

## THIS & THAT ABOUT FINANCES

Rev. Thomas Sotlis, SELC Stewardship Director

### Credit Card Dialogue

**Fanny Fickleface:** "Serenity, do you know that as of June 25, 2011, credit card late payment penalties could jump nearly 30% !!!? I thought recent regulations were supposed to protect us?"

**Serenity Smartside:** "The Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility and Disclosure Act does offer some consumer protection. But late penalty charges are still allowable."

**Fanny:** "Really?"

**Serenity:** "Yes. Actually, the best protection is to pay a credit card bill in full before the deadline date. Do you know your deadline?"

**Fanny:** "... Uh ... no."

**Serenity:** "I do. But I don't really care about the deadline. I pay my bill in full almost as soon as it arrives."

**Fanny:** "Really?"

### Synodical Budget

The Missouri Synod Board of Directors adopted a synodical budget of **\$76,748,812** for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The 2011-12 budget reflects a \$10,183,108 decrease from the 2010-11 budget of \$86,931,920. Estimated revenue includes \$17 plus million from districts (unrestricted funds); \$59 plus million via direct designated giving (restricted funds); a \$1.15 million Thrivent Financial allocation and \$1.54 million in grants from the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation.

### Japan Relief

To date Missouri Synod donors have given over **\$1.3 million** to aid those affected by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami. By the time you read this article, the amount will have gone up as contributions keep flowing in. To donate mail checks (noting "Japan Disaster Relief" on the memo line) to LCMS World Relief & Human Care, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166. Call toll free (1-888-930-4438) Give online at <http://givenowlcms.org> Shipments of rice, water, instant foods and bananas are being distributed.

### What's Your IQ about Finances?

(By Gregory Karp - Chicago Tribune)

**Q.** Would you rather have \$1,000 or a penny doubled every day for a month?

**A.** A penny doubled every day yields nearly \$11 million if the month has 31 days. This is why compounded savings grow quickly, though, granted, not as fast as a daily-doubled penny.

**Q.** How large should your emergency fund be?

**A.** Three to six months of bare-bones living expenses.

**Q.** What is the only official site for getting your credit report?

**A.** [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) Don't be fooled into signing up for a credit monitoring service at a different site. You're entitled to one free report annually from each of three bureaus: Experian, TransUnion and Equifax. You can access one every four months for three reports a year.

**NEW SELC WESTERN CIRCUIT STEWARDSHIP REPRESENTATIVE**  
**Rev. Paul Biber, pastor of St. Lucas Lutheran Church, St. Louis, MO, has been appointed stewardship representative for pastors and congregations in the Western Circuit. He replaces Rev. Warren Huffines, who retired from the position after many years of faithful service for which the SELC District is grateful.**

### Debit Cards Lack Some Protections

Debit card fraud is currently rampant. A couple in Akron, OH, recently discovered that \$1,200 in fraudulent debit card charges had wiped out their checking account. Financial advisors recommend prepaid debit cards not connected to a primary checking account. It's best to arrange a separate checking account just for the debit card to be used only as an ATM card - without a Mastercard or Visa logo - that works only with a personal identification number (PIN).

### Lessons Learned from the Recession

- > **Balance your checkbook** with a check register. Know your balance; don't overspend.
- > **Avoid fees** for late payments. Pay on time.
- > **Create a spending plan.** Establish a budget.
- > **Create an emergency fund** for 3 to 6 months.
- > **Check your credit** at least once a year.