



ARTICLES

What to Expect?

By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

As you look at your life, what would you love to see happen? Maybe you'd like to lose 20 lbs., worry less, get a better job, improve your grades, find a really close friend, get a new car, experience more of the Holy Spirit, build a house, or increase your production (or your cow's production).

What is it for you? What do you really want to see happen in 2023?

If you haven't answered that in a clear, concise statement yet, do it. This won't be helpful unless you know what's going on in your heart and mind. What are you hoping for?

Now the tough question...

Why hasn't God already given you what you are hoping for

There are several possible stoppers, like hoping for something that's just bad for you or bad for you now. But I want to focus on a couple other stoppers...

1. Maybe you are thinking, "God hates me and wants me to suffer." I hope you know enough of the Bible to not let this determine your destiny. Contrary to what many say, God does hate the sinner (Ps. 11:5), but that doesn't mean we

are without hope.

The Israelites had the same concern when they faced the challenge of entering the promised land, saying *“The Lord hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us.”* (Deut. 1:27)

They failed to see God’s providence and love in the midst of hardship, so Moses responded to them, saying *“Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.”* (Deut. 1:29-31) What incredible compassion the Father has! Yet, we want to make him out to be the bad guy, when we are the one’s rejecting him and his good gifts. David did write, *“The Lord ...hates the wicked and those who love to do violence.”* (Ps. 11:5) So, maybe you do need to do a 180 and celebrate some of the blessings God has given you. He is not the hater the world claims He is. The breath in your lungs is a gift; the clothes you wear are a gift; the loved ones in your life are a gift. Rejoice in what God has given and you’ve taken a step in the right direction.

2. Another possibility is that God is teaching you something. This is probably applicable to all of us in many situations. God’s goal for us is to be like Christ, so if we need to be more content, pray more, or learn more Scripture, God may hold back fixing our problems or giving us gifts in order to motivate us to grow in some way. The only way you will know what he is teaching is to listen to Him. Dig into Scripture and bow in prayer. Then I recommend journaling what you sense God saying to you.

3. The final stopper I will address is that God is waiting for you to take a step of faith. If you are longing for a new job, but you are too afraid to send in a resume, God may be waiting for you to act. Whatever you are hoping for may require you to step boldly forward into the water before he parts the sea. Peter would never have walked on water if he hadn’t stepped out of the boat. What step of faith is God wanting you to take today? Take it!

So, if you want to see God work in 2023 in some specific way, let me urge you to rejoice, listen, and move.

Prayer: Lord, help me rejoice in the good things you have given; help me listen for what you are teaching me; and help me step out in faith.

Reverse Offering Stories

By Doug Shotsky

Many years around the Christmas season Alto Reformed Church randomly places \$100 bills in Bibles in the pews, and we ask those who end up with the money to take it and use it to bless someone else. We also ask those who receive these to contact us back to share how God used this blessing to bless others. This year we passed out 20 of those gifts and in this issue of the AMEN, we are sharing some of these stories. We don't share any names of who got the money, or who they gave it to, only of how God used these gifts for His glory. I hope you are inspired at how God used these!

One recipient decided that she would double the \$100 and buy 10 \$20 gift cards to Piggly Wiggly. She picked a day, went to the store, and tried to discern who to give the gift cards to. But better than that, not only did she double the money, when she passed out the gift cards she gave two of them to each recipient and instructed them to keep one and give one to someone else! How cool is that! One of the recipients ended up thinking that was such a great idea, that they told her they were gonna do the same thing! Talk about multiplying the blessings!

My sincere apologies for responding to this so late. I was a guest at the Alto Church when the reverse offering was implemented and was impressed by this idea of giving!

I am a nurse manager with our local healthcare system. As everyone is aware the healthcare world has really changed with the recent pandemic, along with the rest of the world. As a nurse manager I have an open door policy for my employees to come and talk with me about anything. Most recently during the month of December, one of my employees was faced with many family challenges and struggling financially, to the point of being unable to come up with money for a haircut. Although many people are struggling financially, her ability to come to work and put patients and co-workers ahead of her is inspiring. She has bought a mini Christmas tree for patients that could not

afford one, she has driven co-workers to work when their cars were broken, and there are many more stories about her ability to put others first.

When I gave her this \$100.00 gift...I brought her to my office, I praised her for her kindness, selflessness, and noted her struggles. I gave her a hand written card expressing my appreciation for her and placed the \$100 bill in that card. When she opened the card, the \$100 bill fell onto her lap, she continued to read the card, started crying and then picked up the \$100 bill. After talking to her about the Alto Church and this awesome opportunity to express Jesus's kindness, she hugged me and she was very grateful. Thank you for this opportunity of "reversed offering"!

I donated \$100 of it to the palliative program at the dci infirmary. It's a program designed for terminal patients dying in prison. It's to buy comfort items like favorite sodas, candy, treats, nicer tvs, pretty much anything that the state will not allow. It's surprising what a candy bar or a dish of favorite ice cream will do for the spirits of a man dying in a cell all by himself. I don't care what they did, if a dish of chocolate ice cream makes them feel better I will drop whatever I'm doing and get it for them. That's where I sent it.

In the spirit of the thing, my spouse wanted to send it to that young missionary family we had at church. (Preston?) Anyway, I sent it to them too. And just for fun I doubled it all. God has been very good to us.

I received the reverse offering to bless others with this year. I work in fdl so brought it there with me after breaking it down to 20's. As I roomed patients I waited for God to lay it on my heart to bless them. This is how I blessed others:

1. A mom who lives in a homeless shelter in fond du lac that has 2 small children
2. A mom who struggles daily with her nonverbal autistic son who unfortunately gets frequent ear infections.
3. A single mom raising an awesome son all on her own since her husband passed away a few years ago.
4. The Dr I work for to take her mom to lunch when she had to fly home in Oregon to say goodbye to her dying father.
5. A hardworking teenage boy that deserved a little extra.

We used our offering to buy hats and mittens for the middle school kids. ½ went to schools in Oshkosh and the other ½ went to Rosendale Intermediate.

We received one of the \$100.00 bills for the reverse offering. We decided to break down the bill into 5 \$20.00 bills and share with 5 different families. I was working with the Kiwanis club "Holiday Help" on Saturday December 10th. So I took the money to randomly pass out to 5 families as they drove up to receive their Christmas gifts for their children. While organizing the gift bags they realized #53 was not present and would not be receiving a bag of gifts for that child. It was a young mother and 6 yr. old daughter. So I offered the money to them. They explained the situation to the young mother and offered her \$60.00 to use for gifts for her child. (\$20.00 had already been given to a different family) She was grateful to take the money and use it. There were tears in her eyes and a smile on her face. We were all so thankful to have something to give her! So God knew where it was needed that day.

The last \$20.00 was used at Dunkin Donuts to buy coffee and doughnuts for people at the drive up window. A nice surprise for several people. Thanks to the Deacons for this opportunity to spread kindness.

One family decided to give the \$100 to "Mission Backpack" for the Waupun Area School District. This is an organization that helps to distribute food to children in the schools that are at risk of having insufficient food at home.

One young lady in our congregation had been praying for a way to be able to give to a fundraiser at her school for a charity. When she received the \$100 she saw this as the answer to her prayer, but wanted to be sure that was okay, so she came and asked pastor Doug, and he thought it was a great idea! God provides!

One family that received the offering, knew of a family that had recently experienced a major accident and gave the money to that family. What a blessing that others think of us in our time of need.

Another family that received the \$100 called the homeless shelter in Fond Du Lac to see what specific needs they had. They then took the list of needs and used the money to purchase many of these items.

There was a family who decided to use the \$100 towards the "Special Gift" (White Gift) that we take up an offering for each holiday season. This year it was distributed to many families that have had medical issues over the past

year.

Here's a cool story. One of the family's received the money and this scripture from 2 Samuel 24:24 came to their mind: "But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." They felt like the Lord was telling them to double the money, because they felt like this blessing shouldn't cost them nothing! So they knew of a family that has had many medical issues over the past year and gave them the double-blessing.

Well the story doesn't end there. The family that received the money felt like they wanted to take that blessing and pass it on to someone else. So a person they had met during their medical journey was someone they knew they wanted to have it. Just when they thought they weren't gonna see that person again, they ran into them and were able to bless them!

Another couple in the church divided it up and put it to use in several places. First, they went to the Waupun food pantry and asked if there were any folks in need during Christmas. There was a specific family they found out about and gave \$50 to them. After that they put some in the red kettle of the Salvation Army, blessed a young family with Children at Culver's, and helped pay for a young man's food at KwikTrip! They expressed how wonderful it was to help others!

The last story we have to share is from a family that prayed the Lord would show them where to give the money. They knew of their neighbor, a single father with three children, being in need. They took the money to him and he was reluctant to take the blessing, but did and eventually wrote them a note thanking them and expressing his surprise that God had revealed his need to them. Our God is a God who sees all needs!

Equipping Children & Families Update

By Lynnae Loomans

Thank you to my Sunday School teachers, Bible Class teachers, and subs for helping and continuing to make things go smoothly while being in the basement!

Date Change! The Pinewood Derby is Monday April 17th at 5:30-7:30 at The Community Center. Check the Children & Families Resource Center for more

details and to signup.

Save the Date: Vacation Bible School June 19th-23rd

MESSAGES

Thank you to my church family for the candy I received at Christmas and thanks to Betty Daane for delivering it. Thanks also for the Christmas card I received.

-Marilyn Westerveld

Thank you for the candy and cards. Thank you to those who bring the bulletins and CD's.

-Marion Tolsma

Thank you for the box of candy.

-Gerri Loomans

Thank you to our church family for remembering us at Christmas time with a box of candy. Thank you to Willy & Carol Jansma for your visit. God is good!

-Jim & Karen Stelsel

We would like to thank the church for the Christmas candy. Thank you Keith for the visit. Also thanks for the cards and prayers at the time of my (Doris) surgery. All went well. Thanks too for goodies and visits. We have an amazing church family. Thank you for continued prayers for healing in Al's ankle.

-Al and Doris Harmsen

Thank you to our church family for the box of candy at Christmas and Larry & Betty who brought it; and for all the birthday, anniversary, and Christmas cards we received throughout the year. They were all appreciated very much.

-Paul & Audrey Elenius

Thanks to everyone for your caring words, cards and prayers at the passing of our dad and grandpa, Henry Heeringa. It's so wonderful to be part of such a loving and supportive church family!

-Miley and Benita Ter Beest and family

I would like to thank the church for the candy at Christmas and Kathy Flier for bringing it and the visit.

-Ann Boerson

Thank you to the church for the box of Candy and. to Kathy Flier for the delivery and nice visit.

-Kay Vande Zande

Thank everyone for remembering me with cards & especially visits.

-Dayton TerBeest

We would like to thank the Church for the Christmas gift of a box of candy and Burt Wiersema for delivering it and the nice visit we had with him. We are so blessed to be a part of a caring Church!

-Barrie and Ardyce Tenpas

Dear Alto Reformed Church,

To say we are blown away with the love offering from the church is an understatement! We don't know how to properly thank you for your prayers and generosity. Didn't think we could fit everything in a card, so we opted for an electronic message, in hopes you can share it with whomever you deem appropriate.

Kevin's diagnosis was a complete and utter shock. Even though cancer is so prevalent, it still doesn't prepare one for hearing the doctor give the diagnosis, with the dismal life expectancy.

After the initial traumatic period, we prayed for God's direction in this journey. At first, we sought information on holistic treatments and thought that was going to be the plan, but after praying about it, God gave us peace with the traditional chemo. We also felt led to pay for additional testing for holistic counseling. After all their testing, The Wellness Way developed a plan for healthy eating and adding supplements for natural healing & a better quality of life.

We know holistic methods and chemo, mean nothing without the power of prayer and God's divine healing. Because of the tremendous amounts of intercessory prayers being lifted up, we felt the "peace that surpasses all understanding," almost immediately. Not only were people and churches throughout our community telling us they were praying, but we were also told we were being prayed for throughout the state, the country and even on worldwide prayer chains. WOW! We stand in awe & gratitude, to depths we've

never experienced before.

We ask for, believe in, and receive the healing from our Heavenly Father. We give God all the glory for how well Kevin is doing right now. The pain is gone, he doesn't seem to be losing more weight after losing 40 lbs, the tumors are shrinking and the cancer blood marker numbers are decreasing. Praise Jesus!! By his nature, Kevin has always been a "glass half empty," kind of guy and now because of all the prayers, love, and support, that has changed! His attitude is so positive and it's meant so much to him that people have reached out, showing their love & concern for him. Alto Reformed Church is a big part of that & we can't thank you enough!

We have always believed that God ALWAYS provides for our needs and your church is further evidence this is true. We didn't need to "ask to receive," & believe the Holy Spirit led the way in providing this gift. Thank you for sharing the love of Christ in such a tangible way. Our gratitude is truly beyond measure! In Christ's perfect love,
Kevin & Cheryl Harmsen

EVENTS

Mark your calendar...

Alto Reformed Church
February 2023

February 10 **Middle School Overnighter**
Middle Schoolers join us for an overnighter at the Union. Contact Jessa for registration.

February 22 **Ash Wednesday**
Join us at 7pm for the Ash Wednesday service.

February 24 **High Schoolers to Silver Birch**
The high schoolers head to Silver Birch for the weekend. Pray for a great weekend of connecting with God.

For detailed information:
Call 920.346.5505 or email office@altoreformedchurch.org

NEWS

The ceiling renovation project is progressing well!

