

# **Narrative Budgets**

Telling the Story Behind Each Line Item

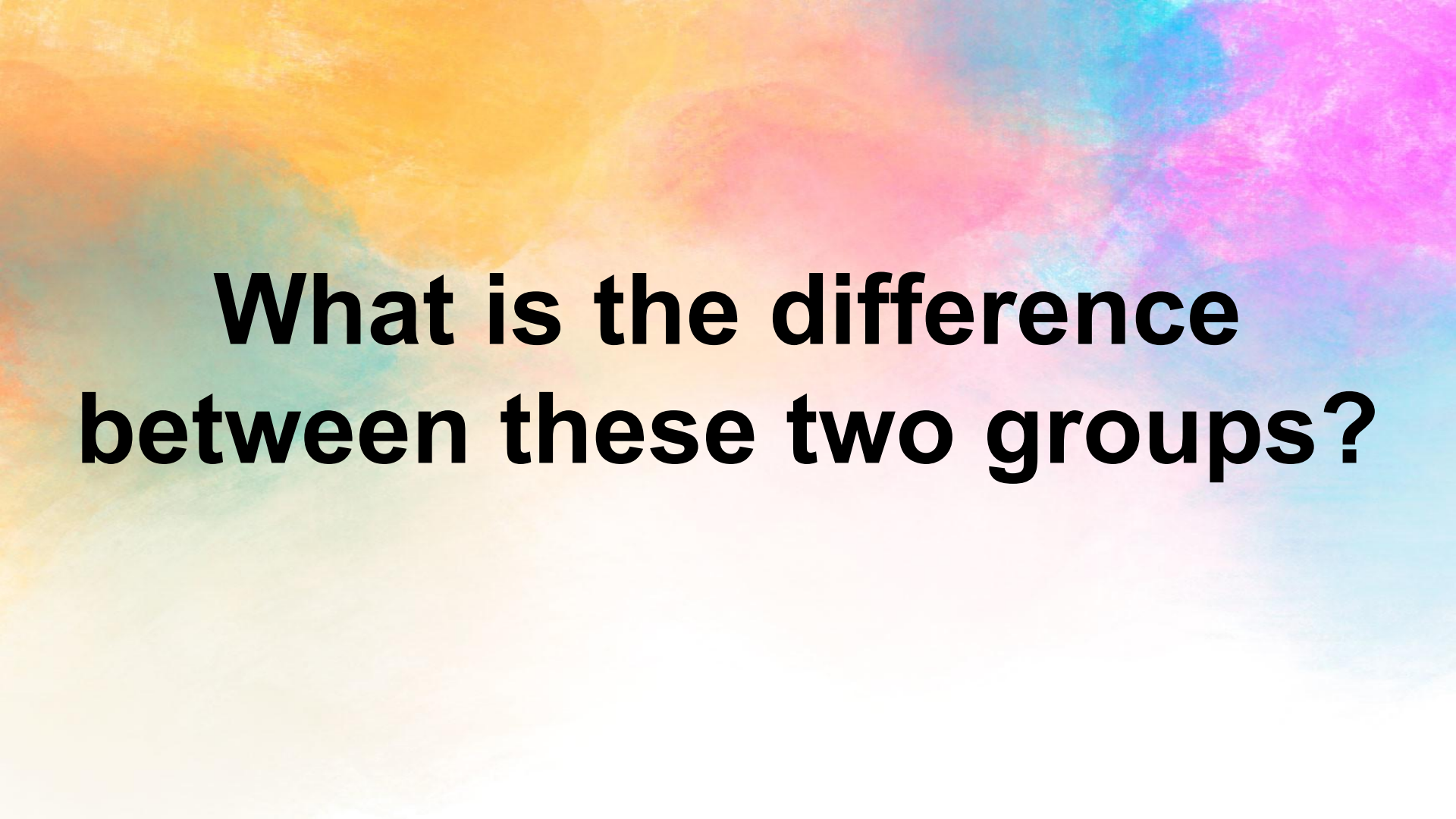
Pastor Lexy Steinle

# What are the easiest budget asks?

- Extra snow removal
- Special ministries (kids, elderly/shut-ins)
- “One time” building updates
- New Curriculums
- What else?

# What are the “less attractive” budget asks?

- Utilities
- General Building Upkeep
- Salaries
- Payroll Taxes
- Copyrights
- Workforce Safety Insurance
- Postage
- Carpet Cleaning
- Direct Deposit Costs
- What else?



**What is the difference  
between these two groups?**

# STORIES!

When we can share stories, putting a relatable or inspirational meaning behind the need for funding that line item, the ask becomes much easier. In many instances, it even does the asking itself!

We as people are drawn to stories, and we want what we do with the gifts God entrusted us with to matter. That is why it's a lot easier to ask for money to support VBS (bringing a new generation into the church!) rather than it is to ask for continued benevolence to purchase floor wax...

# **HOWEVER...**

The mundane line items in our budgets are not without stories. It is our job as leaders to help tell these stories and make connections between money and mission.

# Some examples...

SA and AA at Bethlehem:

- Building
- Lights
- Heat/AC
- Furniture
- Janitors
- TV for Zoom
- Parking Lot



# Another example...

Greeting homeless neighbors in the summer...

- Electricity (lights, fridge)
- Office Staff
- Pastoral Staff
- Food and Water Donation
- Building
- Parking Lot



# Another example...

Donuts and coffee on Sunday mornings...

- Electricity
- Updated Coffee Makers
- Paper Products
- Dishwasher Maintenance
- Updated Tables and Chairs
- Coffee and Juice



# **Narrative Budgets: A Creative Way to Tell Your Story!**

## **What is a Narrative Budget?**

It's a tool to tell the story of how the church is using the congregations gifts of time, energy, skills, and monetary offerings. It does not replace your traditional black and white, columned budget, it enhances it. It makes them easier to digest and to share with others how your church's offerings are translated into mission and ministry.

# How did I learn about them, and why have I fully embraced them?

- “Money and the Mission of the Church” class at Luther Seminary, with Professor Grace Pomroy
- I am a visual learner, and connect best through relationship building and stories. I want to support other congregation members whose brains work like mine!

**It's not a one-time fundraising document,  
It's the story of how your congregation continues to  
use the gifts God entrusted you with.**

Will it help bring in more offering? Perhaps! Money follows mission, and younger generations are drawn to give when they understand what they're giving to and why it's important.

It can also be a wonderful morale boost for your congregation. In the midst of whatever difficulties you may be experiencing, God is still at work. What are the wonderful things that are still happening, despite the struggles? What can be celebrated and uplifted as a hopeful message for the future?

# Step-by-Step Process of How to Build Your Own!

What you will need:

- A small group that is familiar with your budget as well as the happenings in your congregation.
- Someone who has an eye for graphic design or enjoys making documents look more attractive
- Someone who is a great storyteller or has a way with written words
- People who love to take pictures at events and can share the pictures digitally

# Step 1: What Are 3-5 Pillars of Your Mission?

Sometimes they are built in; Bethlehem was already centered on “Belong, Believe, Befriend” so we used those.

If yours are not as clear-cut, look through your mission statement and see what themes stick out.

If your current mission statement has not been updated for quite a while, other tools, like a congregational survey around core values might be helpful in identifying what are the main mission points of your congregation.

# Step 1: Let's Try It Out!

"Morning Star Parish is a partnership of five congregations rooted in Christ, our Morning Star, and reflecting Him in relational ministry with one another, both within and beyond our doors."

"Morning Star Parish is a partnership of five congregations **rooted** in Christ, our Morning Star, and **reflecting** Him in **relational** ministry with one another, both within and beyond our doors."

- **“Rooted”**, mission pieces related to their buildings, and the roots of their ministry.
- **“Reflecting”**, mission pieces that related to the teachings of Christ: curriculum, education, worship, pastoral and lay leadership
- **“Relational”**, mission pieces that relate to outreach and evangelism, events, etc.

## **Bonus Extra Step!**

**Not necessary, but provides great insight into how each part of your budget tells the story**

- Look at your line item budget and distribute each of the items into your 3-5 categories.
- Sometimes you have items that fit multiple categories, especially if your budget is more generalized than specific. You can either...
  - Separate them accordingly, and figure out about how much of the total amount is allocated to each spot
  - Spend some time in discussion to which spot it would fit in best, and go with that! Nothing is in concrete, you can change it the next time around if it seems to fit somewhere else better!

Belong		Believe	Befriend					
<b>Parish Planning</b>	Call Em All	200	<b>Parish Planning</b>	Direct Deposit Cost	100.00	<b>Parish Planning</b>	Miscellaneous	500
	Zoom	200						
<b>Ministry</b>	Workforce and Safety Insurance	600	<b>Ministry</b>	Pastor/Ministers	84,742.00	<b>Ministry</b>	Office Supplies	4500
	Miscellaneous	400		Conventions and Conferences	1500		Cellular Phones	1200
	Payroll Taxes	3626		Pulpit Supply	1000		Secretaries	20060.57
	Postage	2000		Music Coordinator	6935			
<b>Education</b>	New Equipment/Repair/Supplies	300	<b>Education</b>	Curriculum/ Christian Ed	1300	<b>Education</b>	Mission/Donation	500
	Confirmation	250		VBS Supplies/Curriculum	300		Special Events	1500
				Curriculum/Adult Ed	100			
<b>Evang/Fellow</b>	Kitchen/Paper Supplies	1000	<b>Evang/Fellow</b>	Mission Sunday	200	<b>Evang/Fellow</b>	Advertising/Website	2000
	Miscellaneous	300					Cards/Printing/Guest Tags	200
	Cab Rides to Church	600					Care Notes	100
							Evangelism Emphasis	500
							Fellowship Events	600
							New Members	200
<b>Properties</b>	Janitor Supplies	2500	<b>Properties</b>	Office Equip/New/Supp/Repair/Misc	8000	<b>Properties</b>	Parking Lot/Yard/Snow Removal	28500
	Insurance	13200		Church Repair	16500		Utilities	36000
	Carpet Cleaning	3500					Property Taxes	5000
	Janitor	31090						
	Substitute Janitor	1000						
	Payroll Taxes	2741.76						
	Alarm Fee	800						
<b>Stewardship</b>	EaND Synod	20000	<b>Stewardship</b>	Lutheran College Scholarship	3000	<b>Stewardship</b>	Bethany Retirement Living	900
	Offering Envelopes	3000		Oak Grove Lutheran School	1125		Hospice	1125
	Consecration Sunday Expenses	733.33		Consecration Sunday Expenses	733.33		Missionary Support	1125
	Miscellaneous	600		LIRS	1275		World Hunger	1275
	Treasurer	9753.75					EaND Bible Camps	750
	Payroll Taxes	747					Local Benevolences	10800
	Synod Assembly Offering	200					Consecration Sunday Expenses	733.34
<b>Youth Ministry</b>	Payroll Taxes	960	<b>Youth Ministry</b>	Youth Directors	9000	<b>Youth Ministry</b>	Transportation	2500
	Scholarships	200		Retreats	1700			
<b>Worship</b>	Copyrights	1100	<b>Worship</b>	Bell Choir Director	2990	<b>Worship</b>	Media/Video Coordinator	4290
	Decorations	200		Senior Choir Director	6245		Worship Technicians	2200
	Miscellaneous	500		Youth Choir Director	2990		Online Worship Registration Service	200
	New Equipment	400		Supply Directors	300		Bell Choir Music	250
	Organ/Piano Maintenance	1500		Organist	8870		Senior Choir Music	500
	Worship Supplies	1300		2nd Service Accompanist	2470		Youth Choir Music	150
	Payroll Taxes	2550		Wednesday Service Accompanist	3380			
	Special Programs	200		Supply Accompanist	2600			
				Senior Choir Accompanist	1755			
				Youth Choir Accompanist	1560			
				Worship Service Music	250			
				Education	1000			
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>108251.84</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>171920.33</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>128158.91</b>

# Bonus Extra Step: Let's Try It Out!

How do some of the more “less attractive” items fit into these categories?

- Payroll Taxes
- Electricity/Water/Heat and other Utilities
- Insurance
- Pastor's Salary
- Benevolence to the Synod/Denomination Church Body
- Choir Music
- Organ and Piano Tuning
- Carpet Cleaning

# Step 2: Find Your Stories

What are some really cool stories that have happened in your congregation this year?

- Celebrations?
- Events?
- Worship experiences?
- Work with other nonprofits?
- Updates?
- People who have gone above and beyond sharing their talents and time?

# Step 2: Let's Try It Out!

Reflect and share with your neighbors, but keep it short!

What are some of the coolest stories that have come out of your congregation this year?

- New events?
- Family Engagement?
- Growing Adult Ministries?
- Book Clubs?
- Baptisms/Weddings/Funerals that were impactful?
- Individual lives or families impacted by something the church did?

## **Step 3: Distribute Your Stories**

Take the stories you have named, and distribute them among your pillars. I try for 2-4 stories each. You're not sharing everything that happened and every piece of your budget, you're just highlighting certain pieces each time you make one.

If your distribution is a little lopsided, see if you can think of stories that match some of your lower categories. They may not be as razzle-dazzle, but they still show importance!

## **Step 3: Let's Try It Out!**

Which pillar connects best with your first round of stories?

For pillars that don't have as many stories, go to your B-list; what stories can you think of that would align with those ministry values and the line items under them?

## Step 4: Find Your Storytellers

In your congregation, find someone who works well with words and telling a story. Have them take the stories you have compiled and weave them into a narrative.

Can't think of a storyteller? Someone who is good at being descriptive works well too! You just want the writing to be engaging and give more background to the "why" of your budget.

At this same time, find the people who take all the pictures at your events and see if they have any from the stories you are sharing. Social Media is a great way to find a history of the year if you are posting regularly, and usually I find many of my pictures there or just in my own camera reel. I try to take a picture or two of each event we do so I have them for this part!

## Step 5: The Beginning and the End

Write an introduction. This is your main statement, the umbrella that everything sits underneath. This is a great place to name your full mission statement and a wide overview of the whole narrative.

Write your conclusion. I like to use this as the “where do we go from here,” or the “so what do we do with this information now?” If you’re doing this annually: do you have big events coming up or building projects that support your mission and use your budget? Promo them here! If you’re writing these less frequently, what are the hopes for your congregation in the future, and how will the continued stewardship of your congregation support that goal?

# Last Step: Put It All Together!

This is my favorite part!

With the help of your people who love graphic design, put the whole thing together. This is the opposite of the black and white line items, so use some color! There has been so much positive feedback that has come from it just looking “more professional”. Canva.com is a great free site that lets you make really eye catching documents- I used the free version of it to create my whole document.

# Want To Highlight Stories All Throughout the Year?

Share stories weekly during your offering time!

If you have access to screens, make a short slide highlighting stories or line items and telling their stories and why it's important to fund them.

If you don't have screens, write a short blurb to share each week or invite congregation members to share their own stories of the mission pieces they're involved with are aided by budget funds and gifts!

**We give thanks for the gifts God has given us,  
so that we may be a blessing to others.**

***In what way is God  
encouraging growth  
in generosity in this  
season of your life?***

**We give thanks for the gifts God has given us,  
so that we may be a blessing to others.**

*Belong...*



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**Music is integral to our worship,  
and honoring and compensating composers  
whose music we use is important as well! We give  
thanks for your gifts that support copyrights to  
the wide variety of composers and producers  
through CCLI, One License, and John Ylvisaker.**

**We give thanks for the gifts God has given us,  
so that we may be a blessing to others.**

*Believe...*



**Direct deposit allows  
our staff to get paid in a  
timely and convenient manner,  
reflecting the love and care we have  
for those who help run Bethlehem!**

**Thanks to your generosity, we are able to  
offer this option to our wonderful staff!**

**We give thanks for the gifts God has given us,  
so that we may be a blessing to others.**

*Befriend...*



Lake Agassiz  
**Habitat**  
for Humanity®

**Since they began in 1991, Lake Agassiz Habitat for Humanity has built homes for 75 families in Cass and Clay Counties, and hopes to help 4 more this year! Because of your generosity, Bethlehem is able to send \$900 in support for their mission this year!**

# Ways to Give at BLC

**Mail in or drop off your envelope**

Bethlehem Lutheran at 613 16th St S, Fargo ND 58103

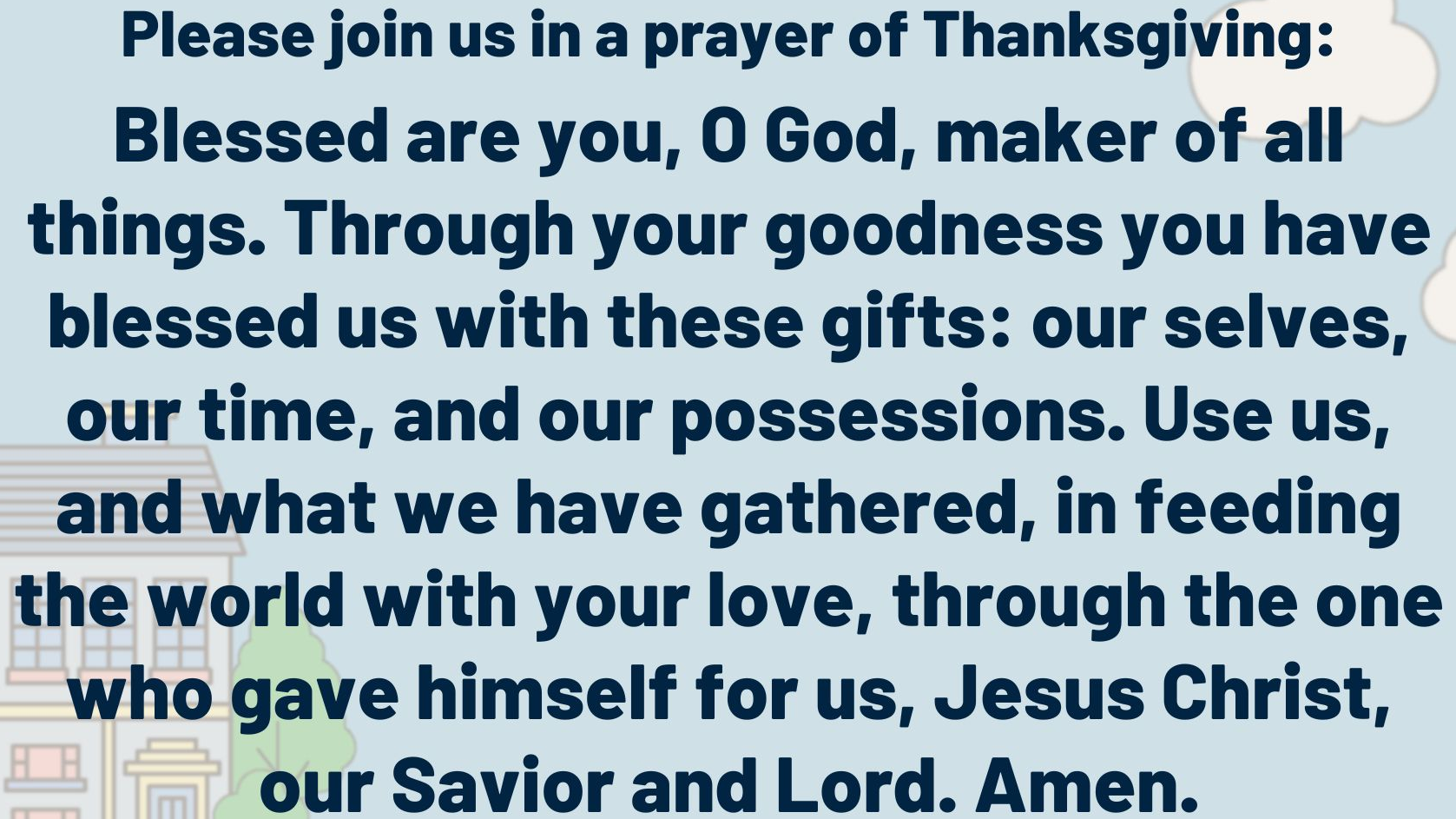
**VANCO Online Offering**

Click the "Donate" button on [blcfargo.org](http://blcfargo.org) or scan the QR code to make a one time or recurring gift

**Bill Pay through your bank**

Check your online banking for instructions how





**Please join us in a prayer of Thanksgiving:  
Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**



**That was a lot of information!  
What questions do you have?**

**Want to talk more about Narrative Budgets or want some more specific conversations about creating one for your congregation or parish?**

**Please reach out! I would love to talk!  
Thank you for being here today!**

**Email: [prlexy@blcfargo.org](mailto:prlexy@blcfargo.org)  
Cell Phone (Call or Text): 507-370-3838**