

Charting a New Course

By Amy Korpi

A couple with a history of overspending connect finances and faith—and become wiser with money in the process.

Thrivent member De’Vonna Pittman, from Minneapolis, grew up in poverty. “We weren’t taught money management,” she explains. “As soon as it came in, it had to go back out. So, when I started my first real job, I made a lot of bad choices with credit cards and spending.”

By 2000, De’Vonna had married Robert Pittman. Both were enjoying career success, and they bought their first home together. “Robert had a more financially conscious background, but I continued to be a big spender,” says De’Vonna.

When the couple wanted a house closer to their jobs, they bought one that was attractive. But it turned out to be “too much house,” and it put a financial strain on the family. For four years, the Pittmans made timely payments, but they were struggling. After the mortgage and bills, there was hardly anything left for giving or saving—and they made the tough decision to let the house go into foreclosure.

The decision and its aftermath were difficult for the Pittmans. But they set new goals for themselves and, with the help of Thrivent Federal Credit Union (TFCU), took the necessary steps to get back on track.



After learning the hard way, De’Vonna and Robert Pittman rebuilt their finances with help from Thrivent Federal Credit Union.

Together on the Journey

One day, De’Vonna had a chance meeting with a Thrivent Financial representative in a coffee shop. He told her about Thrivent’s mission and included information about Thrivent Action Teams, which bring people together to make a positive change in their communities. Because De’Vonna was already doing a lot of volunteer work, she saw the teams as a way to boost her impact in the world around her.

PHOTOS BY JOE SZURSEWSKI

MORE ABOUT TFCU

Thrivent Federal Credit Union (TFCU) is a not-for-profit financial cooperative, where faith-based money management principles influence the tools and resources available to members. Every member is also part owner, so TFCU's values and ways of operating echo the voice of members. Through TFCU solutions, members can make intentional, meaningful financial decisions aligned with the values they share in their faith community. Learn more at Thriventcu.com.



When she and Robert visited Thrivent's website to learn more, they also discovered TFCU. "The first thing that caught our attention was that TFCU's beliefs were aligned with ours," De'Vonna says. "Tithing and giving of our time and talent is important to us—and TFCU puts living generously front and center. But it also provides financial tools to help members achieve that goal."

The Pittmans opened an account at TFCU and began saving a dedicated amount from both of their salaries. TFCU made it easier for them to accomplish their goals, De'Vonna says.

"Plus, it's clear TFCU really cares about its members," she adds. "Most banking institutions are transactional, but from the moment I had contact with TFCU, I knew it was different. People were friendly, ready to answer questions and available when we needed them. It's clear my family is not alone on this journey. It's changed my whole view of banking."

TFCU staff asks people about their goals for saving, giving and more, taking into account their current life stage. That's important because there are many factors to consider when making sound decisions with a long-term perspective. "In every single encounter with our members, we want to help them be better advocates for themselves financially," says Kristin Vlasak, TFCU's chief member experience officer.

Empowered to Do More

As a result of all their work, the Pittmans have built a new home, have increased their savings

and are preparing for retirement. And they continue to make giving a priority.

"I wanted to share my story because I think other people should know that if you have financial challenges, you can overcome them," says De'Vonna. "But it's important to partner with an organization that is aligned with your values and is committed to help you get out of difficult situations or avoid them in the first place.

"I feel like we have more power over our finances now than we've ever had before," she says. "TFCU has helped us get here." ■

Green Bay-based freelance writer Amy Korpi has been writing about how life and finances converge for nearly 20 years.

Securities and investment advisory services are offered through Thrivent Investment Management Inc., 625 Fourth Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55415, a FINRA and SIPC member and a wholly owned subsidiary of Thrivent, the marketing name for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, Appleton, WI. Thrivent Financial representatives are registered representatives of Thrivent Investment Management Inc. For additional important information, visit Thrivent.com/disclosures.

Deposit and lending services are offered by Thrivent Federal Credit Union, a member-owned not-for-profit financial cooperative that is federally insured by the National Credit Union Administration and doing business in accordance with the Federal Fair Lending Laws. Must qualify for membership. Insurance, securities, investment advisory and trust and investment management accounts and services offered by Thrivent, the marketing name for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, or its affiliates are not deposits or obligations of Thrivent Federal Credit Union, are not guaranteed by Thrivent Federal Credit Union or any bank, are not insured by the NCUA, FDIC or any other federal government agency, and involve investment risk, including possible loss of the principal amount invested.

Thrivent member activities, such as Thrivent Action Teams and Thrivent Builds, engage Thrivent members and Thrivent Member Networks in charitable activities, furthering Thrivent's mission and its purposes under state law. You should never purchase or retain any insurance or annuity products simply to be able to participate. Participation is subject to applicable Terms and Conditions. Terms and conditions available at Thrivent.com.