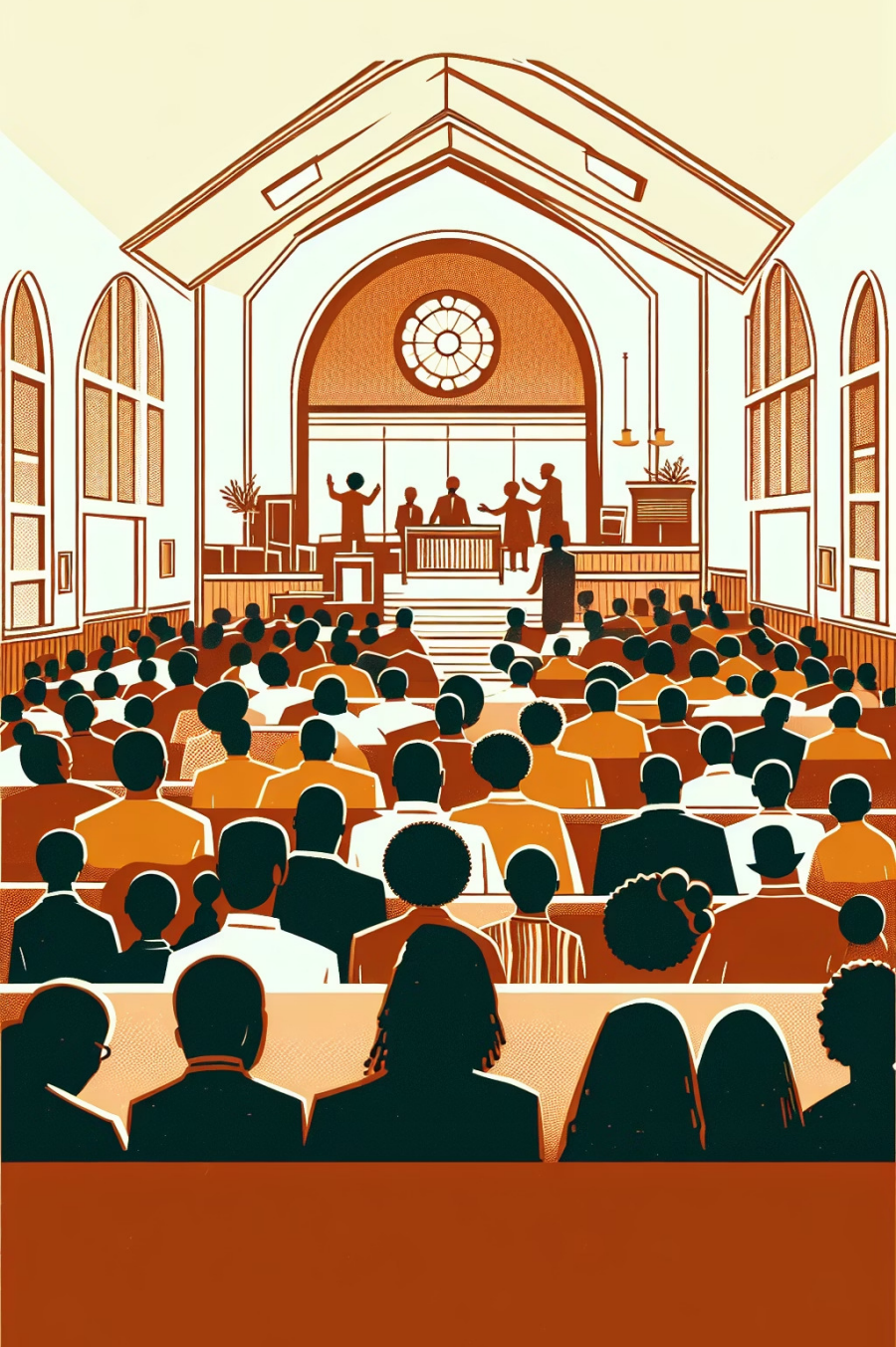




The Gift of Giving: Fact vs. Myth

Worship, Work, and Witness

Week 2: OFFERING: SUPPORTING THE WORK (Churchward Justice):
Stewardship as Spiritual Resistance: Giving in a World That Takes

Theme Scripture (Series)

Acts 2:44–45 (NRSVUE)

"All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need."



Acts 4:32–35 shows us the beautiful reality of redistribution in the early church, where the Spirit moved believers to create an economy of abundance so radical that "there was not a needy person among them." This wasn't charity, it was community. This wasn't obligation, it was liberation. The early church understood that when we share what God has given us, we participate in the divine work of making sure every single person has what they need to thrive.

Memory Verse

2 Corinthians 9:6–8 (NRSVUE)

"The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountiedly. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

This powerful passage invites us into a mindset shift about giving. God isn't looking for grudging gifts extracted under pressure or guilt. Instead, the Divine delights in the joy that flows from a heart that has been transformed by grace. When we give cheerfully, we're reflecting the generous character of God, who gave everything for us. Our offerings become acts of worship, expressions of trust, and declarations that we believe in the abundance of God's Kingdom more than the scarcity of the world's economy.

Scriptural Focus (NRSVUE)

Exodus 35:4–5, 20–22

Offerings for the tabernacle given willingly from the heart

The people brought their gold, silver, bronze, and finest materials, not because Moses threatened them, but because their hearts were stirred. They gave generously because they wanted to create sacred space where God's presence could dwell among them.

2 Corinthians 9:10–11

God multiplies the harvest of our generosity

Paul reminds us that God doesn't just bless the gift, God blesses the giver. When we sow generously, God provides seed for more sowing and multiplies the harvest, enabling us to be even more generous in every way.

Mark 12:41–44

The widow's offering honored over surplus giving

Jesus sat across from the treasury and watched people give. The wealthy dropped large amounts that barely made a dent in their wealth. But one poor widow dropped in two small copper coins, everything she had. Jesus called His disciples over and said her gift was greater than all the rest because she gave from her need, not her surplus.

Luke 8:1–3

Women financially support the ministry of Jesus

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and many other women traveled with Jesus and the disciples, providing for them out of their own resources. These women were economic partners in the Kingdom work, using their financial means to fuel the ministry that would change the world.

Week 2 Outcome

By the end of Week 2, participants should understand that offering is multifaceted and transformative. This isn't just about dropping money in a plate, it's about participating in God's economic vision for the world. We want every person in this study to walk away with a clear understanding of how offerings function within the life of faith and the work of the church.

O1

Distinct from tithing and almsgiving

Each has its own purpose and place in our financial discipleship

O2

Biblical and essential

Rooted in Scripture and necessary for mature discipleship

O3

Fuel for ministry

The resource that enables the church to expand its reach and impact

O4

Economic discipleship

A practice that forms us into people who live by Kingdom economics

O5

A tool for justice and community transformation

A way to redistribute resources and resist systems of oppression

Key Thought

Offerings are how believers partner with God and one another to fuel Kingdom work and build a just community. Where tithing is worship, offering is partnership, love with a budget, faith with a bill, and justice with receipts.

When we bring our offerings, we're not just giving money. We're making a declaration about what kind of world we want to live in. We're saying that we refuse to accept the status quo of inequality and exploitation. We're investing in an alternative economy where everyone has enough, where the work of ministry can flourish, and where justice isn't just preached but practiced with our resources. Offerings turn our faith into action and our prayers into programs that change lives.

FACTS VS MYTHS

MYTHS

"If I tithe, I don't need to give offerings."

FALSE. This myth treats giving like checking a box, as if we can fulfill our financial discipleship with a single percentage. But tithing and offering serve different purposes. Tithing maintains the baseline operations of the church. It's our act of worship that acknowledges God's ownership of everything. Offerings, on the other hand, multiply what the church can do. They expand capacity, launch new ministries, and enable the church to respond to opportunities and needs as they arise. If everyone only tithed and never gave offerings, the church would survive but never thrive. We'd maintain, but never multiply. God calls us to both.

"Any extra giving is an offering."

FALSE. Words matter, and definitions matter. Offerings are specifically designated to support the work of the church, the ministry, programs, missions, staff, and infrastructure that enable the body of Christ to function. When you give money directly to an individual in need, that's almsgiving, and it's beautiful and biblical. But it's not the same as an offering. Almsgiving serves individuals. Offerings support the collective work. Both are important, but they're not interchangeable. The church needs offerings to sustain its ministry, and individuals in need require almsgiving. Don't confuse the two or use one as an excuse to neglect the other.

"Small offerings don't matter."

FALSE. Jesus sat down across from the temple treasury and watched people give. The wealthy dropped in large sums that barely made a dent in their bank accounts. But one poor widow came and dropped in two small copper coins, worth about a penny. Jesus called His disciples over and said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had." God doesn't measure offerings by the amount. God measures them by the sacrifice and the heart behind them. Your small offering matters deeply to God and to the work of the Kingdom.

FACTS vs. MYTHS

FACTS

Offerings are voluntary, but essential for mature disciples

The tithe is the floor, it's where we start, establishing our baseline commitment to honor God with the firstfruits of our income. But the offering is where we truly partner with God's vision for ministry and justice. Think of the tithe as maintaining the foundation, while offerings build the rooms, expand the walls, and add new floors. Mature disciples understand that God doesn't just want our baseline, God invites us to dream bigger, give more generously, and participate more fully in Kingdom work. Offerings aren't required, but they are the mark of believers who have moved from obligation to joy, from duty to delight.

Offerings fund ministry and expand capacity

Every ministry initiative, every outreach program, every community service, every new staff member, every upgraded technology, every mission trip, every leadership training, all of it depends on offerings. The tithe keeps the lights on and pays the basic bills. But offerings determine what the church can build, reach, and sustain beyond survival mode. Want a robust youth ministry? That requires offerings. Want to serve your community with food pantries and job training? Offerings make it possible. Want to send missionaries or support church plants? Offerings fuel that expansion. The vision of your church is only as big as the offerings that support it.

Offerings embody an alternative economy

We live in a world that teaches us to hoard, accumulate, and protect what's ours. Capitalism trains us to see everything through the lens of scarcity and competition. But when we bring offerings, we're practicing a different way of life. We're saying that we believe in abundance, not scarcity. We're declaring that resources should flow toward justice, not just toward those who already have wealth. We're participating in redistribution, making sure that the work of God has what it needs to thrive. Offerings resist the greed of this world and point toward the generous, justice-oriented economy of God's Kingdom.

"The church shouldn't talk about money."

FALSE. This myth is one of the enemy's greatest tools to keep the church weak and believers immature. Jesus talked about money constantly, more than He talked about heaven and hell combined. Why? Because money reveals the heart. It shows what we truly trust, what we truly value, and what we truly worship. When the church stays silent about money, we abandon people to the lies of capitalism, consumerism, and materialism. We leave them trapped in debt, fear, and scarcity mindsets. But when we teach biblical stewardship, we're doing pastoral care. We're helping people find freedom. The church must talk about money because Jesus did, and because silence on this issue is pastoral malpractice.

"Offerings are only about money."

FALSE. While financial offerings are crucial and necessary, they're not the only way we contribute to Kingdom work. God invites us to offer our time, serving in ministries, showing up to volunteer, investing hours in the work of discipleship and community care. God also invites us to offer our skills, using our professional expertise, creative gifts, and practical abilities to build up the body of Christ. However, let's be honest, money is uniquely powerful because it empowers both time and skill. Money allows the church to hire staff who can dedicate their time fully to ministry. Money provides resources that multiply the impact of everyone's skills. So while offerings aren't only about money, financial offerings remain essential and irreplaceable.

CONTEXT: From Tabernacle Economy to Alternative Economy

In Exodus, offerings built sacred infrastructure. The people brought gold, silver, bronze, fine linens, and precious stones. They gave so generously that Moses had to tell them to stop bringing more. These offerings constructed the tabernacle, the beating heart of worship, the place where heaven and earth met. Without offerings, there would have been no place for God's presence to dwell among the people.

In the Gospels, offerings literally financed the ministry of Jesus. Luke 8:1–3 tells us that women like Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna traveled with Jesus and the disciples, providing for them out of their own resources. The Kingdom work required funding, and faithful women stepped forward to make it possible.

In Acts, offerings redistributed wealth, destroying hierarchy and meeting needs. Acts 2 and 4 describe a community where people sold property and possessions, bringing the proceeds to the apostles for distribution. The result? "There was not a needy person among them." This wasn't communism, it was community. This wasn't forced redistribution, it was Spirit-led generosity that created economic justice.



In the Black Church tradition, offerings funded schools, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, mutual aid societies, civil rights work, and liberation movements. When the government refused to educate Black children, the church stepped in with offerings. When banks refused to lend to Black families, the church created credit unions funded by offerings. When the system oppressed, the church organized resistance, and offerings paid for it all.

Today, capitalism trains believers to be religious consumers, rating churches like products on Yelp and treating pastors like service providers. But offering declares:

"We are not
customers. We
are co-laborers."

"We don't
consume church,
we build church."

Offering is economic discipleship, a protest against exploitation and a practice of shared abundance. When we bring our offerings, we're rejecting the consumer mindset that asks, "What do I get out of this?" Instead, we're embracing the co-laborer mindset that asks, "What are we building together?" We're declaring that the church isn't a business and we're not customers. We're family. We're partners. We're investors in the Kingdom of God, and our offerings are the tangible evidence that we're all in.

This is spiritual resistance. In a world that commodifies everything, offerings sanctify our resources. In an economy built on extraction, offerings practice redistribution. In a culture of individualism, offerings build community. Every time you bring an offering, you're voting with your wallet for a different kind of world, one where justice flows, where ministry flourishes, and where no one is left behind.

SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY: Spectator vs. Co-Laborer

Fear says:

| "They just want my money."

Spectators ask:

| "What do I get?"

The spectator mindset treats church like entertainment, evaluating the worship experience, critiquing the sermon, and judging whether they got their money's worth. Spectators sit in the audience, arms crossed, waiting to be impressed. They see their offerings as payment for services rendered. When they're unhappy with the "product," they withhold their offering or shop for a different church. This consumer approach to faith keeps people small, entitled, and perpetually dissatisfied.

Faith says:

| "We are building something together."

Partners ask:

| "What are we building?"

The partner mindset treats church like family, recognizing that we're all responsible for the health and fruitfulness of the body. Partners don't sit in the audience, they work on the stage. They see their offerings as investments in a shared vision, fuel for collective ministry, and expressions of ownership in the Kingdom work. When challenges arise, partners don't leave, they lean in. They ask how they can help, what they can give, and how they can pray. This co-laborer approach to faith produces mature disciples who experience the deep joy of meaningful participation.

Offering shifts us from attending church to investing in the Kingdom, from audience to artisan, from consumer to co-creator.

When you stop asking "What do I get?" and start asking "What are we building?", everything changes. Your relationship with the church deepens. Your sense of purpose expands. Your spiritual maturity accelerates. You move from the bleachers onto the field, and you discover that the joy of giving far exceeds the pleasure of consuming.

ILLUSTRATIVE STORIES

1. The Ministry Menu (Relatable)

Think about your favorite restaurant. The building, the lights, the basic infrastructure, that's maintained by steady, predictable revenue. But the menu, the variety of dishes, the specialties, the seasonal offerings, that's where the chef gets creative and where customers get excited. The tithe is like the baseline revenue that keeps the restaurant open, pays the rent, covers utilities, and maintains the building. But offerings? Offerings create the menu.

Youth ministry, outreach programs, technology upgrades, community care initiatives, pastoral support, mission trips, worship arts, leadership development, every "dish" on the ministry menu requires offerings. With generous offerings, the menu expands and more people are fed, literally and spiritually. Without offerings, the menu shrinks to the bare minimum. The church survives, but it doesn't thrive. It maintains, but it doesn't multiply.

2. Fannie Lou Hamer & the Freedom Offering (Justice History)

The Civil Rights Movement wasn't funded by wealthy donors or government grants. It was financed by offerings from poor Black saints who scraped together kitchen money, side-job money, church money, and sent it to the movement. Fannie Lou Hamer, sharecropper turned freedom fighter, often talked about how the movement survived on the sacrificial giving of everyday people who had almost nothing but gave everything.

These offerings paid for bail bonds when protesters were arrested. They funded bus tickets for Freedom Riders. They supported organizing efforts in dangerous communities. They kept the movement alive when powerful people wanted it dead. Liberation has always been financed by believers who practiced Acts 2 economics, who understood that offerings aren't just about church budgets, they're about justice, resistance, and the transformation of society.

3. The Giver Who Grew (Transformation)

A young man in his late twenties sat in a financial discipleship class, arms crossed, skeptical about the whole thing. He'd grown up hearing horror stories about manipulative preachers and churches that exploited people. He gave his tithe reluctantly, more out of guilt than faith. But offerings? He'd never given one. "I already give my ten percent," he thought. "That's enough."

Then one Sunday, the pastor shared a vision for a youth center in their underserved neighborhood. Something stirred in this young man's heart. He remembered being a teenager with nowhere safe to go, no positive mentors, no hope. He thought about what a place like that could have meant for him. And for the first time, he gave an offering, not much, just fifty dollars beyond his tithe. But something shifted inside him.

Months later, he testified, "I didn't know how closed I was until I started offering. I thought I was protecting my money, but really, I was protecting my heart. Giving didn't just bless others, it freed me. Every time I offer, I feel my soul expanding. I'm becoming the person I always wanted to be, generous, open-handed, trusting God." Offering expands the soul of the giver.

TESTIMONY MOMENT

This is a sacred pause in our study, a moment for real people to share real stories about how offering has changed them. Testimony is powerful because it moves truth from the abstract to the personal, from doctrine to experience, from "what the Bible says" to "what God did in my life."

Prompt for sharing:

"When did offering change you, your mindset, habits, or relationship with money?"

Some of you may need to hear from someone who struggled with the same fears you're facing right now. Someone who worried about having enough, who questioned whether the church would use offerings wisely, who wrestled with trust issues. And then something shifted. Maybe they gave anyway, afraid but faithful. Maybe they watched God provide in unexpected ways. Maybe they discovered that generosity didn't diminish them but expanded them.

Others may need to hear from someone whose offering unleashed ministry that changed lives. Someone who gave toward youth ministry and later watched teenagers encounter Christ. Someone who supported missions and heard stories of transformation in distant communities. Someone who funded community outreach and saw their neighborhood begin to heal.

Take a few minutes now. Who will share their testimony? Who will be brave enough to tell the truth about their journey with offering? Your story might be the very word someone else needs to hear today. Don't underestimate the power of your testimony. It's not about impressing people with your generosity. It's about glorifying God by showing how offering shapes disciples and fuels Kingdom work.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to move us from information to transformation, from learning about offerings to actually practicing sacrificial generosity. Don't rush through them. Sit with them. Let them interrogate your assumptions, challenge your fears, and stretch your faith. Consider journaling your responses or discussing them with a trusted friend or mentor.

1

How does offering move us from consumers to co-laborers?

Think about the difference between someone who pays for a service and someone who invests in a vision. What shifts in your heart when you stop asking "What do I get?" and start asking "What are we building together?" How does offering change your relationship with the church, with leadership, with other believers?

2

Where have offerings advanced ministry in ways tithing alone could not?

Look around your church. What ministries exist because people gave offerings beyond their tithes? Maybe it's the youth program, the food pantry, the counseling services, the technology that enables online worship, or the mission trips that changed lives. What would be missing if everyone only tithed and never gave offerings?

3

What world am I investing in when I give?

Every financial decision is a vote for a particular kind of world. When you spend money on entertainment, you're voting for that industry. When you give offerings to the church, what world are you voting for? A world of justice? A world where ministry flourishes? A world where resources are redistributed toward those in need? Be specific about the vision you're funding.

4

How can offerings help the Black church reclaim its liberating legacy?

Historically, the Black church has been the engine of liberation, funding schools, supporting civil rights work, and building institutions when society excluded us. But in recent decades, some Black churches have adopted the consumerism of megachurch culture. How can a return to sacrificial offering help us reclaim our prophetic, justice-oriented identity?

5

What ministry would you love to see grow, and are you willing to fund its future?

This is where the rubber meets the road. It's easy to wish for better youth ministry, more robust community outreach, or expanded missions. But wishing doesn't build anything. Vision without funding remains fantasy. So be honest: What do you want to see happen? And are you willing to put your money where your heart is?

CORE TRUTH

Offering is partnership, an act of economic resistance that funds ministry, multiplies impact, and builds a just alternative to the greed of this world.

Let this truth sink deep into your spirit. Offering isn't a religious obligation to make you feel guilty. It's an invitation to participate in something bigger than yourself, to be a co-laborer with God in the work of redemption, justice, and transformation. When you bring an offering, you're not just giving money to an institution. You're funding the Kingdom. You're resisting the empire. You're building beloved community.

In a world that teaches us to hoard, accumulate, and protect what's ours, offering is a radical act. It declares that we belong to a different economy, one governed not by scarcity and competition but by abundance and generosity. It proclaims that we trust God more than we trust our bank accounts. It proves that we're willing to put our resources where our faith is.

This is economic discipleship at its finest, using our money to declare allegiance to Jesus and His Kingdom, refusing to let capitalism shape our values, and practicing the redistributive justice that marked the early church. Offering makes us partners with God and with one another. And partners don't just attend church, they build church. They don't just benefit from ministry, they fund it. They don't just hope for justice, they invest in it.

WEEK 2 CHALLENGE

"Choose Your Kingdom Investment"

This week, every participant should take a specific, concrete action that moves offering from theory to practice. We're not asking you to make a vague commitment to "try to be more generous." We're challenging you to do something measurable, something you can look back on and say, "I did that. I partnered with God in that ministry."

1

Select one ministry you believe in

Look at the ministries in your church. Which one stirs your heart? Which one aligns with your burden, your passion, your sense of calling? Maybe it's youth ministry because you know how crucial it is to invest in the next generation. Maybe it's community outreach because you've experienced the power of compassionate service. Maybe it's missions because you've been changed by cross-cultural encounters with the Gospel. Maybe it's worship arts because you believe in the transformative power of music and creativity. Choose one. Be specific.

2

Give a specific offering to that ministry (beyond the tithe)

Not "whatever I have left over." Not "maybe fifty dollars if I can afford it." A specific amount that requires faith, that stretches you a bit, that you've prayed about and decided on. It doesn't have to be hundreds of dollars, remember the widow's mite. But it should be intentional, sacrificial, and beyond your normal tithe. Write the check or make the online transfer. Designate it clearly for that ministry. And give it joyfully, not grudgingly.

3

Pray daily for that ministry's fruit

Now that you've invested financially, invest spiritually. Every day this week, spend time praying for that ministry. Pray for the leaders who oversee it. Pray for the people it serves. Pray for wisdom, provision, and fruitfulness. Pray for God to multiply the impact of every dollar given. Your prayers matter just as much as your offering. In fact, the combination of financial giving and faithful prayer is unstoppable.

Then reflect: How did giving change my perspective, my heart, or my sense of ownership in the church?

At the end of the week, take time to journal about your experience. Did you feel resistance before you gave? Did joy come afterward? Did praying for that ministry shift how you see it or relate to it? Do you feel more connected to the church, more invested in its mission, more like a co-laborer than a consumer? Pay attention to what God does in your heart through this practice. That's where the real transformation happens.

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy and generous God,

Thank You for every resource You've placed in our hands. Thank You for jobs that provide income, for skills that generate value, for opportunities to earn and to give. We acknowledge that everything we have comes from You, and we want to honor You with how we use it.

Shape our hearts to give freely, joyfully, and consistently. Deliver us from fear, from scarcity mindsets that make us hoard instead of share. Deliver us from consumer mindsets that make us entitled instead of grateful. Free us from the grip of materialism and teach us the joy of generosity.

Make us partners in Your work and builders of Your Kingdom. Help us see ourselves not as spectators rating a performance but as co-laborers building something beautiful together. Teach us that offering isn't about obligation, it's about participation. It's not about payment, it's about partnership.

Use our offerings to create a just community, a generous church, and a liberated people. May every dollar given fund ministry that transforms lives. May every offering resist the greed of this world and point toward the abundance of Your Kingdom. May our economic discipleship be a witness to a watching world that there is another way to live.

We pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who gave everything for us.

Amen.