

# koinonia

October 2023

## An Update on Our Ministry. From Pastor Brandon

I have to say that even though we are coming through a rough season, it is such a blessing to walk this out with people of faith and character. As most of you should know, on Monday, September 11th, we came to know that we would not be able to pay any of our staff on September 15th for our regular payroll distribution. We immediately let our staff know so that they had as much time as possible to respond to the situation. On Tuesday, September 12th, we informed our school families know the situation and encouraged them to ensure that they are giving to make the school ministry a success and not only relying on the church to fund this. An investigation into the breakdown in our financial plan began. On Wednesday, September 13th, the church was called to a season of prayer as it was becoming obvious that significant changes would need to be made in order to ensure the sustainability of our church and school ministry.

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Our investigation revealed several things. Our yearly budget was being done correctly and conservatively. Our spending has been trimmed over the past several years and it was affirmed that there was no abnormal or frivolous spending occurring. We were even set to spend \$8,000 less than our budgeted amount. It was also clear that those handling our finances were doing so with integrity. Unfortunately, it was also obvious that, while our yearly budget was sound, there was little accounting for financial shifts in giving and spending from month to month. Large bills which occurred quarterly and yearly were not prepared for in advance and our general fund balance was being used as a barometer for spending ability. These two factors alone left us with the devastating reality that we would not be able to make payroll for our church and school staff on September 15th. Through this week, aside from the investigation, a new monthly budget was being prepared which accounted for yearly spending items. This budget served to account for yearly and quarterly bills on a monthly basis, ensuring that the funds are available when the bills come due. In addition, new and more conservative numbers were used to plan for giving based on the yearly trends seen in our church and school.

As this was happening, our school families were being informed of the importance of giving, and many responded with monthly giving pledges. As this money came in, we were able to pay all of our outstanding obligations, with the exception of payroll. On Sunday, September 17th, our elders met and were presented with the findings of the investigation and a proposal for changes to the budget which



would ensure that we do not end up in this situation again. A financial plan was presented as a part of this budget which would instate the practice of maintaining 30 days of operating expenses in the bank at all times with future plans to expand this to 90 days' worth of operating expenses. This would require a reset of sorts, nullifying all current employment contracts and restarting them on November 1st, 2023. Part of the proposed budget was the necessary elimination of a significant amount from our current payroll obligations.

## **Upcoming Events:**

**Financial Update Meeting  
– October 29th**

**Monthly Elder Meeting  
– October 29th**

It was very clear to me that as a servant of the church and one with the responsibility of the Lead Pastor, this reduction in payroll should affect me before any of our other staff. After some discussion, this was agreed upon by the elders. At the close of this meeting, a vote was taken and our new financial action plan was put into place with a unanimous vote. On Monday, September 18th, our school staff met and were informed of our new financial action plan and were given the information that we would not be able to make payroll disbursements until November 1st. We expressed our deep grief over the situation and gave our school staff time to respond to this information. Before the end of the day, every teacher and staff member had agreed to volunteer their time for the month of October. It was truly a blessing to see the servant hearts of our teachers and staff. With school secured for the year, classes resumed on the 19th.

On Wednesday, September 20th, our church and school families met together to hear the findings of our investigation and were made aware of our new financial action plan. At this meeting, our church families were informed that I would not be receiving a salary for the foreseeable future and due to this, would be looking for supplemental income while also remaining the Lead Pastor. We also took this time to invite conversation from our congregation and school families regarding the issue that brought this about and our new financial action plan. It was a blessing to speak with many of our members and school families about our situation and we were blessed with some great suggestions and encouragements. Please know that we are still willing to meet and speak about this.

In the wake of this, there is still the reality of our staff not being paid through the month of October. It was determined by the elders that a shift in financial priorities must take place during this time to ensure that the one staff family who is completely dependent upon church and school funds for their livelihood is provided for. We have had the habit of setting aside a certain percentage of our giving each month for particular items. 10% of our giving has been moved monthly into our building fund to help take care of large expenses such as AC unit replacement and such. An additional 10% has been distributed between several missionaries and organizations we support. These funds have been redirected to help cover the lack of payroll for the Dragoo family during this time. Our regular structure will resume on November 1st as we enact our new budget. We are in the process of letting all of our missionaries know that we intend to resume missions giving in November.

I am also pleased to let you know that special giving has been made toward taking care of our teachers while they are volunteering and the amount given has taken care of all the pay they have missed and will miss over the month of October! There was a lack of around \$81 total from completely providing for our teachers everything they have missed and will miss during their time of volunteering.

To date, it seems that our financial action plan is working. We are making progress to gather the 30 days of operating expenses and we fully anticipate enacting this plan on November 1st as planned. Please continue to pray with us as we observe and measure to ensure we are doing what is necessary to not be here again. Additionally, we have opened a separate checking account so that payroll can never be infringed upon by routine spending. Changes to our internal accounting structure are also being made so that we can have a much more detailed picture when financial reports are made.

As for me, I am currently searching for a job to make up for my missing salary. I am currently seeking a remote job that can be worked from my current church office so that I am still on site and available for ministry. Pray with me as we seek the right opportunity that will afford me the ability to minister to this church and my family well.

Thank you for your prayers, encouragement, and giving through this time. We have been working this plan for a couple of weeks now and are seeing good results. Continue to pray with us through this season and look for regular updates on how this process is going. As always, please feel free to ask any questions you may have. We are always available for meetings and willing to answer those questions or walk you through our process. All of our records are available for you to look at. We currently have folders with our financials available in the office and on the foyer table. These will be updated monthly. We have a meeting scheduled for Sunday, October 29th, to provide everyone with an update on the effectiveness of our financial plan and where we are moving into the month of November when we are scheduled to begin working according to our new monthly budget.

## **A Word on Worship**

### **From Pastor Scott**

I'm sure you have heard the phrase "going deeper" in reference to times of worship. If you are like me, you have thought to yourself, "What does that mean?" and "How do I do That?". The phrase itself elicits visions of stepping from a bank or beach into a body of water. The first step in and you are ankle deep. As you continue to move into deeper waters, the water line reaches your knees, then your waist, then your shoulders, until you are completely immersed.

You may ask, "What does that picture have to do with our worship?" That is a reasonable and necessary question. To answer it, we must revisit our definition of worship. In our May 2023 Word on Worship, we defined worship as our response to the revelation of who God is and all that has done. When God reveals Himself to us through Scripture or through a circumstance, we are left with a response. Many times that response is gratitude and thanksgiving. Other times we are left face down in awe and wonder. Sometimes He brings us to our knees in repentance and still other times He sets us on our feet and gives us a firm place to stand. There are yet other times that all we can do is stretch out our arms and proclaim our love for because we learn how much He loves us.

In light of all of this, to deepen our worship is to deepen our understanding of God's character through time in His word, His presence, and the circumstances of life. Hagar was introduced to the God who sees in Genesis 16. Abraham received the revelation of Jehovah-Jireh on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22. Moses came to know Yaweh in Exodus 3. The Israelites

received the revelation of the Lord their healer in Exodus 15 and the revelation of the Lord their banner in Exodus 17. Will you take the time to consider how God may reveal Himself to you in your current situation? Then allow yourself time to appropriately respond to what He has revealed about Himself. It will take you deeper than you have ever been before.

