

# Thrivent Magazine



## Agent of change

Tackling America's literacy crisis  
one book at a time

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# Peace

Glory to God in the highest  
heaven, and on earth peace to  
those on whom his favor rests.

—Luke 2:14, NIV

Photo by J. Chizhe / iStock

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Photo by Caitlin Abrams



# Welcome

## Trusted advice

For many of us, gathering around the Christmas dinner table to admire the beautiful holiday decorations and share laughter with loved ones is a cherished family tradition. It holds a special place in our hearts as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, relive precious memories and, often, share wisdom with our family members.

When I was younger, returning home to my parents' farm around the holidays meant grandparents, aunts and uncles eagerly offering to help me navigate life's opportunities and challenges. I learned their advice was a gift filled with the knowledge, understanding and support from those that walked the path before me.

As I reflect on this Christmas season, I'm reminded of the important role that advice plays in all our lives and the many ways we receive it. Good advice is like a compass, guiding us through life's many decisions. When we seek it from trusted friends, family, mentors, experts or the teachings of Jesus, we tap into collective wisdom—learning from experience and giving us confidence in our choices from people that we deeply trust.

I'm proud to lead an organization that values and provides trusted advice to our clients. No matter where they're starting from, Thrivent's financial advisors help our clients better understand their finances and create a plan that's guided by their

priorities and values. Our focus is unique in the industry, providing purpose-based advice that empowers lives of service and faith.

And that's important, because advice isn't just about problem solving; it's also about personal growth. It challenges our perspectives and helps us see new angles. Good advice empowers us to make informed choices and boosts our confidence—letting us know that we're not alone in our journey.

As you gather around the table for Christmas this year, consider the power of advice in your own life—both in giving and receiving—and its ability to shape the future for the better. Have a merry Christmas and blessed holiday season.



**Teresa J. Rasmussen**  
President and CEO

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.

## Connect with us

### Thrivent Magazine

@ thriventmagazine@thrivent.com

thrivent.com/magazine

Thrivent Magazine  
4321 N. Ballard Road  
Appleton, WI  
54919-0001

### Thrivent

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@ mail@thrivent.com

800-847-4836

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# Thrive

Insights and inspirations



Dr. Artika Tyner helps children get access to books through her Leaders are Readers program.

## Inspiring joy in reading

**Dr. Artika Tyner fights America's literacy crisis, one book at a time.**

By Donna Hein / Photo by Caitlin Abrams

Dr. Artika Tyner isn't one to simply talk about change. The civil rights attorney, law professor and author prefers to take action. And that's how the program Leaders are Readers was born—during a conversation with friends in her St. Paul, Minnesota, living room.

"In America, we currently have a reading crisis," says Tyner, a Thrivent client. "When one in four American

children are not reading at grade level by fourth grade, we know that they're four times more likely to drop out of school and three and a half times more likely to be arrested during their lifetime."

Through Leaders are Readers, young people are inspired to find joy in reading. The program brings diverse authors into schools and community centers and provides books for

children to keep.

"I want to make sure that every young person leaves with their own book, because 61% of low-income families don't own one book," she says. "Reading a book opens up your outlook on life, opens up your perspective and helps you create this whole new dimension of creativity and innovation."

This work ties in with Tyner's nonprofit Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute, which works to inspire ordinary people to have an extraordinary impact in their community. "So many of the community members we were working with wanted to impact education and criminal justice," she says.

She also started Planting People Growing Justice Press and Bookstore, with a mission to increase diversity in children's books. Tyner has written 35 books with the goal in mind of activating change across generations. While four are leadership books for adults, she focuses on children's books

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Hear more from Dr. Tyner

Find out how Dr. Tyner is creating her own definition of wealth and uplifting her community at [thrivent.com/tyner](http://thrivent.com/tyner).



Market outlook

What the yield curve may be telling us

Oct. 9, 2023

By David Royal

In my last column, I shared my view that the economy could be on a slow takeoff trajectory rather than a soft landing. That doesn't mean there won't be some bumps, but so far, the data behind the fundamentals of the economy continue to show solid and even improving signs of resilience.

The yield curve

When we look at economic conditions, interest rates are very important. There are two categories of interest rates: short-term rates, which are largely set by Federal Reserve (Fed) policy, and long-term rates, which reflect the market's macroeconomic expectations around growth and inflation. The relationship between short- and long-term rates comprises the yield curve. In 2022 and early 2023, the greatest rise was in short-term interest rates, leading to the unusual situation of short-term rates being higher than long-term rates, which is an "inverted yield curve."

Recession probability

Speculation about an impending recession has dominated headlines and is certainly still possible. However, many recession probability models put a lot of weight on the yield curve because when short-term rates are higher than long-term rates, a recession becomes more likely. This is often because the Fed has raised short-term rates, which usually dampens long-term economic growth

expectations.

What typically happens *right* before a recession, though, is that short-term rates drop in anticipation of the Fed cutting rates to fight a recession, causing the yield curve to un-invert (short-term rates become lower than long-term rates). Recently, however, there has been a notable increase in longer-term rates, like the 10-year U.S. Treasury bond. The yield curve has become less inverted, but short-term rates have been fairly stable and the market and Fed both expect either only one or even no more rate hikes. This is different and not what would normally precede a recession.

Economic outlook

One read of the situation I just outlined is that we may face slow growth and persistent inflation ("stagflation"). However, inflation expectations embedded in markets have not so far increased with the rise in long-term rates. Across the many asset classes we manage, I continue to see underlying economic strength. I am cautiously optimistic for a slow and bumpy but continued takeoff

for the economy, barring significant geopolitical turmoil, which is ever-changing and difficult to predict.

If you have questions about the potential impact of the economy and markets on your personal financial strategy, be sure to connect with your financial professional.



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

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Illustration by David Saracino

Photo by People Images / iStock



Bright ideas

Spread Christmas cheer to seniors

Make the holidays merry and bright by supporting your elderly loved ones and neighbors throughout the season.

By Sofia Haan

Deck the halls

The holidays are a magical time filled with get-togethers, feasts and fun. But for older adults, it can be lonely if they don't have a strong support system. Make their home festive and cheery by helping them decorate for the season. Unpack heavy boxes, hang lights and set up a tree while reminiscing about holiday memories.

Help with errands

Cold weather, snow and ice can make it difficult for some seniors to tackle their to-do lists. Help them buy gifts and groceries, shovel snow and do chores. If they have loved ones who live farther away, offer to tackle their shopping list by ordering and shipping gifts online.

Nurture social connections

Even with all the excitement and festivities, the holidays can be an isolating time for some seniors. Organize a holiday event at home, such as baking Christmas cookies, making ornaments or decorating a gingerbread house. Invite family, friends or neighbors to join in the fun.

Prepare favorite meals or treats

Food is central to the holiday season. Invite others to cook and bake with you as you sing along to Christmas tunes. Surprise them by delivering their favorite batch of cookies to their home. Ask them about their favorite holiday recipes and write them down for future generations.

(Inspiring joy from page 3)

ranging from fiction to nonfiction.

"We oftentimes hear the statement that you cannot be what you cannot see," she says. "But the reality is that when I was growing up, I didn't see books that reflected me. So that was my inspiration—to see myself on pages of books."

Tyner's books are written with a broad audience in mind.

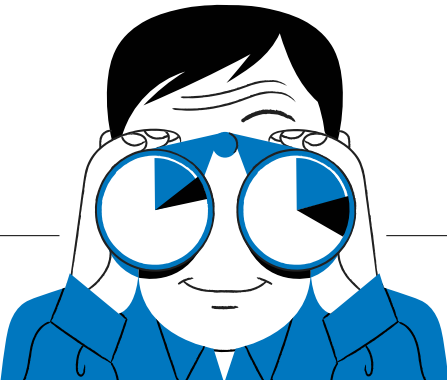
"We make sure with diverse books that we do two things. We help to create mirrors so young people of color see a positive representation of themselves in the pages of books. We also help to create those windows for all children to learn across and within cultures."

Since its start in 2017, more than 20,000 books have been donated as part of Leaders are Readers. Tyner, as well as other Thrivent clients, have led Thrivent Action Teams to host events in local communities across the country to lessen the reading crisis and literacy disparities.

"We have reached more than 5,000 students with our school visits and 30,000 students with our virtual read alouds," she says. "It wouldn't be possible without the support of Thrivent and the 'live generously' spirit. Instead of just pointing out the challenges in the world, we can change them."

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

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Client spotlight

A leap of faith

Cancer survivor Beth Wilmes created a nonprofit to help other women heal.

By Donna Hein

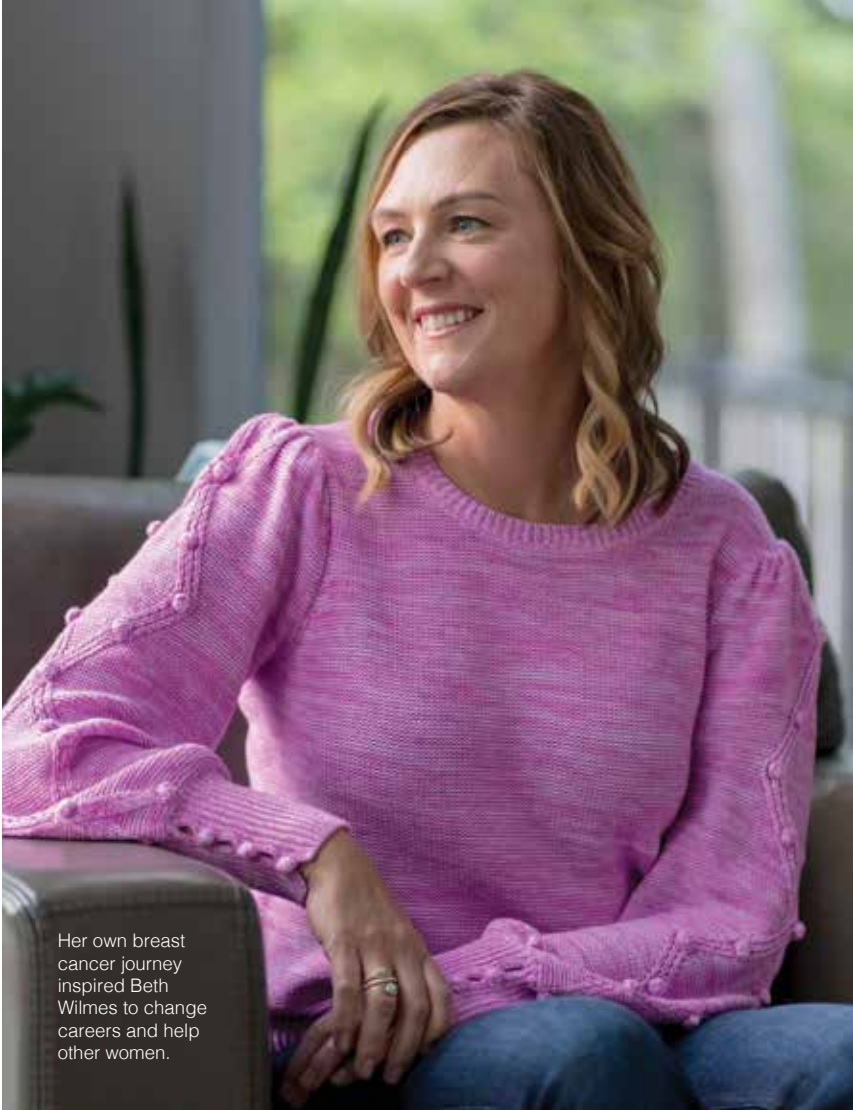
Beth Wilmes wouldn't describe herself as a risk-taker. Yet that's exactly what she did in 2019 when she founded Faith Through Fire, a nonprofit that provides hope to women battling breast cancer.

The Thrivent client from Wentzville, Missouri, was 35 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016. Beth spent the next year in intense treatment that included surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and drug therapy. Her plan was to return to her long career in sales. Or so she thought.

"When I tried to go back to the person I was pre-cancer, I realized very quickly that that person didn't exist anymore," Beth says. "The things I cared about then were different from what I cared about now. I don't think anyone can go through that experience and not be changed by it."

Learn more

Read more about Beth's journey and see a video of Beth at [thrivent.com/bethwilmes](https://thrivent.com/bethwilmes).



Her own breast cancer journey inspired Beth Wilmes to change careers and help other women.

As Beth, wife to Gary and mother to three young children, grappled with those emotions, she started feeling a calling to start a nonprofit. She knew from personal experience that breast cancer comes with fear and anxiety. She desired to replace those feelings with hope and a path toward thriving.

"I honestly felt God prompting me that I could be doing something with my experience," Beth says. "I tried to ignore it for a little bit, which never works out well. And eventually I just decided to heed the call and go ahead and jump in with both feet, which is not like me."

Changing her career to start a nonprofit would reduce their household income by half, but she had her husband's full support. They worked with their Thrivent financial

advisor, Brock Howard, to create a plan that helped Beth and Gary feel confident about the new adventure and their financial future.

"I think the biggest thing that I've learned through working with Thrivent is that you can accomplish anything you want to," Beth says. "It's just about finding the right road, the right path, the smart moves. And I think that has really opened us up to new possibilities, which is really exciting."

How did you first learn about Thrivent?

We were very early in the inception of Faith Through Fire and securing our future and our children's future was important to us. We met Brock Howard and his team and immedi-

Photo by Whitney Curtis

"Even in the hardest circumstances, having gratitude completely changes how you view yourself and the world."

—Beth Wilmes

ately felt at ease. I felt like they understood our goals.

What's your first memory of money?

It was my first job out of college when I figured out what taxes were, and my paycheck was way smaller than I had hoped. I didn't think about it when I was younger.

What are your guiding principles around money decisions?

Money is just a tool to achieve what your goals are. It's not something that you strive for just to have. It's something that you can use to better the world.

What's the best piece of financial advice you've ever received?

It was probably from my parents, and it was to start saving for retirement the minute you get your first job.

What's your favorite volunteer activity?

I've really learned to like volunteering

at my kids' school. It's a little bit like herding cats, but I enjoy it. I know that this time isn't going to be forever, and it's fun to see them with their peers.

How do you demonstrate gratitude?

Gratitude is a big piece of what we teach women at Faith Through Fire. Even in the hardest circumstances, having gratitude completely changes how you view yourself and the world. It changes your mindset. It also makes you look more outward focused instead of inward. When we look at ourselves and we're constantly focused on what we don't have or what went wrong, it makes us unhappy. When you look outward and you're grateful and you're constantly looking at how to improve other people's lives, it breeds gratitude and it breeds health, and it breeds wellness. Gratitude's a big part of health.

What does it mean to thrive with purpose?

I don't feel like you can thrive without purpose. The cancer journey taught me that purpose in your life is what it takes to thrive. If you don't feel like you have a purpose, if you're not making your mark on the world and trying to make it a better place, then I just don't think you can thrive, not in the way that you should. We give survivors the opportunity to mentor the newly diagnosed through our mentor program. Mentoring provides them with purpose, which provides inner healing years after treatment concludes.

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Generosity in action



SuperSenior fun

Sarasota, Florida

To help senior citizens create connections and fellowship, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church hosts themed events throughout the year. Each gathering includes a meal, prayer, fellowship, humor and a special musical program. It's emceed by a costumed character that fits with the selected theme.

Seniors have celebrated Winterfest with Frosty the Snowman, done Irish jigs with bagpipes and a leprechaun, recognized the Dawg Daze of Summer with SuperDog, enjoyed Mardi Gras with Cajun food and honored Oktoberfest with German cuisine. They even did a throwback to their senior prom.

Thrivent clients choose a month to lead a Thrivent Action Team, and they do the cooking, serving and clean-up for each event. The seed money helps cover the cost of food and supplies, enabling all to participate without a charge. Attendance ranges from 50 to more than 100 people.

SuperSeniors was founded by Norm Kurtz, Beautiful Savior member who organizes, serves as emcee and helps with food.

# How do you transition from saving to spending?

By Taylor Hugo



You spent months, years or even decades saving for a big goal. You imagined how good it would feel to buy that house, send your child to college or retire from your career. So, when you do finally reach your savings goal, why does spending your own hard-earned money feel so...bad?

### Why can it feel difficult to spend your money?

This is a mental shift, and we owe it to ourselves to recognize this. Especially in the current economic environment, “it’s natural for people to have a fear around losing their financial security,” says Jill Gutzmer, advice consulting expert for Thrivent. “There’s this drive for self-preservation. We’re seeking shelter, safety, food—and safety is not just physical

safety, but financial safety, too. Spending money can feel like we are harming our financial security.”

Examining your biases toward, and past experiences with, money can help you ease the transition from saving to spending. What steps can you follow to make the transition easier?

- **Check in with yourself.** If a chunk of time has passed between initially setting your savings goal and achieving it, assess whether the purchase is still a priority or if the money would be better allocated somewhere else.
- **Think about your values to guide spending with intention.** “If the value is family, that might look like spending money on a family vacation or a bigger couch for movie night. If the value is

compassion, it might be donating to a meaningful organization,” says Gutzmer.

- **Prioritize needs over wants and wishes.** Spend money on must-have items that you can’t live without (such as housing, transportation and health care) before indulging in the nice-to-haves.
- **Lean on a trusted advisor.** A financial advisor who understands your values and your goals can help you determine if the purchase you’ve been saving for still aligns with your values and helps you use your savings in the most tax efficient way. Together, you can assess how spending will affect your financial future.
- **Reframe the narrative.** Recognize that you’re in a time of transition and be comfortable with a bit of discomfort as you adapt.

### After achieving a savings goal and potentially making a big purchase, what should your next steps be?

Celebrate! Take the time to feel proud of the accomplishment, then reflect on how you were able to accomplish your goal. Acknowledge the accountability partners you had on your team, and evaluate the tools and methods you used to save, as well as any challenges that came up.

“How can we learn from the past to repeat a success like this, working harder and smarter as we go forward?” says Gutzmer. Use that information to set new, larger goals or expand on existing goals for the future.

Photo by Adam Kaz / iStock



# 5 ways to amplify your charitable impact

By Sofia Haan

There’s no better way to end your year than by giving back to others in your community. Throughout this season of giving, consider these ways to make the most of your charitable giving.

### 1. Focus your funds

Instead of contributing small donations to numerous organizations, concentrate your giving by making a larger gift to one or two. This way, you can give greater financial support to the organizations you care about most.

### 2. Skip the fees

Your donation can go further with the help of a charitable giving program such as Thrivent Choice®. Using Thrivent’s online giving platform, you personally can contribute to the organizations you care about. Thrivent will cover processing fees for your donation, making sure your entire donation goes to your cause.\*

### 3. Give together

Accumulate a larger donation amount by combining your giving with others. A group donation can make a greater financial impact for a nonprofit, and it

can be a great way to come together and start a giving tradition with your coworkers, church groups, friends or family members.

### 4. Use other assets

Money isn’t the only way to make a charitable impact. Consider donating noncash assets, such as publicly traded stock and mutual funds, real estate or life insurance, in addition to any financial gifts.

### 5. Give beyond the holiday season

Do you have a strong connection with an organization and want to support it more? Consider giving outside the holiday season by pledging a monthly, recurring gift throughout the year. These continuous donations can help organizations plan budgets and manage their cash flow, knowing they can count on sustaining donors like you to support them.

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

### Generosity in action



### Helping to rebuild Brenton, West Virginia

Lord of Life Lutheran Church members in Tabernacle, New Jersey, teamed up with Appalachia Service Project to help with home repairs for low-income families in West Virginia. Jamie Wagner led a Thrivent Action Team that traveled from New Jersey to West Virginia and rebuilt a porch for an elderly woman. They also sheetrocked and painted a bedroom for another family.



### Filling essential needs Chula Vista, California

John Cox led a Thrivent Action Team of children (and their parents) in the elementary age basketball/cheer program at New Hope Community Church to create health care packets for Mexican Medical Ministries. Families donated toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, brushes, shampoo, washcloths and soap. The children assembled 230 packets, one for each child in the program.



Connecting art and faith

By Joanna Reiling Lindell

Tender, familial closeness emanates as Mary and Elizabeth quietly embrace. This scene depicts Mary’s visit to her cousin, described in the Gospel of Luke (1:41-45). When Mary learns from the archangel Gabriel that her elder cousin Elizabeth had become miraculously pregnant at an advanced age, she journeys to see Elizabeth at her home. The moment these two women meet, each carrying a child because of God’s blessing, is steeped in warmth and wonder.

Käthe Kollwitz offers a modern, fresh rendering of this traditional subject in a bold woodcut from 1928. Known for highly emotional images, and for her use of gesture and facial expression to convey feeling, Kollwitz shows the women in an especially close embrace. Elizabeth pulls Mary in with a hand behind her head and seems to whisper or gently kiss her cousin’s cheek as she places her other hand on Mary’s growing belly. The artist excludes traditional symbolic details to focus solely on the sense of love and togetherness



Käthe Kollwitz (German, 1867-1945) *Maria und Elisabeth*, 1928  
Woodcut  
Thrivent Collection of Religious Art  
©2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

embodied in this moment.

Scripture relates that Elizabeth was well along in years when she became pregnant with John the Baptist. The artist offers some clue to the age difference between these expectant mothers, with the inclusion of lines on Elizabeth’s forehead, and her defined, slightly sunken cheekbone. Mary’s face shows its youth with fresh fullness, but we also can sense

the trepidation and uncertainty she must have been experiencing. Both women, with eyes closed, stand together in a united moment of hope at the promise of life to come.

Kollwitz was a member of the 20th century German Expressionist movement. Many of these artists were attracted to printmaking for its ties to hands-on craftwork and German cultural heritage. In *Maria und Elisabeth*, Kollwitz intentionally leaves the woodblock’s natural grain visible as a proud proclamation of the artistic medium. She brilliantly harnesses the powerful aesthetic of the woodcut technique to emphasize the raw, exposed emotional potential of this profound moment.

Kollwitz primarily dealt with somber themes of war and death in her work, undoubtedly processing the sorrow of having lost her son, Peter, in World War I. Her tender visitation scene stands out in her body of work; the image’s intimacy and expressive emotion convey peace and the blessing of faith.

*Joanna Reiling Lindell is the director and curator of the Thrivent Art Collection (thriventcollection.com).*

Good question

What’s an interesting or unusual thing you do to save money?

When I was younger, I would buy a car and make car payments. Once the car was paid for, I would deposit the same amount in my savings account each month. When I bought my next car, I was able to pay cash, get a better deal and not pay interest.  
*Jacquelyn M. Schacht, Rochester, Minnesota*

I no longer purchase stamps from the post office. I buy Forever stamps on eBay. Just got a coil of 100 for \$15. That’s over 75% off.  
*Andrew Kluender, Bedford, Indiana*

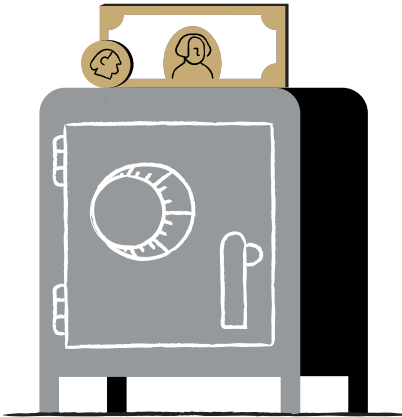
I save state and historical park quarters and put them into an empty plastic container. When I feel it is heavy enough, I will take it to the bank. It usually yields \$200 to \$300 I would otherwise not have saved.  
*Don Peschke, Berlin, Wisconsin*

I wash my sealable bags thoroughly and reuse them. I put used air fresheners in the bottom of my trash cans to keep them smelling good. I toss nearly empty liquid laundry soap bottles in the wash to wash out all the soap.  
*Cindy Jubran, Knoxville, Tennessee*

I round up in my check register.  
*Patrice Bilenski, Allison Park, Pennsylvania*

Each night we put our change in a coin separator to wrap up when each reaches its optimal number. Then, we check \$1 bills for our first and last name initials. At \$100, we change it at the bank for \$20 bills that become part of our “fun fund” for dinners, etc.  
*Gordon Hanson, Murphy, Texas*

I recycle aluminum cans. I always pick up pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters that I find on the ground.  
*Catherine Stuckwisch, Brownstown, Indiana*



**Question for next issue:**  
**What’s your favorite way to use your financial resources to serve your local church or community?**  
Tell us in 50 words or fewer by email at [thriventmagazine@thrivent.com](mailto:thriventmagazine@thrivent.com).

Generosity in action



Ending period poverty  
Reading, Pennsylvania

Sherlene Evans, as part of the Reading Rotary Club, led a Thrivent Action Team to collect feminine hygiene products. The goal was to help alleviate the inadequate access to hygiene products, which is called period poverty and most often affects girls in families with financial constraints. The seed money helped buy additional supplies, which all were delivered to schools in the Reading School District.



Hit the hay 4 pooches  
Cheyenne, Wyoming

Michelle Woerner led a Thrivent Action Team of students at East High School to design and build dog beds for a raffle to raise funds for K9s 4 Mobility. The event raised \$4,800 in support of the local organization, which trains and places assistance dogs, increasing independence and confidence for the owners. Seed money was used to help purchase supplies.

Handled with care

# Creating a legacy that lasts

**A Thrivent client finds new ways to share her time, talents and treasures with her family and community.**

By Donna Hein

If you had all the money in the world, what would you do with it?

Angie Biester didn't miss a beat when Thrivent Financial Advisor Melanie Knoepfle asked her that question in one of their first meetings back in 2018. "This may sound crazy, but I really want to do philanthropy," Angie told her.

She wanted to give money away to people and causes she cared about.

"Angie thought she had to have Bill Gates' money to be able to do that," Knoepfle says. "I assured her she didn't."

Angie lives in Columbus, Nebraska, where she works for the USDA Farm Loan Program. She also owns a 400-acre farm in Clay County, Nebraska, which she and her husband ran together until his death in 2010. Today, she has a crop share lease with two area farmers, which



Melanie Knoepfle (left) helps Angie Biester (right) be generous with her money.

enables them to split the expenses and production of farming. Through this arrangement and investments that had appreciated in value, she was ready to make an impact on the causes and people she cared about.

Knoepfle, who first met Angie at a Habitat for Humanity build, helped her client develop a philanthropy strategy including resources from Thrivent. It enables Angie to support several groups, including Youth and Families for Christ, the Columbus High School band and middle school music program, the high school journalism program, Trinity Lutheran Church, Western Illinois University (girls' volleyball gear), and the Platte Valley Literacy Association.

"It's one of the most fabulous things I've ever been involved in," Angie says.

She loves to lead Thrivent Action Teams, too. It's often while serving others that Angie discovers new opportunities. For example, while leading a Thrivent Action Team to provide refreshments at the Friends of Music concert, Angie learned the high school band needed instruments. While talking to her piano teacher, she found there was a need

for keyboards at the middle school. She provided instruments to both.

"Just a little bit made a huge difference for these kids," Angie says. "I just hope they get as much out of music as I did in high school. It gave me so much confidence in my life."

Angie's generosity extends to her family, too. She loves her two nieces and wanted to help provide for their future. With Knoepfle's guidance, Angie implemented a gifting strategy that allowed her to follow her heart.

Angie is grateful she met Knoepfle. The two have become more than client and financial advisor; they've become friends and exercise buddies.

"I'm just so fortunate that Thrivent gave me the opportunity," Angie says, "to really make my dream come true."

The client's experience may or may not be the same as other clients.

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Photo by Lindsey Thomson / Inspired By Soul Photography

Illustration by David Saracino

On my mind

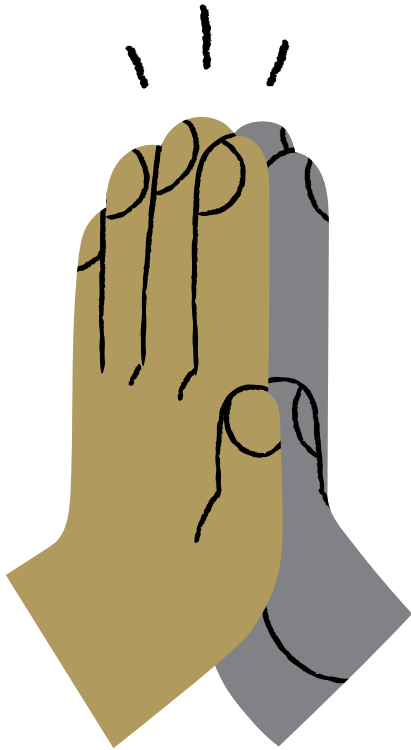
# Thrivent: A unique and inspiring place

By Nick Cecere

As I approach my two-year anniversary at Thrivent, I find myself reflecting on the journey so far. I can't help but arrive at one conclusion—that Thrivent is a truly unique organization that stands out in three distinct ways, making it a place I'm proud to be a part of.

**1. We're one of a kind:** It's difficult to compare us to competition because we're one of one. We're not just about making money; we're about making a difference. Last year alone, Thrivent, our clients and partners raised and donated \$283 million for nonprofits in the communities where we live and work. And that's on top of almost 13 million hours of volunteer time. Our commitment to helping others and giving back to the community is at the core of what we do. Knowing that we are part of an organization that prioritizes purpose over profit is truly inspiring.

**2. This is more than a job:** At Thrivent, providing financial advice isn't just our business; it's our calling. Our advisors are driven by a deep belief in stewardship and service. They live and breathe the Thrivent mission because they genuinely care about the well-being of our members. This unwavering commitment is why we consistently lead the industry in advisor retention. Thrivent advisors are financial experts who are dedicated to helping our members achieve



their financial goals and live out their values.

**3. Unity through faith:** Thrivent's uniqueness also lies in the unity of its members. Regardless of who we are, where we live, whom we vote for, or the causes we care about, we are all united by a common bond—the Christian faith. This sense of community is rare in the financial services industry. It creates a supportive and inclusive environment where members can connect on a deeper level. It's not just about financial advice; it's about faith-based values that guide us in making meaningful decisions for our financial future.

I feel deeply humbled to be a part of the Thrivent team. Thrivent's commitment to its purpose-driven mission, its dedicated advisors, and the sense of unity among our members make it a truly exceptional place to work. I am honored to serve our members and look forward to many more years of making a difference together. The Thrivent community is a place where passion, purpose and faith come together to create something truly extraordinary. I hope you agree.



**Nick Cecere** is executive vice president and chief distribution officer at Thrivent.

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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.

## Learn more

Check out Angie's story in an article and video at [thrivent.com/angiebiester](https://thrivent.com/angiebiester).





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# Planning with a special purpose

From creating an estate plan to building a support network, here's how to navigate special needs planning with confidence.

By Taylor Hugo / Photo by Dean Riggott

When Jeff and Amy Mordaunt's son Drew was diagnosed with autism 17 years ago at age 3, it didn't come as a huge surprise. With a background in special education, Amy began recognizing developmental delays when Drew was 18 months old, and promptly enrolled him in early intervention programs to get him the support he needed.

At home in Cleveland, Ohio, Drew participated in hours of treatments

and therapies each week. As he got older, he eventually moved from his public school to one geared toward students with autism, where he thrived for years until his recent graduation.

When now-20-year-old Drew transitioned from high school into adulthood, the Mordaunts realized they needed help to better prepare for their—and Drew's—financial future.

Even though they had been working with a financial advisor



Thrivent clients Leroy and Pamela Eickhoff photographed at their home in Wykoff, Minnesota.





for several years, they had more questions than answers when it came to planning for Drew. “We didn’t have anything in place that I felt we should’ve had in place,” Amy says.

About a year ago, Thrivent Financial Advisor Hannah Magrum met Jeff when they were both serving on the board for Integrated Community Solutions, an Ohio nonprofit dedicated to building communities for people with developmental disabilities.

In working with the Mordaunts this past year, Magrum took a holistic look at their finances and set up a plan that considered the whole family’s needs. The Mordaunts achieved some of their long-term planning goals to more effectively use Drew’s special needs trust and navigate government systems to maximize their son’s benefits.

From working alongside your attorney to create an estate plan to applying for government benefits, a financial advisor can help you with special needs planning so you feel confident in money decisions for yourself and your loved one with a disability. Here’s how to get started.

### Find the right financial professional

When it comes to planning for those with special needs, it’s crucial to pull together a team who understands the unique estate planning to-dos, government benefits and waivers, and disability resources and programs.

Magrum is a Chartered Special Needs Consultant (ChSNC), the only credential specifically designed to prepare financial advisors to help plan for people with special needs. This designation has been an asset to Magrum’s clients, like the Mordaunts, but also for her own family. Her 9-year-old son has two ultra-rare

chromosome abnormalities, and Magrum herself uses a wheelchair, the result of a genetic condition discovered when she was pregnant with her third child.

“I’ve not only been an advocate for my clients, but an advocate for my family,” Magrum says. “I am very aware, on a personal level, of the struggles families might face when they don’t know what they don’t know. I know what it’s like to feel very lost and not know what to do, where to go for support and resources. It’s my goal that families don’t feel that same sense of uncertainty.”

A personal connection is the same reason Thrivent Financial Associate Meagan Matich pursued her ChSNC designation. Her longtime friend and now colleague, Amber Bluhm, has a 14-year-old son with autism. Knowing the hurdles Bluhm’s family faced in finding resources and support, Matich wanted to become a hub of information for clients who have loved ones with disabilities—and she recruited Bluhm to join her team.

“There are a lot of what-ifs in life,” says Matich. “Our job is to try to think of all the what-ifs and put a plan in place that could cover all of that.”

### Create an estate plan

Leroy Eickhoff wanted to make sure his high school sweetheart and wife, Pamela, would be set if she outlives him.

In 1990, Pamela was diagnosed with the genetic disease Von Hippel-Lindau syndrome, which causes usually benign tumors to grow in certain parts of the body. In the years since her diagnosis, she has had 19 surgeries to remove these tumors. Some complications following a brain surgery in 2017 led to meningitis and the Alzheimer’s-like

symptoms she experiences today, such as confusion, hallucinations and coordination problems.

Ahead of Leroy’s retirement this past fall, he met with Matich, Bluhm, Nancy Hansen, all members of the Redwood Financial Advisors in Redwood Falls, Minnesota, along with his Thrivent Financial Advisor Greg Bonow, to learn about programs available to Pamela and strategies for setting aside money if he dies first. “Nobody plans to fail; you fail to plan,” says Leroy, who lives in Wykoff, Minnesota.

While every family and situation is different, Magrum stresses the importance of having an estate plan in place as early as possible. “Reactive planning is much more limited than proactive planning,” she says. These estate planning to-dos should be considered in all special needs planning:

- Make sure you have a will in place and it’s up-to-date.

“There are a lot of what-ifs in life. Our job is to try to think of all the what-ifs and put a plan in place that could cover all of that.”

—Meagan Matich,  
Thrivent financial associate

## 3 tips to build your support network

Creating a financial plan for yourself and a loved one with a disability can feel overwhelming, but with a solid support network, you don’t have to go it alone.

- 1. Build your team.** This includes professional support—like your financial advisor, tax advisor, attorney and disability caseworker—but also your personal village of friends and family.
- 2. Find your community on social media.** Today, there are thousands of support groups online dedicated to many different disabilities. Connecting with others going through similar experiences may help you feel less isolated.
- 3. Reach out to local nonprofits.** These organizations can connect you with resources and support in your area.



Thrivent helped Jeff and Amy Mordaunt with special needs planning for their son, Drew, to help achieve long-term goals. He was diagnosed with autism at age 3. The family, including Travis, age 21, from Cleveland, Ohio, recently celebrated Drew’s high school graduation.

Photos courtesy of Amy Mordaunt



- Decide if a guardianship or power of attorney designation is appropriate if your loved one with special needs is older than 18, and determine who will take your place if you pass first.
- Establish a special needs trust and appoint an experienced trustee who can manage the assets.
- Plan for how to legally pass down money and assets by ensuring beneficiaries are

named on all accounts and up-to-date. “The largest mistake I see is when a family hasn’t established the appropriate legal tools to leave money to their child with disabilities,” says Magrum.

**Navigate government benefits**  
People with disabilities can qualify for government benefits like Supplemental Security Income (SSI), a federal program that provides

money for basic living expenses, and Medicaid, a state and federal program that covers the cost of medical care.  
Each state also has its own Medicaid waivers for disabled people to receive additional resources and support, such as personal care services, respite care and adult daycare.

The biggest drawback of these government benefits is the asset limit—typically, an individual who is on SSI can’t possess more than \$2,000 in assets. Medicaid asset limits vary by state.  
This can get tricky if you plan to leave your estate to a loved one with a disability, and it demonstrates why it’s essential to work with a financial advisor who is well-versed in government disability benefits and can help you come up with a workaround.

“A lot of clients don’t realize the importance of titling their beneficiaries appropriately,” says Mike Guizzetti, advice services consultant at Thrivent. “Even though they may be well-meaning, leaving assets to someone could potentially cause them to no longer be eligible for certain governmental services.”

**Understand various savings vehicles**  
Despite asset limits imposed on government benefits, legislation over the past 10 years has made it easier for people with disabilities to create a life for themselves without being disqualified from their essential programs.  
The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act of 2014 made it possible for people with a disability with an age of onset before the age of 26 to open a tax-advantaged savings account for up to \$100,000



without losing their SSI benefits. An ABLE account can be used to pay for expenses like housing, education and training, transportation and assistive technology, as well as financial management and legal fees.  
“Your quality of life shouldn’t diminish because you have a disability,” says Bluhm. “Let’s say you work, and now you have to spend an

extra \$1,000 a month just to stay on your program. Maybe you want a car or maybe you want to save up for your own home. You can save for those things without being reprimanded and forced to live in poverty.”  
Another savings option that doesn’t affect government assistance is a special needs trust that allows you to transfer assets to your loved one with a disability. Special needs trusts are classified either as first-party—in which the trust is funded with assets from the disabled individual, such as from an inheritance in their name—or third-party, funded with assets from other loved ones, like proceeds from a life insurance policy or retirement account. Both are administered by a trustee and should be used for the expenses that aren’t covered by government benefits.  
No matter where you’re at in navigating a diagnosis—and whether your loved one with a disability is your child, spouse or another family

member—working with a financial advisor can help you feel heard and supported through the process of special needs planning.  
“I know my designation is Chartered Special Needs Consultant, but as a disabled person, I wish it was titled something different because there’s nothing ‘special’ about what I need or my son needs. I just want more ramps to get into places,” says Magrum, noting that her disability is a motivating factor in her career. “I want to leave this world a more accessible place for my son, for my children’s children. I feel called to and passionate about making a change, making a difference, serving these families.” ■

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The client’s experience may not be the same as other clients and does not indicate future performance or success.  
  
Thrivent financial advisors and professionals have general knowledge of the Social Security tenets. For complete details on your situation, contact the Social Security Administration.

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Photo by Dean Riggott Photography

### How Thrivent can help

When it comes to financial planning for your loved one with special needs, your financial advisor is a crucial member of your support team. Find a Thrivent financial advisor near you at [local.thrivent.com](http://local.thrivent.com). Thrivent Trust Company provides trust and investment management solutions. Learn more at [thrivent.com/trust](http://thrivent.com/trust).





“I had to take  
a stance.  
I had to take  
my life back.”

—LaNette Kincaide

# Fresh perspectives

Subtle shifts in how you think about money may make a large impact on your financial health.

By Monica Wiant / Photography by Ryan Dearth

A new year can feel like a clean slate, a fresh start, an opportunity to make positive changes. If your goals for 2024 include saving money, spending less, paying down debt or just being more financially confident, consider trying on one or more of these ideas from Thrivent experts.

**Get vulnerable about your money**  
LaNette Kincaide grew up in a family that didn't talk about money.

“You never let anyone know when you're struggling; you never let anyone know when things are hard,” she says.

LaNette, who lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado, was skeptical when she learned that one of the conditions of graduating from a local entrepreneur program was to complete three sessions of Money Canvas™, a free coaching service from Thrivent that empowers people to build healthier budgeting, spending and saving habits.

At her first virtual meeting with her Texas-based Money Canvas coach, Claudia Lopez, LaNette broke down

crying. She was overwhelmed with credit card debt and monthly bills. LaNette was in the entrepreneurship program to strengthen the foundation of her writing academy, but her personal finances made it difficult to invest in her business.

Lopez, who immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico 10 years ago, could relate. Prior to joining Thrivent, she had been living paycheck to paycheck and carrying debt. Applying the Money Canvas approach, she paid off her debt and is now financially secure.

“It's empowering that I can share my own personal journey through what we are teaching,” Lopez says.

With the reassurance from her coach, LaNette bared her soul and information about her bank accounts.

“Claudia is amazing,” LaNette says. “She made me feel comfortable in a way I wouldn't ever imagine feeling comfortable talking to anyone. The confidence you hear now is me no longer being afraid of my money.”

Mike Olinger (“MO”), a Thrivent financial advisor with Quadrant Financial Advisors in Cedar Rapids,



Iowa, considers himself a “financial father figure” to many of his clients in their 20s and 30s.

“I’m going to tell you what you need to hear, not necessarily what you want to hear,” Olinger says.

A former funeral director, Olinger is experienced with difficult conversations and helping people feel empowered and supported. Money can be an emotional topic, and he finds that many people are uncomfortable asking for help. He encourages clients to have a financial accountability partner such as a spouse, sibling, parent or friend.

“Open your soul. Look at your bank statements. Share everything you’re doing. Then you aren’t able to hide it from yourself,” he says.

In addition to having a financial accountability partner, Olinger encourages clients to cultivate a support network of experts who can help guide them in the most important aspects of life.

“Create a professional toolbox,” he says. “Make sure you have established face-to-face relationships with a banker, tax professional, attorney, medical professional, mental health professional and a financial advisor. Know them before you need them, so that when you need that ‘tool,’ the comfort and trust

levels are already in place, and you can focus on the advice that you need.”

**Use bank accounts strategically**

Decades ago, it was a common practice to have just two bank accounts: a checking account for spending and a savings account for saving. With digital banking, it’s easier than ever to organize your savings in a way that works for you. For many people, that means having multiple accounts.

Lopez encourages her Money Canvas clients to align savings accounts to their goals. She has five savings accounts herself: emergency fund, travel, health, home improvement and miscellaneous. For clients who are tempted to draw money from savings, she encourages them to open these accounts at a different financial institution than their primary checking account, preferably a bank or credit union that doesn’t have branches or ATMs in their neighborhood. This way, the money is still accessible when it’s needed, but a withdrawal requires forethought.

Olinger encourages his clients to set up “home accounts”—designated checking and savings accounts for their home, which they contribute to monthly. He recommends home

accounts to married couples, as well as people who live with roommates or multi-generational families. The home checking account can be used for static monthly household expenses, while the savings account quietly grows. Olinger suggests a monthly home budget meeting, in which the adults in the household sit down together, perhaps over dinner, and review the previous month’s expenses.

There are also larger expenses in the life of a home. Furnaces fail, roofs need replacing and water heaters don’t live forever. If you live in one place long enough, you’ll likely want to make improvements. The home savings account allows you to pay for expensive repairs and renovations without incurring debt or drawing on your emergency fund.

While Olinger uses the home account approach himself, he acknowledges that there are many ways to successfully manage a budget. His clients use various techniques such as writing checks to themselves, putting cash into paper envelopes, or tracking expenses on spreadsheets.

“What’s most important is having a structure, a framework in place,” he says.

Another way to use bank accounts in your favor is to automate your savings. Many banks offer features such as roundups (rounding your transaction to the nearest dollar and transferring the extra pennies to your savings account), purchase transfers (moving a set amount of money into savings with each purchase), and recurring scheduled transfers.

**If you hate budgets, try buckets**

While some people appreciate a detailed approach to budgeting, others find it overwhelming: Is

a cell phone a utility? Is movie theater popcorn “dining out” or “entertainment”?

Money Canvas simplifies cash flow into three categories or buckets: Save, Pay and Spend. “Save” is money that you set aside for future goals such as retirement, major purchases or emergency funds. “Pay” includes monthly bills and predictable, recurring expenses such as housing, childcare and charitable giving. “Spend” includes variable expenses such as groceries, shopping and entertainment.

“That one number for spend is really powerful,” says Claire Hevel, design manager for Money Canvas. “Some people want to categorize it more, but you don’t have to. If you isolate your variable money and know exactly how much you have left, you won’t risk overspending or debt.”

The priority of the buckets is important. Many people put saving last, intending to save whatever money is left after paying bills and spending on discretionary expenses. Often, they find there is little or no money left over at the end of the month. The “pay yourself first” approach starts with a fixed savings amount (usually 10% to 20% of income), then prioritizes bills and fixed expenses, and whatever remains goes in the “spend” bucket. This means that discretionary spending is the lever that affects cash flow, you only need to pay attention to that one number, and your future needs are cared for.

“Consider your future well-being as a bill you have to pay,” Hevel says. “It’s even better if you can pay it automatically.”

**Bills are not necessarily fixed expenses**

“There’s a misconception that your

“Open your soul. Look at your bank statements. Share everything you’re doing. Then you aren’t able to hide it from yourself.”

— Mike Olinger, Thrivent financial advisor

Slow down your spending

These psychology-based tips from Money Canvas can help you spend less and save more.



**24-hour rule.** If you find something that you absolutely must have, decide to put off your purchase by one day. This will give you time to cool off from the thrill of discovering your “must-have” and will let you think about whether you really need it.



**Digital detox.** Unsubscribe from retail emails and deal sites, delete retail apps from your phone, disable one-click purchase, unfollow brands and influencers on social media, and adjust your preferences to hide targeted ads that show up on your feeds. If you must, take a timeout from social media altogether.



**Wallet reminders.** Print a picture of your bigger financial goal (a new house, a new car, savings, no more credit card debt) and stick it in your wallet. Every time you use your spending money, hold your goal in one hand and your card or cash in the other and ask yourself if it’s worth it.



**Credit card time-out.** Unless you have a plan to pay off your card immediately after you swipe it, lock up your credit cards at home or give them to a trusted guardian. Delete stored payment info from all your devices; if you’ve memorized your credit card numbers, request a new card.



**Positive reinforcement.** Surround yourself with like-minded people and groups. Follow social media influencers or bloggers who write about living simply; join freecycling newsletters or “no spend” groups on social media, listen to podcasts and read articles that offer advice and insight on living more with less.

bills are set in stone and you have no control over them,” says Hevel. “That’s just not true.”

The Money Canvas curriculum includes more than 100 tips for reducing monthly expenses such as mortgage, rent, utilities, phones and debt payments. The solutions include small actions such as adjusting thermostat settings and fixing leaky air ducts to save energy, as well as bigger changes such as consolidating debt and downsizing one’s car or home.

“Shopping around for car insurance and saving \$20 a month might not sound significant, but over a year or two that adds up,” Hevel says.

When LaNette and her husband looked at their monthly bills, they saw several opportunities to save money. She canceled her streaming subscriptions and signed up for a free movie streaming service and audiobook app offered through her local public library. She canceled her gym membership and began exercising at her husband’s military base, where she could use the facilities for free.

“Every bit of money I save goes to the credit card and extra mortgage payments,” LaNette says.

**Think about holidays all year long**

It can be discouraging to follow a monthly budget and chip away at your debt all year, only to find yourself pulling out the credit cards in November and December.

Olinger suggests having wish lists that are as evergreen as an artificial Christmas tree, scooping up bargains and creating homemade gifts throughout the year.

“Not only do you spread out the cost, but you can be original.

Homemade gifts take time, but they mean so much more,” he says.

He also encourages his clients to consider non-traditional holiday experiences such as vacations and shared experiences with friends and family instead of exchanging tangible gifts.

For Lopez, vacation planning is a year-long activity. She loves to travel with her family and consistently contributes to her dedicated “travel” savings account. Her goal is clear, even when the destination is still up in the air.

“It’s a simple thing that changes my mindset from ‘saving is boring’ to ‘saving is fun,’” Lopez says. “You start to get excited about seeing your savings growing and think ‘Where can we go, and what can we do with this money?’”

Like her coach, LaNette knows the joy of saving for travel. She recently surprised her husband with a trip to Hawaii for their 20th wedding anniversary—a trip that she was able to pay for in cash instead of carrying the expenses on a credit card.

“It felt so good to use that card, then come back and pay it all off.”

**Take care of yourself so you can help others**

LaNette is compassionate and kind, the person whom friends and family reach out to in times of crisis. Prior to working with Money Canvas, if someone called to ask for a loan, she didn’t think twice about sending them money, even if they were unlikely to pay her back. Meanwhile, her generosity led to

missed bill payments and more credit card debt. When LaNette added it up, she realized she had given away more than \$20,000 in the previous two years.

“After working with Claudia, I realized this money could be paid toward my bills,” she says. “I had to take a stance. I had to take my life back.”

Since this realization, LaNette has started a new job, achieved a positive monthly cash flow, and has paid off almost half of her debt. She also launched a business, Writing Coach LK, teaching people how to write and self-publish books. She feels a sense of purpose and fulfilment from helping others find and tell their stories.

“If you don’t make the change for yourself first, then you don’t have the ability to really help others,” says Lopez. “If helping is in your heart, then put yourself in a place where you are in a good position to really help.”

**One small change can have a huge impact**

Trying to change multiple aspects of your life at once can be overwhelming, but sometimes starting with one small positive action can cascade into a virtuous cycle.

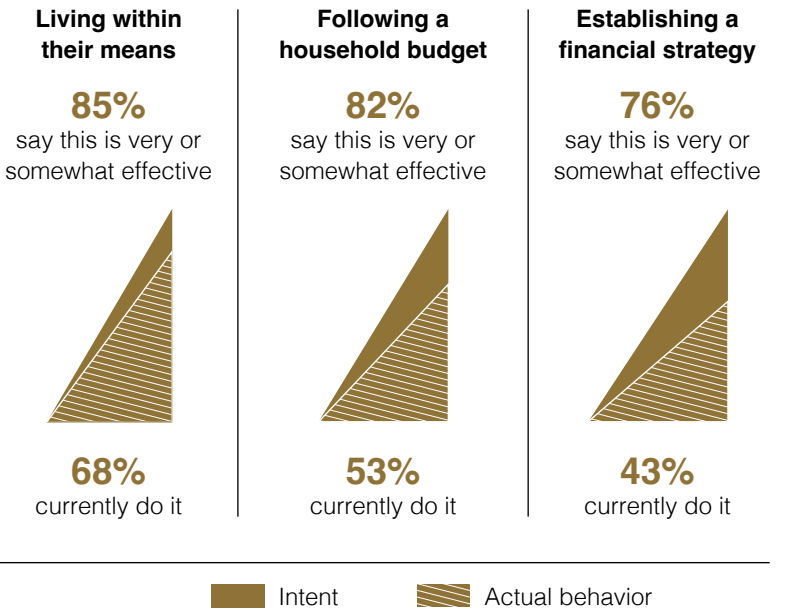
Before LaNette started Money Canvas, she never brought a list to the grocery store.

“When you’re wandering the aisles for an hour without a list, it’s easy to pick up impulse buys,” she says. “At the end, you’re hungry after all that wandering, so you pick up chips and an extra drink on your way out.”

Following advice from her coach, LaNette began meal

**Wise financial behaviors**

While Americans have a good understanding of the healthy financial behaviors that could improve their financial well-being, few are putting those into practice, according to Thrivent’s 2022 Consumer Financial Outlook Survey.\*



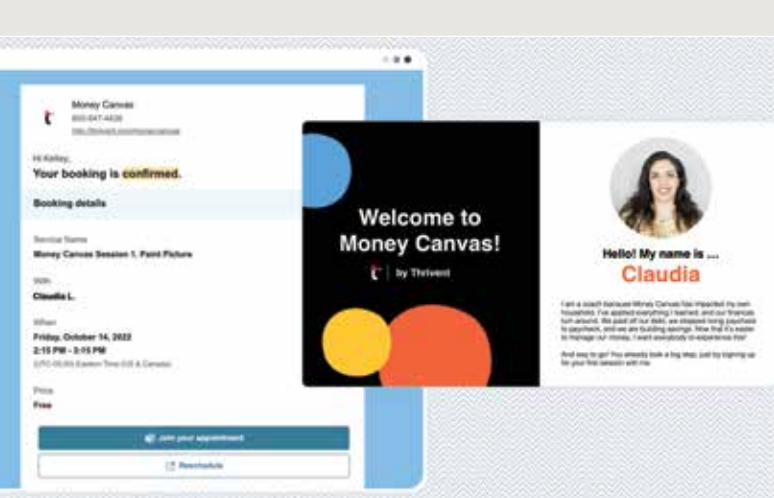
planning for a week at a time. She found herself cooking healthier meals and buying less junk food than before. In addition to saving money, she saw and felt improvements in her physical health and overall wellness. The small change set off a chain reaction of healthy habits. She became more active, taking walks with her husband and joining a fitness class and volleyball team.

“LaNette took it to the next level,” Lopez says. “She felt so confident, so empowered to make changes. First she made a few changes, and now she’s a whole new person.” ■

*Monica Wiant is executive editor of Thrivent Magazine.*

The client’s experience described in this article may not be the same as other clients and does not indicate future performance or success.

**\*Methodology**  
This general population research was conducted in partnership with data intelligence company Morning Consult and polled 2,221 adults across the country between May 9 and 17, 2022. The interviews were conducted online, and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of nationally representative adults based on age, gender, ethnicity, income and geography. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points.



**How Thrivent can help**

Money Canvas™ is a free one-on-one money coaching program that empowers people to build healthier financial habits. Sessions are free of charge and available to all. Want to know if Money Canvas is right for you or someone you know? Find out at [thrivent.com/moneycanvas](https://thrivent.com/moneycanvas).



# Tailored support

Navigating care for loved ones isn't easy, but Thrivent's Caregiver Resources provide financial and emotional support.

By Donna Hein / Photography by Laraina Hase

**N**ancy Jaster knew her mom needed a wheelchair. But since she had just recently moved back to Texas from Illinois to help care for her parents, Nancy wasn't sure where to turn for help.

Then she remembered hearing about Caregiver Resources from Homethrive, a benefit that became available to Thrivent clients with membership in 2022. She enrolled through [thrivent.com](https://thrivent.com), connected with a Care Guide and explained what she was looking for.

"They got back to me the next day with a list of places in the area that I could check out for wheelchairs," Nancy says. "They were so helpful and kind."

Homethrive is a one-stop online destination for practical information to help caregivers navigate all aspects of the caregiving journey—at home or in a facility. It offers 24/7 access to an extensive library of educational articles, videos and podcasts. And, as Nancy learned, Homethrive's team of licensed, credentialed professionals is available to give personalized recommendations based on location and caregiving situation.

The need for caregivers is growing, increasing from 43.5 million in 2015

to about 53 million in 2020, or nearly one in five Americans, according to the Caregiving in the U.S. 2020 report.\* Yet, in the Extended Care survey conducted by Thrivent in June 2023 of women ages 40-65, 61% do not feel prepared to provide care of a partner/spouse or elderly family member. And 78% either have some or no knowledge about the costs of receiving professional extended care.\*\*

Thrivent decided to offer this membership benefit after reviewing data and researching what families need as they help care for their loved ones, says Steve Sperka, vice president of Solutions Design, Implementation and Support at Thrivent.

"The products we provide help people navigate the financial challenges when a family member needs care," Sperka says. "But when you start to understand what else the family needs during these times, it's so much more than financial. It's emotional, educational and physical."

Thrivent's survey confirms this, Sperka says. When asked which aspects of life would be most affected by providing care to a family member, 65% selected financial; 39% selected family time or lifestyle and 34% selected personal health.\*\*

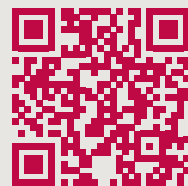
"At Thrivent, we want to show up during difficult times for our clients and their families, in the times that matter," he says.

## Navigating big changes

A request for information about wheelchairs may seem like a small thing, but for Nancy that first interaction turned into a lifeline as she and her two siblings continued navigating care for their parents. Years before Thrivent launched Homethrive, Nancy's parents had moved into an assisted living facility. Then the siblings moved their mom

## Get a sneak peek

The article, "Celebrating the holidays with Alzheimer's," is one example of the resources you can access through Homethrive. Find the article at [thrivent.com/alzheimers](https://thrivent.com/alzheimers).





to the memory care unit and their dad into a smaller independent living apartment at the same facility.

Nancy is an experienced caregiver. She has a master’s degree in therapeutic recreation and previously worked as an activity director in a nursing home. But caring for others is different than caring for a loved one, and Nancy found that she needed someone to listen and supply resources.

“I was having difficulty helping Mom in the memory care unit,” she says. “Plus, I had just moved during a pandemic, so I was navigating that, Covid and helping my folks. It was stressful.”

Nancy, who had continued to receive emails with valuable information from Homethrive, reached out again. This time she opted to pay a monthly fee to upgrade her Homethrive subscription to include Expert Support, a tier of service that provides specialized resources including a personal Care Guide. Nancy’s Care Guide, Melissa, helped her navigate the situation and supplied emotional support.

“Melissa helped me put things into perspective and figure out what I needed to do to help my folks,” Nancy says.

Recently, Nancy reached out to Melissa again, also inviting her brother and sister into the conversation. They had moved her

parents to a different care facility where they could be in the same building. “Dad visits mom at least twice a day,” Nancy says. “He takes her coffee in the morning, and then goes again in the afternoon. It’s nice to have them in the same building so he can go back and forth.”

No facility is perfect, Nancy says, and sometimes you trade one problem for another. The siblings worked with Melissa to discuss an approach to the situation at the new care facility. They came up with a plan, and Melissa even contacted the facility about the issue.

“The help we’re getting is so valuable,” Nancy says.

**Personalized support**

Using Thrivent’s Caregiver Resources is better than Google search, says Jennifer Behrens, manager of New Business Development at Thrivent who helped launch the program in the fall of 2022. Behrens personally used it as she and her sister navigated care for their parents, who lived hours away and needed support as their mom recovered from a broken arm and their dad from a stroke.

“You’re going to immediately find a lot of content relevant to you and your caregiving situation,” Behrens says. “The best feature is the ability to chat or schedule a phone call during business hours with a licensed

social worker who has expertise in elder care and aging. You can talk about your own situation and their responses will be specific for you. Homethrive is trying to help you help your aging adults live in their homes safely and securely for as long as possible.”

More than 3,000 Thrivent clients have enrolled in the program. Some of those needing additional support have upgraded to the Expert Support service, which is a monthly subscription-based program that you can opt in and out of as Nancy did.

“It can be so isolating when you’re a caregiver,” Behrens says. “And when you’re in it, you feel like you have to learn all this stuff yourself. It’s helpful to know others have gone before you and have sorted it out.” ■

*Donna Hein is senior editor of Thrivent Magazine.*

*\*www.caregiving.org/research/caregiving-in-the-us/caregiving-in-the-us-2020/*

*\*\*Methodology: This poll was conducted in June 2023 among a national sample of 1,500 adults in order to measure women’s (ages 40-65) behaviors and attitudes surrounding extended care. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of adults based on gender, education, age, race and region. Results for women aged 40-65 included in this report have a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.*

Member benefits, programs and activities are not guaranteed contractual benefits. 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.

**Planning for a long life**

No one knows for certain how long they’ll live, what expenses they’ll have and how much money they’ll need, says Ron Lutes, advice services consultant at Thrivent. Factor in additional uncertainties about future health care needs, inflation and taxes, and you may begin to wonder if you’ll have enough money to outlive you. Consider these three steps:

- 1. Create a secure income stream.** You need a strategy that, no matter what happens in the market, Lutes says, you’ll have income to help cover your base needs. “One option is a variable annuity with a guaranteed lifetime withdrawal benefit. Your balance could be zero; you could have lived so long that you depleted the account. But you’ll still get paid,” he says. The good news is that the payment can’t ever go down. But on the flip side, there’s no guarantee it ever would go up, he adds. It’s dependent on the market.
- 2. Keep some money in the market.** Social Security and your pension aren’t going to keep up with inflation, and your spending power may decrease. Even in retirement, Lutes says, you need to be in the market with a portion of your money in order to grow your principal.
- 3. Create a strategy for extended care and health care needs.** Medicare is a staple of most retired Americans’ insurance for medical expenses, hospitalization and prescriptions. Medicare supplement insurance can fill the gap between what Medicare pays and the total cost of the expense. It’s essential to understand what role each plays and even more important to have a strategy in place to manage any potential extended care or other health care needs.

According to the 2022 Thrivent Retirement Readiness Survey,\* only two in three adults nearing retirement have spent serious time thinking about their future health care needs in their retirement planning. Only 15% said they had spent a great deal of time focusing

on this and felt comfortable in their level of understanding. Learn more about planning for health care costs in retirement at [thrivent.com/healthcarecosts](https://thrivent.com/healthcarecosts).

With the right solutions in place, you can feel confident knowing you’ll have what you need to fund your goals, no matter how long you live. Contact your Thrivent financial advisor or find an advisor at [local.thrivent.com](https://local.thrivent.com) to help you create your plan.



*\*Methodology: This research was conducted in June 2022 among a national sample of 1,500 adults in order to measure their sentiments, financial planning, knowledge and issues regarding retirement. The interviews were conducted online and the data was broken into three sample groups; Saving, Nearing and Retired. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.*

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

Thrivent is not connected with or endorsed by the U.S. government or the federal Medicare program.

**Sign up for Caregiver Resources**

Are you feeling the work, worry or stress of caregiving? Thrivent clients with membership can access Homethrive’s personalized online resources and live chat features at no cost to you. Visit [thrivent.com/caregiverbenefit](https://thrivent.com/caregiverbenefit) to learn more.





# What’s happening at Thrivent



## 2024 Live Generously T-shirt design is here

The new 2024 gray Live Generously T-shirts, sporting the new design selected by 49% of voters through online voting in August, will 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 soft, tri-blend Live Generously T-shirts for the volunteers on your project, Thrivent Action Kits can include:

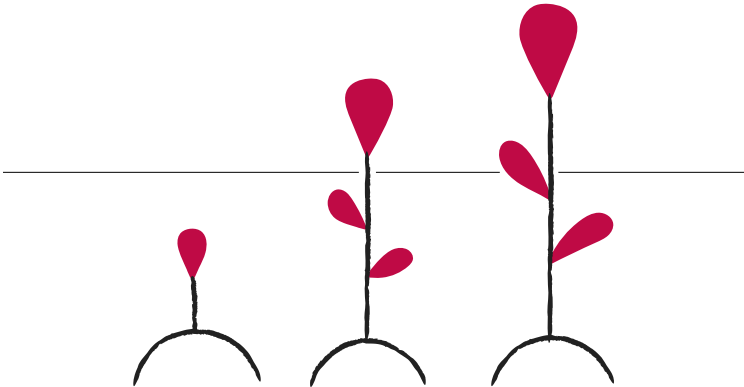
- A Community Impact Card with up to \$250 in seed money.
- A personalized web page and other digital tools to promote the activity.
- Thank-you cards, name tags, stickers and more.

“When first developing the shirt in 2014, we asked ourselves: ‘What if we could use these shirts to spark a movement of generosity far beyond the volunteer project? What if we could create something that inspired people to act while also creating recognition for Thrivent?’ What we came up with is a statement so bold and meaningful that the shirts quickly became one of the most well-loved items in our closets,” says Emily Hendren, manager of the Thrivent Action Teams program.

As of 2023, there are 13 million Live Generously T-shirts in circulation, in an array of colors and designs. They’re manufactured by Bella+Canvas, a company that cites eco-friendly processes, including extensive recycling and a small carbon footprint.

There’s still time to apply for a Thrivent Action Team to help someone this year, or you can apply now for a fundraiser, service activity or educational event to lead in January.

Go to [thrivent.com/actionteams](https://thrivent.com/actionteams) to find out how. To get activity ideas from others, visit [thrivent.com/actionteamshub](https://thrivent.com/actionteamshub).



## Thrivent to deliver \$542 million total payout to clients with membership in 2024

Thrivent will provide a record-breaking \$542 million total payout in 2024 through dividends and policy enhancements, reaching more eligible clients than ever.

- This includes \$414 million in dividends and \$128 million in policy enhancements, such as additional credited interest and reduced fees.
- It builds on last year’s record-setting total payout of \$444 million in 2023.
- Over 77% of all Thrivent policies—more than 2.1 million—will receive a 2024 dividend or policy enhancement.

“Thrivent serves millions of clients and we deliver value to them with competitive products and solutions, strong investment performance and a commitment to financial stewardship. We have grown Thrivent’s surplus significantly over the past few years because of our disciplined financial management, and now we’re able to deliver record-breaking total payouts to our clients in 2024,” says David Royal, chief financial and investment officer. “Although never guaranteed, we’ve offered dividends to our clients for more than 100 consecutive years. This financial strength and stability—combined with Thrivent’s work to empower lives of service and faith—is why our clients put their trust in Thrivent.”

Separate from dividends, policy enhancements refer to improvements in non-guaranteed policy features such as future credited rates or fees. These enhancements are not guaranteed in the future.

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

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## Thrivent Member Network Corner

Thrivent Member Networks are communities of clients committed to helping others make an impact locally and reach their financial goals. As 2023 comes to a close, consider:

- Helping a favorite nonprofit by using Thrivent’s online giving platform at [thrivent.com/choice](https://thrivent.com/choice). Thrivent will cover processing fees for your donation, making sure your entire donation goes to your cause.\*
- Taking control of your money by participating in Money Canvas™. It’s a free one-on-one online money coaching service that empowers people to understand their money more clearly and take practical steps to spend less so they can save more. Spread the word and refer a friend. Visit [thrivent.com/moneycanvas](https://thrivent.com/moneycanvas).
- Getting practical tips from industry experts at Thrivent’s virtual events. Visit [bit.ly/thrivent-events](https://bit.ly/thrivent-events) to stay up-to-date on what’s being offered.
- Finding out what’s happening in your area on your regional Thrivent Member Network’s page. Visit [thrivent.com/tmn](https://thrivent.com/tmn), enter your ZIP code, then click on “Get to know your community.”

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

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# Just for fun

## Complete the song

Fill in the lyrics to these holiday tunes.

- 1. Snowing and blowing up bushels of fun.  
Now the \_\_\_\_\_ has begun.
  - a. Doo wop
  - b. Hip hop
  - c. Jingle hop
- 2. From now on, your \_\_\_\_\_ will be out of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Happiness, mind
  - b. Troubles, sight
  - c. Cares, tune
- 3. Oh the weather outside is \_\_\_\_\_. But the fire is so \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Frightful, delightful
  - b. Terrible, nice
  - c. Cold, freezing
- 4. Said the night \_\_\_\_\_ to the little \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Candle, light
  - b. Reindeer, boy
  - c. Wind, lamb
- 5. Sleigh bells \_\_\_\_\_, are you \_\_\_\_\_?
  - a. Fall, hearing
  - b. Ring, listening
  - c. Break, throwing



## Word scramble

Unscramble the letters to find words that relate to the Christmas season.

- 1. RENPTSE
- 2. HIYADOL
- 3. JULYOF
- 4. NSWOKELFA
- 5. TOELSMITE

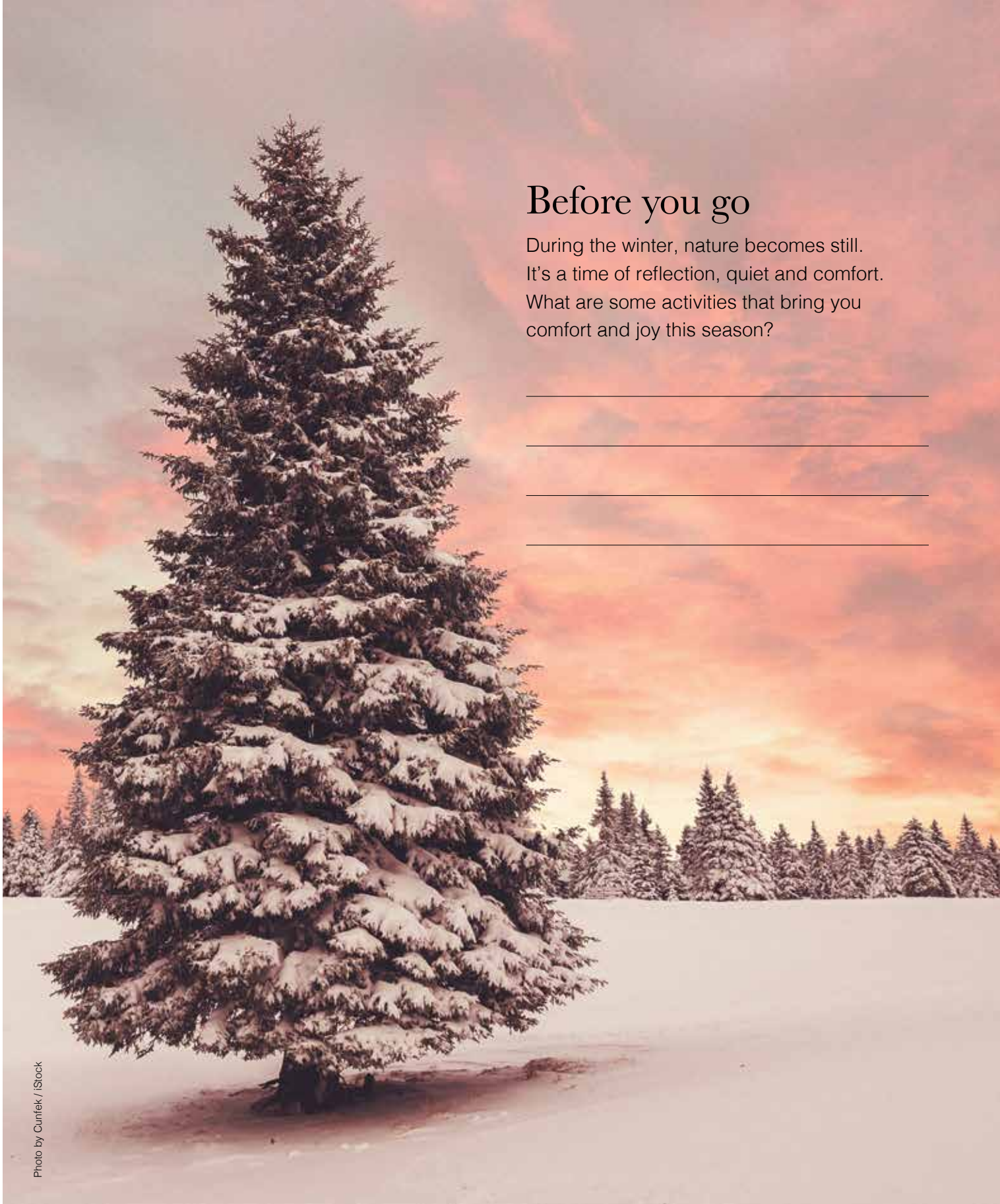
## Winter trivia

- 1. How many months can bears hibernate?
  - a. 1-2 months
  - b. 5-6 months
  - c. 7-8 months
- 2. How many sides does a snowflake have?
  - a. 6
  - b. 8
  - c. 10
- 3. What ancient monument is aligned with the winter solstice sunset?
  - a. Machu Picchu
  - b. The Egyptian pyramids
  - c. Stonehenge
- 4. At what temperature can you begin to see your breath?
  - a. 30 degrees
  - b. 50 degrees
  - c. 45 degrees
- 5. What is mushing?
  - a. A type of breakfast food
  - b. The sport of racing sled dogs
  - c. How animals prepare for hibernation

**Answers:**  
**Christmas lyrics**  
1. C, 2. B, 3. A, 4. C, 5. B  
**Word scramble**  
1. Present, 2. Holiday, 3. Joyful, 4. Snowflake, 5. Mistletoe  
**Trivia**  
1. C, 2. A, 3. C, 4. C, 5. B

## Before you go

During the winter, nature becomes still. It's a time of reflection, quiet and comfort. What are some activities that bring you comfort and joy this season?





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