



THE VINE

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church & School Newsletter

SPECIAL EDITION - JUNE/JULY & AUGUST 2025

"Leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ,
His followers, and His world."



JUNE 2025

Congregational Budget and Election Meeting

At the congregational meeting on June 15, the proposed Ministry Plan and Budget was approved by the assembly with no changes. The assembly also elected the following people to serve two-year terms on the Board of Directors: Neill Barker, Shanna Caceres-Reed, Rebekah Kramer, Sal Pagano, and Brad Seiter. They will join returning Board members Bob DeYoung, Dick Lemin, Ron Johnson, and Martin Meissenhalter. We give thanks to God for the Board members who have completed their terms: Dennis Arnett, Tyler Roberts, Judi Rock, Paula Schweiger, and Gail Vandeburgt.

CONGRATULATIONS - 2025 High School & College Graduates

Graduate's Name	High School	Future Schooling
Landon Abraham	Valley Oak	Napa Valley College
Samantha Carey	Justin-Siena	Columbia University
Grayson Cushing	Justin-Siena	University of San Diego
Soren DeYoung	Vintage	US Air Force Academy
Tyler Koen	Vintage	Napa Valley College
Abigail Munoz	Justin-Siena	Santa Barbara City College
Matteo Robertis	Justin-Siena	St. Louis University in Madrid
Charlie Vaziri	Justin-Siena	Texas Christian University
Evan Winkler	Justin-Siena	University of CA, Santa Cruz
Patrick Yoder	Vintage	Napa Valley College

Graduate's Name	College	Degree Achieved
Rachael Fitzgerald	Sonoma State University	B.S in Business Administration (Wine Business Strategies)
Bennett Goller	Colby College	B.A. in Economics (Financial Markets)
Sam Schneider	University of CA, Irvine	B.A. in Drama
Megan Schweiger	Hanover College	B.A. in Art Design and Spanish



1	Brent Koen
2	Matthew Seiter
3	Kelsey Rodriguez, Rebecca Newman, Shannon Lloyd
4	Barbara Miller, Sandee Schachner
5	Joel Wahlers, Bob Harvey
6	John Van Hofwegen
8	Declan Wood
9	Kristin Goller, Dean Ehlen
10	Bennett Goller
11	Abigail Zimmerman, Ken Tews
13	Haley Cremen, Brian Wood
14	Tyler Lamb, Anastaxia Kirkpatrick, John Kostelac
15	Abriana Helfrich, Darlene Elia
17	Tyler Koen

18	Bailey Loban
19	Jaxson Uffmann
20	Jessica Bresee, Ezekiel Anderson, William Smith
21	Pam Foottit, Elaine Hoff
22	Ellen Burmester, Tyler Morgenlaender
23	George Clark
24	Amy Smith, Brian Bresee, Lenora Balsiger
25	Brian Youngblood, Grace Bouchet, Carolyn Fruchtenicht
26	Thomas Commander
27	Dustin Messner, Lisa Walter
28	Gunnar De Young, Aaron Eisberg
29	Tracy Cushing
30	Jeffery McFarland-Johnson

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

DATE COUPLE YEARS

2	Craig & Karol Underhill	40
5	Robert & Doris Klein	53
5	Robert & Kari Perna	30
7	David & Janece Como	17
9	Christopher & Beth Vecera	12
11	Ron & Amy Shively	53
12	Tim & Christy Kramer	42
13	Cliff & Ellen Burmester	32
14	Bill & Susan Clark	55
15	Carl & Linda Hammond	60
15	Chad & Jennifer Alexander	22
15	Jerry & Karen Zachry	40
16	Lucy & David Franklin	33
18	Richard & Karol Bruechert	64
18	Gerald & Midge Schneider	59
18	David & Rebecca Hudgins	54
20	Brad & Shannon Lloyd	3

20	Herbert & Nancy Heil	59
23	Dan & Cathy Bunnell	45
24	Martin & Eva Meissenhalter	24
25	Dana & Christine Zanone	52
25	Jacob & Sarah Bartelt	8
26	Scott & Autumn Zimmerman	31
26	Rev. Ted & Elaine Zimmerman	59
26	Karl & Rachel Frisinger	20
27	Brent & Jessica Koen	9
28	Pastor Mike & Teresa Schmid	39
28	Gary & Marlen Virkus	56
28	Joel & Dawn Wahlers	27
29	Christopher & Heidi Newman	11
29	Erika & Andrew Boudreaux	10
30	Michael & Janelle Newton	45
30	Michael & Patte Quinn	23

OFFERING UPDATE

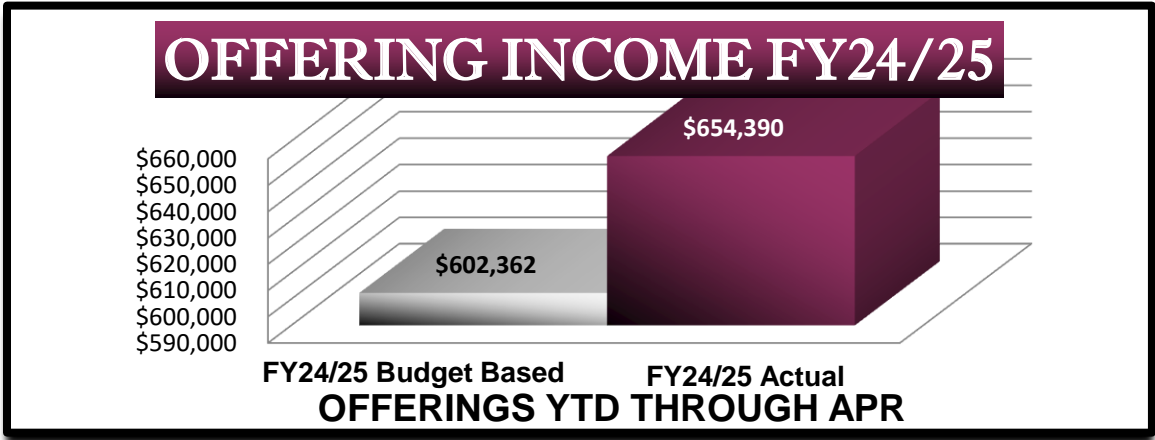
Actual Offering Income for April:

Total Offerings for FY24/25 (as of April 30, 2025):

\$67,515.

\$654,390 which is **8.64%** or **\$52,028** above our budgeted offering income.

Total expenses are in line with our budget and we paid all bills received. *The budget amount shown below is based on the ten-year average offering received for that time period.



Meditation:

“If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?” (Luke 16:11 ESV)

Money and the Great Commission

Jesus’ parting command was: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus was very direct and explicit with His mandate. There is no question as to where or with whom we are to share the Gospel. The love that God gives to us is to be shared by us with all people everywhere. He has given us our marching orders, and, in His strength, we can give ourselves fully to His work.

Because God has chosen to use us as His tools to bring salvation to all people, we must use our lives and gifts to spread the Good News. Paul wrote, *“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us”* (2 Corinthians 5:20). One of the tools that God gives us to use in our mission of reaching out to others with the Gospel is our money. According to an old stewardship phrase, “Stewardship without mission is unnecessary and mission without stewardship is impossible.” Stewardship and mission are inseparable. The funding of the Great Commission needs to come from believers. The money which God entrusts to us has many purposes, and the funding of mission work is of first importance. Through the giving of our money, we demonstrate our obedience to Jesus’ command to reach out to all people. Paul wrote that, through our giving, we *“test the sincerity of [our] love by comparing it with the earnestness of others”* (2 Corinthians 8:8).

For nonbelievers and those who lack spiritual maturity, the giving of money is done begrudgingly out of a sense of obligation. By the grace of God, our attitude toward giving is a “want to” rather than a “got to” give. We view giving as a privilege and an opportunity to spread the Gospel through our money. Our giving expresses our gratitude for who God is and all that He has done for through His Son. Through faith, we hold onto our money loosely and then are privileged to experience the joy of giving as we give God our first and best. As Christians we understand that God has a claim on all that we have, so we willingly and cheerfully give our money to help all people hear of God’s love. Money is an important tool for God’s mission. Through our faithful giving, we are able to leverage our witnessing to all people.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, You are so generous with me. Grant me a faithful and giving heart so I can be generous with You. Help me to hold onto my things loosely. Empower me, Lord, to use my time, talents, and treasures in Your service. In Your precious name I pray. Amen.

Adapted from *“12 Months of Congregational Stewardship”* by Ronald J. and Phyllis J. Chewning, Stewardship Advisors, Inc.

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Giving an Opportunity or Obligation

As the Apostle Paul traveled to churches, he collected offerings for the Christians in Jerusalem who were experiencing hard economic times. When Paul was speaking to the Corinthians, he used the Macedonian believers as an example of people who, in spite of their own economic troubles, gave joyfully to the people in Jerusalem. The Macedonians’ love for Christ and their concern for their fellow believers moved them to give beyond their ability. The Macedonians gave themselves first to the Lord, and then, Paul said, they *“urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints”* (2 Corinthians 8:4). In Christ, they saw their giving as an opportunity to help other believers in need.

Does someone who views giving as an obligation plead for the opportunity to give? Probably not. When giving is an obligation, we will give, but giving as an obligation will not give us the joy or the attitude of pleading for the privilege to give that the Macedonians had. As God’s people, we have both an obligation and an opportunity. Scripture is clear that we are called to give. Paul said, *“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made”* (1 Corinthians 16:2). Giving is an obligation, but, just as God changed the hearts and minds of the Macedonian people, He changes us so our attitude toward giving can change from being an obligation to an opportunity. As renewed and changed people, our attitude toward giving changes from a “got to” to a “get to” attitude. We stop giving grudgingly, and we start giving willingly and cheerfully. We want to give, because giving is an expression of our love and gratitude to God for Who He is and what He does for us.

The more we give of ourselves and our gifts, the closer our relationship with Christ becomes, and the more we want to give, and the more God blesses us which enables our continued giving. *“You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God”* (2 Corinthians 9:11).

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for filling me daily with Your love so that I, as a member of Your Church here on earth, see giving as a privilege and an opportunity to praise and thank You. In Your precious name I pray. Amen.

Adapted from *“12 Months of Congregational Stewardship”* by Ronald J. and Phyllis J. Chewning, Stewardship Advisors, Inc.

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July 2025



DATE	COUPLE	YEARS
1	Thomas & Christine Commander	29
3	Todd & Teri Mitchell	42
4	Cameron & Debra Hopkins	43
6	Levi & Ashley Cloud	12
7	Todd & Natalie Yoder	24
9	Rodney & Marie Skillings	7

10	Ken & Michelle Arnold	32
15	Jeffery & Cynthia McFarland-Johnson	41
20	Scott & Ayne Ondek	6
21	George & Andrea Clark	51
27	Kevin & Megan Mathison	6
31	Kevin & Lezlee Cootey	43

JULY BIRTHDAYS



2	Laura Kostelac, Gabriel Gutierrez, Abigail Munoz
3	Craig Underhill
4	Nancy Henry, Jeron Chaudhary, Kailea Bresee
5	Liam Alexander
6	Katie Chagonjian, Roxana Castro
7	Karen Dalen, Christine Zanone
10	Cynthia McFarland-Johnson
11	Noah Helfrich, Andy Schweiger
12	Natalie Bouchet, Alexander Winkler
14	Michael Quinn
15	Landon Abraham
16	Riann Engelbracht, Melinda Herrera, Teri Mitchell

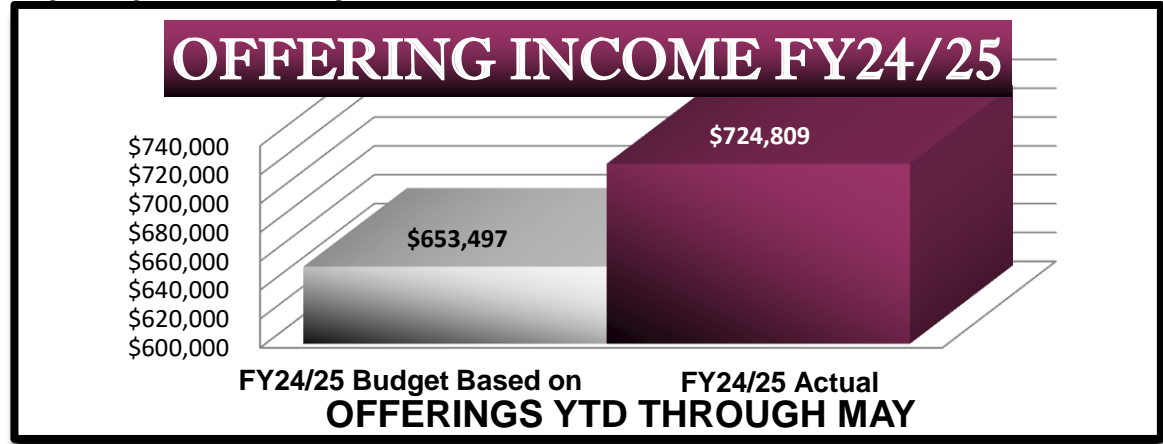
17	Matthew Commander, Laurie Bresee
18	Tatum Chagonjian, James Henry
19	Amali Svien
20	Samuel Hoff
21	Robert Ehlen, Todd Mitchell
23	Alexander Christie
25	Shanna Caceres, Bryce Mathison
26	Karol Underhill, Michelle Roberts
27	Dennis Arnett
28	Nathan Kaufmann
29	Rodney Skillings
30	Judi Rock, Gary Virkus, Susan Clark, Todd Yoder

OFFERING UPDATE

Actual Offering Income for May:
Total Offerings for FY24/25 (as of May 31, 2025):

\$70,419.
\$724,809 which is **10.91%** or **\$71,312** above our budgeted offering income.

Total expenses are in line with our budget and we paid all bills received. *The budget amount shown below is based on the ten-year average offering received for that time period.



Meditation:

“And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.” (Hosea 2:19-20 ESV)

The Lord’s Great Day of Salvation

Hosea was a prophet serving God in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the 8th century, BC. During that time, and for many years prior, the people living in the Northern Kingdom had forgotten the LORD. They had turned their backs to God, Who brought them out of slavery and gave them their inheritance in Canaan. The people made idols, practiced horrific sacrifices, and indulged in unimaginable perversions of every kind. The people, whom God had made His very own, denied Him and were unfaithful to Him.

In the Book of Hosea, we read the prophet’s messages of threats and promises, judgment and mercy, law and gospel.

Because the Israelites did not acknowledge that He gave them the grain, the new wine and oil and lavished riches, such as silver and gold, God threatened ***“Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens and my new wine when it is ready”*** (2:9a). Because the Israelites prostituted themselves to things and ideas they made gods and idols, God proclaimed ***“So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers... I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot,” declares the LORD*** (2:10a, 13).

Israel acted like an unfaithful, promiscuous wife. Yet, over and over again, the LORD wooed her back to Him (2:14-17). He remained faithful and true. He graciously smothered His wayward people with mercy and forgiveness. He showered His steadfast love on them. Martin Franzmann wrote in the Concordia Self-Study Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971), that “the distinctive note in Hosea is his portrayal of the God who loves when all possibility of loving has rightly ceased...the injured Husband who forgives the unforgivable (chapters 1-3), the father whose “heart recoils within” Him, whose ‘compassion grows warm and tender’ (11:8) for the wayward child whom He led with cords of compassion in His youth (13:3,4), the Healer who hurts in order to restore with compassionate skill and with a love that does not die, simply because it is the love of God and not of man” (7:1; 11:3; 14:4; cf. 5:13; 6:1).

“In that day I will make a covenant for them...” (2:18). It will be a new marriage where God will promise Himself to His people for life. When will “that day” be? According to Rev. Paul E. Eickmann, “That day” is a prophetic way of describing the time when God will come as Savior and Judge. The promises were first fulfilled when Jesus came to earth reconciling the world to God (2 Corinthians 5:19). The “forever” blessings will be fully revealed when Jesus comes again in glory when He will make us His betrothed forever (v19). ***“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!”*** (Revelation 19:9)¹

Prayer: Dear Lord, like the Israelites in Hosea’s time, I am unfaithful to You and repeatedly go my own way and turn my back to You. Yet, You remain faithful. You are righteous, just, compassionate and ever loving. Thank You! Lord, I repent of my sin. Forgive me. Transform my life to be like my Savior, Jesus. In His name I pray. Amen.

¹ “Hosea, Joel, Amos” (People’s Bible Commentary, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994)

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Daily Bible Readings for July

	Psalm	Old Testament	New Testament
1	Psalm 80:8-11	Isaiah 15, 16	Ephesians 1:11-23
2	Psalm 80:12-19	Isaiah 17:1-19:17	Ephesians 2:1-10

3	Psalm 81:1-5	Isaiah 19:18-22:14	Ephesians 2:11-22
4	Psalm 81:6-10	Isaiah 22:15-23:18	Ephesians 3:1-13
5	Psalm 81:11-16	Isaiah 24, 25	Ephesians 3:14-4:6
6	Psalm 66:1-9	Isaiah 66:10-14	Galatians 6 (1-6), 7-16; Luke 10:111, 16-20
7	Psalm 82:1-4	Isaiah 26, 27	Ephesians 4:7-16
8	Psalm 82:5-8	Isaiah 28	Ephesians 4:17-28
9	Psalm 83:1-8	Isaiah 29	Ephesians 4:29-5:7
10	Psalm 83:9-12	Isaiah 30, 31	Ephesians 5:8-20
11	Psalm 83:13-18	Isaiah 32:1-33:16	Ephesians 5:21-33
12	Psalm 84:1-7	Isaiah 33:17-35:10	Ephesians 6:1-9
13	Psalm 25:1-10	Deuteronomy 30:9-14	Colossians 1:1-14; Luke 10:25-37
14	Psalm 84:8-12	Isaiah 36:1-37:13	Ephesians 6:10-24
15	Psalm 85:1-7	Isaiah 37:14-38	Philippians 1:1-11
16	Psalm 85:8-13	Isaiah 38:1-40:5	Philippians 1:12-22
17	Psalm 86:1-10	Isaiah 40:6-41:7	Philippians 1:23-2:4
18	Psalm 86:11-17	Isaiah 41:8-42:9	Philippians 2:5-18
19	Psalm 87	Isaiah 42:10-43:21	Philippians 2:19-30
20	Psalm 15	Genesis 18:1-10a	Colossians 1:15-28; Luke 10:38-42
21	Psalm 88:1-5	Isaiah 43:22-44:23	Philippians 3:1-11
22	Psalm 88:6-12	Isaiah 44:24-45:25	Philippians 3:12-4:1
23	Psalm 88:13-18	Isaiah 46:1-48:6	Philippians 4:2-13
24	Psalm 89:1-8	Isaiah 48:7-49:21	Philippians 4:14-23
25	Psalm 89:9-18	Isaiah 49:22-51:16	Colossians 1:1-14
26	Psalm 89:19-29	Isaiah 51:17-53:12	Colossians 1:15-27
27	Psalm 138	Genesis 18:20-32	Colossians 2:6-15, 16-19; Luke 11:1-13
28	Psalm 89:30-37	Isaiah 54, 55	Colossians 1:28-2:10
29	Psalm 89:38-45	Isaiah 56, 57	Colossians 2:11-23
30	Psalm 89:46-52	Isaiah 58, 59	Colossians 3:1-11
31	Psalm 90	Isaiah 60, 61	Colossians 3:12-25

AUGUST 2025

Worship in August

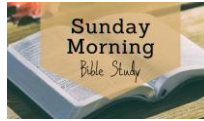
Set Free: Paul’s Letter to the Galatians

Our current worship series is “Set Free,” focusing on Paul’s letter to the Galatians. In this letter, Paul is intent on helping the Galatian Christians to better understand how the Gospel has set them free - from sin, from death, and from the demands of the law. Because of what Christ has done, we now live in the freedom of God’s grace.

Pastor Mike's Bible Class

Pastor Mike's Bible Class

The Early Church and the Nicene Creed



We will focus on the content of the creed, and the biblical foundations for the faith confessed by it. We will be looking at the scriptural references behind each line of the creed. We meet in Room 8 at 11:00, starting July 27th.



June brought us to the end of the 2024-2025 School year. As we look back and reflect on all that this year brought to us, we remember God's plan for each and every one of us as stated in Jeremiah 29:11 - "*For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'*" June is always a bittersweet time on a school campus. As we rejoice that another academic year is in the books, it almost means that we will be saying farewell to some beloved faculty members as well as graduating a class of 8th graders and sending them off to High School in the Fall. We are excited to see where God leads each of our graduates and pray that, as said in the words of the prophet Isaiah in Chapter 40, verse 31, "*But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*"

Once a St. John's Eagle, always a St. John's Eagle! Soar high!

We bid Godspeed to Mrs. Angela D'Angelo (Music), who is retiring after serving 20 years as our Music teacher and Choraliers director. In addition, Mrs. Betsy Gewirz (3rd Grade) will be moving out of the classroom and into a student support position.

Planning for the 2025-2026 school year is progressing at a rapid pace. Big news on Campus is that the field is being refurbished. We are rejoicing in the hard work of the APT, spearheaded by Brandt Mori, in making this dream a reality. The turf has been laid and will be ready for the students return in August.

Speaking of August, our faculty and staff retreat will be August 10 - 12, 2025. The first day of school will be Wednesday, August 20, 2025, with a half day for the elementary students. Our school theme for the 2025-2026 school year is "**Love in Action**", based on 1 John 3:18, "*Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*" This verse is encouraging us to go beyond just *talking* about love—it calls for *showing* love through what we do. The idea is that genuine love isn't just about saying nice things; it's proven by how we treat others, especially those in need. For example, if someone says they care about others but never helps, comforts, or supports anyone, their love may not be sincere. This verse challenges us to live out love in practical, meaningful ways—by being honest, kind, generous, and selfless. **True love is shown through consistent, truthful action—not just words.**

I am excited that the APT is working diligently on creating fellowship opportunities for our community. Please save the dates for the following activities: September 26 - Country Fair and October 24 - Get on Track. As always, please keep St. John's Lutheran School in your prayers! For ongoing information on what is happening at St. John's, please read our weekly newsletter on our website at www.stjohnsnapa.org.

Dr. Christy Wood
Principal

Disability Etiquette

The subject of autism has been in the news lately, and we are glad that it is receiving some recognition. While more children have been diagnosed with autism in recent years, it is in part because of better awareness and the availability of diagnostic resources. The current increase of autism diagnosis in children though has been incorrectly referred to by some people as an epidemic.



Epidemics describe diseases that are extremely contagious. Epidemics describe situations that must be fixed by preventing and curing the diseases. Autism is NOT a disease. It is NOT contagious. Autism is not something to be afraid of. People with autism do not need to change; they cannot cease being autistic. People with autism can be accommodated, and our world can show them more hospitality than it currently does.

People with autism and their families may experience great challenges, but we want them to know they are beloved by God. We have an opportunity to extend God's love and welcome to them by our understanding, our friendship, and choosing to walk alongside them.

(Continued)

Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Autism is a spectrum. *If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism!* There's great diversity in the characteristics of this population. Some have no speech and others talk a lot. Some have challenging behaviors, and others may have a particular skill or ability that is outstanding. Each one is unique!
- Individuals with autism may be apprehensive about social interaction.
- Some individuals will avoid eye contact with you when you speak with them.
- Give information clearly in few words. Pause between words and phrases to give the person time to understand and think of a response.
- Keep directions simple and direct.
- Be accepting and offer encouragement.
- Discover the person's interests. Find ways to help them share those interests.
- Individuals with autism like predictable routines. Tell them how long the current activity will last and what is coming next.
- Loud sounds, bright flashing lights, strong smells, unusual tastes or textures of food ---all these things can be overstimulating and cause the person to be very uncomfortable.
- Praise the person for the things they do correctly.
- Recognize this person as a beloved child of God.

Information from: *"Disability Etiquette,"* joniandfriends.org and *"Communicating for Success,"* Bethesda LLC and notes from Andrew Jones. For other information, contact Elaine Zimmerman at zimelaine@comcast.net

Bible Class for people with special needs
meets the 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays
at 9:30-10:15 a.m. in classroom #10

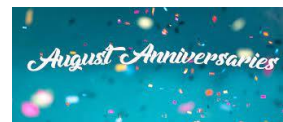


Contact information:

Elaine Zimmerman at zimelaine@comcast.net or 225-4291
Rebecca Vitkus at happysoulstomest@gmail.com or 775/685-6201

DATE	COUPLE	YEARS
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1	Thane & Sarah Knutson	16
1	Jeff & Carri Mello	27
1	Mark & Cindy Zeller	38
2	Corrin & Mark Kornovich	9
3	Dennis & Judie Arnett	57
3	Dean Bledsoe & Lori Hunt	24
7	Ronald & Judith Irwin	60
11	Rita & James Bresee	35
13	Charles & Elaine Scott	64
14	Amy & Michael Smith	26
15	Daniel & Angela D'Angelo	27
17	Betsy & Irv Gewirz	50
17	Leonard & Tracy Lamb	36
19	Barbara & Walt Gmelch	16
21	Leonard & Deborah Bommersbach	54
28	Dean & Nancy Ehlen	54
28	Tony Carafa & Karen Schoenfeld	26
30	Ken & Sharon Tews	50
31	John & Kristi Clark	51



1	Salvatore Pagano, Casie Wood, Cathy Bunnell, Amy Thompson	A graphic with a light blue background. On the right is a chocolate cake with white candles on a white stand. The text "August Birthdays" is written in a large, purple, serif font.
2	Martin Meissenhalter	
3	Abigail Sneed	
4	Dana Zanone, Kylie Martindale	
5	Wayne Miller, Wendy Helfrich	
8	Linda Diviak, Marco Barbosa, Paul Han, Jacqueline Price	
9	Lindsey Engelbracht, Eva Meissenhalter, Nancy Gressinger	
11	Jason Newton, Jacob Peterson, Brad Lloyd, Jennifer Schluter, Isabella Munoz	
13	Peyton Koen	
14	Paul Bartelt	
17	Jeffery Squibb	A row of six cupcakes with different colored frosting: blue, pink, yellow, blue, pink, and yellow. They are in white paper liners.
18	Ken Arnold, Cailyn Helfrich, Madeline Bresee, Debra Laratta	
19	Devin Lamb, Eric Vandeburgt, Echo Connell	
20	Kerri Thompson	
21	Tony Carafa	
22	Dove Bain, Alexia Svien	
23	Matthew Uffmann	
24	Dick Lemin	
25	CarlJohn Meissenhalter, Abigail Ondek	
28	Cameron Hopkins	
29	Grady Greely	
31	Tiffany Tucker, Parker Dahl	



Submitted by: Farmer Ted

“Do everything, anything, however menial, measuring it not by hours, or by dollars, but by love.”

I recently ran across this quotation by Amy Carmichael (b. 1867, d. 1951), an Irish Christian missionary serving many years in India, her work focused on providing a safe-haven for children rescued from poverty and temple prostitution. She also was a prolific author of devotional literature. I reflected on this quote in light of preparing to write this article for the Vine.

How do I tell its story best?

I could say that we have been engaged for 15 years in this mission of growing fresh produce to help feed financially challenged families in the Napa Valley. Many of our key volunteers put in anywhere from 400 to 500 hours a year (augmented by many occasional volunteers who come out once a week or so to assist).

That’s measuring the Farm by HOURS, days, weeks, months, or years.

I could say that we turn over to the Food Bank on the average about 20,000 to 25,000 lbs. of fresh, organically grown fruits and vegetables a year.

That’s measuring it by POUNDAGE.

I could also monetize that by stating that according to organicproducenetwork.com “the average price of organic produce in California in 2024 was \$2.82 per pound.” That means we are making available for the tables of financially struggling neighbors between \$56,400 and \$70,750 worth of fresh organic produce.

That’s measuring the Farm by DOLLARS.

But is that the best way to measure the Farm?

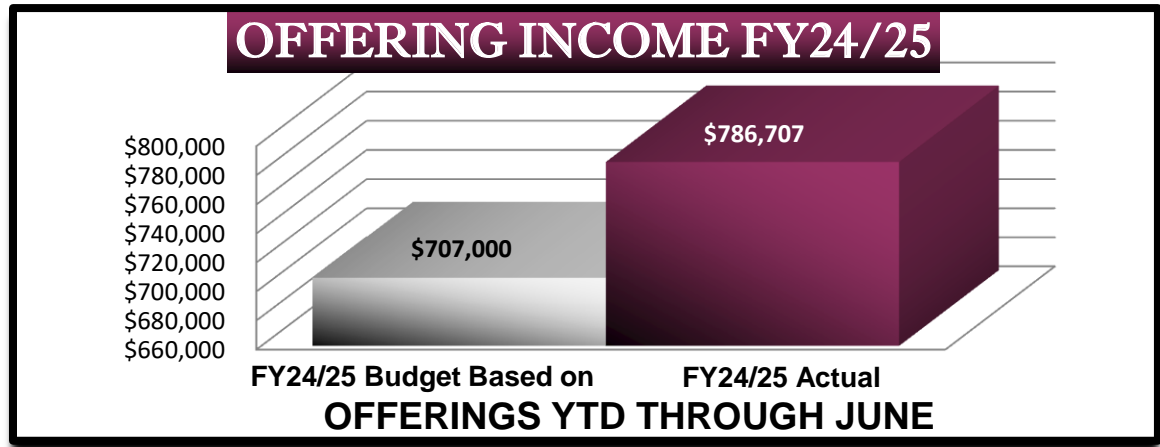
Taking a hint from Amy Carmichael, let’s measure it by **LOVE**! All totaled we have around two dozen volunteers, some working 3 days a week, some 1 day a week, some once or twice a month. From my conversations with them, they all do it out of **love**.

Some join us for the **love** of making a difference in the quality of life for their neighbors who are struggling financially. And some because they **love** God and the Farm is a good witness to our community about our Heavenly Father’s **love** and care for his children. It makes visible this truth, expressed in Psalm 145:14-16 – *“The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.”* Farming can be hard work, but it is also very fulfilling when you are doing it out of the **LOVE** God has planted in your heart!

OFFERING UPDATE

Actual Offering Income for June: \$60,549.
Total Offerings for FY24/25 (as of June 30, 2025): \$786,707 which is 11.27% or \$79,707 above our budgeted offering income.

Total expenses are in line with our budget and we paid all bills received. *The budget amount shown below is based on the ten-year average offering received for that time period.



Meditation:
“By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts... And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” (Hebrews 11:4, 6 ESV)

The Gifts of Cain and Abel

It’s the attitude of our hearts and minds toward God that matters most to Him.

The first gifts that we read about in Scripture are the offerings made by Cain and Abel who were the sons of Adam and Eve. In Genesis 4:2-4a we read, “. . . Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. And Abel also brought an offering — fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.” Cain and Abel, having been instructed by Adam in the knowledge of the Lord, brought offerings or gifts for the Lord. Because one worked the land and the other raised animals, their gifts were different. We read that Cain “brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering,” whereas Abel brought “fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.”

Between the two brothers there is also an indication of a difference in the attitudes of their hearts. While Cain wasn't concerned about giving the first or best of his crop, Abel brought in his best. God looked with favor upon Abel's offering. God looked into the hearts of both Cain and Abel as He looks into our hearts. He saw Abel's humble faith. In his gift, Abel showed his sincere gratitude for all that God had done for Him.

We need to understand that it's not the size of our gifts and offerings which makes them acceptable to the Lord, but rather it is the attitude of our hearts and minds toward God. God wants our gifts to be an expression of our love for Him. He wants us to give cheerfully rather than grudgingly. He wants us to give out love through faith. We are told by the writer in Hebrews that "*...without faith it is impossible to please God...*" (Hebrews 11:6).

May this story of giving by Cain and Abel help us to examine our attitude toward giving. If we are not giving our first and best out of faith and love to the Lord, God does not look with favor upon our giving. May God grant us all faithful, loving, and giving hearts.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, I am a sinner. The attitude of my heart is not pure; it is not often focused on You but rather towards myself. The gifts that I sometimes give, I give grudgingly and often without thought or consideration of Your love. Forgive me for being weak in my faith. Grant me a faithful, loving and giving heart. Lead me to joyously look to Jesus, "the perfecter of our faith," [†] for the inspiration and motivation to give generously and cheerfully. In Your precious name I pray. Amen.

[†] Hebrews 12:2 ESV

Adapted from "*12 Months of Congregational Stewardship*" by Ronald J. and Phyllis J. Chewning, Stewardship Advisors, Inc.

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Bible Readings for August

	Psalm	Old Testament	New Testament
1	Psalm 91:1-8	Isaiah 62, 63	Colossians 4:1-9
2	Psalm 91:9-16	Isaiah 64, 65	Colossians 4:10-1; Thessalonians 1:5a
3	Palm 49:1-12	Ecclesiastes 1:2,12-14; 2:18-23	Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21
4	Psalm 92:1-8	Isaiah 66-Jeremiah 1:7	1 Thessalonians 1:5b-2:9
5	Psalm 92:9-15	Jeremiah 1:8-2:19	1 Thessalonians 2:10-20
6	Psalm 93	Jeremiah 2:20-3:13	1 Thessalonians 3
7	Psalm 94:1-11	Jeremiah 3:14-4:22	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
8	Psalm 94:12-23	Jeremiah 4:23-5:25	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:3
9	Psalm 95	Jeremiah 5:26-6:30	1 Thessalonians 5:4-15
10	Psalm 33:12-22	Genesis 15:1-6	Hebrews 11:1-3,8-16; Luke 12:32-40
11	Psalm 96:1-9	Jeremiah 7	1 Thessalonians 5:16-28
12	Psalm 96:10-13	Jeremiah 8:1-9:9	2 Thessalonians 1
13	Psalm 97:1-6	Jeremiah 9:10-10:16	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
14	Psalm 97:7-12	Jeremiah 10:17-11:23	2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5
15	Psalm 98	Jeremiah 12:1-13:19	2 Thessalonians 3:6-18
16	Psalm 99	Jeremiah 13:20-14:22	1 Timothy 1:1-11
17	Psalm 82	Jeremiah 23:23-29	Hebrews 11:29-12:2; Luke 12:49-56
18	Psalm 100	Jeremiah 15:1-16:13	1 Timothy 1:12-2:7
19	Psalm 101	Jeremiah 16:14-17:27	1 Timothy 2:8-3:7
20	Psalm 102:1-11	Jeremiah 18:1-19:9	1 Timothy 3:8-16
21	Psalm 102:12-22	Jeremiah 19:10-21:10	1 Timothy 4:1-10
22	Psalm 102:23-28	Jeremiah 21:11-22:30	1 Timothy 4:11-5:8
23	Psalm 103:1-5	Jeremiah 23:1-32	1 Timothy 5:9-16
24	Psalm 103:1-8	Isaiah 58:9b-14	Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17
25	Psalm 103:6-18	Jeremiah 23:33-25:14	1 Timothy 5:17-6:2
26	Psalm 103:19-22	Jeremiah 25:15-26:9	1 Timothy 6:3-16
27	Psalm 104:1-9	Jeremiah 26:10-27:22	1 Timothy 6:17-2 Timothy 1:7
28	Psalm 104:10-18	Jeremiah 28:1-29:14	2 Timothy 1:8-18
29	Psalm 104:19-23	Jeremiah 29:15-30:11	2 Timothy 2:1-13
30	Psalm 104:24-30	Jeremiah 30:12-31:22	2 Timothy 2:14-26
31	Psalm 112	Proverbs 25:6-7	Hebrews 13:1-8,15-16; Luke 14:1,7-14

Stephen Ministry: The After People

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13



People often ask, “What exactly is a Stephen Minister?” One way to put it is that Stephen Ministers are the *After People*.

Stephen Ministers are there...after the phone call you hoped you’d never get.

Stephen Ministers are there...after the funeral, when everyone has left and the emotions you’ve held at bay come crashing in on you.

Stephen Ministers are there...after the relationship falls apart and the bottom falls out of your life.

Stephen Ministers are there...after the doctor says, “I’m sorry, but there’s nothing more we can do.”

Stephen Ministers are there...after the nursing home director shakes your hand and says, “Welcome to your new home.”

Stephen Ministers are there...after the last child honks the horn, waves, and drives away – and the house suddenly seems empty.

Stephen Ministers are there...after the gavel comes down, the handcuffs go on, and your loved one is led away.

Stephen Ministers are there...after the baby arrives, demanding more of you than you ever dreamed possible.

Stephen Ministers are there...after you find a pink slip with your final paycheck.

Stephen Ministers are there...after your family and friends have heard your story one too many times, but you still need to talk it out.

Stephen Ministers are the After People. They are ready to come alongside you – or your friends or relatives – and provide comfort and support for as long *after* as needed.

If you, or someone you know, would like to learn more about connecting with a Stephen Minister, please contact Penni Cremen (707-483-9321) or Pastor Mike in the church office (707-255-0119).

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Visit our school website at: www.stjohnsnapa.org

Facilities Calendar Link: <https://teamup.com/ks059311afd6a21c57>



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