

# Toolkit

HELPING YOU CARE FOR YOUR GOD-GIVEN GIFTS | ISSUE 2, 2025

## NEW WORSHIP SONG – FROM THE OLDEST KNOWN HYMN

A historian and a musician joined forces to **bring back and record an ancient hymn from the third century** – the oldest known to scholars. Christianity Today reports on an ancient Greek hymn that predates the next notated work by 600 years and was discovered about a century ago. Historian John Dickson and Musician Ben Fielding worked together to **turn the ancient fragment into a singable song for today's church**. In addition to writing the song, the pair worked with Grammy-winning worship artist Chris Tomlin, who helped produce the song, named "The First Hymn," and a documentary about the discovery and work done on the papyrus fragment containing the hymn.



## GEN Z LOOKS TO BLUE COLLAR JOBS FOR CAREER BUILDING

Many young adults graduating high school are **forgoing traditional college degrees in favor of working in skilled trades**, according to CNBC Make It. Part of the reason is the cost of a bachelor's degree, which increased about 30% between 2011 and 2023. There are about 2 million fewer students enrolled in a traditional four-year college than in 2011. Instead, many young adults are looking at trades like construction, plumbing, electrical contracting and automotive repair. **In 2024, 18- to 25-year-olds made up nearly 25% of all the new hires in skilled trades industries.** But despite the high cost of education, college graduates still tend to earn higher and get higher returns on their investments.

## HIGH HOPES FOR CHURCH AND BUSINESS LEADERS



More than **seven in 10 American Christians believe that some of the world's greatest problems could be solved by pastors and entrepreneurs working together**. In a recent study published by Barna Group, the organization surveyed 1,800 adults and 400 teens, along with 653 Protestant U.S. senior pastors and 248 entrepreneurs. The group found that those interviewed **trusted local business leaders more than politicians (and other traditional institutions)** and see them as problem-solvers. For their part, church leaders suggested that strategic planning and innovation are two of the most useful skills entrepreneurs can bring to the church.



## EVERENCE FOUNDATION RECEIVES MORE THAN \$6 MILLION IN REAL ESTATE GIFTS

**Everence® Foundation received 17 gifts of real estate totaling more than \$6 million in 2024.**

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## OUR BRAINS ON DESSERT



Scientists wanting to know why seemingly **there's "always room for dessert"** might now be closer to having an answer. A recent study, published in the journal *Science*, described an experiment in which scientists fed mice until they couldn't eat anymore, then split the group in two, giving one group more feed as "dessert," while giving another a high sugar feed, and monitored the activity in their neurons. They found that the neurons of mice eating the sugary "dessert" released an endorphin

that bonded to opioid receptors in the mice's brains, **triggering a feeling of reward**. These endorphins and receptors are very similar to human ones and help paint a picture of why a sweet treat can make us want to keep eating.

## THE BEST PARK CITIES IN THE US

Ever wonder how your city's park system compares to others in the country? There's a tool for that. Trust for Public Land, a nonprofit organization, **releases a report every year that ranks the park systems across the country's 100 most populous cities**. In their 2025 report, they list Washington, D.C., as their top ranked city, based on the percentage of residents living near a park, the percentage of land used for parks, the amount of money spent, and how many parks and greenspaces it holds. **To look up how your city or the one nearest to you scored**, go to [tpl.org/parkscore](https://tpl.org/parkscore)

## HOW IGUANAS CROSSED THE PACIFIC OCEAN

All members of the iguana family live in the Americas, with one exception. Four iguana species live in Fiji, **an island nation 5,000 miles from their closest ancestors**, desert iguanas from Mexico and the American Southwest. Scientists from the University of San Francisco studied the genetic instructions of 200 species of iguanas and related lizards. Their findings have led them to theorize that some lizards, around 31 million years ago, **floated on a patch of plants washed out at sea, traveling one-fifth of the way around the world**. This would be the longest travel known among land vertebrates.



## EVERENCE RECOGNIZED FOR RELIEF WORK IN CALIFORNIA

Everence was recently recognized for its relief work following the 2025 wildfires in California. The American Fraternal Alliance, one of the country's largest member-volunteer networks, **recognized Everence during its Spring Symposium on Monday, May 5, in Cleveland, Ohio**. In response to the wildfires in Los Angeles County, California, in January, **Everence offered \$75,000 in funding for California Wildfire Assistance Grants, allowing Everence-affiliated churches to support their communities**. The grant program is an example of the long-standing commitment Everence has to supporting its members' needs as a fraternal benefits society. Everence Association became a fraternal benefits society in 1966 as a way to provide mutual aid and insurance to our members throughout the country.

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