

# Happy Birthday to Us!

Come celebrate the 45th anniversary of Covenant Church! Our committee was given a mandate by council to acknowledge this milestone, with the purpose of encouraging long-time members and giving newer members a sense of our history. We hope we will praise, remember, and rejoice as a Covenant family in the seamless day of worship we have planned for Sunday, November 4.

Morning worship on that day will be followed by a catered meal, with early members of Covenant serving as hosts at tables set up in the fellowship hall. We will continue our fellowship with an interactive, intergenerational, and informal time of worship. A special request: during this WE service there will be a hands-on activity which asks each participant to provide a photo, either individual or family. These may be multiple copies of the same family picture, and Rebecca will print photos for you if you email them to her (rebecca.ann.devries@gmail). Talk to us if you have questions.

We are grateful for this opportunity to remind ourselves of who we are as a Covenant congregation and excited to celebrate God's faithfulness to us.

-The Anniversary Committee

*Rebecca DeVries, Bernie & Kathy DeWit, Adam Fedders, Laura Janssen, Ron Oostra, Len & Lee Rhoda*



Please mark these upcoming events and activities on your calendars!

## Wednesday, November 14

6:00 PM: Youth Group Lasagna Dinner  
*(Chicken, beef, vegetarian options available. Freewill donation for Youth Group activities and missions.)*

7:00 PM: Congregational Meeting  
*(Hear updates on our ministry and vote on the 2019 budget.)*

## Thursday, November 22

10:00 AM: Thanksgiving Day Worship Service

## Monday, November 26

7:00 PM: Installation Service for Joel Kok

## Sunday, December 9

6:00 PM: Sunday School Christmas Program

## Saturday, December 15

4:00 PM: Swimming & Pizza Party  
*(Swim at the All Seasons Center from 4:00-5:00, enjoy pizza together from 5:00-6:00.)*

## Pastoral Group Dinner Schedule



October 28—Kok/Christians  
November 11—Jongsma/Mellema  
November 18—Tazelaar/Oostra

# From the Elders...

Dear Covenant brothers and sisters: greetings again from your elders, who—at the time of this writing—met last night to discuss what is happening in our church family, and to pray for God’s direction, grace, and love as we continue daily to live before his face. Last Sunday morning we celebrated individuals in our church family and in the body of Christ who are different from the expected norm in one way or another. When I say, “the expected norm,” I’m thinking of how God created everything, including people, “good,” and how our disobedience and pride, led to a broken creation, and a broken relationship with God. Some of this brokenness comes out in physical and cognitive ways. We saw a beautiful video last Sunday morning of the Apostle’s Creed, recited by a group of people, young and old, many of whom displayed obvious physical or cognitive brokenness. (Thanks, worship planners, for including this moving testimony of God’s grace and love in the midst of brokenness!)

However, let us not forget, that each and every one of us is a broken person. Take me, as an example. I am a broken person. When I look at the rules for thankful living first given by God through Moses to the people of Israel, and knowing how Jesus interprets the keeping of the law, I know, and God knows, that I am constantly grieving him with my transgressions. Daily I need to repent from my sinful behavior and ask for the Spirit of Christ to lead, guide, protect, and sustain me. Yet, if you look at me, you might not—unless I have personally offended or let you down—think to yourself: there goes a broken person. But, if you did think that of me, you would be right. And each

one of us needs to admit this to her- or himself. I am a broken person. I do not meet the norm of a “good” person. Yikes! this is getting to be pretty heavy. However, as we all know, and as the Word of God and our preachers constantly remind us, God’s marvelous grace is far, far greater than the most tragic brokenness and the most vile behavior on our part. That is the good news that we hear every Sunday. We are broken; our best works are, as the apostle Paul puts it, no better than a pile of dirty rags. Who will rescue us from “this body of death?” Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ, our Lord! (Romans 7:25) Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ! (1 Cor. 15:57) But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ, and through us (imagine that!) spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. Now that is light shining in darkness; that is good news for us, Covenant sisters and brothers.

May we have the humility to regard ourselves as broken people, people who have handicaps and disabilities, but, who by the unbelievably immense grace of God have a place in God’s family, to walk alongside of each other, to encourage each other in the inevitable difficulties and dirtiness that we all, at some time, need to work through. As we function in our community and as we are ready to welcome our new pastor and his wife, may we, in our own weakness, radiate, through the strength of Jesus Christ, the marvelous power and goodness and beauty of our God—the great I AM.

-Sanneke Kok (on behalf of the Elders)

# Work in Progress: Why Christianity is Still Important

The Banner *announced the winners of their “Why Christianity Still Matters” 2018 college essay contest in August, and Rylan Brue won first place! Here is his essay (which will also be printed in The Banner this month):*

“No matter how wide you stretch your fingers, / your hands will always be too small to catch all the pain you want to heal” (*No Matter the Wreckage*, Write Bloody Publishing, 2014). Written by spoken-word poet Sarah Kay, these words have been running through my head lately. You see, I’ve just graduated and despite all the energetic exhortations to change the world and seek shalom I can’t help but feel overwhelmed by what an immense assignment that really is. When the echoes of the commencement addresses fade and the balloons with “Congratulations!” etched across them have started to sag, I begin to recognize how poorly I’ve done at making a positive impression at my high school much less the world. How will a signed piece of paper make me any better at it? This world seems so broken, where do I even start?

I don’t pretend that this emotion is unique to me, however. There’s a possibility that you’ve had it and I know others who’ve had it. Elijah

had it. You can read about it in 1 Kings 19. Elijah had a tough assignment. Tasked with reforming an entire wayward nation seemingly by himself, it’s easy to understand why Elijah might despair. Fresh off the dramatic showdown on Mt. Carmel, you can imagine Elijah’s excitement and optimism (perhaps not all that different from the immediate feelings incited by a hard-earned diploma). Surely things would be different now. This was the incisive act that would wake up a nation to who was really in charge. But, surprisingly, not much seems to have changed. Jezebel and Ahab still sit on their thrones determined to see Elijah dead before 24 hours are up. Elijah, disappointed and afraid, flees. Called to Mt. Horeb after God doesn’t give him the death he asks for, Elijah pours out his feelings to God. *I’ve been working so hard for you, but it’s all still so messed up, he cries in effect. I’m the only one left and I—I can’t do it by myself.* Sounds an awful lot like the post-graduation blues, if you ask me.

However, the story doesn’t end there. God doesn’t leave Elijah in his despair, and God won’t leave us in our despair either if we pay attention. For, on the side of God’s mountain

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## Grandma Alert! Grandpa Alert!

Jake and Trena Van Wyk are thankful for God’s blessing of a granddaughter, Nikalina Joy. Her parents, Briana and Kyle Van Anandel, with siblings Giselle, Vera, and Bentley are enjoying her and are thankful for this gift.

## Evening Worship Schedule

**November 4:** 45th Birthday WE service after morning worship, no evening worship

**November 11:** 6:00 PM service

**November 18:** No evening service

**November 25:** No evening service

# November Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Jan B	15	Teo Crull	26	Georgina Gracia Kate H David T
2	Jeananne Kuiper	16	Mia Castelan Lauren VP		
3	Troy Bierma Natalie B Mary P	20	Verne M Kellan T Duane & Jan B Paul & Ruth C	27	Bella D Tim K Ryan Z Jerry & Shonna P
4	Austen G				
5	Rue M	21	Cambri Z Alejandro & Isabel C	28	Neil Collins MC Doug & Marge DB
7	Jan V			29	Laremy DV Hannah L Jasper & Phyllis L
8	Rebecca DS	23	Bob DS Sadie L		
12	Priya Bierma	24	Louisa DV	30	Esteban Gracia Jocelyn Z Ed & Mary D
14	Mark C Nancy VB	25	Cara H		



## Offering Schedule

### November 4

**AM** General/Building Fund  
**WE** The Bridge

### November 11

**AM** Christian Education Fund  
**PM** World Renew: World Hunger

### November 18

**AM** Missions Fund  
Calvin Seminary

### November 22

**AM** Thanksgiving Offering

### November 25

**AM** Tuition Assistance Fund,  
Compassion Fund, Dordt College

## Covenant Sunday Morning Schedule

**November 4**—Emily Kramer on Chapter 8:  
“Serpents and Doves in the Public Square” Dr.  
C. Everett Koop

**November 11**—Mary Dengler on Chapter 9:  
“As He Lay Dying” John Donne

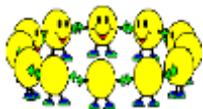
**November 18**—Bob De Smith on Chapter 11:  
“Whispers from the Wings” Frederick Buech-  
ner

**November 25**—No class

# November Assignments

Here are the assignments for members to “practice hospitality” this month...

Remember to wear your name badges!



## Nursery

Parents of the month: Jenni M, Ruth C

### November 4

AM INF Mark C, Laura L

TODDLER Lisa C, Emily S

WE No nursery (kids can participate!)

### November 11

AM INF Paul C, Jeri S

TODDLER Ruth C, Dave S

PM Jeff & Sara P, Ron & Carol O

### November 18

AM INF Lee M, Rebecca DV

TODDLER Jenni M, Laremy DV

### November 22—Thanksgiving Day

AM INF Nick B, Ruth C

TODDLER Jenni B, Tom C

### November 25

AM INF Dennis DJ Rachel L

TODDLER Pam DJ, Andy L

### November 26—Installation Service

PM To be determined

### December 2

AM INF Alejandro C, Rin G

TODDLER Isabel C, Chris G

Thanks for serving!



## Coffee Servers

Duane B, Ruth C, Mary D,  
Terry F, Mark MC, John Z



## Greeters

AM Dave S, Sharon D, Val Z

PM Ruth C, Laremy DV, Marilyn M



## Ushers

AM Chris G, Luanne G, Dennis VP

PM Lee R, Marty VP

## Substitutes

*If you are unable to serve on your assigned date for coffee, usher, or greeter, contact*

Jo A, Andy L, Ron O,  
Fednel T, Trena VW, Jan V

**Courier Copy—It's up to you!**

The *Courier* is issued monthly at Covenant church. If you have copy that you wish to be included, send it to the church office. Each issue is distributed on the last Sunday of the month. **Copy deadline** is Monday, **November 19** for the December issue.

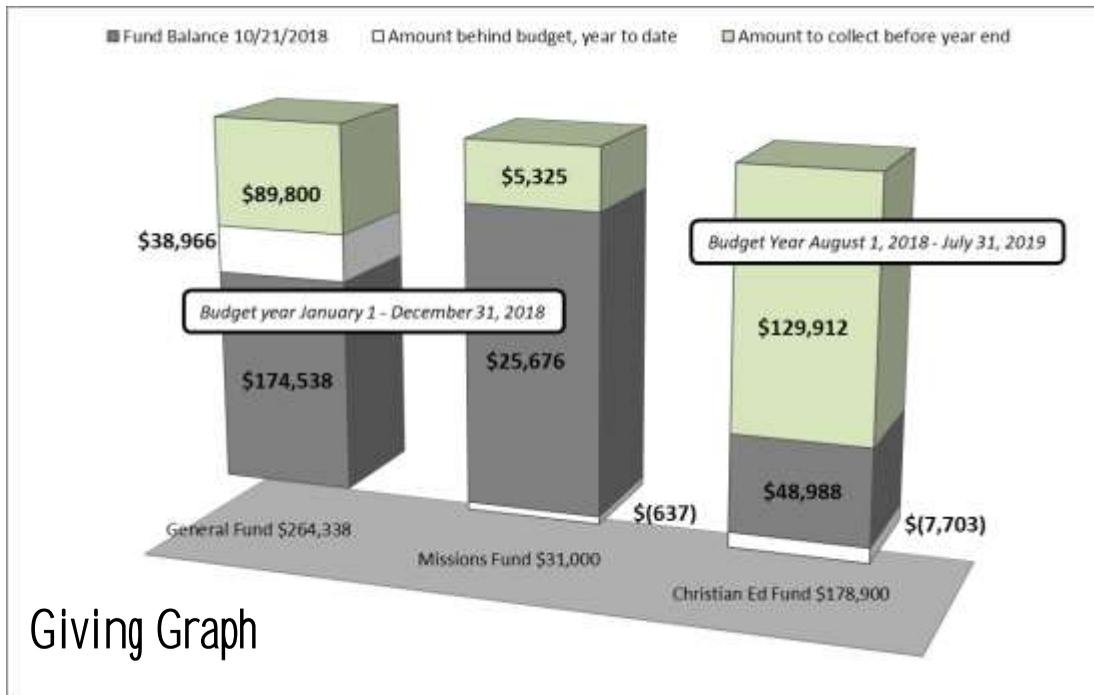
# Notes from the Deacons

This year the federal government is going to borrow \$779 billion to cover its spending which will raise the total federal debt to \$21.4 trillion. Many people like politicians who spend money on them and their interests but also many people like politicians who lower their taxes. Over the last century these two realities have played out much as expected. I am happy to report that the finances of Covenant CRC are in much better shape. But, I bring this up because, as deacons, we face a similar situation where there are so many things we want to do, so many ministries we want to support, so many missionaries we want to send out, so many worship services we want to make possible by maintaining a building, calling a pastor, supporting worship planners, musicians, janitors, office staff, keeping the lights on, the furnace running,

having hot coffee ready after the service for fellowship, among others. Yet, there are scores of things we'd also like to be doing but don't. I remember Pastor Kory sharing with me a grand vision of ministry ideas he had for our church once and I just thought, "how are we going to pay for that?" We want to make so much more ministry possible than what we have the resources to support. But, we have chosen not to borrow money so that we can do all the things we want to do regardless of whether we can afford them.

Each of the last two years the council has put budgets forward that are "hopeful" in a sense. We've planned to support more ministry than what the previous years' giving would have suggested because it is hard to say no to good things. We thought that by casting a vision for more ministry people might catch it and get excited to support it. But this made it

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## Notes from the Deacons

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difficult later on when deacons had to make choices about what to actually do with the resources we had. Do we keep the lights on or support a missionary, do we pay a pastor or pay our musicians, do we have office staff or support Cornerstone Prison Church? We had hoped to do all of them, so it was hard to choose one or the other.

Parallel to making decisions about supporting various ministries, the deacons are also tasked along with the elders with fostering the spiritual well-being and growth of the congregation. Throughout Scripture there are calls to be generous, to be cheerful givers, to cling not to the things of this world. Each week as the offering plate goes around and people drop something in, that is a powerful spiritual act, a demonstration that whatever that money could have bought for me, I will let it go with open hands because Christ is enough. Because better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere. Because the prodigal comes home and finds the Father himself. Because in giving, the joy and salvation I have may spread to all the world. And we want everyone to have that and experience that.

But....cynically one wonders if that last paragraph holds up to scrutiny. Do you really care about your brothers and sisters growing in generosity or do you just not want the stress of choosing which ministries to support? I know I'm not perfect on this one. So don't look to me, look to Christ. What do the Scriptures say? And so there are two things that are true that stand together. It is not the size of the check but the shape of the heart that God cares about. I would encourage everyone to grow in generosity, and that will look different for each member. And at the same time I would encourage you to take part in the ministry that Covenant is doing, and that will look different for each member. And I hope we all can see those two in unison, not the one in cynical service to the other.

As we prepare the budget for 2019, the council is, through minds and hearts in prayer, thinking through all the ways we want to support the work of the Spirit in the world. We are deciding what we're able to do with the resources with which we have been entrusted, and we are excited to see what God is able to do and join in that work. I doubt that Jesus thought "blessed are the spreadsheets," but they might just serve the Kingdom of Heaven in their own small way too.

-Tom Clark



*Thanks to all those who helped shingle this month to raise money for Christian Education!*



*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner was a great night of food and fellowship.*

## Work in Progress

(Continued from page 3)

comes the surprise. God, whom Elijah had just seen reveal himself in the flair of flames, reveals himself in something so hard to notice that Elijah might have missed if he hadn't just been instructed to look: a gentle whisper. As it turns out, God *had* been at work in his quiet, consistent way reserving 7,000 who hadn't bent their knee to Baal. Elijah, despairing under the burden of a task he couldn't do by himself, is suddenly reminded that God was at work.

Did you catch that? God at work. Christianity is *still* important because God is *still* at work. The Biblical narrative is bookended by stories of God in action. As the curtain comes up on opening night, we witness God *creating*. As the last pages of Revelation are read, we hear Christ's declaration, "I am *making* all things new!" Creating and making, both draw attention to who God is and what he is doing. But if that's not enough to convince you, look between the bookends and witness the most world-changing act of all. In the humility of human flesh, God comes to us. Dying the death we deserved, Christ leaves the tomb empty, opening up possibilities of newness previously unimaginable. This is the action that makes the Revelation declaration possible.

Where does this take us? Where did it take Elijah? Where does it take me as my diploma gathers dust? Well, for Elijah, it took him back to the place he ran from. God was not ready to throw in the towel. God had plans for his people yet and Elijah still had a role to play. Eugene Peterson likes to say that "there are no spectator seats in the drama of salvation" (*As Kingfishers Catch Fire*, Waterbrook, 2017). Although God does the heavy lifting,

we are all invited to participate. If Christianity is important because it declares that God is at work, then it only gains importance when we realize it is also the way we participate. Where does the resurrection—God's most decisive act—take me? Back to Monday morning. Back to everyday life where the news headlines don't allow me to ignore how much work there is to be done. Like the Emmaus disciples we return to the places we escaped from originally, the world in such desperate need of healing. But things are not the same as before. How could they be? Instead, filled with hope, we return, exploring the new possibilities of resurrection life, testifying about the God who has acted and is acting, and participating by allowing the good news of resurrection to seep into every corner of our beings in pursuit of lives that reflect the coming kingdom.

So, in Mt. Horeb moments—when the brokenness of the world is so apparent, when we seem so small, when we can't imagine how things can get better—know that the Creation-al Reclamation Project is not one we can tackle by ourselves. In fact, we can't. The perfect remedy is realizing that God is at work and has worked—sometimes as loudly as a stone rolling away and other times as quiet as a gentle whisper.

Sarah Kay is right. We can't stretch our hands wide enough to catch all the pain we want to heal, but to declare Christianity as still important is to declare that once a wooden cross-beam stretched God's arms wide enough to embrace and bring healing to an entire world.

-Rylan Brue