



## **A Giving Family**

As we come to the end of the year we should take time to reflect on the acts of compassion and giving we have done over the last year. The impetus for this comes from our thinking about gifts for our family and friends at this time of year and on thinking about taxes. In this last Shepherd's Pen for 2023 I thought it would be good to remember how our church family has blessed so many individuals in 2023 through various gifts.

We began 2023 with a budget of \$583,763. Through November we have donated \$705,432 toward the various works of our congregation. You may ask yourself then why are we behind on our weekly average? The simple answer is that other opportunities have arisen over the year for us to help others and the congregation has stepped up to meet those needs. Let us look at some examples of our giving both budgeted and opportunistic.

James 1:27 says – *“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”* This year we have supported Pine Vale Children's Home with a monthly cash donation and collected requested supplies for their pantry in November. We also provided food once a week at the feeding center in Tierra Del Padre, Honduras, and paid school fees for many of the students living there. In El Valle, Panama we are supporting Cleo and Chanet Perez with funds for a preacher training course. Closer to home we have helped Aaliyah Quarels and Caleb in meeting their basic needs for food and shelter after she could no longer work while she awaits a kidney transplant. This sustained help has now

got her to the point where in January her Social Security Disability income should meet her needs while she awaits the transplant surgery. We have also set up a Baby Closet to help mothers in making the decision to keep their unborn children and we continue to work with the local school district with the backpack foods program. We have also been involved with the Bridges Out of Poverty program which serves to give people in poverty the needed skills to better their standing.

Galatians 6:10 says – *“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”* An excellent example of this has been our support of the Christians in Sopot, Poland and Ukraine who have been displaced due to the war there. This year our focus, working with Molly Dawidow, has been supplying families near the front lines in Ukraine with sleeping bags and warm clothing. Also, a special need we have helped meet is in supplying essentials (diapers, creams, formula) for babies. There is a near total lack of these resources in these areas and our gifts are helping supply them and to get them delivered.

Proverbs 22:6 says – *“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”* Although much of this training needs to occur at home, we provide bible classes on Sunday and Wednesdays for all our youth and because of our proximity to campus also to college students via the UCSC. There are other opportunities that are outside of these scheduled times (e.g., retreats, youth rallies) and the support of alumni and parents is appreciated for fees and help in transport.

There are numerous other opportunities that are being met with the gift of time – notes of encouragement, phone calls, meals, transportation, etc. I have tried to call to remembrance many of the good works performed by our members over the last year. I know it does not cover everything, but I think it

helps us all gain a better appreciation of how we are serving in the Kingdom.

- Roger King