

Thrivent Magazine

Refresh your finances

Kick start your 2025 saving and spending plan

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The Mcknight family,
Thrivent clients



Miracle

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

—Isaiah 7:14

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On the cover: Roman, Melissa, Isaiah and Nevaeh Mcknight, photographed by Taylor Jones.

Welcome

Everyday miracles

When my children were young, one of my favorite holiday traditions was to share the story of Christmas and Jesus' birth before opening gifts. Christmas morning was full of stories of the Magi, youthful excitement, tousled hair, pajamas and the irresistible allure of presents under the tree.

I fondly remember those mornings and, as my children are adults, those experiences have stayed with them more than any gift.

For my family, the Christmas story symbolizes hope, wonder and the arrival of love and light into a weary world. It's also about everyday miracles.

Everyday miracles are found in the kindness and generosity of strangers, the resilience of the human spirit and in grown children remembering the true meaning of the holiday season over long-forgotten gifts.

At Thrivent, we have witnessed 1.2 million everyday miracles through Thrivent Action Teams. Each of these client-led volunteer teams that organize to do service work in the community is completely unique and born out of our clients' generosity, kindness and sense of purpose.



This issue of *Thrivent Magazine* is filled with stories of everyday miracles. We're recognizing 10 clients as we celebrate the 10-year anniversary of Thrivent Action Teams. They're doing incredible work and making a meaningful impact in their communities. And we're celebrating our nearly two-decade partnership with Habitat for Humanity, which empowers clients to help others access safe and affordable housing.

In a world often overshadowed by challenges, these everyday miracles inspire us to serve others, express our faith in unique ways, and share our gifts. As we celebrate this holiday season, let us embrace the Christmas story and the everyday miracles that make life extraordinary.

Teresa J. Rasmussen
President and CEO

See footnote 6 in "Important information" on the inside back cover.

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Thrive

Insights and inspirations

Life-changing donations

Thrivent client coordinates two American Red Cross blood drives a year to combat nationwide blood shortages.

By Amy Overgaard Fenske • Photo by Eliza Porter



Thrivent client Linda Keepers practices what she preaches, donating blood four times a year.



You still can lead a Thrivent Action Team this year!

Learn more, get tips and apply now. Simply scan the QR code or visit thrivent.com/actionteam.

In 2017, Thrivent client Linda Keepers took over as coordinator for a long-running Red Cross blood drive out of her church, Lake Street Methodist, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Since then, she's been organizing two per year. With 70-100 donors per drive, it's a lot to coordinate—from recruiting and following up with donors to getting day-of volunteers and preparing food for donors and Red Cross employees.

A few years in, she and her husband, Dick, learned about Thrivent Action Teams from their financial advisor, Ian Kopp. Linda now leads two Thrivent Action Teams a year to support her blood drives, which generally take place in May and November.

"We were paying for all of this out of our own pocket," Linda says. "When Ian told me about Thrivent Action Teams, it was a godsend." She uses the seed money to buy items for the meal she prepares for the Red Cross staff, as well as sandwich supplies, fruit cups and paper products for the buffet available for donors. Volunteers also provide extras like fruit and desserts. "It's great having all these people helping," Linda adds, noting that she had 21 volunteers at her blood drive in May.

That day, 84 units of blood were donated. "With that amount of blood, we were able to help 252 people," Linda says. "Each unit of blood can be divided into platelets,

red cells and plasma. So, there are three different people that can be helped with that one unit of blood."

Linda first donated blood in her 20s; now, at 73, she donates blood four times a year and has donated more than 17 gallons of blood in her lifetime. "I'm planning on donating blood as long as I'm able to," she says.

"There just aren't enough donors to go around for all the people that might need blood," she adds. "It doesn't cost you a cent and it only takes an hour of your time, but it's so important."

See footnote 6 in "Important information" on the inside back cover.

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Thrivent Magazine

@ thriventmagazine@thrivent.com

✉ Thrivent Magazine
4321 N. Ballard Road
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5 ways to navigate ‘tipflation’

By Amy Overgaard Fenske

Tipping etiquette is rapidly changing. In a 2023 Pew Research survey* of more than 12,000 U.S. adults, 72% of participants feel that tipping is expected in more places today than it was five years ago. But many people aren’t confident about when and how much to tip. Here are five suggestions from etiquette experts to help you navigate the murky waters of tipping etiquette.

1. In general, follow the 15-20% rule. Whether you’re eating at a restaurant, heading to the salon or taking a cab or rideshare, tip 15-18% minimum for average service; a 20% tip indicates very good service. However, in some situations—like takeout and food or grocery delivery—tipping 10-15% is acceptable. At a restaurant with a service fee? Every restaurant handles this differently, but most don’t expect an additional tip on top of service fees exceeding 15%.

2. Only ordering a beverage? Tip per drink. When you’re at a bar or coffee shop, you can tip based on

the type of drink you order. For a latte or a beer, \$1 is considered an acceptable tip. For a cocktail, bump it up to \$2 due to the added complexity. Many people skip the tip on a black coffee—and that’s fine. Though, if you frequent a specific coffee shop, you may want to throw a dollar in the tip jar every now and then.

3. Have cash on-hand. If you’re at a hotel or salon, getting valet service or using a coat check, cash is often the only way to tip a service provider. Wondering how much to tip? The American Hotel & Lodging Association suggests

tipping housekeeping \$1-\$5 per night. For valet service, tip \$2-\$5 when the car is returned to you. For a bellhop or coat check, \$1-\$2 is acceptable.

4. Take your time. Don’t succumb to “screen pressure” when your service provider is holding a tablet for you to electronically sign and add your tip. Feel free to ask them for privacy so you can calculate the appropriate tip if you’d like to give more or less than the suggested tip on the screen.

5. When in doubt, use your best judgment. What about house cleaners or home and pet service providers? Or delivery people or movers? As more businesses and service providers offer the option for tips, there aren’t always hard-and-fast etiquette rules. But it’s worth remembering that tips help service workers make a more liveable wage.

At the end of the day, most tipped workers offer services that enhance your life while doing work you wouldn’t want to do yourself—so a tip is a nice way to express your appreciation.

*www.pewresearch.org/2023/11/09/tipping-culture-in-america-public-sees-a-changed-landscape



Market outlook

Economies in transformation

By David Royal

Oct. 18, 2024

When providing thoughts for this column, I often focus on the macroeconomic situation in the U.S. because it’s what affects you most. This focus also reflects our investment view that the U.S. continues to be the world’s leader in economic and market influence. However, we also pay close attention to international economies.

The 2024 global economic landscape reveals a world in transition, with the pandemic’s influence still looming large. China, the United States and European nations are each navigating distinct economic currents.

China’s self-reported GDP growth surpassed expectations earlier this year, yet economic structural imbalances persist. Key risks include an overdeveloped and troubled real estate market, local government debt and geopolitical tensions. China’s economy has historically been driven by investments and exports, but it is trying to transition to a consumer-driven model. In the meantime, China is leaning on policies like lowering interest rates and increasing

government spending to boost economic growth. Coupled with major demographic headwinds, we believe China will continue to experience economic challenges for the foreseeable future.

Europe, traditionally an industrial powerhouse, now trails the U.S. in economic dynamism. Despite its strong industrial foundation, Europe’s slower adoption of new technologies and lower productivity growth have widened the economic gap. Strikingly, the U.S. tech sector’s market capitalization now surpasses the entire European stock market, underscoring the shift from traditional industries to tech-driven growth.

The U.S. market concentration has reached unprecedented levels. The “Magnificent Seven” technology companies dominate the stock market landscape, reflecting America’s technological prowess but posing diversification risks. Interestingly, this concentration trend is not unique to the U.S.; emerging markets like Taiwan also exhibit high levels of concentration.

As these economic narratives

unfold, the global financial landscape faces significant transformation. We continue to favor the U.S. over international stocks, but this preference is based on structural factors and not any “home bias.” We will monitor these dynamics closely to position investments and deliver value to our clients.



David Royal is executive vice president and chief financial & investment officer at Thrivent.

All information and representations herein are as of 10/18/2024, unless otherwise noted.

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Illustration by David Saracino





Thrivent client Austin Shariff is passionate about performing in church and with his band.

Client spotlight

Dreaming big

Thrivent client Austin Shariff has turned his hobby into a career while helping others deepen their faith through music.

By Donna Hein

Austin Shariff has a passion for music, and he wants to share it with his community. On Sunday mornings, the St. Louis-area native can be found leading worship at Manchester United Methodist Church. And during

other times, he's out and about at local venues solo and with his band, saint chuck.

As director of Modern Worship Arts at his church, Austin calls it a privilege and opportunity to lead

people in song. "This work fills my cup every single day that I get to do it," he says. "It leaves me feeling rejuvenated and fulfilled. Being able to lead people to a deeper faith through music is super, super important to me."

He also hopes his solo and saint chuck gigs allow people to sit back, relax and enjoy their weekends. "We're hoping people can forget about some of the other things going on in their lives, and in that moment enjoy some good music and let everything go."

Austin knows that a music career can be filled with uncertainties about when the next opportunity may come along, so gaining confidence around his finances has been important to him.

"I was not taught about money growing up, and money wasn't something that my parents, friends or family talked about a lot," he says. Yet at 23, he is ahead of many of his peers when it comes to managing his finances, including being free of debt.

In part, it's thanks to financial and emotional support from his grandma's best friend, a retired banker with a "big heart for knowing that money management can lead to a happier life in other settings," Austin says. But it's also from the support of a college friend, Thrivent Financial Advisor Jack Bedtke.

Austin recognizes that not a lot of young people talk about money. He wants to change that narrative for his friends, and also in his personal life, especially with his fiancée, Samantha.

"Financial organization doesn't have to be something I'm in fear about," he says. "It's helped me have confidence in my next steps as I go about figuring out what music is for me. It could be a journey that's short after college, but

having resources and education has given me a lot more confidence," he says.

Read on for more thoughts from Austin about his life.

How did you get involved in music?

A lot of credit goes to my parents, but music has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I started singing in choir as a child. From there, I found myself singing in talent shows and such, realizing that singing onstage is something I really enjoy. As I got into college, I saw some of my friends picking up instruments. I thought it would be awesome to do that myself. I sing, and I play guitar and piano.

What led you to work in the church?

I've always been a choir kid. Someone asked me if I had ever thought about leading worship. It was not a career I had thought to enter into, but now it's the most exciting thing I could ask for. Singing in church has been the easiest place

that I perform in. Worship music allows me to express myself in a way that I think is best and allows me to continue to make the most of my abilities.

How did you start working with Thrivent?

After graduating college, I had a lot more resources in front of me, and I needed to quickly decide how responsible I was going to be in managing them. My grandma's best friend suggested I talk with a financial advisor. That brought me to Jack, who I met at Lindenwood University in a fraternity. He was a senior and I was a freshman, so we didn't have much time together, but even in just that year, we made a connection.

What challenges do you face working in music?

It's just knowing what's next—when that next gig will be or when that next project will come about. Compared to some of my friends, they know what their to-do list every day is when they show up to the office. And even just in my practicing and my rehearsing, it's a very personal thing, especially with singing. My instrument is within me and not outside of me, so it's a very personal thing to work on myself and to hand over to other people, hopefully for their enjoyment.

What advice do you have for young adults?

Just ask the questions. There are people who want to share their knowledge and share their answers. Without asking, you might not be able to know those things that you have in your heart.

See footnotes 1, 2, 3 and 5 in "Important information" on the inside back cover.

Generosity in action



Longest open house

Fargo, North Dakota

Real estate agent Kyle Olson held a 65-hour open house in June while raising funds to support Alzheimer's research. In all, eight REALTORS® across the country hosted a combined 149 hours of open houses, raising nearly \$25,000.

June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month, and Kyle hosted the event in honor of his dad, who lost his battle with Alzheimer's in 2019. "I witnessed firsthand the challenges my father faced, and I want to do everything I can to bring an end to this devastating disease," he says.

In addition to exploring a two-story home in West Fargo, event visitors participated in a variety of activities and enjoyed live music. This included a Thrivent Action Team Kyle led with his son where they ran a lemonade and snack stand during a wrestling match at the event, raising \$1,600.

Through both this event and donations Kyle makes from every house he sells, he's raised more than \$95,000 for Alzheimer's research so far, with a goal to raise \$100,000. (longestopenhouse.com)



Hear more from Austin

Learn more about Austin and see his video at thrivent.com/Austin.

Photo by Committee Films

How do qualified charitable distributions work?

By Taylor Hugo

If you're charitably inclined and want to share your wealth later in life, qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) are a great way to support organizations and causes you're passionate about while reaping meaningful tax benefits.

What is a QCD?

A QCD is a tax-free donation from your individual retirement account (IRA) to a qualified organization. This includes nonprofit groups that are religious, charitable, educational, scientific or literary in purpose, or those that work to prevent cruelty to children or animals.

“QCDs can reduce your adjusted gross income and lower your tax bracket on the amount of taxes you pay.”

—Brent Robinson, Thrivent Advice Services consultant

What are the eligibility requirements to make a QCD?

“You must be 70½ or older and own an IRA to make a QCD,” says Brent Robinson, an Advice Services consultant for Thrivent. Traditional and inherited IRAs—as well as inactive Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees (SIMPLE) and Simplified

Employee Pension (SEP) plan IRAs, which no longer receive contributions—are eligible, so long as the money is directly transferred from the IRA custodian to the charity.

In 2024, the annual QCD limit for an individual is \$105,000, a number that may increase from year to year based on inflation. You can make one large donation or several smaller donations throughout the year, but the total amount of QCDs taken from all your IRAs cannot exceed that limit.

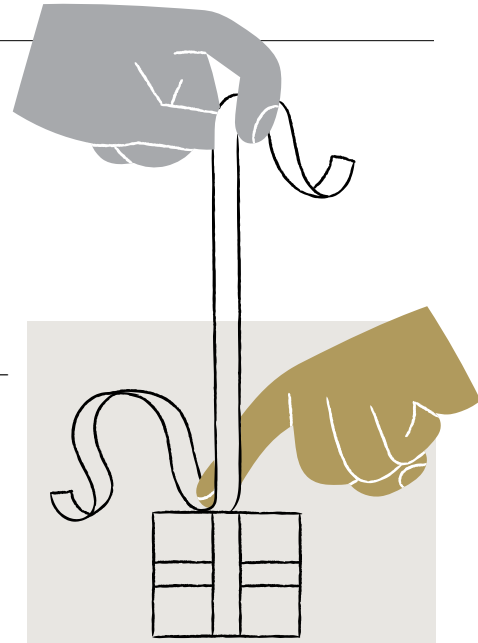
What are the benefits of QCDs?

Making QCDs can be a smart tax-efficiency strategy. “QCDs can reduce your adjusted gross income and lower your tax bracket on the amount of taxes you pay,” Robinson says. “So, for example, if you make a \$10,000 QCD from your IRA, you don't have to report that money as income.” This, in turn, can help lower Medicare premiums and Social Security taxes.

If you make a QCD before age 73, or 75 depending on when you were born, it reduces your IRA, which in turn can reduce your required minimum distributions (RMDs). Once your RMD goes into effect, if you make a QCD in excess of your RMD, this also reduces your IRA balance, potentially decreasing future RMDs.

You must complete QCDs by Dec. 31 for them to count toward your annual RMD. To get started, talk to your Thrivent financial advisor.

See footnotes 2 and 4 in “Important information” on the inside back cover.



QCDs by the numbers

70½

The minimum age to make a QCD

\$105,000

The annual QCD limit for an individual in 2024

\$53,000

The one-time gift made to a Charitable Remainder Trust (CRAT or CRUT) or Charitable Gift Annuity in 2024

From the archives

Decking the halls

By Lauren Gaines



Among these six plates are the Royal Copenhagen official plate from 1911 (far left), and the “Thief plate” from 1911 (far right).

As the Christmas season nears, you may be readying your home with nostalgic décor and table settings. Thrivent, too, will be pulling out its beautiful collection of Christmas plates.

Thrivent's Corporate Archives hold a complete collection of Danish Christmas plates from 1895–2015 (Bing & Grøndahl) and 1908–2015 (Royal Copenhagen). These two firms create annual Christmas plates showcasing traditional holiday themes and Danish motifs. For example, *Julehjerter*, the Danish woven heart ornaments, are seen decorating many Christmas trees.

Each firm creates a new prototype every year, produces a set number of plates and then destroys the prototypes. This limits the number of plates available and enhances their desirability as collectors' items.

Elias Rasmussen, a Norwegian-born pastor living in Minneapolis, began collecting Christmas plates in the 1940s. A proud Norwegian, he

led relief efforts for Norway during World War II and was knighted by King Haakon for his work. Lutheran Brotherhood acquired the plates from Rasmussen in 1956; Thrivent continued to collect them through 2015.

Thrivent's collection includes novelties such as the Bing & Grøndahl Jubilee plates issued every five years since 1915 and the 12.5-inch Bing & Grøndahl plates issued from 1908–1911.

The collection also features the Royal Copenhagen “Thief” plate, an unofficial prototype plate that mysteriously made it onto the market in 1911. That year, two plates were issued by Royal Copenhagen. The “Thief” plate was not the prototype chosen as the official plate. Legend has it that production workers stole several prototypes, allowing this plate to survive and become a collector's item.

Lauren Gaines is Thrivent's corporate historian and archives manager.

Generosity in action



Family fun day

Poughkeepsie, New York

Arts and crafts, face painting and cupcake decorating were the highlights of the day when First Evangelical Lutheran Church held its Family Fun Day in June. For the annual event, which is open to the community, Nancy Compton led a Thrivent Action Team that provided more than 250 hot dogs, chips, lemonade and ice cream to those who attended.



Meals for seniors

Naples, Florida

Thrivent clients George and Jane Turczyn made and packed nearly 50 meals of grilled pork chops with mashed potatoes, broccoli Normandy and a roll for distribution to shut-in seniors. They prepare and deliver meals to Café of Life Senior Outreach Program the first Wednesday of every month. Seed money from their Thrivent Action Team helped with food costs.

Connecting art and faith

The love of a mother

By Joanna Reiling Lindell

Mary lovingly cradles the infant Christ; she wraps around him as he nestles into her warmth. The baby is delightfully plump, perhaps suggesting this moment is weeks after his birth—but his tightly closed eyes, softly curled form and tiny furrowed brow show he is still a newborn.

The sleeping child looks slightly distressed. This is a realistic portrayal of an infant—babies often display animated expressions while slumbering—but it also alludes to his future. She cannot see his face, but the mother intuitively comforts her child's unrest, pulling him closer and resting her cheek on him. Mary's expression is solemn but peaceful. Since before her son's birth, she knew his divine purpose and weighty fate. An exemplary agent of God's perfect will, Mary's unwavering faith and devotion to God allow this mother to accept the unimaginable. For now, he is enfolded in her love and tenderness, protected.

The Madonna and Child subject



Guido Reni (Italian, 1575–1642)
Madonna and Child in the Round,
c. 1615
Etching
Thrivent Collection of Religious Art

is a central motif in Christian art. Images appear as narrative episodes or as devotional representations. A sleeping Christ child is more typically found in Nativity or Adoration scenes, where onlookers gaze upon the newborn babe. Here, Jesus is shown asleep in his mother's arms. The hint of sorrow on Mary's face here recalls Pietà imagery. The Pietà devotional motif portrays Mary mourning her crucified son. Like the Pietà, *Madonna and Child in the Round* depicts a solitary, poignant moment between Mary and Christ.

Italian prints are known for their beauty, elegance and visual splendor. This etching highlights the aesthetic grace and delicacy of line that is particular to Italian prints of the era. Reni's lyrical flowing and broken lines create a shimmering effect that contributes warmth to the already tender composition.

Here, the Virgin's simple halo of etched lines denotes her saintly status. Her nimbus is echoed by the circular composition, adding elegance and intentionality to the overall design. Even without additional details that might establish a specific setting, there can be no doubt the artist considered his composition complete. The finished state is further evidenced by the signature at the bottom left, which proclaims, *Guid'. Rhen'. In, et fe.* ("Guido Reni invented and made this.")

Though these figures are regarded by many as divine, the image is universally relatable. It reflects a uniquely intimate relationship between mother and child, which is built on a love that is singular in its power and reveals God's love for humanity.

Joanna Reiling Lindell is vice president of Audience & Experiential Engagement at Thrivent and chief curator of the Thrivent Art Collection (thriventcollection.com).

Reflecting

The season of Advent and celebration of Christmas uplift our joy in the birth of Jesus and offer a reminder of Mary's love for her son and God's love for humanity. Who and what makes you feel most loved and protected?

Bright ideas

Cut spending—not holiday fun

By Donna Hein



With Christmas around the corner, rising costs and tighter budgets are causing concern for many families. According to Thrivent's 2024 Holiday Spending Survey*, two out of three Americans are uneasy about how they'll manage their holiday finances this year, with 33% planning to purchase less expensive gifts and 31% planning to buy fewer gifts overall.

Here are some ideas to spend less without sacrificing your holiday experience.

Make a list

Identify those you'll give gifts to and establish spending limits. Be creative with gift-giving. Consider DIY (do-it-yourself) gifts, or a shared experience with family such as a zoo membership or a family waterpark day.

Avoid credit

To avoid that credit card bill in

January, try using a debit card or cash for your holiday expenses instead. The envelope system—where you designate a certain amount of money for gifts, décor, meals and more into individual envelopes—can help keep money in check.

Limit social media

While social platforms can offer great ideas, they also encourage impulsive purchases. It may be time to unfollow or hide retailers and reduce your screen time.

Get creative with food

If you're hosting, plan a potluck and assign guests a dish to bring. Or simplify by doing an appetizer or dessert bar. It's about being together, not whether there's a turkey or ham!

*Thrivent's 2024 Holiday Spending Study was fielded online by Morning Consult from 9/13/24 through 9/22/24 among a total sample of n=2180 adults 18+ (weighted to U.S. general population on key demographic aspects such as gender, age, etc.) with a total audience margin of error of +/-2%. Some questions for this survey were shown to a subset of respondents, thus base sizes and margin of error may vary by question.



Get more
spending tips

at thrivent.com/holidaytips.

Generosity in action



Card ministry

Berea, Ohio

Bonita Sears leads a Thrivent Action Team of women and teens at St. Paul Lutheran Church to create handmade cards. They make cards for a variety of occasions, including wedding anniversaries, baptisms, birthdays and to encourage those who are sick. Seed money from the Thrivent Action Team helps purchase supplies. The group meets monthly to build relationships and to bless others.



Hog roast benefit

Galesburg, Illinois

More than 400 people attended the hog roast benefit for the Rescue Mission and Women's Shelter. Peggy Masterson led a Thrivent Action Team that purchased and prepared food, including roast pork, baked beans, potato salad and dessert, set tables and served customers. Seed money helped purchase the potato salad. Money raised by the meal will help pay for electricity for the shelter that can house up to 80 people.

Handled with care

Building a growth mindset

Thrivent clients value a strong support system on their financial journey.

By Donna Hein
Photo by Patrick Heagney

A.J. Artis believes it's important to make every moment count. As the director of Strength & Performance for the football team at Georgia Tech, he knows the value of discipline and execution.

"You have to be willing to do what other people aren't willing to do to be a champion on the field and in life," says Artis, a Thrivent client in Atlanta.

That applies to his finances, too. About a year ago, A.J. and his wife, D Janelle, teamed up with Thrivent Financial Advisor Andrew Frerking in Johns Creek, Georgia, for advice as they were growing their family and careers. Together, the Artises made a game plan for their cash flow, debt management and protection needs. Doing so nudged them to get transparent about their finances and goals.

"I come from a background where you're taught to keep your money *your* money," A.J. says. "You don't let anyone else see your money and you have to manage your money [yourself]. Working with Thrivent on my finances has shown me the importance of not going it alone. It's opened my eyes to different financial opportunities and the way I can make an impact with others."

A.J. refers to this as a growth



Thrivent Financial Advisor Andrew Frerking (left) and Thrivent client A.J. Artis photographed at Georgia Tech.

mindset. While he still has control of his finances, he now has a resource to help guide him in his decision-making. He admits he was apprehensive at the beginning, but that putting in the time and trusting the process has made this perspective possible.

"I always talk with the athletes about having a growth mindset," he says. "But I have to do it as well and not be stuck in my ways. I want different stuff for my family going forward."

Frerking recognizes that money is a hard topic for people to open up about. And it starts with building trust.

"The first step was providing a different experience from what A.J. was accustomed to with financial

advisors," Frerking says. "For many, the work is transactional, and people end up with a collection of products and services, but there's not much coordination with a plan. My team leads with advice."

A.J. had built a personal relationship with Frerking's family years earlier when he was a strength coach for Frerking's brother at Tennessee. So it was a natural connection for the two when A.J. moved to Atlanta.

Frerking continues working with A.J. and D Janelle to build upon their now-strong financial foundation—guiding them through questions about investment options and their tax efficiency.

See footnotes 2 and 5 in "Important information" on the inside back cover.

On my mind

Make the most out of your Thrivent online accounts

We're delivering account features that make your life easier.

By Kevin Kastenholz

I'm proud to be part of the team continually improving the digital experiences of our clients. How do we do it? First and most importantly, we listen to you! Then, our teams apply their expertise to deliver, test and improve digital experiences that better meet your needs.

You may have noticed improvements, ranging from the way you log in to how you locate key information such as documents, membership benefits and generosity programs. Our goal is to help you get the most out of your Thrivent relationship at your convenience—no phone call or appointment required.

If you haven't already, please consider creating an online account. And once you have one, check back frequently, because we always are making updates. Highlights from the past year include:

Improvements to online bill pay

- Make one-time billed payments for insurance and annuity accounts.
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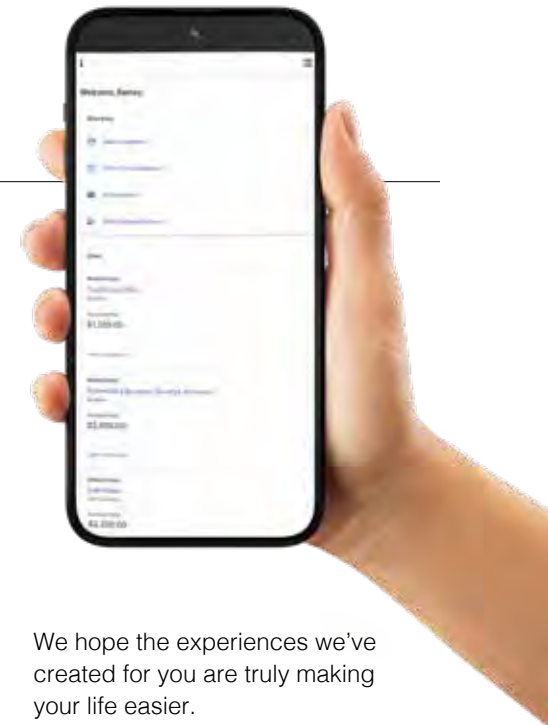
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Kevin Kastenholz is the vice president of Digital Client Experience at Thrivent.

See footnotes 1 and 6 in "Important information" on the inside back cover.



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Thrivent clients Roman and Melissa Mcknight photographed with their twins, Isaiah and Nevaeh, in Tacoma, Washington.



Fresh start, fresh goals

Eighty percent of New Year's resolutions fail by February.* If you're looking for your savings goals to stick in 2025, these expert tips can help you follow through.

By Nicole Abendroth • Photo by Taylor Jones

Every year, “save more money” ranks among top New Year's resolutions, along with losing weight and exercising more. And they have more in common than you'd think.

“Saving money isn't really any different than how you'd go about losing weight,” says Karl Jensen, financial planner in Advice & Planning Services at Thrivent. “At first, ‘I need to lose 40 pounds’ or ‘I want to save \$1,000’ might feel like daunting tasks. But you'd break them into things you *can* do: ‘I'm going to the gym twice a week’ or ‘I'm going to eat one smart meal a day’ is like, ‘I'm going to save an extra \$50–\$100 a month.’”

“You change your behaviors. You make adjustments. Those compound over time. That's how you succeed.”

Thrivent clients Melissa and Roman Mcknight know that sometimes putting that advice into practice can be easier said than done. As the

couple from Tacoma, Washington, bring up their 8-year-old twins, Isaiah and Nevaeh, they've found that saving money can be twice as hard.

“Since they're the same age, a lot of their achievements and needs come at the same time,” Melissa says. “They're both in private school. They always seem to be outgrowing clothes and shoes.”

In less than 10 years, the Mcknights prevailed over steep challenges and celebrated major wins. They overcame homelessness and drug addiction. They navigated medical emergencies and job layoffs. They balanced raising toddlers with going back to school to get their degrees—and then their dream jobs. They bought their first home. Most recently, they've paid off four credit cards.

“That's victory,” Roman says. “Knowing we can overcome these adversities is the springboard for us

in everything else: We can do it. We can continue on.”

Cut out the extra

When committing to your savings goals, a good place to start is by trimming excess expenses.

“Look at your spending habits—dining out, offhand entertainment expenses,” Jensen says. “Review your mindless subscriptions—like

Take a deeper dive

Get more savings tips in the extended online version of this article at thrivent.com/savingstips.

subscribe-and-saves, your streaming services, your cable. Ask yourself if those are consistent with how you want to spend your money.”

Oua Xiong, a Thrivent financial associate in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, offers a gentle reminder that, while these cuts can be hard, they’re temporary.

“It’s so crucial to understand needs versus wants,” Xiong says. “If you focus on needs for now and are realistic, it’s a short season. You don’t need to give it up forever.”

Motivate your mind

To succeed in saving, Xiong’s clients Ashley and Paul Silber needed to first adopt a new mindset. Initially, the former high school sweethearts from Lake Elmo, Minnesota, were struggling to pay down debt on their entry-level salaries. Promotions eventually increased their cash flow. But as their family grew, so did their expenses.

Their daughter, Felicity, was 3 when their son, Luca, was born, doubling their day care bill. And Paul was in graduate school completing his master’s degree.

“For years it felt like, ‘We’re never going to get out of this,’” Ashley recalls. “We knew we had to make a change and got serious.”

Ami Lopez, a Thrivent financial advisor in Federal Way, Washington, recalls similar conversations when working with the Mcknights.

“I always say: Identity is everything,” Lopez says. “If you keep telling yourself, ‘I’m bad with numbers,’ ‘I’m bad with budgeting,’ ‘I’m bad with money,’ you’re going to believe it. You have to take steps toward a new mindset, a new identity, where you’re a good steward of the resources you’re given.”

Prioritize emergencies

As you start saving for various goals, one key area should be your emergency fund. Lopez recommends starting with an initial goal of \$1,000 and gradually working up to one month’s worth of expenses, then three to six months’ worth.

“Start small and build organically,” Xiong agrees.

The Silbers had an emergency fund in place before they began paying off their large amount of debt. “That really helped us sleep at night—knowing that if something did happen that was catastrophic or an emergency, we’d have that,” Ashley says.

Make it automatic

Taking a close look at excess spending exposes how subscriptions and automatic payments make it easy for money to leave your account. Lopez recommends turning that structure on its head by using it to streamline money coming in.

“Let’s say your gym membership takes out \$23 a paycheck. You realize later that that’s over \$500 a year. You could set up your direct deposits into savings the same way. If you never touch it, you won’t spend it,” Lopez says.

If saving is a challenge, try a savings challenge

Savings challenges can be helpful if you like to have a written plan with set numbers laid out.

With automatic savings, you could challenge yourself to deposit \$50 per paycheck into a savings account. If you get paid semi-monthly, that’s \$1,200 saved over the course of the year. Biweekly, make that \$1,300. And if you have the means to set aside \$100 per paycheck, those savings double: \$2,400–\$2,600 saved by Dec. 31.

You also could try a challenge that starts small and increases how much you save over time. For example, you could contribute \$1 the first week of the year, \$2 the second week and so on. By the end of the year, you’d have more than \$1,300 in the bank.

Try a no-spend month

As a different type of challenge, the Silbers try to commit to a no-spend month from time to time.

“We don’t go out to eat and don’t buy clothes, just mainly essentials like groceries and utilities,” Ashley says. “Those are good opportunities to finally eat through the food in our freezer.”

How Thrivent can help

Thrivent financial advisors have tools that can help you take a comprehensive look at your financial situation and find opportunities to save more money. They can help you get a handle on your debt and spending, manage your cash flow, and position your assets so you can achieve your long-term goals. Contact your financial advisor or find contact information at local.thrivent.com.

Money Canvas™ is a free virtual coaching program that can help you establish a budget and build better spending and saving habits. Get started at thrivent.com/moneycanvas.

“If we didn’t have the money, we didn’t spend it. We tracked it down to the dollar for probably three years.”

—Ashley Silber, Thrivent client



Paul and Ashley Silber are spending and saving smartly for the future of their kids, Felicity, Luca and Violet.

Photo by Committee Films

If a month doesn't seem achievable, start with a no-spend week and go from there.

Shop smart

When spending *is* necessary, the Silbers consider the reusability of the items they buy. Their daughters, Felicity and Violet, are now 10 and 4. Their son, Luca, is 7.

"We reused a lot of baby gear—car seats, strollers. Even today, I'll buy nicer brands for Felicity knowing they'll last and pass down to Violet."

They also look for ways to save money on travel, like staying in Airbnbs, where they can cook their own meals, racking up hotel points and buying two one-way flights instead of one roundtrip ticket, when it makes sense.

The Mcknights also try to cut down on costs by buying in bulk and looking for discounts.

"I love coupons, and I love a great deal," Melissa says. "I pay attention to when things are on sale. When there's something I do want, I do a few cost comparisons at other sites or stores. I also try to buy generic when I can."

Track it all

The Silbers took the guesswork out of saving by diligently tracking their income and expenses.

"We created a budget spreadsheet that included our assets, liabilities and net worth on one tab. Then our monthly expenses are on another tab," explains Ashley. "If we didn't have the money, we didn't spend it. We tracked it down to the dollar for probably three years."

Monitoring expense categories and savings goals also benefitted the Mcknights.

"We would set up different

accounts for each of our goals: savings, hygiene, groceries, tithing and fun," Melissa says.

Hold yourself accountable

Melissa says that being open and honest about finances with Roman has been key in helping their savings stay on track.

"Staying in constant communication about how we're spending our money forces us to be more careful," she says. "We'll revisit our budget a couple times a month and frequently do some inventory. It helps us prevent guilt because we stay on the same page."

Xiong recommends writing down savings goals and checking in on them periodically.

"Discuss openly with each other. Share your goals. Your financial advisor will hold you accountable as well. Meet at least annually with your advisor—or even every six months," Xiong says. "That's when we'll review statements, identify room for improvement and make micro-adjustments."

"Think of your financial advisor as a personal trainer for your financial goals," Jensen says. "If you want the results and you're willing to put in the work, your financial advisor's accountability and expertise can help you make it happen." ■

Drive Research, September 2023. "New Year's Resolutions Statistics and Trends [2023]."

How to pay down holiday debt

Christmastime can be a joyous season. But once it's over, post-holiday ho-hum may set in—especially if the scale, and your credit card balance, is a bit higher than usual.

"When the holidays are over, it's time to buckle down," says Karl Jensen, financial planner in Advice & Planning Services at Thrivent. "Don't have regrets. You had your 'let loose' moment. Now it's time to get back on track with our good habits."

- **Leverage credit cards.** While credit cards may have enabled you to rack up debt by overspending, they also can be tools to help you get out. Look for promotions on new cards that may be offering 0% APR or longer grace periods. You may be able to transfer the balance of your other card(s) if you can commit to paying it down. Just be aware of how opening a new account may affect your credit score.
- **Keep to cash.** As you work on whittling down your credit card balance, try to use cash or readily available funds in your checking account to avoid adding to that debt.
- **Holiday shop throughout the year.** Don't make credit card debt an annual Christmas tradition. Try to spread out gift- and decoration-buying throughout the year, especially when there are sales, to prevent an end-of-year spending crunch and skip holiday price markups.

Get more ways to pay down holiday debt at thrivent.com/holidaydebt.



Ivan and Lori Bost



Adelle and Allen Duhon



Aisha Taylor

Celebrating 10 years of Thrivent Action Teams

By Donna Hein and Lisa St. Pierre

It's been 10 years since Thrivent clients helped kick off a program enabling them to make a difference locally and globally. In the program's first year, Thrivent clients with membership led about 25,000 Thrivent Action Teams.

Over the past decade, interest and participation steadily grew, reaching a record of more than 157,000 Thrivent Action Teams held in 2023 alone. To date, Thrivent clients with

membership have led more than 1.2 million projects, engaging more than 16 million volunteers and raising more than \$1.9 billion to support causes they care about.

To celebrate the milestone, Thrivent recognized 10 clients doing incredible work through Thrivent Action Teams. They were selected from hundreds nominated by financial advisors, engagement leaders and Thrivent team members. Thrivent

then made a surprise donation to the causes they care about, based on the meaningful impact they've made in their communities through the program and the close connection these causes have to Thrivent's purpose and values.

Keep reading to learn more about these inspiring clients.

See footnotes 5, 6 and 7 in "Important information" on the inside back cover.



Ivan and Lori Bost
Tennessee

Ivan and Lori Bost, who lead the Holy Smokers, an outreach group at Grace Celebration Lutheran Church, are making a difference one BBQ plate at a time. What started as a dream to cook BBQ for local college athletes has become a full-time function of outreach in their congregation. The food opens the door for the Bosts to provide prayer, mentorship and encouragement to athletes and the greater Memphis community.



Forget-Me-Knot Quilters
Michigan

The Forget-Me-Knot Quilters of Bethel Lutheran Church stitch together more than fabric and batting as they create over 540 quilts annually for delivery locally and to Lutheran World Relief. They also sew in warmth and love as they gather twice monthly for sewing and conversation. The quilts are made with donated fabrics and batting purchased with seed money provided by Thrivent Action Teams.



Adelle and Allen Duhon
Louisiana

Adelle and Allen Duhon started a school supply giveaway after they noticed families in their church and community struggling to keep up with the rising price of supplies. Now in its 10th year, the giveaway provided backpacks for 485 students this year. "It's bigger than us," Allen says. "God only allows us to be blessed so that we can impact others."

It's been 10 years since Thrivent clients helped kick off a program enabling them to make a difference locally and around the world. Learn more about these clients and their Thrivent Action Teams at thrivent.com/10teams.



Sonia and Skip DuPree
Florida

Sonia and Skip DuPree are the founders of E.N.D. It (Everybody's Not Doing It), a nonprofit that provides positive alternatives for at-risk behaviors in youth through a mix of academic, artistic and preventive education. The group uses theater to address social issues and empower teens to make good choices. Sonia and Skip stress to students that "your off-stage character is the most important thing."



Jill Schwiderski
Minnesota

Jill Schwiderski provides hope to families throughout Renville County through St. Paul's Closet in Hector. Based in three Sunday school rooms in St. Paul's Lutheran Church, it's filled with seasonal clothing, footwear, bedding and household items. Donations of new and like-new items, financial gifts and Thrivent Action Teams help meet specific needs like work boots, socks, towels and baby kits.



Joe and Terri Heyrman
Wisconsin

Joe and Terri Heyrman are sprucing up their small community with the help of Thrivent Action Teams. They annually brainstorm improvement ideas, such as fixing up a local playground, then organize brat fries to raise money. For one project, they raised funds to purchase six kayaks for public use. "We have a very generous community for donating time and money," Terri says.



Whitney Scarborough
Texas

Whitney Scarborough started a Bible study to connect with other women when she moved to a new town. Over time, it became clear that she could do even more. She started a women's ministry, Woven, and today helps women from all over the country to study the Bible and cultivate meaningful relationships with each other.



Hugo and Claudia Huesca
Colorado

For 17 years, Hugo and Claudia Huesca have been planting seeds of faith and generosity. They've helped open churches in several states and, alongside their three children, they organize events such as breakfasts, school supply giveaways and an annual women's retreat. Hugo and Claudia were early adopters of Spanish-language Thrivent Action Teams, and they wear their "Vive Generosamente" T-shirts with pride, inspiring others to live generously.



Brooke Fleming
Minnesota

Brooke Fleming spent time on bedrest and in the NICU when she delivered her twins (now 12). She knows the value of a strong support system like the one she had. Now, Brooke pays it forward through her nonprofit, Hearts 2 Hope, which provides gift bags to women on bedrest and families in the NICU, offering support and hope during a difficult time.



Aisha Taylor
Ohio

Aisha Taylor, a single mother of twins, has made it her mission to teach single moms about finances. An author who also has a personal finance blog, Aisha uses Thrivent Action Teams to host finance events on budgeting, saving and the emotional components of spending. The events also provide women with local resources and build support systems.

Chad and Pam Wilsky
photographed with
their sons, Samuel
and Caleb.



How to talk to kids about money

It's never too early—or too late—to instill financial values in your kids.

By Donna Hein • Photos by Jocelyn Espejo

Chad and Pam Wilsky know that talking about money can be challenging, especially with children. But when it came time for the couple from Debary, Florida, to broach the subject with their sons, Samuel, 20, and Caleb, 12, they found one method made it easier: Focus less on talking points and more on values. And incorporate it into their day-to-day lives through teachable moments.

"We talk about the reality of what things cost and the choices we have to make," Pam says. "We talk about saving, giving, planning for retirement. We taught them that they may need to use their own money for things, that money doesn't grow on trees. And sometimes there's the reality that we can't—or don't want to—afford that right now."

Pam learned a lot about money from her parents. Growing up, she and her sister may not always have had what they wanted, but they had what they needed. "We never went without," Pam says. "My parents were smart financially, and that's the mindset we want to share with Samuel and Caleb."

Like Chad and Pam, most U.S. adults believe that teaching children how to manage money starts at home. Yet many don't actually follow through. A recent Family Financial Foundations survey by Thrivent* found that, for many

U.S. adults, open discussions about money rarely—if ever—happened while they were growing up. And if it did, money was often a source of conflict. That makes it seem like a taboo topic, which is something that needs to change.

“A healthy relationship with money is important to being physically healthy, happy and flourishing in life,” says Thrivent client John Busacker, author, speaker and founder of Life-Worth, LLC, a personal leadership development firm. “Money is all around us; it’s a part of our everyday life,” he says. “Having a healthy relationship with it begins with having conversations about it when our kids are young.”

Whether your kids are still at home, or they’re adults, it’s never too late to talk to them about money. Read on for some ideas on how to break down the walls of communication.

Start simple

No one’s expecting you to teach a class on money concepts for your kids. Or even to plan out a conversation. Simply start with what you know.

“The biggest thing we can do is lead by example,” Pam says. “Show them how to be responsible.”

An example for the Wilskys is travel baseball—something many young families can relate to. The couple talked with the boys about the costs associated with it: from buying a bat to paying for food and lodging on the road. “They understood that if we can’t do something, it’s because we’re doing A, B and C with our money instead,” she says.

Scott Morris, Thrivent financial consultant in Ormond Beach, Florida, encourages families to help their children designate earned or gifted money into three categories: share,

save and spend. There should be a set minimum percentage for what goes into the share and save categories.

“Your kids can be doing chores to earn money, to understand it’s not free,” Morris says. “This also helps them start to understand money management.”

Share the household bills with your children, says Thrivent Advice Services Consultant Jennifer Warner. Talk to them about the cost of taking a long shower, using the internet and leaving lights on. Or when grocery shopping, let them make some of the purchases. All of these things will

serve them well into adulthood.

Busacker says that when his children, now 39 and 36, were young, they would watch as he and his wife gave of their time and money. “Then we provided opportunities for them to give, and we watched. Our job as parents is to teach them to ‘adult’ and then let them do it,” he says.

Share your values

“Financial conversations, no matter how simple, help you deepen your relationship with your children and enable you to share your values,” Warner says.

Living your values is one of the



most important money lessons you can impart. What do you value?

- If it’s education, how are you saving money for it?
- If it’s family time, how is your money being used as a tool for that?
- If it’s being charitable, who are you saving money for and why?

“When I do a Thrivent Action Team, my kids and grandkids are involved,” Morris says. “When we collected school supplies, we took them shopping with us. When there’s a community event, we all get involved and give back. We want to be examples of living a life of generosity.”

Encourage your children as they get older to find a job. “It not only helps them prepare for good and terrible bosses, which is a great life lesson, but it also helps them learn about saving, spending and taxes,” Busacker says. And when it comes to going to college, “make sure they

have some skin in the game with paying a portion,” he says. “We wanted them to know the financial cost of being in or skipping a class.”

When Pam Wilsky’s mom died in 2022 (her dad died in 2020), money had been set aside to be divided between the grandchildren to give them a nice start in life. Caleb was only 10, while Samuel was 18.

“This gave us a great opportunity to talk to the boys about our values and how to invest it, not simply stick it all into a savings account,” Pam says. “We actually pulled out a calculator and showed them how much this wonderful gift could turn into.”

The boys were with them when they talked about options with their Thrivent financial advisor. And they took Caleb to the bank when they opened a savings account for him with a portion of the gift. Caleb actually already had \$500 stashed away at home that he also put into the account, Pam says. They also started brokerage accounts for both boys.

Keep the conversation going

Sometimes it feels easier when your children are younger to encourage wise stewardship of their money, but it’s equally as important to continue the conversations as they get older.

“As I look back, there are things we did well in teaching them, and there are things we could have done better or differently,” Busacker says. “We’re still trying to pass along those lessons, even though the conversation has changed.”

The topics may change a little as they become adults. It’s important to talk about life insurance, protecting their own but also their future family’s financial future, and generational wealth, Morris says.

Pam remembers her dad asking her about her retirement plan when

she got her first real job. “He told me I had to do the math, starting today, to put us on the right trajectory.”

Talk with your children about having an emergency fund, using credit carefully and paying bills on time.

“But the most important lesson to continue to impart is to live within your means,” Busacker says. “Have an awareness of what’s coming in and going out. And always try to get on the same page as your partner when it comes to money.”

And finally, as you age, talk to your children about your financial plans. As appropriate, share your estate plans, including health directives, and your extended care plan, Morris says. Talk about why you’ve prioritized certain things. Include your financial advisor in the planning and discussions.

“Start at a high level, communicating the architecture of the plan and your intentions,” Busacker says. “For us, it’s not so much about the numbers; it’s about our values and the ‘why’ behind our plan.”

The time is now to have these conversations, says Warner. “We don’t know what tomorrow will bring; we need to plan for the certainty of uncertainty.” ■

Donna Hein is senior editor of Thrivent Magazine.

See footnotes 2, 5 and 6 in “Important information” on the inside back cover.

*This poll was conducted in August 2023 among a national sample of 2,214 adults. The interviews were conducted online, and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of adults based on age, gender, educational attainment, race and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of +/- 2%.

How Thrivent can help

As you work to both model and teach financial management to your children, sometimes you need an ally in your corner. A Thrivent financial advisor can offer ideas and help you get the conversation started. They also have access to a “plan for extended care” worksheet that can help you think through and document your thoughts about long-term care planning. You can find contact information at local.thrivent.com.

Home is where the heart is

Thrivent's two-decade partnership with Habitat for Humanity allows clients to put their generosity into action, helping people around the globe access safe and affordable housing.

By Taylor Hugo

Chuck and Terri Gafford of Appleton, Wisconsin, remember every family they've built a home for through Thrivent's partnership with Habitat for Humanity. There's Jay, the kid from Wisconsin who was sleeping in the walk-in closet of a one-bedroom apartment he shared with his family. There are the three brothers from Poland who lost their mother. Every day, the middle brother, a caretaker for his handicapped siblings, would carry them up and down the stairs to their second-story apartment.

Then there's Zoe, a 4-year-old girl from a small village along the Danube River in Hungary, who was living in a house that was so moldy, it was affecting her breathing. As the

Gaffords and their team of volunteers spent their time insulating the outside of Zoe's home to keep the inside dry, the little girl was drawn to Chuck, whom she started referring to as "her American grandpa."

"In the morning, before she went to daycare, she'd come running and she'd say, 'Papa! Papa!' I'd pick her up, give her a big hug, and she'd kiss me on the cheek. I was in a puddle of tears," Chuck says. "Since then, we've seen pictures of her, and she's continuing to grow and becoming a fine young lady in a city that we didn't think she would have a chance in. It's those kinds of experiences that keep pulling us back in."

This passion for helping families that need safety and housing started

Chuck and Terri Gafford have a passion for helping families that need safe and affordable housing.



for the Gaffords in 2006. Terri, who worked for Thrivent at the time—she has now been retired since 2019—was one of 12 people selected to go to Poland for a build. “We had to learn how to work together in a country where they don’t speak a lot of English,” she recalls. “We learned how to communicate with locals by taking a stick and drawing in the dirt and playing charades.”

She came back to the U.S. completely changed. “Chuck met me at the Appleton airport. You would expect that, for being apart for so long, I would say, ‘I missed you so much!’ I did not do that,” Terri says. “I said, ‘I need to grab my luggage and go home and do laundry. I’m going back to Poland. I figured out what I want to do for the rest of my life now that I’m in my 50s.’”

Within three months, both Terri and Chuck were being trained by Habitat and Thrivent to become team leaders. They’ve now led, by their estimate, 470 volunteers on 30 Habitat and Thrivent Worldwide builds around the country and across the globe, including to Poland, Hungary, Romania and Macedonia, as well as Louisiana, Missouri, Oregon, Texas, Florida, Kentucky and Wisconsin.

“We have found that our itch is really scratched whenever we’re working with families that need homes—whether it’s in Medford or Sebring or Budapest or wherever. You’re helping folks who need help,” Terri says.

Generosity in action

Chuck and Terri represent two of the 842,000 Thrivent clients and other volunteers who have donated their time and talent to the Habitat and Thrivent partnership since the program’s inception in 2005.

After Lutheran Brotherhood and Aid Association for Lutherans merged to form Thrivent in 2002, “we were looking for a nonprofit we could partner with that encourages clients and prospective clients to put their generosity into action in meaningful, new ways,” says Amy Heinen, Thrivent’s director of member engagement strategies.

Nearly two decades in, more than 25,000 individuals have been served with safe and affordable homes built or renovated for them. Further, upward of \$282 million has been donated to Habitat through affiliate/country program donations and fees, which Thrivent helps offset for all participants, making the experience more affordable.

There are currently three domestic build locations: Marianna, Florida; Bowling Green, Kentucky; and Medford, Oregon. International builds—which resumed for the first time since COVID this past spring—travel to Brazil, Cambodia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Fiji, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Nepal, Paraguay, Poland, Romania and Vietnam—and the list of destinations is growing.

“It’s a way for Habitat and Thrivent to partner together with families from around the world who need decent, safe and affordable housing to make a powerful impact in the lives of families and communities by helping where it’s needed most,” Heinen says.

No special skills are required for the builds. Anyone 18 or older, regardless of Thrivent membership status, can sign

International builds are back

After a hiatus due to the pandemic, Habitat for Humanity and Thrivent Worldwide international builds are back in 16 countries: Brazil, Cambodia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Fiji, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Nepal, Paraguay, Poland, Romania and Vietnam. New locations will continue to be added, so visit thrivent.com/habitat for the latest updates.

For those interested in being a team leader to serve in one of the locations, visit the link above and fill out the team leader interest form. Team leaders, who must be Thrivent clients with membership, will attend a virtual training and recruit volunteers. If you know of someone planning to lead a build, reach out to them. If you want to join an international team but don’t know a current leader, individual opportunities will be announced at a later date.

There are also domestic disaster recovery builds available in Marianna, Florida; Bowling Green, Kentucky; and Medford, Oregon. You can learn more, find new locations and see available open teams at thrivent.com/habitat.

No special skills are required, nor do you have to be a Thrivent client, to participate on a build. All that’s needed is a generous heart and a desire to make a difference.



David
“Ziggy”
Ziegler

Thrivent’s program operations specialist. “These experiences are life-changing. They come back with a changed perspective and view.”

Lifelong connections

David “Ziggy” Ziegler tells people that “Habitat” is his middle name. The former Air Force officer volunteers at the Habitat affiliate in Denver five times a week. He started in 1999 when he joined his church’s faith coalition, the Holy Hammers, helping to build homes on the weekends. Now he spends most days recycling metal at a nearby Habitat ReStore, a home improvement store and donation center.

Retiring from Boeing in 2014, Ziegler also has had the opportunity to join more than 60 Habitat builds, 50 of which have been through Thrivent. “I’ve been able to experience destinations and cultures I probably would never have gotten to had it not been for the Thrivent and Habitat builds,” Ziegler says.

Of all the places he’s traveled for

builds—including most countries in Central America; Paraguay; Macedonia; Jackson, Mississippi; and, most recently, Bowling Green, Kentucky, as part of a Chuck and Terri-led team—his favorite location is Medford, Oregon. Right after the pandemic, Ziegler took every opportunity he could to join build teams there. “I’d be there for a week, come home for a week and then go right back,” he says. “I fell in love with the people up there.”

The people are what keep Ziegler hooked. “When you go on these trips, you really get to meet the people, and they’re so appreciative of the work that we do. You end up being lifelong friends with your team. You have similar ideas and goals, so it’s a great group of people to travel with.” ■

Taylor Hugo is a freelance writer in Colorado.

See footnote 6 in “Important information” on the inside back cover.

up to join a build, whether they’re recruited by a friend or family member, or they apply for one of the open teams listed on Thrivent’s website. Team leaders like Chuck and Terri, however, must be 24 years or older and have a membership with Thrivent.

Once a team leader’s build proposal is accepted and a team—which typically ranges anywhere from 10 to 16 people—is compiled, they spend about a week at their destination, learning new skills, fostering bonds with others on the team and the family for whom they’re building a home, and immersing themselves in the local culture.

“[The participants] are so passionate. People often talk about how they want to put their generosity into action, and Thrivent allows them to do that in different ways they maybe wouldn’t have thought of before,” says Taylor Ruffing,

Other ways you can support Habitat for Humanity

If you’re not able to participate on an actual build, there are other ways you can help people access safe and affordable housing through Habitat for Humanity.

- Contact your local affiliate and ask about opportunities to help the work in your community.
- Lead a Thrivent Action Team to do a fundraiser, educational event or service activity. Learn more at thrivent.com/actionteam.
- Direct Thrivent Choice Dollars®, if you’re eligible, or make a personal donation using Thrivent’s online giving platform at thrivent.com/choice.

What's happening at Thrivent



Thrivent to provide a record \$564 million total payout to policyholders in 2025

Thrivent will distribute an all-time high \$564 million total payout in 2025 that delivers more value to more of our clients with membership than ever before.

- This total includes \$432 million in dividends and \$132 million in nonguaranteed policy enhancements,* such as additional credited interest and reduced fees.
- About 85% of all eligible Thrivent insurance and annuity policies—more than 2.2 million—will receive a dividend or policy enhancement in 2025, 10% more than in 2024.

Thrivent has achieved strong operating performance and investment returns over the past few years and maintains an exceptional surplus position. In 2022, Thrivent leaders saw an opportunity to increase dividends and add policy enhancements, resulting in record-breaking total payouts each of the last three years.

“Our three-year streak of record-breaking total payouts reflects Thrivent’s long-term strength and stability, disciplined financial management and commitment to the financial well-being of our 2.4 million clients,” says David Royal, Thrivent chief financial and investment officer.

While dividends are never guaranteed, Thrivent has paid them every year since 1913, distributing over \$3 billion in the last 10 years alone.

If you have questions, contact your Thrivent financial advisor or call 800-847-4836.

*Policy enhancements refer to improvements in nonguaranteed policy features such as future credited rates or fees. They are not guaranteed in the future.

Also see footnotes 1 and 2 in “Important information” on the inside back cover.

New Live Generously T-shirt design and color revealed

The new 2025 Live Generously T-shirt is here! Through an online voting campaign in mid-August, 30,000+ voters selected the new modern design. It will be printed on blue T-shirts and start appearing in Thrivent Action Kits in January.

Thrivent clients with membership are eligible to lead Thrivent Action Teams to support a fundraiser, service activity or educational event. In addition to the soft tri-blend Live Generously T-shirts for the volunteers on your project (up to 25), Thrivent Action Kits can include:

- A Community Impact Card with up to \$250 in seed money to help kickstart your project.
- A personalized web page and other digital tools to promote your activity.
- Thank-you cards, name tags, stickers and more.

More than 13 million Live Generously T-shirts in an array of colors and designs are in circulation. They’re manufactured by Bella+Canvas, a company that cites eco-friendly processes, including extensive recycling and a small carbon footprint.

To learn more about Thrivent Action Teams and how you can get a T-shirt, go to thrivent.com/actionteam.

See footnote 6 in “Important information” on the inside back cover.



Your 2024 tax documents are coming soon

At Thrivent, we know that preparing for tax season can be stressful. That’s why we’re here to make navigating your Thrivent tax documents simple.

This year, we’re making improvements to your online documents experience. When tax time comes, it’ll be easy to find what you need, just by logging in to your account at thrivent.com. You’ll find your Thrivent tax documents by clicking “Accounts” at the top of the page, then selecting “Tax forms” under the Documents section. You also can view tax and other documents when you select the “View documents” option on the listing for each of your accounts or contracts. Here’s what you can expect regarding your 2024 tax documents:

Online Document Center

- Annuity, insurance and most mutual fund tax documents will be available by Feb. 1, 2025.
- Tax documents for mutual funds with holdings in real estate investment trust (REITS) will be available by mid-February.
- Tax documents for most brokerage accounts will be available by mid-February.

U.S. mail

- Most tax forms (1099s and 5498s) will be mailed by Jan. 31, 2025, to your primary address on file. Please allow up to seven business days for arrival.
- Tax documents for mutual funds with holdings in real estate investment trusts (REITs) are typically mailed by mid-February.
- Tax documents for most brokerage accounts will be mailed by mid-February.

If you’ve always received your documents via the U.S. mail, you may want to opt for fast, easy access to your documents online instead through our eDelivery option. To sign up for eDelivery, which means you’ll receive notification of the availability of your statements, tax documents and other important correspondence, go to thrivent.com/gopaperless. Note: If you choose eDelivery for your tax documents, you no longer will receive a paper copy.

For additional information regarding mailing dates, IRS forms and more, visit thrivent.com/tax-resource-center, or call 800-847-4836 and say “Tax help.” Always consult your tax advisor about your specific tax situation.

Thrivent Member Network Corner

As we gear up for 2025, consider these Thrivent opportunities:

- Sign up for Thrivent’s Market & Economic Update, set for Tuesday, Jan. 14, at 11:30 a.m. CT. The forum brings perspective on the latest economic trends. Register at thrivent.com/marketupdate.
- Get practical tips from industry experts at Thrivent’s virtual events. Visit bit.ly/thrivent-events to stay up-to-date on what’s being offered, including a presentation on retirement income planning with Dr. Wade Pfau on Feb. 25 and 26.
- Enjoy the sounds of the Christmas season in a virtual concert featuring Steven Curtis Chapman. This on-demand concert is available Dec. 10-25. Register at bit.ly/thrivent-events.
- Support a Thrivent Choice® enrolled nonprofit by using Thrivent’s online giving platform at thrivent.com/choice. Thrivent will cover processing fees for your donation, making sure your entire donation goes to your cause.
- Find out what’s happening in your area on your regional Thrivent Member Network’s page. Visit thrivent.com/tmn, enter your ZIP code, then click on “Get to know your community.”

See footnotes 6 and 8 in “Important information” on the inside back cover.

Just for fun

Word search

Find the words below related to holiday baking.

L A E I K O O C A C
 G S U G A R N B F H
 F W Z A M Q I K N O
 M O L A S S E S O C
 S O G Q Z F K P M O
 G P I I Q B J P A L
 A O O C N W I F N A
 M U N O P G J D N T
 I O S G N R E N I E
 X F L O U R M R C P

Flour Chocolate Spoon
 Cinnamon Molasses Mix
 Sugar Ginger Cookie

Word scramble

Unscramble these words that relate to the Christmas season.

1. STLIHG _____
2. ETER _____
3. SUEJS _____
4. SNODECITARO _____
5. FIGTS _____
6. GICARONL _____
7. RTAS _____
8. HEMHLETEB _____

Brainteasers

Can you solve these visual word puzzles?

pearpartridgetree

1. _____



2. _____

ABCDEFGHI
 JKMNOPQR
 STUVWXYZ

BUNDLE

3. _____ 4. _____



Answers:

Word scramble:
 1. Lights 2. Tree 3. Jesus
 4. Decorations 5. Gifts
 6. Caroling 7. Star 8. Bethlehem

Brainteasers:
 1. A partridge in a pear tree
 2. Reindeer 3. Noel 4. Bundle up



Before you go

Winter is a time to slow down, heal and regroup. Give yourself permission to rest. What are some ways you can connect with yourself this season?

Important information for you to know

¹ Thrivent is the marketing name for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Insurance products issued by Thrivent. Not available in all states. Securities and investment advisory services offered through Thrivent Investment Management Inc., a registered investment adviser, member FINRA and SIPC, and a subsidiary of Thrivent. Licensed agent/producer of Thrivent. Registered representative of Thrivent Investment Management, Inc. Thrivent.com/disclosures.

² Thrivent provides advice and guidance through its Financial Planning Framework that generally includes a review and analysis of a client's financial situation. A client may choose to further their planning engagement with Thrivent through its Dedicated Planning Services (an investment advisory service) that results in written recommendations for a fee.

³ Insurance products, securities and investment advisory services are provided by appropriately appointed and licensed financial advisors and professionals. Only

individuals who are financial advisors are credentialed to provide investment advisory services. Visit Thrivent.com or FINRA's BrokerCheck for more information about our financial advisors.

⁴ Thrivent and its financial advisors and professionals do not provide legal, accounting or tax advice. Consult your attorney or tax professional.

⁵ The client's experience may or may not be the same as other clients and does not indicate future performance or success.

⁶ Member benefits and programs are not guaranteed contractual benefits. The interpretation of the provisions of these benefits and programs is at the sole discretion of Thrivent. Membership benefits are reviewed and evaluated regularly. Thrivent reserves the right to change, modify, discontinue or refuse to provide any of the membership benefits or any part of them, at any time.

You should never purchase or keep insurance or annuity products to be eligible for nonguaranteed membership benefits. You should only purchase and keep insurance and annuity products that best meet the financial security needs of you and your family. Consider the cost, features and benefits of specific insurance and/or annuity products.

⁷ The Thrivent Choice® charitable grant program engages Thrivent clients with Membership and Thrivent Member Networks in providing grants that support charitable activities, furthering Thrivent's mission and its purposes under state law. All grant decisions, including grant recipients and amounts, are made at the sole discretion of Thrivent. Directing Choice Dollars® is subject to the program's terms and conditions available at Thrivent.com/thriventchoice.

⁸ Thrivent will pay up to \$300,000 in online processing fees per calendar year for personal donations made through Thrivent's online giving platform.

Photo by Alicia Neumiller/Adobe Stock

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Is your retirement strategy built for the long run?



Feel confident and secure knowing your financial plan can be resilient in any market environment.

Now's the time to ensure your strategy covers unexpected costs—whether that's inflation, potential tax increases or extended healthcare needs.

A strong financial plan can help sustain you through it all.



Contact your Thrivent financial advisor, scan the QR code or visit **Thrivent.com/MakeItLast** to learn more.

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Thrivent and its financial advisors and professionals do not provide legal, accounting or tax advice. Consult your attorney or tax professional.

Insurance products, securities and investment advisory services are provided by appropriately appointed and licensed financial advisors and professionals. Only individuals who are financial advisors are credentialed to provide investment advisory services. Visit [Thrivent.com](https://www.thrivent.com) or FINRA's BrokerCheck for more information about our financial advisors.

Thrivent provides advice and guidance through its financial planning framework that generally includes a review and analysis of a client's financial situation. A client may choose to further their planning engagement with Thrivent through its dedicated planning services (an investment advisory service) that results in written recommendations for a fee.

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