Holy Week schedule coming up.

- April 2, 2023, at 10:00 AM Palm Sunday Worship in the sanctuary.
- April 6, 2023, at 5:30 PM Maundy Thursday All-Church dinner of soup and salad followed by a worship service in the Fellowship Hall at 6:30 PM.
- April 7, 2023, at 12:10 PM Good Friday Ecumenical Worship service in the sanctuary.
- April 9, 2023, at 7:00 AM Easter Sunrise service beginning outside (weather permitting)
- April 9, 2023, at 10:00 AM Easter Sunday Worship in the sanctuary. Children will receive an Easter Gift Bag to take home with them. No Sunday School or Adult Education this week.

# February Financial Update

In summary, our income is not keeping up with our expenses.

We anticipated that would happen as historically expenses have exceeded income each month by \$5-10K until year-end giving makes up the accumulated monthly deficits. Thus, in developing a budget for this six-month interim fiscal year, we followed historical patterns of income and expenditures and planned on a cumulative deficit of \$45K on June 30. At the end of February, however, our income is already running \$25K behind budget while our expenses are \$15K over budget YTD. That's a trend we can't sustain and still carry out the ministry we intend as a congregation. Here is a quick look at the numbers through February 28:

	<b>Actual YTD</b>	<b>Last Year YTD</b>	<b>Budget YTD</b>
Operating income	\$149,322	\$149,621	\$178,166
Designated gifts	\$8,470	\$8,889	\$4,167
Total Income	\$157,792	\$158,510	\$182,333
Operating expense	\$195,852	\$156,179	\$181,750
Designated gifts	\$9,328	\$24,740	\$8,333
Transfer to reserves	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000
Total expense	\$210,180	\$180,919	\$195,083
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>(\$52,388)</b>	<b>(\$22,410)</b>	<b>(\$12,750)</b>

You will note our operating income is tracking close to last year through the first two months, but our expectations for this fiscal year called for an increase in giving in order to meet the needs of our expanding ministry program. Our hope is that this represents a delay in the timing of giving rather than a plateauing of support.

As we move through the remaining four months of this fiscal year, we encourage you to consider the significance of the church and its ministry in your life; your gratitude to God for the blessings you experience; and your commitment to support for the ministry of Third in the coming months. Thanks for your consideration.

# LIFT Next Week, March 15

Next week it's delicious homemade soups for dinner!

We hope to see you all there for dinner at 5:30 and kids activities, Middle School Youth Group, and adult bilingual Bible study as well as lots of opportunities for fellowship after the meal at 6:30.



# Abundance at the Border:

## Part 2

—Mark Hiskes

Having written Part One in more general terms about Juarez and Pastor Samuel's role, here I want to introduce you to two people who help out at the shelter as well as some of the migrants we met at Frontera de Gracia.

A woman who helps out at the shelter is a single mom and former Juarez police captain, where she did her best to keep her officers clean from the structural corruption of Juarez's politics. When she converted to Christianity, she left police work and began helping at the shelter. An extraordinary chef, today she's an on-call host for groups like ours that visit the shelter as well as helping out with meals for the migrants. Her commitment to migrants runs deep. She lives in a simple, cozy home in a tough Juarez neighborhood. During a particularly cold spell last winter, she housed 80 Cuban migrants for several weeks. Her rustically-paneled kitchen was the parting gift of the carpenters among the group. When she invited us in for lunch, she showed us around her four-room home and explained how she managed the sleeping arrangements for 80 grateful migrants, some of them families. She smiled as she quietly said, "God blessed me to be a blessing to others." And so, she spends her week offering meals to migrants and inviting them to visit Frontera de Gracia, where she worships every Sunday.

A young, married father actually runs the shelter at Frontera de Gracia. He welcomes and checks in new migrants, shares the house rules, assigns the various duties for keeping it clean, makes sure the doors are locked at night. He also serves as a resource for any news about old or new governmental policies about crossing the border. He's tuned in to the various scams that the Institute of Mexican Immigration (the I.N.M) or our own country's I.C.E. might be running as a way to round up migrants by promising freedom, while intending to deport them to other countries. He, too, is a former Juarez Police Officer and is built like a middle linebacker. He became a Christian and found this new calling at the shelter. As with

the woman I described above, his devotion to the migrants is fierce. He has a gentle spirit and a huge heart that understands them, as he gets to know them one by one. He was our transportation throughout our stay, and I don't know when he sleeps, because he also drives an Uber during the night. During worship at Frontera de Gracia he leads the praise band with electric-guitar skills that would make churches in Holland envious.

As we got to know the migrants themselves by name, and they were eager for us to do so, we heard their stories. Each name I wrote down represents a story I can barely imagine—Octavio, Raymond, Ian, Rosalee, Katherine, and more. Most of them had passed through as many as six countries, on foot, in order to wait at Frontera de Gracia for legal passage into the United States. Many left good jobs, careers, and family fleeing out-of-control violence, exploitation, extortion. They'd walked hundreds of miles that included jungles, rivers, and predators of all kinds.

I'll share the story of Vicki and Windor here, two young, gregarious migrants from Venezuela. After a morning English lesson Angel engaged us in a conversation with them about their journey to the shelter. What we heard was stunning. They had become friends during the journey with a larger group because, as Angel translated, "Necessity creates friendships." Their journey was particularly harrowing. Throughout the jungle they had encountered poisonous snakes, tigers, roaring rivers to be crossed, and several corpses of people who hadn't made it. They spoke about all of this without any intent to shock or impress. They'd encountered a husband and wife who had recently hanged themselves when their daughter died along the way. They showed us a photo of how the group worked together to get each member across a river, many hands holding fast to the rope on each side as a person pulled herself across. Not all of them could hang on and were drowned down river. They talked about the bravery of a Haitian man among them who, with a long staff, held a tiger at bay while the group managed to walk past. "Haitians have a reputation among migrants for being brave," Windor humbly added. Vicki told of Windor's own heroism when, one dark night, during their three-day journey

through the jungle, they encountered an especially steep slope, which previous migrants had rigged a rope for followers to use to pull themselves up. Vicky and Windor were among the last to ascend when, an old woman weary from the days of walking, tried to climb but quickly fell backwards. Vicky recounted how Windor sent her up first, and then put the old woman next and in front of him so that he could break her fall. She did fall again, and nearly broke Windor's leg in the process, but he held her firm and all three got to the other side.

Their story reminded me of a simple fact: the people we can so glibly, and falsely, refer to as "illegals" when they arrive in Holland are the kind of saints we would be wise to bend the knee to. Risking obstacles and predators most of us can't even imagine, these folks need to be respected and welcomed not viewed as a problem to be solved.

One of the questions we taught the migrants during our English lesson one morning was, "Where is the church?" which is a critical question for any migrant arriving in a city where no one knows their name and where they are less likely to be welcomed in than turned in. It's a much deeper question, of course: where is the Church on the issue of increasing global migration? It seems to me Christians in West Michigan are capable of the whole range of responses: from the "build the wall!" Christian nationalists to the border of grace advocates. I'm proud to be a member of a church that is truly wrestling with what it means to offer grace to our migrant brothers and sisters. We may not all agree on the right way to deal with the influx of migrants both at the southern border and in Holland, Michigan, but at Third Reformed Church, I'm proud to say, it's not a question of should we help, but of how can we help best?

On Sunday morning we worshipped with the congregation of Frontera de Gracia. All the mattresses, blankets, pillows, and backpacks had been stacked in the adjoining room. Clean, straight rows of padded chairs were in their place. An elder introduced our group of four. Then he announced that this service would be in both Spanish and English. I saw several of the migrants scattered throughout the crowd. As the praise

band led us through a rousing "Our God is an Awesome God," it occurred to me that while Bethany, Lorena, and Angel were all fluent in Spanish, this "English" version was for the one English-only speaker among them: me.

It was hard to sing after that. This border of grace works both ways: for those from the south *and* from the north.

When I returned and shared my impressions of the trip with Pastor Ryan, who was on the last trip to the border and knew the difficulty I was having finding words for the experience, he told me something from Walter Brueggemann: we serve a God of abundance, not of scarcity. Which I take to mean that when we serve others out of love there's always enough—both for the grateful receivers and for the worried givers.

Privileged Christians like me need to remember that. ***There will be enough***—manna, fish and loaves, money in the annual budget. If we act in God's name, which means out of love, God will provide. Whether it's caring adequately for the needs of our own members or welcoming new ones from across the border, God will provide.

Now, weeks later, "Where is the church?" still echoes in my head. There are certainly other questions we Christians need to wrestle with, but when it comes to participating in the work of Christ's kingdom, it may be the best one. So, where did I see God at the border, brother Angel? Thanks to you, I saw Him at Frontera de Gracia, where Grace is a bridge over the borders of brokenness.

## Antique Tech Help Request

You may know that Third Reformed Church has a Records Room on the lower level where many church records are stored such as photographs, newsletters, and Sunday bulletins. There are also recordings on tape reels, cassette tapes, CD's, DVD's, and video tapes. Included in the recordings are a few video tapes that appear to be in the BetaMax format. It was the home video format that lost to the VHS system. We would like to look at them sometime to determine if their contents are important to the history of our

church. We could pay an outside service to transfer them, but would first like to ask if anyone has or has access to a working BetaMax video player that could be used for free to view these tapes. Please contact Mike Rannow at [rannowm@gmail.com](mailto:rannowm@gmail.com) or phone/text to 616-392-3417.

## Chewing Gum: Is it Good or Bad?

—Mark Faga, Green Team Member and Lead Custodian

Are any of you avid gum chewers? Do you need a piece on a regular basis? Are you a social chewer? Have you ever thought about why you chew gum at all?

People have been chewing gum for thousands of years. The Mayans chewed on chicle, northern Europeans munched on birch bark while others even chewed on spruce tree resin. Up until the 1940's chicle-based chewing gum (a material extracted from the sapodilla tree) was popular. Then it changed and the natural chicle was replaced with synthetics. Even though food grade and safe, the key ingredient in most gum is polyvinyl acetate (plastic) which is also used in the production of glue, plastic bags and bottles. Another common ingredient is polyisobutylene, which is also used in the manufacturing of inner tubes. These ingredients give you the long(er) lasting chew that was desired.

So back to the question: is chewing gum good or bad? For you? For the environment?

So let's let you decide based on some pros and cons...

Pros: chewing gum produces a more alkaline saliva which can soothe your esophagus while also neutralizing the acid in your stomach reducing acid reflux. Chewing gum that has mint or ginger can soothe an upset stomach. Chewing gum for 20 minutes after eating can also help protect your teeth by removing food debris. And the saliva we mentioned earlier also carries phosphate and calcium which can strengthen your tooth enamel. Chewing gum is also thought to increase focus, reduce stress and anxiety as well as improve short

term memory.

Cons: Sugared gum can cause tooth decay, cavities and gum disease. Swallowing a lot of gum in a short period of time can put your digestive system in danger (a piece a day or a megawad, 4 or more pieces at a time). Too much chewing can cause TMJ. It can also dislodge fillings or dentures.

Alternatives: Sugar free gum. Gum that contains xylitol which reduces the bacteria that causes cavities and plaque build up (Xyloburst, Pur, Peppermint, Glee Gum and Orbit are the best). Chew on crunchy fruits and vegetables like apples, carrots and celery (the extra chewing again produces more saliva and the abrasiveness removes stuck food particles). Chew natural gum that contains no plastic such as Chicza, Simply, Glee Gum, Chewsy Gum, Millways, Oh My Gum, and True Gum (some of which also uses plastic-free recyclable cardboard).

So there you have it. Chewing gum can be very good or very bad. It's up to you to do the best for you and the environment.

And for this month I will leave you with a quote: *"If the bee disappeared off the face of the earth man would only have 4 years left to live."* — Maurice Maeterlinck

## Announcements

### Dishes Needed for Maundy Thursday Meal

Please sign up by calling the church office, to bring either Soup, Salad, or Bread for our Maundy Thursday meal.

### Please Update Your Information...

We are coming up on traditional spring cleaning time, and one area we could all "dust off" and clean up is our contact information in ShelbyNext. We want to make sure our church directory is up to date, so please take some time and look at the directory and make sure all of your contact information, birth dates, anniversary dates, etc. are correct. This would also be a good time to update your individual and family pictures too. If

there is incorrect information please inform Kristen in the church office so that the directory can be updated. If you need assistance accessing the directory please contact Kristen in the church office.

## Upcoming Mosaic Classes

**March 19, 2023**

*RCA Mission Update*

**Stephanie Soderstrom**

Stephanie is the Coordinator for Short-Term Mission. RCA Short-Term Mission works alongside RCA Global Mission to coordinate mission trips with our missionaries worldwide and to maintain partnerships with a variety of well-established mission partners in the U.S. and Canada.

**March 26, 2023**

*Approaching the Bible with Artist Eyes*

**Bryant Russ**

Come discover what we might see when we explore the Bible through artists' eyes. We will play with familiar texts alongside some of Church history's most famous interpreters—and we might be surprised by what we find!

Bryant is the Director of Faith Formation at Holland Christian Schools.

**Sunday Morning Bible Study \*ROOM CHANGE\***

*The Corinthian Correspondence: The Cross Changes Everything.*

**A study with Rev. Dr. George Hunsberger.**

This study will take place in the Chapel for the remainder of this church year.

## Third Church Family News

### Sympathy

To MaryAlice and Bob Ritsema on the passing of her sister, Revell Rayne, on March 12 in Tucson, AZ.

## Prayer Requests

Please pray for the following:

- Condolences to MaryAlice and Bob Ritsema in the death of her sister, Ravell Rayne.
- Milly Ten Brink
- Betty and Jerry Van Wyngarden's grandson dealing with cancer.
- Steven and Laurie Orlow's son dealing with cancer.
- Continue to pray for Arshad Amiri (17 yo) as he recovers from bacterial meningitis.
- John Hubers who is teaching in Ethiopia.
- Thanks for all who planned, helped and participated in the Staytreat this past weekend.
- Those who quietly struggle with medical, emotional or family issues.

**Remember in our prayers:** Dennis DeWitt, Reno Lamania, Joanne and Jack Kuiper, Larry Loss, Dennis and Nancy Gebben, Mary and Harry Borsersen, Margaret Doorenbos, Bob and Elle Kuiper, Tom Norman, Lucille Schroeder.

**Prayer Spotlight:** Appledorn - Bob Kuiper, Donna Prins; Vista Springs - Barb Piaget.

**Missionaries:** Wayne & Miho Jansen (Japan), Rowland Jr. & Jane Van Es (Kenya), Victor Kanyi (Kenya).