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NEW RESIDENT churchguide



Harvest Family Fellowship

See Inside Back Cover!

Kansas now has its first express lanes, with a toll



The Kansas City metro's first express toll lanes are now open on U.S. 69 in Overland Park.

U.S. 69 has been widened from four to six lanes — three in each direction. The farthest left lane in each direction is now a designated express toll lane. The new lanes run from 103rd Street to 151st Street. The two right lanes in each direction remain free.

■ Please see EXPRESS LANES page 5

Is Lent Important?



Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of Lent, a season of 40 days (excluding Sundays) leading up to Easter that symbolizes mortality and calls believers to self-reflection and repentance as they draw closer to God. A growing number of Christians are observing it as a time of renewal.

Many Christians use this time to

give up luxuries or habits (sacrifices) to focus on a closer relationship with God and embrace simpler living, self-discipline and fasting. Lent echoes the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert enduring temptation by Satan, before beginning His public ministry.

Lent is a time to both remember and expect... It is a time to pre-

pare for the experience of Easter by remembering the journey Jesus walked to the Cross, through the passion of Christ (his arrest, trial, and crucifixion) in order to fully appreciate Resurrection morning.

Jonathan Roumie, who portrays Jesus in "The Chosen" and is a primary voice for Hallow, the Catholic

■ Please see LENT page 2

4-story mixed-use community coming to 6th & Van Buren



The Hutch, a 4-story mixed-use community being developed at 6th and Van Buren, will offer 192 luxury residential units and 2,500 square feet of retail, as well as 6,000 square feet of resort-style amenities.

Included will be a rooftop lounge with Capitol views, a fitness & yoga studio, sauna, co-working spaces, coffee bar, pool, pet spa & more.

Construction begins in the fall of 2026 on this \$50M+ project. It's will make it possible to live, work and relax, all in one place.

Multigenerational missions transform Church

Many churches sponsor missions teams of teens, working adults or retirees. Second Baptist Church in Springfield is building unity through multigenerational teams.

"It's difficult to engage cross-generationally, but when you put believers of varying ages alongside each other with a common cause and a common love for Christ, it becomes beautiful," Missions Pastor Rob Brewer said, according to "Kentucky Today." "We're

not doing this in silos. The youth minister isn't running his own missions thing; the missions minister isn't just leading a group of adults. We're doing this together."

Whether they are serving in a community center in Munich, a church-planting effort in St. Louis or a disaster-relief hub in Toronto, Second Baptist seeks mission work where an 80-year-old can stand beside a college

■ Please see MISSIONS page 2



Pastor Jentezen Franklin encourages Christians about the power of short prayers

Spending more time in prayer likely was on the list of New Year's resolutions for many Christians. This resolution already have gone by the wayside because they feel they don't have enough time to pray. In his new book, pastor and author Jentezen Franklin said much can be accomplished through short prayers.

"I also know that it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that longer prayers are better prayers," he said. "There is a temptation to believe the more we talk, the more persuasive we are in moving the hand of God. But that is not what the Bible shows us."

The Bible is filled with examples of short prayers that brought breakthroughs, miracles, deliverance and heavenly help. Franklin offers several reasons why short prayers can be pow-



erful.

"For one thing, short prayers often carry a sense of urgency that long prayers don't," he said. "I've watched

the mother of a toddler running out into a busy street shout the name 'Jesus!' and then witnessed every car miraculously swerve or come to a

sudden stop. That one-word prayer is as effective as the tongues of men and angels."

Second, short prayers are powerful because the Bible said that when we pray, even briefly, God moves. "God, in a sense, 'moves' from where he is to where you are," Franklin said. "Crying out to God in prayer is the best way to draw near to your heavenly father."

God's ears are ever and always inclined to the voices of his people. In the gospels, Jesus frequently was stopped by cries for help while on a journey to a specific place. Over and over, he stopped and brought about a miracle in response to those cries.

"You may only see where you are right now, but God sees the glorious

possibility of where you could be," he said. "You see where your loved one is right now, but God sees what is possible for them. In other words, just as Jesus demonstrated, God will pause his purpose to bring about your possibility."

Finally, he reminds Christians that praying shorter prayers doesn't necessarily mean praying less.

"Please don't misunderstand, though. I'm not suggesting that you spend less time talking to God," he said. "Fellowship with him. Pour out your heart to him. Spend all the time you can in intimate connection with him. By all means, carve out as much time as you can to quiet your soul and listen for His voice of wisdom. Longer isn't necessarily better. Sometimes less is more."

Examining near-death experiences bolsters faith of pastor and author

Near-death experiences have both been cited as proof of heaven and dismissed as mere hallucinations or frauds. John Burke, a pastor and author, changed his opinion after investigating more than a thousand near-death experiences, or NDEs.

"Not only did I not believe in near-death experiences, I didn't believe in Jesus or God," he told CBN News, "Many decades ago, my dad was dying of cancer and someone gave him the very first research that coined the term near-death

experience."

Burke said this came in the form of a book, which he ended up reading. It featured stories of people who were clinically dead and resuscitated. Among the stories, he noticed many of those experiencing NDEs claimed to have seen Jesus. "That really began my whole faith journey, because so many saw Jesus," he said. "I was like, 'I better be open to the Bible.' So I started reading and studying the Bible, came to faith."

His wife, Kathy, has a different faith

trajectory and can't remember a time when she wasn't a believer. "Scriptural truths have always been a big part of my life, and I've enjoyed being able to stand on them," she said. "And I know they're solid. It just has really given me a fresh perspective and revitalized my faith, and the power of my faith, and the power of God in really amazing ways."

John expressed some of the most fascinating reflections he has had after exploring these stories, particularly the types of people who claim to have exper-

rienced NDEs.

"The thing that I like to point out is that many of these people that I've interviewed and write about, they were CEOs, they were spine surgeons, commercial airline pilots, bank presidents, lawyers," he said. "They don't need money, and they have nothing to gain by making up crazy, wild stories about dying and going to heaven and seeing Jesus, and yet, they consistently say it was the most real thing that ever happened to them."

He believes God is using these jour-



neys to help illuminate Scripture and point people back to Him.

"God doesn't feel any need or constraint to the box we try to put him in."

LENT

continued from page 1

prayer app, told Fox News Digital that "Lent becomes a time for just meditation, peace and reflection. I think every year, the noise in the culture, the global noise, just seems to get louder and louder and louder."

This year's Hallow 40 Day Prayer Challenge is themed "The Return." "It is essentially the epitome of what it means to take time for yourself and to return to this time of meditation and prayerfulness with God," he said.

A Barna Group study published in September suggested that church attendance has increased among Gen Z and millennial men, demonstrating signs of a return to church that surpasses even that of older generations. Gen Z men are attending slightly more often than millennial men, marking a generational reversal.

"I think it's because men are sort of really tired of what they're experiencing in society and in the world in general," Roumie said. "For men in society, good men, holy men and re-



sponsible men -- everything just works better. Their lives are more fulfilled, their relationships are improved, their marriages are improved

and their relationships with their kids are made much fuller and more vibrant and loving."

He said his own faith has grown through the use of the Hallow app.

"Despite all the crises we see everywhere we look, this opportunity to be able to pray and return to the father and to connect with God allows people to ultimately fulfill the mission it has for them in their lives," he said.

He said anyone can use the app

to meditate for 10 or 15 minutes or longer, to pray or meditate.

"It gives me a sense of calm and peace and mindfulness," Roumie said. "Whenever I use the app, it is drawing me closer to Christ. It gives me a sense of calm and peace and mindfulness -- but you don't have to be a Christian of any faith to get peace from praying with this app."

Hallow was founded in 2018. Actors Mark Wahlberg and Chris Pratt are among the many others who have been outspoken about their regular use of the app for prayer and meditation.

MISSIONS

continued from page 1

sophomore and a high school freshman, handing out water bottles to the same community residents and sharing the gospel.

Lead pastor John Birchett has seen many members from Second Baptist

commit to serving in missions, and he shared how this is a churchwide emphasis. "It's important for me that we not simply be a financial resource to our mission field," Birchett said, "but to really engage our people to live at a mission level."

In 2025, the church sponsored two trips to serve in Toronto. Another team recently went to Munich, Ger-

many. The team featured a mixture of college students and retirees. The church sent a similar crew to serve in Northern Africa. When the teams returned to Springfield, the impact was palpable, Brewer said. Church hallways buzzed with familiar faces, exchanging hugs and handshakes among different age groups.

Leaders provided several tips for

other churches interested in multigenerational missions:

- Find leaders with a mission heartbeat. Consider people who have walked on the mission field themselves.
- Make partnership criteria explicit. Can they be host to multiple generations?
- Build a pipeline that starts in grade school and ends in lifelong service. Chil-

dren and students can do mission projects, even locally. Aspire to send members to serve full time.

- Invest in preparation. Applications, interviews and vision trips keep the focus sharp.
- Encourage cross-generational teamwork. Let retirees mentor college students. Let youth invite older adults to worship.

Mural Project Coming to NOTO Area

The NOTO Arts & Entertainment District is moving forward with the Kansas Avenue Veterans Memorial Bridge Mural Project, a major public art initiative that will serve as a visual gateway into North Topeka. Titled "Reflections of Eugene, The Rise of NOTO," the mural is designed and curated by lead artist Zandra Sneed-Dawkins. Work is scheduled to begin March 1 and be completed by June 15, with a public dedication planned for late June 2026. Positioned near the bridge and partially revealed from NW Laurent Street, the mural will welcome visitors with a vibrant NOTO-inspired color palette while telling the story of the district's origins and transformation.

The artwork traces the history of Eugene, Kansas, highlighting early figures such as Louis Laurent and Julia



Gonville-Pappan, whose lineage includes Charles Curtis, the 31st Vice President of the United States. It reflects North Topeka's deep connection to the Kansas River and key moments including Pappan's Landing, the arrival of the Union Pacific Railroad, the floods of 1903 and 1951, and the Melan Bridge

collapse of 1965. Through dynamic shapes, rich color, and imagery of youth symbolizing hope and progress, the mural honors resilience, diversity, and the ongoing evolution of the community — celebrating how Eugene ultimately became the creative district known today as NOTO.

Conservative Global Methodist Church has grown to 7,000 churches

The Global Methodist Church, a theologically conservative denomination formed in 2022 as an alternative to the increasingly liberal United Methodist Church, has announced it now includes more than 7,000 member congregations worldwide.

In a statement shared online, the GMC said the milestone reflects more than numerical growth. "This moment reminds us that growth isn't just measured in numbers — it's found in repentance, renewal, and lives being transformed by Jesus Christ," the denomination stated. "As Wesleyans, we are called to holiness of heart and life."

GMC Bishop Mark J. Webb described the expansion as evidence of "the faithfulness of God and the willingness of His people to boldly follow the Holy Spirit's leading." He added, "Each congregation is a living witness to the transforming power of Jesus Christ... We remain steadfast in our calling to make disciples of Jesus Christ and to spread scriptural holiness across the globe."

The GMC was launched amid longstanding debate within the United Methodist Church over policies concerning same-sex unions and the ordi-



nation of noncelibate homosexuals. While attempts to amend the UMC's Book of Discipline had failed for years, divisions intensified, leading to widespread disaffiliations.

A group of 16 UMC leaders from different theological backgrounds in 2020 announced their support for a proposed separation protocol that would create a pathway for churches that wanted to disaffiliate from the denomination over the debate. The proposed protocol would also set aside funds to create a theologically conservative denomination for those congregations interested in launching such a church body.

The protocol was scheduled to be

considered at the 2020 UMC General Conference, which was postponed multiple times during the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2022, GMC organizers said they would launch the new denomination that May, without waiting for the postponed General Conference to approve the protocol. Thousands of congregations subsequently voted to leave the UMC, with many joining the new denomination.

By early 2024, the GMC reported over 4,200 congregations, later surpassing 6,000 in October. The latest announcement marks another significant increase as debates over doctrine and church governance continue to reshape Methodism globally.

and the time of day.

To use the lanes, drivers can pay a toll, allowing for a more reliable travel time.

The two general-purpose lanes in each direction on U.S. 69 will remain toll-free.

Drivers can enter and exit the express lanes at three points on the 69Express:

103rd Street, Blue Valley Parkway and 151st Street.

Signs at these entry points will show the current toll rate to the driver's destination. The rates shown on these signs will apply to drivers with two-axle vehicles and a KTAG or compatible transponder.

C5 Luncheon to feature John 'Iron Man' Cantrell

The March C5Alive POWER Luncheon will be held on the 12th at 11:30am at the Celtic Fox.

The program will feature John "The Iron Man" Cantrell, the heavy-weight knockout king. Cantrell is the IBF and ABO Professional Boxing Champion (16-0). His story is one you should hear!

Admission is free, and lunch can be ordered from restaurants on site if desired. RSVPs and inquiries can be sent to info@C5Alive.org.

"POWER" luncheons are held the 2nd Thursday each month and are open to the public. C5Alive is dedicated to creating Christian culture in the Capital City, by developing and uniting leaders in community businesses, non-profits and churches.

Upcoming luncheon dates are, April 9, May 14, June 11, July 9, Aug. 13, Sep. 10, Oct. 8, Nov. 12, and Dec.

10, 2026. Coming up on August 13 will be Ambassador Sam Brownback.

C5 also hosts other events, including EASTERFEST, the annual

Topeka Easter Fun Fair, held this year on March 28 in NOTO Arts District.

C5 members also sponsor luncheons and other events as a way to promote their organizations.

C5 is currently holding a membership drive with special incentives for new members. Lower-priced memberships for small and home-based businesses are now available. Individuals may join for \$20.

A list of current members and more information is available on the website at www.C5Alive.org, at www.facebook.com/C5Alive, or by calling Lee Hartman at 785-640-6399.





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EXPRESS LANES

continued from page 1

The new lanes will allow the Kansas Department of Transportation to manage congestion on the highway using tolls, which vary based on traffic levels

EasterFest Takes Over NOTO Area in 11th Year Event

The 11th Annual Topeka EasterFest will take place in the NOTO Arts District for 2026. This year, the event will be held Saturday, March 28 (the weekend before Easter).

The Big Egg Hunt and Fun Fair will be held at Veterans Park, in between Kansas Avenue and the Kansas/Quincy bridge. In the large parking lot behind the NOTO district there will be childrens activities, inflatables, a petting zoo, cake walks, food trucks and other vendors.

There will be live music at Redbud Park, with more vendors and activities in that area.

More food trucks will be next to the NOTO Arts Center across the street, along with a kid's Foam Party, with more vendors inside.

Even more vendors and activities will be available up and down Kansas Avenue, and in the breezeway connecting the Avenue to Veterans Park.



nesses and non-profit organizations set up vendor booths and kids' games as part of the family fun fair.

This year more NOTO storefronts will join in the fun with outdoor booths and sales.

"We've had a great response and new entries each year at EasterFest," said Kevin Doel, one of the organizers. "I expect it to just keep growing every year."

The Family Fun Fair will consist of activities geared toward children and families, as well as health & wellness vendor booths, vendor exhibits, and more. Live performers will be on hand all day as well.

Back are the ever-popular cake walks, along with face painting, and some new food trucks. A kid's Foam Party is new this year!

Also new this year is a Walking Easter Book, which consists of 10 stations, with



each displaying a page from the book. As children walk from station to station, they will complete a simple craft project and collect other items along the way. At the end, they will turn in a completed form to collect a prize.

There is still room for more EasterFest sponsors and participants for the Vendor Market, Entertainment Stage, Food Court, etc.

Volunteers are also needed to help with the entire event.

Major sponsors for EasterFest include Luxury Motor Cars, The Learning Center, Ernest-Spencer Metals, Rooter-Man Plumbing, Downing Septic, Stormont Vail Health, Emerald City

Cosmopolitan Club, Lions Club, Kaw Valley Bank, Health & Wellness Magazine, SoulFire Nutrition, College HUNKS Movers Capital City Flooring, and Kansas Fencing.

Media partners and sponsors include TV25, WIBW, WREN Digital Media, Majic 107.7, Apha Media, KFGB 97.7 FM, and Metro Voice.

Proceeds from the event will benefit Let's Help and other local non-profits.

The event is coordinated each year by C5Alive.

For more information or to volunteer, visit Topeka EasterFest 2026 on Facebook, email info@C5Alive.org or call/text 785-640-6399.

Topeka Renaissance Festival to present Viking Celebration 2026

The Topeka Renaissance Festival is gearing up for its first Viking themed event, Viking Celebration 2026, as it brings the world of Norse legend to life for an unforgettable weekend of warriors, feasting, merchants, music, and myth. Step into the realm of longships and lore as they honor the rise of the new Viking leader. It's a Renaissance Festival like no other!

Friday Night — The Crowning of the Jarl

On March 20th, from 6:30 PM to Midnight, witness the grand Crowning of our Jarl, Viking King Hjarta An Róthaich, as the clans gather to swear loyalty beneath torchlight. Enjoy the Opening ceremony & royal procession, mead, feasting, firelit celebrations, Viking combat exhibitions, live music and late-night revelry. This evening event sets the stage for the battles, stories, and festivities to come.

Saturday — The Viking Festival

On March 21st, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM, get the full festival experience featuring:

- Viking & Renaissance merchants
- Mead, ale, and food vendors
- Weapons demos & full-steel combat
- Storytelling, runes, and living-history displays
- Family activities & children's realm
- Live performers, musicians, and entertainers



- Clan Óttalauss in full Viking regalia

You can help celebrate the victory and rule of Jarl Viking King Hjarta An Róthaich as the clans unite for a day of immersive fun and historical adventure.

Join the Saga

You are encouraged to come dressed as a shieldmaiden, raider, rune-reader, skald, or villager, or whatever you desire. But whatever you wear, you'll find yourself transported into a

world of Norse magic and medieval wonder.

The fun takes place at the Woodshed Event Center, 1901 N. Kansas Avenue in Topeka.

For updates, be sure to visit the official Topeka Renaissance Festival pages on Facebook and other social media channels. Be part of this epic celebration of history.

General admission tickets and a special VIP option can be purchased at www.topekarenfest.com



Versatile event center fits any need

The Woodshed Event Center is located just north of Garfield Park in north Topeka.

The building at 1901 N. Kansas Avenue is a north Topeka landmark, once serving as home to the Moose Lodge.

At 20,000 square feet, the building has a large ballroom with a bar, a stage and large dance floor, with a seating capacity of 400. It also houses a lounge with its own bar, stage and dance floor, with an additional seating capacity of 200 people.

Now transformed into The Woodshed Events Center, which opened in 2018, it holds a wide variety of events. Manager Jeanice Brown likes to say, "If you can dream it, we can create it."

Now in its seventh year, Brown says she is enjoying this business venture. "It's been a learning experience."

Clearly, one of Brown's strengths as an entrepreneur is her people skills.

"I've been in customer service my whole life," said Brown, who previously worked for Dillon's and Goodyear. "I enjoy meeting people and being involved in their events and festivities. We can get you what you need to make things happen."

A variety of event options possible

The versatility of the Woodshed offers the perfect venue for events of all kinds, such as birthday parties, weddings, business meetings, networking events, dances, formal balls, corporate events, local bands & dances, fundraisers, holiday markets, vendor events and more.

Currently, The Woodshed Market is held outdoors in the parking lot from 10 am to 2 pm every Sunday. The market offers such items as baked goods, arts and crafts, garage sale and vintage items, to name a few. Food trucks are also on hand.

Another regular event is ballroom dancing held by Carousel Rendezvous Dance Club on the 2nd Friday each month. Upcoming dates are March 13 & April 10.

The 2026 Topeka Gem and Mineral Show is scheduled for October 9-11.

"Anything you can think of, you can possibly find it here," Brown said. The market attracts people each week from all parts of Topeka and surrounding communities, including Manhattan and Kansas City. "We probably get a thousand people through," said Brown.

Brown also said one of The Woodshed's most popular bookings are for Celebrations of Life, or as Brown affectionately refers to them: "The After-Party." The Woodshed can create a positive, comfortable atmosphere where friends and family can gather to remember a loved one. "You tell stories and talk about the good times," Brown said.

The Woodshed has also hosted Quinceañeras, which are celebrations of a young lady's 15th birthday, common in Mexican and other Latin American cultures.

Brown believes The Woodshed offers the versatility and affordability for any occasion, including private parties, live music and dancing, birthdays, wedding



receptions, graduations, milestone anniversaries, and corporate events.

Outdoor events are also an option

The Woodshed sits on a 13-acre plot, partially wooded, which offers lots of

The Renaissance Festival will be back for their summer event June 14-15, and again in the fall on October 24-25.

Last Summer featured another big outdoor event – the Backyard Music Fest, held on the grounds in May.



parking as well as options for large outdoor events. One such event coming up is the Topeka Renaissance Festival Viking Celebration on March 20-21, which will transform the entire property into a medieval world of entertainment, shopping and games, with adventure and fun both inside and out.

For booking information, Brown can be reached at 785-213-3561.

"We'll work with people to make their experience a positive one," she said.

More information can be found at www.thewoodshedtopeka.com or on the Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/notowoodshed,



University's Digital Rest Effort Refocuses Students on God

Students at Liberty University are stepping away from their phones for a 28-day digital rest, a campus-wide effort aimed at refocusing attention on God and other people. The challenge encourages students to log out of all media platforms and delete nonessential apps. Importantly, they'll reconsider how constant connectivity shapes their spiritual health.

The college's second annual initiative provides students with an easy-to-understand and structured guide featuring scripture readings, devotionals and even reflection prompts. Participants are encouraged to engage with the guide daily on weekdays while reducing screen time. The university has also placed 300 Brick devices — tools that temporarily block social media access — in residence halls to support the effort.

The digital rest launched last month during Liberty's convocation, where



Joey Odom warned that excessive phone use can "choke out every good thing in our lives." Invoking Jesus' parable of the sower, Odom described worries, pleasures and wealth as "thorns" exacerbated by social media.

"The deceitfulness of wealth and the

constant comparison of our social media feeds is a reminder of what we don't have, which opens up our hearts to the lie that we are incomplete without that wealth," he said. "This is the thorn that chokes out truth."

He called them "digital thorns."

"What it looks like to live differently is this," Odom said. "We have to stop bringing our phones to every moment of our lives. When we bring our phones into potential moments of fruit, we're just bringing thorns to a fruit party. Don't bring thorns to a fruit party. Get into the daily practice of spending time apart from your phone."

Odom also cautioned that mobile devices can be used by the enemy to "separate us, our mind, our will, our intentions, everything, from God." He contrasted modern distractions with those of the 1940s.

"But why would he waste a temptation on a capital-S sin like murder when simple distraction can do the trick? In the 1940s, the greatest distraction this brilliant man could think of was a deck of playing cards. If only that were our greatest distraction today."

Unlike the mid-20th century, Odom

noted, roughly 10 million games are accessible through cellphones today, alongside TikTok, YouTube and other platforms competing for attention. It's a flood of distraction.

"So let me ask a question," Odom said. "How on earth are we supposed to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength? And then, once we nail that, love our neighbors as ourselves? This feels impossible."

The digital rest initiative also aligns with a recent Harvard Medical School study that found a one-week voluntary social media detox reduced anxiety by 16 percent, depression by 24 percent and insomnia by 14.5 percent.

For Liberty University students participating this month, the goal is simple, even if it isn't easy: fewer digital thorns, more spiritual fruit.

FINANCIAL PLANNING



DAVE RAMSEY
Financial author,
radio host, television
personality, speaker

davesays

EMERGENCY FUND FOR TEENS?

Dear Dave, our daughter is in high school, and she has a car and a part-time job nights and weekends. We've worked with her on saving, spending and giving, but should a teenager have an emergency fund, too?

If so, how much do you recommend them setting aside?

A. This is a great question! I'm glad to know you're working with your daughter and teaching him wise financial habits. I always recommend an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses for adults, and I think that's a fair expectation for teens, as well. He won't need as big an emer-

gency fund as a married couple with kids if his expenses consist only of those connected to his car and social life. So, I'd suggest her saving up three months' worth of what it takes to operate the car—gas, insurance and maintenance. I think those are fair financial responsibilities for a responsible teen in his situation.

—Dave

Your Income is the Key

Dear Dave, I have \$100,000 in student loan debt. Since the amount is so large, is there a special place in your Baby Steps plan for

A. I hope you have a nice, large income with which to fight that big pile of student loan debt. I've seen even worse situations, though. I've talked to people who went \$200,000 into debt for a four-year degree in a field where they'll make \$45,000.

The fact that it's a large amount of student loan debt doesn't change anything. Baby Step 2 is where you pay off all debt except for your home. So, don't let this student

loan debt hang around for years and years. You've got to get focused and intense about getting control of your money. That means living on a strict, basics-

only monthly budget. After that, start throwing every nickel and dime you can scrape together, and save toward paying off those student loans as fast as possible.

Your income is your largest wealth-building tool. You can't save, and plan for the future, when all your money is flying out the door to pay off debt —Dave

New Tax Break for Seniors in 2025: What It Means for Your Social Security and Your Tax Bill

By Susan Shumaker
Tax Professional at
The Retirement Team



A major change to the tax code is bringing welcome relief to millions of older Americans filing their 2025 federal tax returns.

But despite headlines and political sound bites, Social Security benefits themselves are not entirely tax-free. Instead, Congress created a larger tax deduction for seniors — a move that may significantly reduce, and in some cases eliminate, federal income taxes for many retirees.

Here's what you need to know in plain language.

What Changed in 2025?

In July 2025, Congress passed a sweeping tax package known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. One of its key features is a new, temporary enhanced senior deduction.

Beginning with the 2025 tax year, taxpayers age 65 and older can claim:

- Up to \$6,000 extra if filing as single
- Up to \$12,000 extra for married couples filing jointly (if both spouses are 65+)

This new deduction is in addition to:

- The regular standard deduction
- The existing extra standard deduction already available to people 65 and older

In simple terms: seniors can subtract more income from their tax return before the IRS calculates what they owe.

How a Deduction Works (In Everyday Terms)

A deduction reduces the amount of income the government taxes.

For example:

If a retiree has \$50,000 in total income and qualifies for \$20,000 in deductions, they are taxed only on \$30,000 — not the full \$50,000.

The new senior deduction lowers that taxable number even further.

Does This Mean Social Security Is No Longer Taxed?

No — at least not directly.

The rules for taxing Social Security benefits have not changed.

Under longstanding federal law, whether your Social Security is taxable depends on something called “combined income” or “provisional income”. That formula includes:

- Your adjusted gross income
- Any tax-free interest (such as from municipal bonds)
- Half of your Social Security benefits

If your combined income rises above certain thresholds, up to 85% of your Social Security benefits can be subject to federal income tax.

Those thresholds have not been updated under the new law.

So Why Are Some People Saying “No Tax on Social Security”?

Because for many middle-income seniors, the larger deduction may wipe out their taxable income entirely — even if part of their Social Security is technically considered taxable.

In practice, that could mean:

- You still first calculate taxable Social Security
- But after applying the bigger deduction, you could owe little or nothing

It's a back-door reduction — not a repeal of the Social Security tax rules themselves.

Who Qualifies for the Full Deduction?

The new senior deduction is income-based.

For 2025 returns:

- Single filers begin to lose the deduction if income exceeds \$75,000
- Married couples filing jointly begin to lose it above \$150,000
- It phases out completely at higher income levels (around \$175,000 single / \$250,000 joint)

Most middle-income retirees will qualify for the full amount.

Higher-income retirees may receive only part of it — or none at all.

How Much Could This Save?

The actual savings depend on your income and tax bracket.

For example:

- A married couple over 65 could reduce taxable income by an additional \$12,000

If they're in the 12% tax bracket, that could mean about \$1,440 in federal tax savings

In the 22% bracket, savings could be closer to \$2,640

For retirees living on fixed incomes, that's meaningful relief.

How Long Will This Last?

The enhanced senior deduction is temporary.

It applies for tax years 2025 through 2028 unless Congress extends it.

That means retirees may want to consider tax planning strategies during this window — such as timing IRA withdrawals or Roth conversions — while deductions are higher.

What Hasn't Changed

To avoid confusion, here's what remains the same:

- Social Security taxation thresholds are unchanged
- Up to 85% of benefits can still be taxable
- Required minimum distributions (RMDs) still apply
- State taxation rules for Social Security vary and are unaffected by this federal change

The Bottom Line

The 2025 tax law does not eliminate taxes on Social Security, but it does provide a meaningful new deduction for seniors that could significantly reduce — and for some retirees eliminate — their federal income tax bill.

For many Americans over 65, that may feel like the tax break they've long been promised — even if the mechanics behind it are more complicated.

For a detailed review of your own tax situation, Susan can be reached at 785-478-7808.

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Turning Retirement Dreams into Travel Realities

By Jim Hanna

One of the most rewarding aspects of retirement is the opportunity to reclaim your time and invest it in pursuits that bring joy, fulfillment, and



Hanna

personal growth. For many retirees, travel is not just a leisure activity but is a long-held aspiration and a central part of their vision for this next chapter of life. If traveling in retirement is on your to-do list, the following considerations can help you evaluate your options and build a strategy that supports your desire to explore the world on your financial terms.

Be strategic about timing. When it comes to retirement travel, timing matters. Many retirees choose to embark on their most ambitious trips during the early years of retirement, when physical and mental health are often at their peak. These initial years may involve longer or more frequent journeys, which can result in higher travel expenses. If this aligns with your personal goals, consider front-loading your travel budget to accommodate a more active lifestyle early on in retirement. Adjusting your financial plan to reflect this pattern can help you enjoy your adventures while maintaining long-term financial stability.

Define your travel style and preferences. Understanding your travel preferences is key to estimating costs and planning effectively. Are you envisioning short road trips to nearby destinations, extended RV road trips, or regular international travel? Each ap-

proach comes with its own financial implications. For example, domestic travel by car may be relatively affordable, while overseas trips can involve higher costs for airfare, lodging, and insurance. By clarifying the type and frequency of travel you envision, you can tailor your retirement plan to reflect realistic spending expectations and avoid surprises.

Look for ways to reduce travel expenses. Travel doesn't have to break the bank. There are many ways to reduce costs without sacrificing enjoyment. Consider renting a home or apartment if you plan to stay in one location for an extended period as this can be more economical than staying in hotels. Take advantage of your flexibility as a retiree by traveling during off-peak seasons, when prices for flights and accommodations are often lower. With a little research and planning, you can stretch your travel dollars further and make each trip more affordable without sacrificing the experience.

Review your insurance coverage. Insurance is an often-overlooked aspect of travel planning, but it can be crucial, especially in retirement. Travel insurance can provide peace of mind by covering unexpected events such as illness, trip cancellations, or lost luggage. It's also important to understand the limitations of your health insurance coverage. Medicare, for example, does not provide coverage outside the United States, and even domestic travel may require supplemental insurance depending on your provider. Reviewing your insurance needs before you travel ensures you're adequately protected wherever your journey takes you.

Retirement is a time to embrace new adventures, and travel can be one of the most fulfilling ways to do so. Consider connecting with a financial advisor to create a well-crafted financial strategy that supports your lifestyle and brings your retirement vision to life without compromising your long-term goals.

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2 Reasons You Shouldn't Bank on a Higher Tax Refund in the Future

By Ryan Shumaker
SmartVestor Pro



Ryan hosts a radio show Saturdays at 7:30am & Sundays at 8am on FM93.5/AM1440. Listen anytime at RetireLawrence.com/Radio

According to early IRS filing data, the average tax refund is over 14% higher so far this filing season compared to the same time last year, and the average refund is projected to be over \$1,000 more. While many treat their tax refund like a spring bonus, the reality is that a tax refund is nothing more than the IRS giving you your own money back. Tax refunds are not 'free money,' nor are they really indicative of whether you paid more or less in total tax compared to other years. Having a tax refund simply means that throughout the year, you paid the IRS more than what you actually owed, and in essence gave the government an interest free loan.

One big reason refunds are larger this year is because nearly everyone that was an employee had more taxes withheld than what was actually owed. The explanation for this is that the original Trump tax cuts were set to

automatically expire in 2025 and the IRS told payroll companies via their published tax withholding tables to assume tax rates were going to increase as part of this expiration. When the Big Beautiful Bill was passed in the summer, which extended the current lower tax rates, the IRS announced that it was not going to change their tax withholding tables partway through 2025. This meant that employers continued to withhold more in tax than what everyone actually owed by assuming tax rates were higher than what they actually were. This has been corrected for 2026, so if you were an employee being paid wages you'll likely have seen your take home pay go up slightly this year as the amount that has been withheld for taxes has decreased. This correction means more money throughout this year, but a smaller (or no) refund next year.

Another reason tax refunds are higher is due to some of the new provisions in the Big Beautiful Bill, such as the bonus deductions given to those that are 65 or older, and the ability to deduct more in state and local taxes

■ See RYAN SHUMAKER on page 9



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Biology and Common Sense Triumph Over Radical Transgender Ideology

By Dr. Michael Brown

Two major events last month signal that, at last, the radical transgender house of cards is starting to fall, marking the triumph of biological reality and plain common sense.

The first major event was a legal decision, where two million dollars in damages was awarded to detransitioner Fox Vaian. As reported by Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D., on the Children's Health Defense Website,

"Fox Varian, now 22, underwent a double mastectomy in 2019, when she was 16. Afterward, she felt that her gender transition had harmed her, so she detransitioned. In 2023, she sued her

psychologist, Dr. Kenneth Einhorn, and her plastic surgeon, Dr. Simon Chin."

Sadly, two million dollars cannot repay Varian for the lifelong damage that was done to her.

But her case marks a significant legal development, one that should be echoed hundreds or even thousands of times in the years ahead, thereby shutting the door on the genital mutilation or surgical castration of minors.

Financial pragmatism alone, even without any accompanying ethical restraint, will be enough to sink the industry of "transitioning" children.

The second major event was an announcement from the American Soci-

ety of Plastic Surgeons. As reported by Devi Shastri for AP News,

"The nation's largest professional organization for plastic surgeons recommended that gender-affirming surgeries be delayed until patients turn 19, changing the group's stance on the politically charged issue and diverging from several other major medical organizations' guidance."

Specifically,

"The American Society of Plastic



Surgeons said Tuesday that it found 'insufficient evidence' that the benefits of chest, genital and facial surgeries on mi-

■ Continued on next page

Is It All About Entertainment?



CLINT DECKER
President and Evangelist with Great Awakenings, Inc.

Speaking Truth

The Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC has an exhibit, "Entertainment Nation." It explores America's transformation into an entertainment and leisure focused country. Today, Americans spend nearly five hours a day being entertained through their phones, tablets, video games, computers, TVs, other games, sports, leisure and recreational activities. Budgets reflect this as people spend over \$300 a month or \$3,600 a year on entertainment related items. And even in hard times Americans are still determined to have lots of fun no matter their financial situation.

Is this what we were created for – to be in constant pursuit of entertainment, pleasure, recreation, and leisure?

Our Creator had a different mindset. The Bible says about Him, "Thus the heavens and the earth were fin-

ished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done." (Genesis 2:1-2) The work God did took place before evil ever entered the world. Work was part of God's utopia, the perfect place He created for mankind to live. And He purposed them to labor like Him, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." (Gen. 2:15) All mankind was created in the image of God, so since God worked, He created mankind to do the same.

What does it mean to work? It means to create, build or produce something. Just like God did with the heavens and the earth. Jesus, who is the physical image of the invisible God, reflects this. He once said, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (John 5:17) He worked constantly at doing signs, wonders, miracles, teaching and preaching to bring the Kingdom of God to earth and build His church. Then near the end, before His death and resurrection, he said, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." (Jn. 17:4)

The culture of entertainment we

live in is not what we were made for. God made us for something greater. He made us so that we might create and build things for His glory, and for the good of other people, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:23-24)



When we give ourselves to work, we are the benefactors. When we work at our job with excellence we might get promoted or a pay raise. When we work at building a company, we provide beneficial products and services to people and give others a place of employment to provide for their family. When we work on our marriage, we can have a strong and healthy relationship with our spouse. When we work at raising godly children, we provide them a foundation for a successful future. When we work at maintaining

our home and property we provide something that will last and can be used to be a blessing for others.

We have a moral obligation to work, so we can provide for ourselves without relying upon others. We also have an obligation to teach our children and grandchildren to work so they too can provide for themselves. God tell us to, "Train up a child in the way he should go..." (Proverbs 22:6) Training a child is more than just teaching him to tie his shoes, ride a bike or go to school and learn to read and write. Training also involves teaching our children how to work. That is what we are doing when we assign them simple chores like making their bed, feeding the dog, taking the trash out, cleaning off the table and other things. They are learning invaluable skills to prepare them to make it on their own.

A prayer for you – Lord God, help us to realize the blessing you have provided to create and build things through working. Help us to be an example to the next generation of the value and joy of labor. In Jesus' name. Amen.

—Clint Decker is President of Great Awakenings. Share your comment at cdecker@greatawakenings.org and follow his blog at clintdecker.blogspot.com.

■ Continued from previous page

nors experiencing gender dysphoria outweigh the risks.”

This too marks a significant moment in the transgender debate, since the statement was compassionate, not minimizing the very real emotional stress experienced by some individuals who suffer from gender confusion. Instead, the announcement noted that the

“ASPS affirms that truly humane, ethical, and just care, particularly for children and adolescents, must balance compassion with scientific rigor, developmental considerations and concern for long-term welfare.”



Detransitioner Chloe Cole predicts a massive wave of lawsuits after landmark \$2 million verdict for Fox Varian, and says the legal precedent will hold doctors accountable for performing gender surgeries on minors.

Yet, as I argued during a November 18, 2009 appearance on Tyra Banks, real compassion often calls on us to do the more difficult thing, namely, get to the root of a child’s confusion and help them from the inside out, rather than remove (or “remake”) their private parts and/or surgically castrate them.

During that same appearance, I also warned that doctors were “experimenting with kids’ lives!”, a claim that the other panelists passionately rejected. But by 2021, one of those very panelists admitted to serious misgivings about the subject, stating,

“We zig and then we zag, and I think maybe we zipped a little too far to the left in some cases. I think there was naivete on the part of pediatric endocrinologists who were proponents of early [puberty] blockade thinking that just this magic can happen, that surgeons can do anything.”

How costly that medical zipping and zagging has been on countless confused minors who have been irreversibly damaged, not to mention the broader damage done to the thinking of an entire generation of young people who have become deeply confused about issues as simple as the difference between male and female.

It is “sociological contagion” that best explains why, according to “a controversial 2021 Barna poll, nearly 40% of Gen Z describes themselves as being somewhere on the LGBTQ spectrum.” In contrast, as it is becoming increasingly evident that the emperor has no clothes, it is no surprise that, “A new report re-

veals a sharp decline in Gen Z identifying by terms such as ‘nonbinary,’ ‘bisexual,’ ‘transgender’ and ‘queer’ over a recent two-year span while the percentage of Gen Z describing themselves as heterosexual has increased.”

But these changes have been inevitable for some time.

Political leaders who have no problem with same-sex “marriage” realized that boys competing against girls in sports was inherently unfair and that biological males did not belong in the same locker rooms and bathrooms as females.

As for ideological considerations, there is no hiding the folly of judges and medical experts and educators unable to answer questions as simple as, “What is a woman?” or, “Can men get pregnant?”

Added to all this are the many heart wrenching stories of the detransitioners, victims of “a massive human rights vio-

lation,” which are now turning into what could well be a flood of legal cases. Their poignant stories must be heard, both in the court of public opinion and in courts of law.

That’s why voices as disparate as Joe Rogan, Prof. Richard Dawkins, Bill Maher, and J. K. Rowling have spoken out against radical trans activism.

To repeat: the emperor has no clothes.

More broadly, the larger failure of radical leftist, trans ideology, evidenced most drastically in the disastrous ad campaign of Bud Light featuring Dylan Mulvaney, reveals that woke does not triumph over common sense. (Put another way, you don’t need to be a rocket scientist to figure out that your average American beer drinker would not be particularly thrilled with a biological male being the new “poster girl” for the brand.)

It turns out, then, that biology is quite stubborn and common sense quite resilient, helping steer society back in a saner direction. This is good news.

The only caveat is that we don’t forget compas-

sion, remembering that some people, young and old alike, are deeply tormented by gender confusion. Let all who can stand with them, from psychologists to medical professionals to spiritual leaders, make a serious effort to help them find wholeness and relief.



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RYAN SHUMAKER

continued from page 7

paid. Both of these provisions are considered temporary though, and are set to expire in a few years. They both also have phase outs, meaning if your income starts getting too high, you’ll begin to lose them. So, if you think your income may increase or that you may live for more than a few more years, you shouldn’t assume your taxes will continue to be lower in the future.

These are just two of the many reasons tax refunds may be lower than expected in future years. Certainly there are others, such as not being able to deduct 100% of charitable giving or gambling losses any longer. It certainly makes sense that the government would want to have people receiving larger tax refunds during a midterm election year as it would help those in power increase the likelihood of being re-elected. Don’t assume, though, that if you got a larger tax refund this year that it will happen again.

Oftentimes assumptions can be dramatically different than the way reality plays out. Probably the number one myth we dispel when it comes to retirement

planning is that taxes will be lower in retirement. While the Big Beautiful Bill may have given temporary tax relief and bigger refunds to some, far too many retirees will still face higher marginal tax rates in the future even if their income is lower than when they were working. The fact is that taxes are often one of, if not the largest cost for retirees. We firmly believe that retirees are still one of the highest and most unfairly taxed groups out there. If you’re having trouble navigating the increasingly complex tax system and don’t want to pay more than your fair share in taxes, I’d suggest scheduling a complimentary tax strategy review with someone from our team at Retirement Portfolios by calling 785-330-9292 or visiting RetireFromTaxes.com.

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Why Male Friendship Matters In an Epidemic of Isolation

Samwise Gamgee and Frodo Baggins from “Lord of the Rings.” Augustus McCrae and Woodrow Call from “Lonesome Dove.” Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin from “Master and Commander.” These are just three examples of strong male friendship in 20th-century fiction.

The classic template for this sort of friendship is the ancient Greek tale of best friends Damon and Pythias. Sentenced to death for plotting against the cruel tyrant Dionysius, Pythias asks permission to visit his mother and sister and settle his affairs before his execution. He promises to return and face his death. The king refuses, but then Damon steps up and offers himself as a hostage for his friend’s return. The king grants this request, cynically certain that Damon will die, and Pythias departs. Yet he does return just in the nick of time, and Dionysius is so touched by the devotion of both young men that he sets them free.

This is the quintessential story of male camaraderie.

Today, however, these tales, old and new, mock rather than match the reality experienced by many men.

Stats and Causation

In his article “How Male Friendship Saves Lives,” writer Jarie Bolander mentions a 2021 survey that said that in 1990, 55 percent of men had six or more close friends. By 2021, that number had dropped to just 27 percent. Meanwhile, the percentage of men with no close friends at all rose from 3 percent to 15 percent.

Experts cite several reasons for this decline. Bolander, for example, says that men are activity-oriented, engaging in shoulder-to-shoulder sharing, whereas women prefer face-to-face relationships, focusing on emotions. When these shared activities, such as sports, fade away, the friendships fade with them. Consequently, high school or college graduates who shared not only sports or clubs with friends but also recreation such as video games often find that commencement ends many of these friendships.

Like some other commentators, Bolander writes, “Add in a lack of emotional skills, fear of rejection, and outdated ideas about masculinity, and it’s no wonder men struggle to build meaningful friendships.” Some observers go further, advocating that men adopt more feminine qualities of friendship: emotional openness, engagement in personal matters, and vulnerability.



More Likely Causes

Yet all of these reasons for male loneliness appear inadequate. Given that the men from 1990 must have shared those same traits with the men of 2021, including “outdated ideas about masculinity,” how did they have more friends and experience less loneliness?

More likely, the isolation that some men are feeling today is part of the social disconnection in our culture at large, addressed in the 2023 Surgeon General’s Advisory “Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation.” Less community involvement, more time spent on screens than with human beings, and hurried lifestyles have created distance between people.

Founders of The Art of Manliness website, Kate and Brett McKay, have constructed a different take on male friendships. In their excellent article “Why Are Female Friendships the Ideal? (‘Cause Dude Friendships Also Rock),” they unpack the differences between men and women in what they expect and get from a friendship, then reaffirm the more traditional shoulder-to-shoulder friendships between men, including the vital point that “instead of trying to force male friendships into a female mold, maybe we should just let men make the connections that feel the most natural to them.”

Here’s the Part That Counts

All of these statistics, data, and analyses have little to do with individuals. We

might feel good knowing that we have the average number of friends, and if we’re lonely, it might be a comfort realizing that we’re not the only person in the world experiencing isolation. But if we want to make some friends, what’s really needed is some good practical advice, preferably from people who’ve experienced loneliness and know what they’re talking about.

In “Making and Keeping Man Friendships,” Brett McKay begins by telling readers that he has gone through the same difficulties. He modestly notes that he doesn’t have all the answers to making friends and that he’s consequently collected ideas and advice from several acquaintances. Here is the truncated version of those conversations.

Join an Organization

Men, particularly those with families, often say they lack the time for activities outside the home. After suggesting that these men take an inventory of how they’re spending all those hours, the McKays conclude, “Having healthy man friendships and interests outside your family will make you a saner, more well-rounded man, and thus a better husband and father.”

The associations that he recommends include fraternal organizations such as the Masons—“they’re not just for your grandpa”—churches and religious organizations, sports leagues if you’re looking for some physical action, book clubs,

and Toastmasters, where you’ll not only become a better orator but will meet other guys. Although we usually associate book clubs with women, several men whom I know, including one of my sons, both founded and participate in a men’s book club. They read some great literature, enjoy a monthly evening of camaraderie, and deepen their friendships with others in the group.

The workplace and neighborhoods, the McKays rightly contend, are natural pools of potential friends. Getting to know men in both places means introducing ourselves and inviting someone out for a drink or over to the house for a beer. The point is to get past our natural reticence and open a dialogue.

Maintaining Friendships

Here again, the McKays offer some solid tips for staying in touch and deepening relationships. Having a common goal—running a marathon, sticking to a diet, reading a book in common every month—keeps the friendship on the upswing. A monthly guys’ night out playing poker, attending a sports event, or simply getting together for breakfast or supper boosts friendships.

And if circumstances have separated you from a close friend, the McKays recommend touching base on a regular basis rather than on random occasions. Phone calls, emails, or old-fashioned letters, which the McKays strongly encourage, ensure that the friendship, no matter the miles, will thrive.

Points to Remember

The McKays’ advice is excellent, but here are several other quick notes for consideration.

Being alone does not equate with loneliness. Some people spend the greater part of each day alone for all sorts of reasons. We who do so often treasure this time of self-isolation.

Loneliness is often a passing mood rather than a permanent condition. The mood lasts one or two days, then vanishes as suddenly as it appeared.

With certain exceptions, you are not a “victim” of loneliness. To take that attitude is unmanly. If you are physically able, with effort and intention, you can make friends.

Some of those polls showing diminished rates of male friendship likely neglected to ask whether the respondent had a spouse, grown children, or close female friends. Certainly, having man-buds is valuable, as the McKays stated, but others may count as much or more.

The number of male friends one has means little. It’s not a contest. If we’re talking about guys who would stick with us through thick and thin, then count yourself blessed to have one or two such “brothers from other mothers.”

Finally, and most importantly, there’s this word of advice from Ralph Waldo Emerson, as true now as the day he wrote it, “The only way to have a friend is to be one.”

There you go.

By Jeff Minick | *The Epoch Times*

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Vatican Works For Unity Across Christian Denominations

In a profoundly positive appraisal of the Protestant Reformation, high-ranking Vatican officials are championing the Augsburg Confession — a pivotal Lutheran text — highlighting it as a shared basis for Christian unity, as the 500th anniversary of the document approaches in 2030.

Marking the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity last month, Cardinal Kurt Koch, the prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, underscored the “widespread discussion” about the Catholic Church possibly recognizing the document.

The authors “express their fundamental conviction that it is a Catholic confession,” Koch wrote in the Italian edition of the Vatican daily *L'Osservatore Romano*. “With this orientation in mind, we cannot underestimate the ecumenical significance of the Diet of Augsburg.”

Emphasizing Pope Leo XIV's resolute commitment to ecumenism, Archbishop Flavio Pace, the dicastery's secretary, stressed the significance of commemorating the confession to “rediscover a common foundation” and “rediscover something more for our present.”

Pace told the Italian edition of *Vatican News* that the role of the Augsburg Confession was “an attempt to find common ground” and “a shared profession of faith among the countries we now identify with the Reformation,” after Pope Leo X excommunicated Martin Luther in 1521.

Philip Melancthon, Luther's friend and colleague, drafted the “*Confessio Augustana*” for the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1530. Its goal was to peacefully settle the ecclesiastical split by showing that reformation teachings were genuinely Catholic when viewed through scripture and tradition.

The confession “certainly deserves consideration as a stellar ecumenical confession of faith,” Fr. Lorenzo Murrone, the co-pastor of Rome's Confessional Lutheran Church of Italy, told *Religion Unplugged*. “Its intent and spirit were precisely to foster clarity and understanding between the nascent evangelicals and the Roman Catholic emperor.”

“It also rooted the reformation's justification in church history and scripture, so much that Melancthon can close it by saying, ‘in doctrine and ceremonies we have received nothing contrary to Scripture or the Church universal,’” the Latin and Greek scholar



added. “But history has shown us that confessions ... can become casualties in word-battles, losing sight of the sensus auctoris [author's meaning].”

He said religious leaders need to take an honest approach and ask: “What did Melancthon mean by this — and do I agree?”

Affirming the confession's dual purpose, Koch explained how the first part demonstrates that “the evangelical communities accord with the doctrinal foundations of the early church,” while the second part justifies the abolition of improper practices which were “not divisive issues at the ecclesiastical level.”

This shows that the Reformation “at its origins, conceived of itself as a movement for the renewal of all Christianity in the spirit of the gospel, convinced that it was a universal renewal of the church and not a reformation that had shattered the unity of the church,” Koch said.

At the 450th anniversary of the publication of “*Augustana*” in 1980, Pope John Paul II praised it as “the last energetic attempt at reconciliation” — noting that “even if the bridge was not built successfully, the storm of the times has spared important pillars of this bridge.”

Joseph Ratzinger, who later Pope Benedict XIV, also praised the efforts “to achieve recognition of the Augsburg Confession as Catholic and thus to affirm the catholicity of the churches of the Augsburg Confession, which makes possible a corporate union in diversity.”

In his column, Koch concluded that the “*Confessio Augustana*” was not accepted as a Catholic confession in 1980 despite extensive efforts, primarily due to the confusion over the precise meaning to be attributed to the term “recognition.”

Koch and Pace's endorsement of the Protestant Reformation's central text echoes the relentless thrust by Pope Leo

XIV towards Christian unity since his election last May.

For example, in his apostolic letter “*Unitate Fidei*,” marking the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, Leo urged Catholics to “leave behind theological controversies that have lost their [reason for existence]” and unite with Protestants and the Eastern Orthodox “in one faith and one love.”

Last October, Leo hosted the Anglican archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, and King Charles at a joint service, bestowing on Charles the title of the Royal Confrater of the papal basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls and ordered a throne to be permanently installed in the basilica for Charles and his successors. Leo and Cottrell led the service together.

At an ecumenical service that culminated the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Jan. 25, Leo preached: “We are one! We already are! Let us recognize it, experience it and make it visible!”

Historians agree.

“Luther was a prophetic voice,” Jesuit scholar Fr. Bryan Lobo, professor of missiology and former dean at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University, said. “Acknowledging the Reformation's contributions and recognizing the Augsburg Confession as a paradigm for Christian unity would further the cause of mission and a unified Christian witness to a broken world that needs to hear the Gospel.”

—*Jules Gomes has a doctorate in biblical studies from the University of Cambridge. Currently a Vatican-accredited journalist based in Rome, he is the author of five books and several academic articles. Gomes lectured at Catholic and Protestant seminaries and universities and was canon theologian and artistic director at Liverpool Cathedral.*

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Spring activities coming to NOTO

The Morris Gallery in NOTO Arts Center will feature Between the Lines, an exhibit of drawings that dwell in the spaces where meaning lingers between gesture and silence, intention and accident, presence and absence. These works, rendered solely in pencil, ink, charcoal, and graphite on paper, invite viewers to read the invisible.

NOTO will host the 11th ANNUAL TOPEKA EASTERFEST on Mar. 28, 10am-3pm, in the NOTO Arts District on North Kansas Avenue, in Redbud Park, and in Veterans Park & the connecting breezeway. The 3 Big Egg Hunts begin at 10:10am in Veterans Park (between NOTO and the Kansas Ave. Bridge). Food Trucks will be on hand and the Family Fun Fair will continue until 3PM, including vendor booths, children's games, food trucks, face painting, inflatables, petting zoo and more. Live music and other entertainment, along with more vendor booths and

photos with the Easter Bunny, will be on hand at Redbud Park. More food trucks and vendors will be located in NOTO Arts Center and parking lot across the street, along with a kid's Foam Party. In addition, sidewalk merchants will be located up and down Kansas Avenue. For more info: Topeka EasterFest 2026 on Facebook, info@C5Alive.org or 785-640-6399.

North Woods Warpaint Post at Topeka Viking Celebration: Join Austin-Marie and the Pink Witch at the Topeka Renaissance Festival as they bring the world of Norse legend to life for an unforgettable weekend of warriors, feasting, merchants, music, and myth. The **TOPEKA RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL - VIKING CELEBRATION** will be Mar. 20-21, at Woodshed Event Center, Friday 6:30pm-midnight; Sat. 10-6. Step



into the realm of longships and lore as we honor the rise of our Viking leader. Friday Night — The Crowning of the Jarl - Viking King Hjarta An Róthaich, as the clans gather to swear loyalty beneath torchlight. Enjoy: Opening ceremony & royal procession, Mead, feasting, and firelit celebrations; Viking combat exhibitions; Live music & late-night revelry. Return on Saturday for the full festival experience, Featuring: Viking & Renaissance merchants; Mead, ale, and food vendors; Weapons demos & full-steel combat; Storytelling, runes, and living-history displays; Family activities & children's realm; Live performers, musicians, and entertainers; Clan Óttalaus in full Viking regalia.

First Friday Art Walk hours are 10 am to 9 pm. First Friday Art Walk & Market is the first Friday of every month. The North Topeka Arts District has become an attraction to Art Lovers and History Buffs alike with beautiful scenes of art and history. Entertainment can also be found on First Fridays, at various venues during the artwalk up and down N. Kansas Avenue, as well as streetside vendors. The restaurants, locally owned shops, art galleries antiques and studios have become a favorite art walk destination.

Racing with Daryl - Fighting cancer one lap at a time: A fundraiser for Daryl Hiebsch 6:30pm, Apr. 3 at The Woodshed. Live & Silent Auction, Tod's BBQ, Music from Crooked Kicks & Nucklehead Jones.

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the events calendar

FREE LISTINGS! E-mail your events to: Voice@cox.net; mail to Metro Voice, P.O. 5724, Topeka, KS 66605; fax to 785-235-3340 or enter online at metrovoiceneeds.com Get your event **Highlighted in Blue in print, our online calendar and promoted in social media for only \$29!**

FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENTS

WEST RIDGE LIVE – every Thursday from 6:30-8:30, food court at Westridge Mall. Mar. 12 – Big Rick Soul Band; Mar. 19 – Rock Party; Mar. 26 – Jack Wagoneers; Apr. 2 – Typical Stereo; Apr. 9 – Bill Horn Band; Apr. 16 – The Coats; Apr. 23 – Departure. While you listen, grab food and drinks from Iron Rail Brewing, Ta Co, and more, serving from 6:30-8:30 PM.

TOPEKA HOME SHOW – Feb. 27, 1-6pm; Feb. 28, 9-6; Mar. 1, 10-3, Stormont Vail Events Ctr

MIDWEST CHRISTIAN COLLEGE EXPO – Feb. 28, 10am - Noon. Colonial Presbyterian Church: South KC Campus, 9500 Wornall Rd. Kansas City, MO 816-524-4522

TOPEKA SPIRIT FAIR – BODY & SOUL REJUVENATION – Feb. 28 – Mar. 1, Woodshed Event Center. Two-day holistic wellness fair with hourly workshops, vendors, food trucks, cash bar

COMMUNITY SPAGHETTI DINNER – Mar. 4, 5-6:30pm, Tecumseh UMC, 334 SE Tecumseh Rd. Spaghetti with meat sauce, garlic bread, salad, and delectable desserts. To-Go Available. \$10 donation requested.

ING NETWORKING GROUP – Mar. 4, 11:30am, at IHOP on Hwy 24. All welcome, free to attend, order from menu if desired.

COULTURE FOR CANCER – Mar. 7, 4-7pm, Vaerus Aviation, Forbes Field. An annual fashionable charitable event supporting the American Cancer Society.

CAPITAL CITY CARNAGE DEMOLITION DERBY – Mar. 6-7, Stormont Vail Events Ctr. stormontvaileventscenter.com or 785-251-5552

TOPEKA ZOOVERSE – Mar. 7, 9am-4pm, Topeka Zoo.

A pop culture festival that will gather local artists, collectors, cosplayers, and enthusiasts from multiple fandoms for a day of fun. **COMPETE** in our Cosplay Contest! **COLLECT** new memorabilia from multiple vendors/artists! **CONNECT** with other fans, creative minds, and animal enthusiasts! Food Trucks will be parked inside the Zoo, providing lunch & snacking options at additional cost. This special event is NOT included in Friends of the Topeka Zoo Membership.

KANSAS KIDFEST – Mar. 7, 10-4, Maner Conference Center, 1717 S. Topeka Blvd. Inflatables, Face-painting, Activity Stations, Interactive fun for curious minds, Live Performances, Interactive Exhibitors, Hands-on experiences. Email hello@tastyfestivals.com to learn more about event & exhibitor opportunities. FREE Admission. Upgrade your experience with an Adventure Wristband (\$12.99 at KansasKidsFest.com)

“SPRING AHEAD” TIME CHANGE – Mar. 8, 2am. Don't forget to change your clocks!

C5Alive “POWER” LUNCHEON – Mar. 12, 11:30-1, at Celtic Fox. Featuring Iron Man John Cantrell. Free admission. Meals available from menu if desired. Please RSVP to info@C5Alive.org so we know how many to expect. Open to the public - bring a friend!

SAVE THE DATE: C5 POWER Luncheon, Apr. 9, 11:30-1.

BLARNEY BREAKFAST – Mar. 14, 7-10am, Blind Tiger. All-you-can-eat breakfast buffet, entertainment, raffles, and more while celebrity servers get their Irish on...earning tips for a great cause. Advance tickets only: <https://bit.ly/blarneybreakfast2026>

CAR SEAT CHECKLANE – Mar. 14, 9-12, 1155 SW Seabrook

TOPEKA IRISHFEST – Mar. 14, Every Plaza. Begins at

Noon with parade, music, food, vendors and kids activities. <http://TopekIrishFest.com>. 5K Run at 10am.

ST. PAT'S CELEBRATION – Mar. 14 12:30-3:30pm after the parade, Arab Shriners, 1305 S. Kansas Ave. Music, cash bar, bagpipes, food.

WOODSHED MARKET & ST. PAT'S CELEBRATION – Mar. 15, 10-3. A festive day full of community fun: Market Bingo, Donknado Playing Irish Acoustics from 11 - 1 pm / To Open the Market at 10 am - Bag Piper, Food,

Lounge & Cash Bar open throughout the day. Sellers & Local Businesses, Prizes & Giveaways. Costume contest at 2pm.

TOPEKA RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL – VIKING CELEBRATION – Mar. 20-21, at Woodshed Event Center. Friday 6:30pm-midnight; Sat. 10-6. Bringing the world of Norse legend to life for an unforgettable weekend of warriors, feasting, merchants, music, and myth. Step into the realm of longships and lore as we honor the rise of our Viking leader. Friday Night – The Crowning of the Jarl. Enjoy: Opening ceremony & royal procession, Mead, feasting, and firelit celebrations; Viking combat exhibitions; Live music & late-night revelry. Return on Saturday for the full festival experience, Featuring: Viking & Renaissance merchants; Mead, ale, and food vendors; Family activities & children's realm; Live performers, musicians, and entertainers

HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS – Mar. 20, 7pm, Stormont Vail Event Center

TOPEKA RV & OUTDOOR SHOW – Mar. 20-22, Ex-pocentre

PINSTRIPES AND PEARLS – Mar. 21, 5:30-9:30pm, (Afterparty from 9-11pm), Union Station, Kansas City. The Center for Developmentally Disabled (CDD) empowers children and adults with developmental disabilities by providing inclusive programs that promote

independence, dignity, and meaningful participation in the community through residential support, education, vocational training, nursing services, and access to essential resources. CDD's signature 1920s-inspired fundraising gala brings together community and business leaders for dinner, auctions, and entertainment. Ticket Link: <https://secure.ogiv.com/event/cddgala26/>

SPRING FLING OUTDOOR MARKET – Mar. 21, 10-4, 10th & MacVicar

11th ANNUAL TOPEKA EASTERFEST: FAMILY FUN FESTIVAL & VENDOR FAIR – Mar. 28, 10am-3pm, in the NOTO Arts District on North Kansas Avenue. The Big Egg Hunt begins at 10am in Veterans Park (between NOTO and the Kansas Ave. Bridge). Food Trucks will be on hand and the Family Fun Fair will continue until 3PM, including vendor booths, children's games, food trucks, face painting, inflatables, and more. Live music and other entertainment, along with more vendor booths, will be on hand at Redbud Park. More food trucks and vendors will be located in NOTO Arts Center and parking lot across the street. In addition, sidewalk merchants will be located up and down Kansas Avenue. For more info: [Topeka EasterFest on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/C5Alive.org), info@C5Alive.org or 785-640-6399.

2ND ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT – Mar. 29, Cedar Lawn Farm, 12741 SW K4 Hwy. Face painting, cookies,

TOPEKA RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

VIKING CELEBRATION

MARCH 20TH 630 PM - 12 AM

MARCH 21ST 10 AM - 6PM

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Mar. 12, 11:30-1: "POWER" Luncheon at Celtic Fox. Featuring Iron Man John Cantrell!

Free Admission. Order lunch from menu if desired.

Open to the public. RSVP to info@C5Alive.org

Save the Dates!

- Mar. 28: 11th Annual EASTERFEST in NOTO, 10:00-3:00
- Apr. 9: POWER Luncheon, 11:30-1
- May 14: POWER Luncheon, 11:30-1

For info: www.C5Alive.org or [Facebook.com/C5Alive](https://www.facebook.com/C5Alive)

open bar.

SPOKEN 4 IN CONCERT - Mar. 29, 6pm, First Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar.

HHS FOOD TRUCK NIGHT - Apr. 3, 4-8pm, 5720 SW 21st. Food and local bands.

SMOKE IN THE SPRING - Apr. 10-11, Osage City Community Building. Taste of Osage City BBQ and fun. Live Music, Inflatables, & Fireworks!

PAWS IN THE PARK - Apr. 18, 10-2, HHS, 5720 SW 21st St. Meet the community, shop vendors, help the animals. Lindsay.hubbard@hhstopeka.org; helping-hands@hhstopeka.org

TOPEKA YOUTH FOR CHRIST COMEDY CAFÉ - Apr. 17, 6:30pm, Topeka Bible Church, 1101 SW Mulvane Ave. A Night of Laughter featuring comedian Connie Hall. Underwritten by table sponsors. Seating is limited. Make reservations at www.topekayfc.org/event/comedy_cafe or call the YFC office at 785-232-8296

ONGOING EVENTS

SK&AWAY LEARNERS SESSIONS - Every Saturday morning 11-1, Sk&away, 815 Fairlawn Family fun environment and the best deal in town, \$8 per person but an adult skates for free with paid child! sk&away.net; 785-272-0303; manager@sk&away.net

SENIORS NUTRITIONAL LUNCH - Weekdays, except holidays, at noon at Auburn Civic Center, 1020 N. Washington Street. Minimal cost per person. Reservations/cancellations required 24 hours in advance by calling Meals on Wheels of Jefferson & Shawnee Co. at 295-3980. Each meal includes 1% milk & sugar-free items for diabetics. 215-0064.

MEDICARE MONDAYS - First Mon. ea. month, 1-3pm. Topeka/Sh. Co. Public Library, 1515 SW 10th. Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging offers Senior health insurance counseling. 580-4545 or nhnl@tscpl.org

COUNTRY AND BALLROOM DANCING - Thursdays 6-9pm. Croco Hall. Info: 379-9538, 478-4760.

FIRST FRIDAY ART MARKET - Downtown and NOTO arts district. Arts, antiques, fine crafts, flea market items, snacks, beverages, entertainment and more.

TOPEKA ACAPPELLA UNLIMITED AUDITIONS - Topeka Acappella Unlimited is looking for female singers who would like to sing four-part acappella harmonies. Topeka Acappella Unlimited is a Chapter of Sweet Adelines, International. Cindy Patton: 785-640-7403

HARVESTERS MOBILE FOOD PANTRY. 1st & 3rd Sat, 2-3pm, Shawnee Heights UMC parking lot.

FREE MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION - 4th Tue. thru Nov., 9am, 1231 NW Eugene St. Randel Ministries, Inc., in partnership with Harvesters and Family of God Church will have its monthly food distribution. No ID or proof of income required, first come first served. Distributing fresh produce and other items to families in need. 785-234-1111. RandelMinistries.com

OPEN INDOOR COURT PICKLEBALL - Sundays at 4pm, Berynton United Methodist Church (7010 SE Berynton Rd. All ages and abilities welcome.

WOODSHED MARKET - Sun. 10-3, 1901 N. Kansas Ave.

FAMILY NIGHT AT COSMOS COURT - Tuesdays, 5pm, Cosmos Court, 909 S. Kansas Ave. Pizza, salads, hot dogs, nachos, soup and more! Get a 16" Pizza, 2 side salads, and 4 cups of ice cream for only \$30!

FRIDAY NIGHT FUNNIES - Every Friday at Cosmos Court, 909 S. Kansas. Weekly comedy show is only \$15, or two for \$25.

CORNER MARKET - 2nd Saturdays. 29th & Adams. 50+ Vendors, food trucks, music, kids activities,

KANSAS PRAIRIE PICKERS - Fourth Sun. ea. Month, 1pm, Auburn Community Center. Foot-stomping, hand-clapping tunes. Concessions available

GRAND OTTAWA OPRY - 2nd & 4th Saturday, 5:30PM-pre-show, 6PM showtime, Ottawa Memorial Auditorium, 301 S Hickory, Ottawa. Tickets are \$15 and only at the door. Ph. 785-241-6762, email grandopry@gmail.com. GrandOttawaOpry.com

HARVESTER'S PROGRAM FOR SENIOR CITIZENS - every second Sat., takes place at Christian Lord Ministries, 2421 SE California. Call 266-4979.

HOPE HOUSE FREE COMMUNITY CLOTHING BANK - Wed. 6-8pm and Sat. 10am-12pm, Oakland Church of the Nazarene: 939 NE Oakland

HARVESTER FREE MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION - 3rd Saturday each month, 10-11am, Oakland Church of the Nazarene: 939 NE Oakland

FIRST SATURDAY BREAKFAST BUFFET - 7:30 AM - 10:00 AM, Shawnee Heights UMC, 6020 SE 44th

MEETINGS & CLASSES

CHRISTIAN WRITERS GROUP OF TOPEKA - 1st & 3rd Mondays, 7pm at the Hughes Room 205 of the Topeka Library. Workshop for aspiring writers. Each participant is asked to bring five copies of a two page type written sample of a work in progress. After reading the pages aloud each par-

tipicant is allowed an equal number of positive and negative comments offered in a spirit of helpfulness. If you would like to read something email Charles at jccw@gmail.com

SENIORS PITCH CLUB - Every Tuesday 1 pm at Garfield Community Center. First visit free then a dollar per visit for coffee and replacement cards

CRAFTY, SKILLED OR CREATIVE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to develop outdoor lighted displays at Ward Meade Park events. Contact Elsie, 785-256-2920.

CONCERNED WOMEN FOR AMERICA MEETING - Join other concerned people to pray and unite in action for Shawnee Co. and our Nation. For info about monthly meetings: 702-328-7835 or ks.cwfa.org.

THE HEAT - FREE fitness classes for the community. Located at Florence Crittenton Services Center for Integrative Health, 5423 SW 7th. www.floorcritkansan.org

DEAF WORSHIP SERVICE - 3rd Sun., 3pm, Faith Lutheran Church, 17th & Gage. Also, every Sun. 9:30am service is interpreted.

TAI CHI FOR HEALTH - Mon. 10-11 at Lowman United Methodist Church and Thu. 9:30-10:30 at Topeka Zoo. No training needed, just watch & follow. Contact Madon Daily at 505-424-8989 or madondailey@gmail.com. To Join from Home via Zoom, contact Madon for the Zoom link

PICKLEBALL - Mon. & Wed, 1-3pm, First Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar Ave. Park on West Side, where the gym is located. Contact Dave Mathias, davemathias@sbcglobal.net, or Betsy Thompson, betsyjthompson@gmail.com.

SHEPHERD'S CENTER BOOK CLUB - 1st & 3rd Mon. 2-4pm at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1275 SW Boswell Ave. Call: 785-249-3258 or email shepherdstopeka@yahoo.com for the book of study.

SMS - STRENGTH, MOBILITY, STABILITY EXERCISE GROUP (SMS) Mon. 9-9:30am, Arbor Court, 4200 SW Drury Lane. Tue. & Thu, 9-9:30am, Rosehill Place, 3600 SW Gage Blvd # 97. Tue & Thu, 10-10:45, Grace UMC, 2627 SW Western Ave. Call Anne Crawford at 785-273-4527 or email anne.crawford@cox.net.

SENIOR FIT & FUN PROGRAM - Every Mon., Wed., and Fri at 1:30 at Pleasant Hills United Methodist Church, 4525 NW Butten Rd., 785-246-1737.

TOPEKA LIONS CLUB - 1st Mondays at Noon - 1 pm at The Capper Foundation, 3500 SW 10th Ave. Park on the North side. RSVP by Fri. for lunch/pay at the meeting. Visitors welcome. TopekaLions.org/contact-us to make reservations. WE SERVE!

BOY'S TRAIL LIFE & AMERICAN HERITAGE GIRLS

TROUPS - Every Mon. 6pm, Cornerstone Comm. Ch., 7620 SW 21st. Faith-based scouting programs, age 5-18. Register: cornerstonetopeka.com. 478-2929.

TOPEKA NEEDLEWORK GUILD - Every Mon. (except holidays) 9a-11a in the Menninger Room of the Topeka Public Library. Bring a project to work on as we share our needleworking skills and ideas.

TOPEKA LINCOLN CLUB - 1st Tue. of month, 7pm, Topeka Public Library. Discussing our greatest President, Abraham Lincoln, and his times. The public is welcome. For info, Kirk Nystrom 785-235-6977.

SUNRISE OPTIMIST CLUB - Every Tue., 6:30am, Sunrise Optimist Complex, 720 NW 50th St. 246-1291.

NARVE (Nat'l Assn of Railroad Veteran Employee) - 2nd Tuesday each month at 9:30AM @ Museum of the Kansas National Guard, 125 SE Airport Dr, Topeka

FRATERNAL ORDER OF EAGLES Aerie 4319. 1st & 3rd Tue. 7pm; Auxiliary: 1st & 4th Tue. 6pm, 2941 SE Fremont Street. An international non-profit organization uniting fraternally in the spirit of liberty, truth, justice, and equality, to make human life more desirable by lessening its ills and promoting peace, prosperity, gladness and hope. www.foe.com 785-266-7307

DUPLICATE BRIDGE - Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:30PM at The Woman's Club of Topeka, 5221 SW West Dr. Bill Gates and Warren Buffett play duplicate bridge! It is great for your brain health. For additional information email janescola@hotmail.com.

O.W.L.S. (Older Wise Loving Saints) - meets the second Tuesday of the month. Location varies and can be found at www.faithfamilylife.com

MAP GROUP (MEMOIRS, ANCESTRY, PHOTOS) - VIA ZOOM - 4th Wed. 10-11:30am. Contact Rich McReynolds at rlm4017@gmail.com. Via Zoom link

FAMILY HISTORY WRITING GROUP - 2nd Wed. 10-11:30am, Lowman United Methodist Church, room 12. Do you have great family stories to tell and want to pass them down to the next generation but don't know where to start? shepherdstopeka@yahoo.com

S.W.A.G. (Spiritual Warriors Anointed by God) youth group - Wed at 7:00 p.m. 3710 NW Topeka Blvd.

AWANA - Every Wed., 6-8pm, First Southern Baptist Church, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 272-0443.

AWANA - Every Wed., 6:30pm, Bethel Baptist Church, 4011 N. Kansas Ave. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 286-0467.

AWANA - Every Wed., 6:30-8pm, Auburn Christian Church. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 256-2515.

VIP LUNCHEON FOR SENIORS - Every Wed., 10:45 Bible Study and meal at Noon, Topeka Church of the Brethren, 3201 NW Rochester Rd. (1 mile north of Dillon's North). FREE lunch with Christian fellowship, devotions & entertainment provided by Topeka North Outreach. Free will donations accepted. For info: 785-224-8803 or vip@topekanorthoutreach.org.

STUDENT IMPACT - Every Wed., 6-8pm, First Southern Baptist, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Youth games, teaching, worship, small groups. For info: 272-0443.

CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE - Every Thurs. 7-9pm, First Southern Baptist, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Worship for college students.

TOPEKA COSMOPOLITAN CLUB: The Club that fights Diabetes - Meetings: first three Thursdays of every month, 12 noon, at the Topeka County Club.

INTENTIONAL MOM - 1st & 3rd Thurs., 9-11:30am, Topeka Bible Church Auditorium, 1135 SW College. For all moms, helping to be intentional! 234-5545.

OPERATION BACKPACK - 1st Thurs., 6pm, Indian Creek Elementary School, 4303 NE Indian Creek Rd. Volunteers assemble Weekend Snack Sacks for low-income students. No assembly in August. Sponsored by Topeka North Outreach: 286-1370.

LINE DANCING - 2nd & 4th Thu. 1:30-3:30 at First Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar Ave. Contact Karen Botkin at 785-945-6785 or Jim Baer at 785-256-2432 or jimbaer73@gmail.com to register.

BRIDGE GROUP - 1st & 3rd Thu. 1-3:30pm, at Our Savior Lutheran Church, 2021 SW 29th St. To play, arrangements must be made by Mon. 5pm with Joan Arterburn at 408-5174.

TOPEKA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY - 4th Thurs., 7pm, Topeka Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th St. No program in Nov. or Dec. Promotes & stimulates the education, knowledge & interest of the membership & the public in family history, genealogical records & research. 233-5762 or tgstopeka.org.

KINGDOM ADVISORS TOPEKA AREA STUDY GROUP - 3rd Thu., 11:30am-1pm via Zoom. Christian financial professionals: financial planners, accountants, attorney's & insurance agents invited. For info: kingdomadvisors.org or Jim Hanna, james.c.hanna@ampf.com or 785.357.6278 x19.

A GOOD YARN CLUB - 2nd & 4th Sat., 9-11am, Wanamaker Rd Baptist Church, 2700 SW Wanamaker. Doing Good for Others: Knitting & Crocheting for Local Charities, free yarn, needles, hooks & patterns. All are welcome. Info: Anne, 785-272-9249 or kittens812@sbcglobal.net

TOPEKA GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY - 4th Fridays,

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7:15pm, 1st Congressional Church, 1701 SW Collins.

BIBLE QUIZZING — 1st Sat. Learn God's Word & have fun with area Christian youth age 9-19. YFC/YEA style quizzing & rules. 913-593-6427 or biblequizzing.org.

MONTHLY SCORE MEETING — 1st Sat., 8-9:30am, Washburn Tech, 5724 SW Huntoon (enter east doors facing Huntoon). No RSVP or fee is required. Small business owners are invited to a Breakfast Roundtable discussion with members of SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives). Info: 234-3049.

TOPEKA GREAT LIGHT AGLOW — For info contact Vickie Lynch at greatlighttopeka@gmail.com.

SUPPORT GROUPS

PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP meets 1st Thursday every month at 5:30 pm, Midland Hospice House, 200 SW Frazier. Jean Barton 785-478-9045.

HOPE AND HEALING ACADEMY harnesses the power of horses to transform the human spirit. For info: 785-224-4232 or www.hopeandhealingacademy.com.

OVERCOMER'S OUTREACH ANONYMOUS RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP — Mondays 6:30-7:30pm, at Be Filled Of South Topeka, 200 Airport Rd. Bldg. 818 Suite 1. Led by Pastor Bill Ritchey. 785-817-2802

BINDING UP THE BROKEN HEARTED — Sessions offered for women who suffer from the after-effects of abortion. All the women who lead these sessions have had an abortion and have received healing from God's Word. For info, contact local Healing Hearts representative Shelly Brush, First Southern Baptist Church at shelly.b@healinghearts.org. All communication is confidential and secure.

MIDLAND CARE GRIEF SUPPORT Groups: Building A, 200 SW Frazier Circle; Every Mon., 4-5pm: 12 Week Adult Group for Recent Loss 1st and 3rd Thu., 10:30am & 5:30pm—Ongoing Adult Group 1st and 3rd Thu., 5:30pm: Ongoing Young Adult Group (4-18 years of age) For All Groups: Call for start dates and info packet. Group and individual grief support available upon request. Info: 785-232-2044 ext.341

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS - Jayhawk Area

Agency on Aging provides an opportunity for caregivers to get together and share their ideas and feelings. 2nd Monday, 3:30pm, Topeka public library, Anton Rm. 3rd Friday, 12 noon, Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, 2910 SW Topeka

ABORTION RECOVERY SUPPORT — Providing services for women & men who suffer from Post-Abortion Syndrome. Kay Lyn at KLCarlson20@cox.net.

AL-ANON is a support group for families and friends of alcoholics. For info on meetings in the Topeka area email ais-topeka@kansas-al-anon.org or 785-215-1045. All correspondence confidential

PURSUIT FOR SEXUAL PURITY — Men struggling with pornography & sexual addiction. This bible study/ accountability group uses the Pure Desire book by Ted Roberts. For info: 249-9509. All inquiries confidential.

ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT GROUPS — Monthly support group meetings for caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. All of our programs have moved from in-person to virtual.

Caregiver support group via Skype 9:30am every other Wednesday. Email Hayley Young at hdyoung@alz.org or call 785.379.3067 for the meeting link and other info.

Caregiver Support Group via Google Hangouts, 4:30pm every other Wednesday. Email Hayley Young at hdyoung@alz.org or call 785.379.3067 for the meeting link and other info.

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS/BEREAVED PARENTS GROUP — 4th Mon. in Formation classroom at Most Pure Heart of Mary, 17th & Stone. Discussion starts 7pm; fellowship & refreshments 8:30. 785-272-4895

CAREGIVERS GROUP - Caring Hearts of Hope meet 2nd & 4th Tuesdays 5:30-6:30pm at Highland Heights Christian Church. Encouragement in God's word and prayer as well as conversation and sharing, open to all those who care for others with illnesses such as Alzheimers, dementia, cancer or other debilitating illnesses or injuries. For info: "Weekly Class List" at www.highlandheightsccc.com or call 785-379-5642.

FIBROMYALGIA & CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME SUPPORT GROUP — 2nd Tue., 7-9pm. First Congregational Church, 17th and Collins. For info: Randy at 785-969-4038 or TopekaCFS@outlook.com.

GRANDPARENT/RELATIVE CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP — 3rd Tue., 6:30-8pm, 2nd floor meeting room, St. Francis Hosp, 1700 SW 7th. For info: Sharla, 286-2329; Jennie (English/Spanish) 231-0763.

HEALING AFTER LOSS TO SUICIDE (HeALS) - Topeka support group meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month from 6:30-8, at 1st Congregational Church, 17th and Collins. For info: Topeka.heals@gmail.com or 785-380-9309.

DIVORCECARE PROGRAMS — (For updates check www.divorcecare.org) locations and times:

WED. — 6:30pm, Topeka Bible Church, 1101 SW Mulvane. Cost: \$15. Child care provided. For info: 379-0505 or www.divorcecare.org.

WED. — 6:45 — 8:45pm, Walnut View Christian Church, 3634 SE 37th St. (just East of 37th & Croco). Cost: \$10 registration (scholarships available). The video seminar series featuring some of the nation's foremost experts on divorce and recovery topics, combined with support group discussion of the materials. Complimentary child care children up to the fifth grade. Info: 266-7550 or walnutviewcc@att.net.

WED. — 6:30pm, Northland Christian Church, 3102 NW Topeka Blvd. No Cost. 785-286-1204, www.northland.cc

CELEBRATE RECOVERY — Every Fri., 6pm, 1912 Gage Blvd. A Christ-centered program, based on 8 principles found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Applying these Biblical principles, become free from addictive & dysfunctional behaviors. crtopekaks.org.

PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP — First Thursday, 3pm, St. Francis Hospital, Room 300 on 2nd floor. For info: Jim 785 806 3266

TOPEKA NAR-ANON FAMILY GROUP — For families & friends who are affected by someone else's narcotic addiction. Every Mon. 7pm; Every Sat. 10am. First Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar, Enter Door A, Room 211. www.naranonmidwest.org

COVENANT KEEPERS — 3rd Sat. Group for people who

National Parks are free on these dates



Planning to visit a National Park in 2026? Here are the six days that are free for the 110 sites that normally charge admission.

The most popular parks, like Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, and Acadia typically charge from \$20 to \$35 per vehicle and often only with a reservation.

The Park Service says there are more than 400 parks across the country that are open each day. In a press release, the Park Service says "The fee-free days provide a great opportunity to visit a new place or an old favorite, especially one of the national parks that normally charge an entrance fee."

The free days don't just include outdoor parks, but sites like the Gateway Arch in St. Louis.

The others are free all the time. The entrance fee waiver covers entrance fees only and does not cover amenity or user fees for activities such as camping, boat launches, transportation, or special tours.

On these remaining six days, all National Park Service sites that charge an entrance fee will offer free admission to everyone.

- May 25: Memorial Day
- June 14: Flag Day
- July 3-5: Independence Day weekend
- August 25: National Park Service Birthday
- September 17: Constitution Day
- October 27: Theodore Roosevelt's Birthday
- November 11: Veterans Day

If you travel to parks throughout the year, or hope to in the future, there's a convenient and affordable way to do so. The annual \$80 America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass allows unlimited entrance to more than 2,000 federal recreation areas, including all national parks that normally charge an entrance fee.

Special discounts are given to senior citizens (\$20), while free admission is given to current members of the military & dependents, Gold Star families & veterans, fourth-grade students, and disabled citizens.

For more information about America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass series check out their website: nps.gov.

want to see their marriage saved when their spouse wants out. 816-453-0884 or 816-966-0927

MOMS-IN-TOUCH PRAYER GROUP — Every Wed., 2:30-3:30pm, Library at Cair Paravel-Latin School. Experience God's power through prayer as we lift our students, teachers, staff, administrators & board up to the Lord. For info: 357-0369.

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS — Every Wed, 7pm, St. Francis Hospital, meeting room #8.

PRISON OUTREACH MINISTRY — Every Tue., 7-9pm, Topeka Women's Prison, 815 Rice Rd. Reaching out to those who can't come in, finding freedom behind bars, inspiring inmates to seek salvation during a difficult time. Providing support & guidance through the Holy Spirit to offer strength. Director: Don Garner, 286-0489 or faithfamilyministries@gmail.com.

BIKERS AGAINST CHILD ABUSE — NE Kansas Chapter (B.A.C.A.) 3rd Sun., 4 pm American Legion, 3800 SE Michigan. Open to the public. For info: 817-5801.

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entertainment

Most People Approve of Faith Themes in Entertainment, Researchers Find

Most Americans are open to religious themes in visual entertainment, the 2026 Faith & Entertainment Index from the Faith & Media Initiative. Researchers tested more than 100 scenes from TV series and films with more than 12,000 respondents in the United States.

In recent years, Hollywood studios and streaming platforms have wrestled with how — or whether — to incorporate faith storylines into mainstream projects. The success of faith-based titles such as Angel Studios' 2023 hit "Sound of Freedom" and the ongoing popularity of series like "The Chosen" have demonstrated that explicitly religious content can draw sizable audiences. At the same time, industry analysts note that portrayals of religion in secular programming have often been limited or stereotyped, a tension this new research seeks to address.

More than nine in 10 entertainment consumers said they are open to seeing faith represented on screen, and three-quarters said faith can have broad appeal in modern entertainment.

"I knew it would be a big number, but that really is almost like 100 percent," said Brooke Zaugg, executive director of the Faith & Media Initiative. "Religion can feel scary to talk about — like politics — so it creates the illusion that it's a small group. That makes it easy for filmmakers to oversimplify it or not give it much thought instead of recognizing how valuable faith storytelling can be when it's done well."

Ed Stetzer, dean of Talbot School of Theology at Biola University, who has written extensively on faith and culture, has similarly argued that "religion is not disappearing from American life — it is being renegotiated in public spaces, including media." He has said in previous interviews that nuanced portrayals of belief can resonate beyond a single faith tradition when they focus on universal human questions.

Support for faith themes was consistent across age demographics. The percentage of each groups who be-



lieved faith-based stories have broad appeal include Eight in 10 among Gen Z, 83 percent of millennials, 78 percent of Gen X, and 72 percent of baby boomers. Politically, 82 percent of Republicans believe so, 75 percent of Democrats and 73 percent of independents agree.

Survey respondents were shown scenes drawn from multiple genres and series, including examples from both secular and faith-oriented storytelling. The scenes that scored highest tended to depict characters authentically exploring their beliefs and placing them in familiar and emotionally grounded contexts. Media researchers have long found that audiences respond more positively to religious content when it is integrated organically into character development rather than presented didactically.

One of the top-ranking clips was from the HBO series "The Pitt," which resonated with viewers across different faith backgrounds for its depiction of Jewish identity, even as it has problems. Other highly rated scenes came from "Young Sheldon," "Nobody Wants This" and the film "Hacksaw Ridge."

Shows like "The Pitt," which even progressive reviewers say has a lot of "woke" content, shine in other instances. In a discussion about the lead character, who is Jewish and played by Noah Wyle, Kveller.com states "He does mention his Jewish identity earlier, in the show's fourth episode. In a conversation with

charge nurse Dana Evans, she accidentally attributes a quote that comes from the Book of Luke to Shakespeare. The line, he then corrects her, should be attributed to 'Luke, the disciple, who probably heard it from Paul, the apostle, but what do I know? I'm Jewish, it's not my book.'"

The research was conducted in two waves between September and November 2025, with participants who watch television or movies at least weekly. Religious affiliation data were weighted to reflect the U.S. population, with oversampling of some groups to ensure statistical reliability. According to the Pew Research Center's latest Religious Landscape Study, roughly 63 percent of U.S. adults identify as Christian, while religious "nones" account for about 29 percent — a demographic reality that makes broad-based openness to faith themes noteworthy for content creators.

The study corroborates an earlier report from Movieguide, which found that titles featuring strong Christian, biblical, moral or redemptive themes dominated both the Top 10 and Top 25 highest-grossing films of 2024, outperforming movies driven by graphic violence, explicit sexuality or antibiblical worldviews. Industry box office data from 2024 show several family-friendly and faith-adjacent films exceeding projections, reinforcing the report's conclusion that values-driven storytelling continues to command a substantial audience.

"I Can Only Imagine 2" picks up story where original film left off



The wait is almost over for fans of the faith-based film "I Can Only Imagine." The sequel, "I Can Only Imagine 2," will open in theaters on Friday.

"From the very beginning, our hope for 'I Can Only Imagine 2' was that the story wouldn't end when the credits roll," codirector Andrew Erwin said. "We can't wait for people to share this moment in community."

The sequel follows the record-breaking original 2018 film, which captured hearts around the globe and became one of the most successful faith-based films in history, bringing in more than \$83 million at the box office.

"I Can Only Imagine 2" brings Bart Millard's (MercyMe) story full circle as he faces the challenges of fatherhood, faith and keeping hope alive through life's hardest moments. The film is codirected by Erwin and Brent McCorkle, who also wrote the script. After the breakout success of the song "I Can Only Imagine," MercyMe's Bart Millard is living the dream — sold-out arenas, a devoted fan base and a thriving career. But behind the spotlight, Bart's past threatens the family he's built, especially the fragile bond with his son, Sam.

When hopeful newcomer Tim Timmons joins the band for its biggest tour yet, he unknowingly brings a renewed gratitude to Bart's life through their unlikely friendship. Bart soon discovers that Tim carries hardships and secrets of his own, forcing Bart to face his past and repair his relationships with Sam and his wife, Shannon, before fame costs him what matters most. Based on the heartfelt true story behind the hit single "Even If," the movie is the inspiring next chapter of faith, family and finding God in the fire.

"It was such a fun challenge," John Michael Finley, who portrays Millard in the movies, told Movieguide. "For me personally, a lot has happened in the past eight years. You know, for me, it might as well have been 30 years. So, for me it was quite fitting to jump back into a place of being unsure, struggling with things, maybe loss of faith, loss of this, loss of that. And so I'm happy that we're talking about so much, things that are kind of taboo, you know what I mean? And I love that we're covering that stuff."

For more information, visit www.icanonlyimagine.com.

Evangelical Protestants engage with Christian media at very high rates

“Metro Voice” readers already understand the important contributions of Christian media. A new nationwide survey of Evangelicals by Infinity Concepts and Grey Matter Research agrees.

Nearly half of evangelical Protestants engage with Christian media daily, while seven in 10 engage at least weekly, a level of engagement that stands out amid broader declines in media trust and usage. Evangelicals under age 40 are more likely than older cohorts to engage with multiple Christian media formats weekly, particularly digital and social platforms, while overall engagement remains strong across all generations.

Together, the findings suggest Christian media continue to adapt and retain influence amid rapidly changing media consumption habits. The study also found a clear and consistent correlation between Christian media use and spiritual engagement. Evangelicals who regularly pray, read and study the Bible and participate in worship or



small groups are significantly more likely to engage frequently with Christian media.

The findings arrive as public confidence in mass media continues to hover near historic lows. Gallup reported in 2024 that Americans' trust in newspapers and television news remains far below levels seen a generation ago. Against that backdrop, Christian media appears to occupy a different space for many believers — less as an optional news source and more as a spiritual touchpoint.

The connection is especially pronounced among highly engaged believers. Eight in 10 evangelicals with high levels of spiritual engagement consume Christian digital sources daily. At the same time, Christian media continue to reach beyond the most committed audiences, with 22 percent of evangelicals with low or no spiritual engagement still engaging with Christian media on a daily basis.

“Christian

media continue to reach evangelicals where they are, regardless of age or level of spiritual engagement,” said Ron Sellers, president of Grey Matter Research. “The data show media consumption increases alongside spiritual participation, but it also highlights that Christian media often reach individuals who are otherwise less connected to personal faith practices.”

Among the 11 forms of Christian media examined, Christian music, radio and social media are the top three in weekly use, each reaching more than half of all evangelicals weekly. These channels are some of the most consistent touchpoints for biblical teaching, encouragement and inspiration.

Despite broader cultural skepticism toward media in general, the study also found that evangelicals hold a largely positive view of Christian media's reputation. A majority of evangelicals say Christian media are perceived favorably by the general public, citing its emphasis on hope, encouragement and spiritual values.

“Christian media remain one of the most trusted and effective channels for reaching the evangelical community,” said Mark Dreistadt, president and CEO of Infinity Concepts. “These findings affirm the value of Christian media not only as a source of information or inspiration but as a meaningful contributor to spiritual formation and discipleship. For media leaders and ministries alike, this represents both an affirmation and an opportunity.”

—Alan Goforth

“No-Skimming Journey:” Actor Tim Allen Reads Entire Bible



Actor Tim Allen says he has completed a yearlong journey through the entire Bible — from Genesis to Revelation — describing it as a disciplined, word-by-word reading that reshaped his understanding of faith.

“Finished the entire Bible,” Allen wrote recently on social media. “It’s been a 13-month word-by-word, page-by-page, no-skimming journey. Humbled, enlightened and amazed at what I read and what I learned. I will rest and meditate on so much. I will begin it again.”

Allen, long known for his roles in “Home Improvement” and the “Toy Story” franchise, first made his Bible-reading goal public last August, explaining that he had begun with the Jerusalem Bible Old Testament.

“Never took the time in all my years to ever read and really read the Bible,” he wrote at the time. “Currently, almost through the Jerusalem Bible Old Testament and almost done with the prophets. Next up to New Testament. So far, amazing and not at all what I was expecting.”

By last June, he reported finishing the Old Testament, calling the experience “richly rewarding.” “It is such a gift when I get out of the way and the words and meaning flow,” he said.

Allen has spoken more openly about faith in recent years. In a January appearance on Bill Maher’s “Club Random” podcast, the two discussed the relationship between God’s law and human sin, with Allen pushing back on Maher’s skepticism. “You can’t have a law without a lawgiver,” Allen said during the exchange, arguing that moral standards point beyond human invention.

In 2022, Allen also said he pressed

for explicit acknowledgment of the holiday’s religious roots in Disney+’s “The Santa Clauses,” a continuation of the film franchise he helped make famous.

“It originally had a lot of otherworldly characters, and ghosts, and goblins,” he said in an interview at the time. “I said, ‘No, this is Christ-mas. It’s Christ-mas. It literally is a religious holiday.’ We don’t have to blow trumpets, but I do want you to acknowledge it. That’s what this is about.”

Allen’s public comments come amid a broader trend of entertainers speaking more candidly about spirituality. In recent years, actors such as Chris Pratt and Mark Wahlberg have discussed their Christian faith in interviews with mainstream outlets, while polling from Pew Research Center continues to show that a majority of Americans identify as Christian, even as overall religious affiliation declines.

For Allen, the journey appears far from over. After finishing the final pages of Revelation, he indicated he plans to start again — returning to Genesis with what he now describes as a deeper sense of humility and awe.



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Going Beyond Aesthetics: 7 Home Design Trends for 2026

Heading into a new year, home design is once again evolving. Homeowners are blending comfort, personality, sustainability and connections to the outside world this year. More than just aesthetics, these trends are warm, intentional and rooted in real life.

Whether you're refreshing a room or planning a full-blown makeover, consider these ideas for inspiration that feels both timeless and fresh.

Warm, Earthy Palettes

This year, say goodbye to whites and cool grays. Instead, cozy earth tones like clay, sage, caramel and rich neutrals create a grounded, inviting atmosphere. Refresh walls or cabinetry with these earthy hues or try color-drenching – using a single hue in varying tones across walls, trim and ceilings –

for a bold new vibe that feels both timeless and modern.

Flowing, Curved Shapes

As homes trend more toward feeling lived-in rather than staged, hard edges and rigid forms are taking a backseat. In 2026, curves are everywhere: soft archways, rounded furniture and curved statement pieces – think circular mirrors or oversized armchairs – create fluid, comforting spaces.

Natural Materials and Textures

Designs this year celebrate materials that age beautifully, like natural stone,



reclaimed wood and textiles that tell a story. Consider woven pillows and throws, handmade pottery, textured walls and wood with visible grain to enrich rooms with sensory detail and an artisanal feel.

Personalized Nostalgia

Blend vintage finds with contemporary art to create a space that's truly your own. That means vintage finds, heirloom pieces and decor that evokes memory – even quilted textiles or classic checkered tiles – styled in fresh, modern ways to add warmth and individuality.

Attention to Statement Details

Small details are getting big attention this year. Swapping out basic cabinet hardware and lighting fixtures for artisanal, tactile metals can help elevate kitchen cabinets or bathroom vanities, turning them into design statements.

Flexible, Multifunctional Spaces

With hybrid work and lifestyle blending continuing into 2026, rooms should be designed to serve multiple purposes. Reading nooks can double as workstations. Living rooms effortlessly transition from day to night. Adaptable furniture, hidden storage and smart layouts help make multifunctional spaces feel intentional and uncluttered.

Outdoor-Inspired Interiors

The connection to nature grows stronger inside homes with greenery, natural light and materials that echo the outdoors. From indoor-outdoor flow to plant-rich spaces that feel alive and tranquil, biophilic design promotes calm, comfort and connection.

Visit eLivingtoday.com to find more design inspiration to make your home more personal and grounded in comfort.

–Feature Impact

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sports

Christ-followers Jacob Slavin, Tage Thompson help U.S. hockey capture historic Olympic gold



The United States is partying like it's 1980.

For the first time since the memorable "Miracle on Ice" team at Lake Placid, New York, the American men took home the hockey gold medal at the Winter Olympics with a 2-1 overtime victory against Canada in Milan, Italy.

With NHL players participating in the Games for the first time since 2014, stars littered the ice as the bitter rivals played to a 1-1 tie at the end of regulation. Streaking down the left side of the ice toward the goal, American Jack Hughes of the New Jersey Devils — missing two front teeth from a high stick earlier in the game — received a pass and in one seamless motion zipped a shot into the far corner of the net to send the United States into a frenzy.

It was the United States' second overtime winner in this Olympics; Jack Hughes' brother, Quinn, also netted a game-winning goal in overtime against Sweden in the quarterfinal round. Although the United States and Canada have faced off in the gold-medal match eight times at the Winter Olympics, this triumph was just the second U.S. victory.

Among the Americans flinging their gloves in the air in celebration of Hughes' goal on Sunday was Jacob Slavin of the Carolina Hurricanes and Tage Thompson of the Buffalo Sabres. Slavin was +1 during his time on the ice Sunday while Thompson accumulated a team-leading four shots on goal. Slavin, a defenseman, and Thompson, a center, were both crucial to Team USA's run. Slavin provided stout defense throughout the trek to the goal medal while Thompson recorded goals against Latvia, Germany and Slovakia.

Slavin and Thompson are also

bonded by something much deeper than even a national allegiance. Both are also professing believers in Jesus Christ and have appeared as guests on the Sports Spectrum Podcast. Slavin has appeared multiple times, speaking about just how important Jesus is to him during an October 2024 episode.

"[Jesus is] everything," he said. "He's Lord of my life. If He's not Lord of everything, He's not Lord at all. He's a gracious Friend. I live my life because of Him and what He did for me. My purpose in life, my purpose in my marriage, my purpose of being a father, it's all to glorify Him because He's worthy of that glory."

The 31-year-old has spent his entire 11-year career in Carolina, making the playoffs for the past seven (and likely eight) and earning a spot in the All-Star Game in 2020. Even more important to him, however, is winning the Lady Byng Memorial Trophy in 2020-21 and 2023-24, awarded annually to the player who's best demonstrated "sportsmanship and gentlemanly conduct combined with a high standard of playing ability."

"Out of all the awards that I'd want to win, that's the one I feel like means the most to me because that exemplifies how I try to carry myself, how I try to live. And I do that by trying to represent Jesus the best I can," he said on the podcast. "An award like that — having good sportsmanship, being a gentleman in a violent game — I'm thankful the Lord has given me the temperament that I have and He's led me by His Spirit. People may not know it, but what they're seeing is Jesus through me."

Like Slavin, the 28-year-old Thompson has also appeared once in the NHL

Seahawks Coach, Players Praise God After Super Bowl

Most NFL coaches go through their entire careers without winning a Super Bowl. Last month, Mike Macdonald won a championship in just his second season as head coach of the Seattle Seahawks.

Macdonald became a head coach for the first time in 2024 when Seattle hired him away from Baltimore, where he had served as defensive coordinator. After narrowly missing the playoffs in his first season, the Seahawks rebounded to finish 14-3 this year and rolled through the postseason.

In the moments after securing the franchise's first title in more than a decade, Macdonald pointed upward.

"I believe God called me to be a coach, and I listened to him, and I thank Him," Macdonald told NBC during the live postgame broadcast. "We are incredibly blessed to be Seahawks ... and now we're world champions."

In his postgame press conference, Macdonald expanded on the role faith has played in his life and in the locker room, crediting team chaplain Jonathan Rainey for fostering spiritual growth among players and staff.

"My faith hasn't always been strong," Macdonald said. "You have doubts, you have kind of a roller coaster ride. And over the last few years, it's been really strengthened. You see what our players do — and what Jonathan Rainey does every day — and how he brings people together."

Rainey has served as Seattle's team chaplain for more than a decade, leading optional Bible studies and prayer gatherings during the season. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes has highlighted the

All-Star Game (2023), and he also grew up hearing about the things of God. And at around the age of 13, Jesus revealed to Thompson his need for a personal relationship with Him.

"That's where my faith really started to turn," Thompson said on the podcast in July 2023, "from just going through the motions and a title of being a Christian to understanding the actual relationship part of walking with Christ and the sacrifice that He made for all of us."

He also explained the immense freedom he's felt from the years-long process of learning to submit to God's plan for his life.

"I think when you take a step back," Thompson said, "and realize that God's in control and He has a plan for you and His plan is far better than anything that we could ever imagine (Ephesians 3:20), you just kind of give it over to Him and sit back and enjoy the ride."



Seahawks in past years as one of several NFL teams with strong voluntary faith participation among players.

"It's a journey that we're in together," Macdonald said. "And it's empowering, and it's inspiring to pursue that part of your life that's so important."

The team's leading receiver, Jaxon Smith-Njigba, also pointed to his faith during the nationally televised postgame news conference.

"Jesus is everything," he said. "When I put it on His shoulders, He takes it off my shoulders. He never fails me. He's never failed me, whether we would have won or lost today. You know, Jesus won, and I'm just happy to give Him the glory today."

Public expressions of faith have long been part of the NFL's championship stage. Former Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Nick Foles famously told reporters after Super Bowl LII that "all glory to God" following his MVP performance, as reported by ESPN. Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes likewise told reporters after Super Bowl LIV, "God is the greatest," according to

The Associated Press.

For Seattle, faith had been a recurring theme throughout the season. One of the team's most widely shared locker room moments came after a regular-season win over Minnesota, when linebacker Ernest Jones was handed the game ball after a two-interception performance and delivered an emotional testimony.

"I've been through a lot this year," Jones told teammates in video later shared on social media by the team. "Earlier this week, I found myself feeling stuck ... and what I was missing was God. I got back on my knees. I started back praying — and just look at what we got. It's bigger than this interception. It's bigger than that. I got my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, back, and I'm with my boys."

Such remarks reflect a broader culture within professional football where personal faith is often expressed publicly, particularly at pivotal moments. While the NFL maintains a neutral stance on religion, players and coaches regularly use the league's largest platforms to articulate deeply personal beliefs — especially when the confetti falls.

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Cutting Medication Costs Without Cutting Corners

As the cost of living continues to rise, many Americans are being forced to make difficult financial decisions. Skipping medications might seem like a quick way to save money, but this can lead to serious health risks and higher costs down the road.

In fact, research shows 27% of Americans skip prescriptions each month due to cost. More than half of Americans who filled a prescription this year said the cost felt like a financial

burden.

Cindy George, MPH, a senior personal finance editor at GoodRx and nationally recognized health journalist, shared expert advice to help consumers improve their health care cost literacy, reduce expenses and stay healthy without overspending.

Understand the True Cost of Medications

Many people assume the pharmacy counter price is non-negotiable, but the

cost of the same medication can vary significantly.

“Costs can vary by upwards of \$100 from one pharmacy to the next, even in the same ZIP code,” George said. “Understanding how to compare prices and find the most affordable option is incredibly valuable.”

By entering the medication name, along with dosage and ZIP code, individuals can quickly compare prices in their area using GoodRx. Using the website or app, you can explore alternative forms of a medication and get suggestions to help you talk with your doctor or pharmacist about more affordable options.

When Insurance Falls Short, You Still Have Options

Only about half of prescriptions are fully covered by insurance without restrictions.

“Even insured individuals are struggling to keep up with health care costs,” George said. “More are finding themselves underinsured, and that’s making basic health care harder to afford and access.”

That’s why comparison shopping is increasingly important, including price comparisons at different pharmacies.

“Cost comparison tools can help people find lower prices on both generic and brand-name medications, regardless of their coverage status,” George said.

While cost comparison tools are not a full replacement for health insurance, they can be a helpful way to reduce medication costs and avoid unexpected surprises at the pharmacy.

Build Confidence Through Cost Literacy

Cost literacy involves understanding how insurance works, what’s included in a plan’s formulary, how to interpret billing documents and how to challenge costs that seem too high. According to George, “health care cost literacy” is one of the best investments you can make in your financial well-being.

“Tools like the GoodRx Guide to

Drug Costs, Coverage and Savings, cost estimators from hospitals and insurance plans and State Health Insurance Assistance Programs can help you better understand and manage costs,” she said. “If something is unclear, don’t hesitate to ask your provider, pharmacist or insurance representative to walk you through your bills or Explanation of Benefits.”

Simple Strategies Can Add Up

George recommends a few strategies that can reduce out-of-pocket costs for medications:

- Always compare prices, including your insurance copay. “People assume their insurance is the best deal for accessing a medication at the lowest cost, but that’s not always true,” George said.
- Uncover savings programs. Many pharmaceutical companies offer copay cards or patient assistance programs that can dramatically reduce costs.
- Explore generic medications, if



available. Generic medications typically cost less than their brand-name counterparts. Check with a health care professional before opting for a generic.

- Consider a 90-day supply. For chronic conditions, ask your health care professional whether you can switch from a 30-day supply of medication to a 90-day supply.
- Try delivery. Ordering through a mail-order pharmacy can add convenience and, in many cases, offer lower prices.

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4 Smart Tips to Save Money and Stay Well This Season

The beginning of the year is a natural time for a reset, especially when it comes to budgets and better-for-you habits. With cold and flu season still in full swing, it's also a time when many people start thinking about how to stay healthy without spending more than they planned.

With a few tips and tricks, staying healthy doesn't have to be expensive. Here's what you can do:

Shop ahead. Most people don't think about cold and flu products until they actually need them. Stocking up ahead of time can help ensure quick access to relief while making it easier to take advantage of savings. Using

coupons, price-saving apps and shopping for store promotions can help bring down the cost of everyday health essentials.

Choose generic and save. Store brand over-the-counter (OTC) products offer a more affordable option for common needs, including pain relief and cough and cold care.

Perrigo, a leading provider of store brand OTC products, makes trusted alternatives to name brands across key self-care categories, including ibuprofen, acetaminophen, cough suppressants, decongestants and multi-symptom relief. These store brand OTC products contain the same



active ingredients and meet the same FDA standards as national name brands, but at a lower cost.

As health care costs continue to rise,

consumers can opt for these store brand OTC products to save money without compromising on quality.

Stay active. Staying active doesn't have to mean joining a luxury gym membership or having a complicated routine. Research published in the National Library of Medicine suggests that moderate amounts of exercise can help reduce stress and support immune function. Walking, running, free online workout classes or body-weight exercises at home are all accessible ways to stay active throughout the

season.

Adopt healthy habits. Small, everyday habits can also make a difference during cold and flu season. Washing your hands, staying hydrated and getting plenty of sleep are simple steps that support overall wellness and help reduce the risk of getting sick.

As consumers settle into their routines, combining smart shopping choices with healthy habits can help them feel prepared and more in control throughout cold and flu season.

To stock up on affordable store brand self-care and OTC products, stop by your local retailer.

—Statepoint

Screenings you need when you're 50+

You're in your 50s. It's the prime of your life -- or it should be. Don't let illness rob you of your health.

When you go for your annual physical, make sure your doctor performs or recommends these simple tests that may save your health -- and your life -- later. (Note that your doctor may recommend other tests based on your personal health profile.)

Colon cancer screening is recommended for everyone at age 45. Colon cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S. When you turn 45, your chance of getting it goes up. Colonoscopy is the test most frequently recommended, though there are other options. Ask your doctor which screening test is best for you.

Stepping on the scales. This is the age when most people start gaining weight. Watch this weight gain carefully, and fight back with healthier eating and exercise. Being overweight puts you at high risk for getting a number of diseases -- and studies show that weight loss can improve your odds.

Blood pressure. Untreated high blood pressure is an equal opportunity killer: It kills your heart, your brain, your eyes, and your kidneys. Don't let hypertension sneak up on you. Get your blood pressure checked. It's simple, it's cheap, and it's quick.

Cholesterol profile. Do you have high cholesterol? Find out -- at least once every 4-6 years (or more frequently if you have high cholesterol

and you're at risk for a heart attack). Controlling your cholesterol can add years to your life.

Blood sugar. Untreated diabetes can destroy your health, causing heart disease, kidney failure, and blindness. Don't let it. Get a fasting blood sugar test or other screening test for diabetes or prediabetes at least once every 3 years, and take control of diabetes early.

For women only: Pelvic exam and Pap smear. Combining a Pap test with a human papillomavirus (HPV) test can safely extend the interval between cervical cancer screenings from 3 years to 5 years in many women between the ages of 30 and 65. Women over age 65 can stop getting screened if they've had at least three consecutive negative Pap tests or at least two negative HPV tests within the previous 10 years, ac-

ording to the guidelines. But women who have risk factors for cervical cancer such as smoking, a history of HPV, or a more advanced precancer diagnosis should continue to be screened.

For women only: Mammogram. By their 50s, all women should have started routine mammograms to help detect any early signs of breast cancer. Your doctor can tell you how often you should repeat the test. Early detection of breast cancer can save your breast and your life.

For men only: Prostate cancer screening. At age 50, men should discuss with their doctor whether they should be screened for prostate cancer and when that screening should happen. African-American men, and those with a close relative who had early-onset prostate cancer, should talk to their doctor at an earlier age.

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Looking for moles: Love your skin. Check your skin for any unusual spots or moles. Check with your doctor if you notice anything new or unusual. Have them check your skin regularly if you have had skin cancer.

Protecting your eyes. Vision-robbing diseases become more common as you age. Be sure to get your eyes examined regularly -- every 1 to 3 years until age 60, and then every year thereafter. Go more often if you have vision problems or risk factors for eye problems.

Screening for Hepatitis C. The CDC recommends that anyone over the age

of 18 get tested for hepatitis C. If you haven't been screened, you should consider having the test.

Depression screening: Depression is a common cause of disability in adults, although it's often overlooked. It can show up with chronic illness and aging. It's not a normal part of aging, and you can get treatment. If you're feeling sad, hopeless, or not interested in things you used to enjoy, talk with your doctor. They can see if you're depressed by having you fill out a questionnaire or by asking you a few simple questions.

—webmd.com



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¹“Medicare & You,” Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2025. ²“Aging changes in teeth and gums”, medlineplus.gov, 4/17/2022. ³FairHealth, Inc. National average dental fees. Data current as of July 2025; subject to change.

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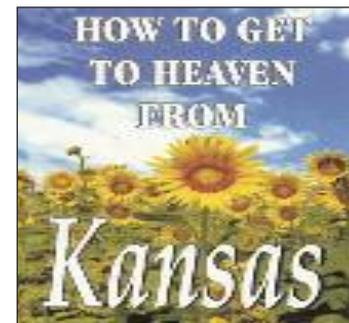
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1. Realize you are a sinner. Everyone starts the same place spiritually. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23). Sin's penalty keeps you out of Heaven and condemns you to Hell, separating you from God. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." Sin brings both physical & spiritual death. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (Rev. 20:14).

2. Realize Jesus paid the penalty. Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection provided a way for you to go to heaven and restore your relationship with God. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8). Since Jesus, God's Son, was the only One who could pay for our sin, He is the only Way to Heaven.

3. Repent of your sin and receive Jesus as your Savior. In order to go to Heaven from KANSAS, or anywhere else, you must accept Christ by calling on Him in prayer. He tells us in Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Use the following prayer, or one similar to it, to receive Him now:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I believe that you died and rose again for me. Please forgive me of my sin, become Lord of my life, and take me to heaven when I die. I am trusting you completely, and in nothing I can do. Thank you Jesus! Amen.



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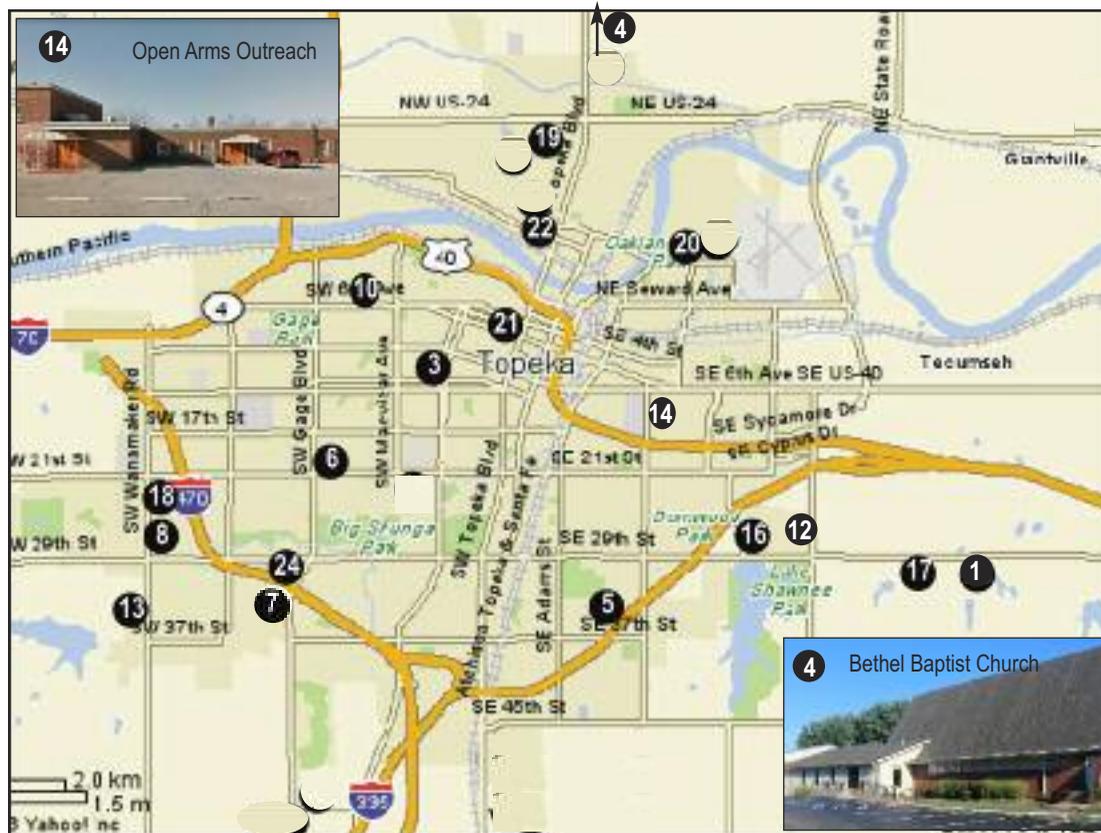
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SAVE THE DATE!

EASTER CELEBRATION & FAMILY FUN FAIR!



It all takes place on N. Kansas Avenue and NOTO Arts District!

Fun Fair open 10 am - 3 pm at NOTO Arts Center, Redbud Park, Veterans Park & connecting breezeway to N. Kansas Avenue! 3 Big Egg Hunts start at 10:10am at Veterans Park! Food Trucks open 9 am - 3pm at Veterans Park and NOTO Arts Center. Live music 10:15 - 3. Vendor Market open 10 am - 3 pm at Veterans Park, Redbud Park, NOTO Arts Center & on Kansas Avenue. Craft stations, face painting, Easter Bunny photos, Petting Zoo, Inflatables, Carnival Games, Cup Cake Walks, and more! (no parade this year due to traffic restrictions)

Volunteers needed! Contact:
info@C5Alive.org or 785-640-6399

For booth, sponsor & parade entry information:
info@C5Alive.org or 785-640-6399

Follow us on Facebook at Topeka EasterFest 2026! • Funds raised will be shared with local non-profits serving local families



SATURDAY, Mar. 28, 2026 • 10 AM - 3 PM

TopekaEasterParade.com • "Like" us on Facebook: Topeka Easter Parade & Family Fun Fair