

Lord, You Have Been Our Dwelling Place...

This prayer originated as a piece by Joan Beck published in the Chicago Tribune in the 1980's. Dave Schelhaas took that piece and reworked it significantly for Covenant's 45th anniversary celebration.

Lord, you have haven our dwelling place in all generations. For 45 years Covenant church has dwelt in you whether we gathered at the Christian School or here at 106 2nd Street Northeast or on a grassy knoll at Oak Grove Park.

You have made your dwelling place with Kelly and April Crull in Spain; with Troy and Faith Bierma in Nepal; with Dan and Jeananne Kuyper in El Paso; with Sos and Kara Maletoungou in West Africa and with Mike and Megan Ribbens in South Africa.

We praise you, O God, that you made your dwelling place a manger in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago. We look forward to being your guests in mansions you have prepared for us, sitting there with saints who have gone before, Gloria Vander Plaats, Russ Maatman, Jill Vander Zee, Tressa Riemersma and so many others who dwelt with you here at Covenant and now, we believe, dwell with you in glory.

Hours and days and years and ages swift as moving shadows fly, so rapidly do our days here on earth fly by. Some of us, with gray

hair and bent bodies, can look back 45 years and see ourselves with our babies in our arms at that very first meeting of Covenant Christian Reformed Church. Yet we praise you who are outside of time for placing us in time because time is all we know.

We praise you for hours—for noon hours and story hours, quiet hours and worship hours; for the sweet hour of prayer and the assurance that you will be with us in the hour of trial.

We praise you for days—for pay days and May days and days off and day care. For work days and rest days, for worst days and best days and birthdays and holidays and holydays. "The

(Continued on page 8)



Joya, Eden, Corrie, and Ruth work together on their photo album page.

From the Elders...

The Elders and Deacons thank all those who enjoyed the lasagna meal served by the Youth Group and those who attended the congregational meeting later in the evening. This was an opportunity for fellowship, learning more about the ministries of Covenant CRC, and approving the 2019 church budget.

The excitement of welcoming our new pastor, Rev. Joel Kok, is building as the time of his arrival gets nearer. Last week Saturday, Joel and Tricia's household effects arrived in a moving van and were brought into the parsonage. Pastor Joel was present to do some guidance of where to place items, but he is unwilling to guarantee that things are all in the right places. Nevertheless, he is happy to have the household effects off the moving van and into the parsonage. Tricia remained with her Mother in Grand Rapids as her Mother recovers from knee replacement surgery.

Early on, Joel stated that his first service at Covenant would occur on December 2, the first Sunday of Advent. Pastor Joel is already becoming more acquainted with Covenant, since last Sunday, November 18, he met with the Advent Liturgy Team, attended the worship service and joined the Tazelaar/Oostra Pastoral Group for dinner before driving back to Grand Rapids.

The Elders are grateful to all who contributed in any way to prepare for the Koks' arrival and we ask you to join in prayer for Joel and Tricia as they travel and join our church community.

-Dennis DeJong (on behalf of the Elders)

Choir in December

Since the Sunday School children will be leading us in a Service of Lessons and Carols on December 9, this year the choir, directed by Ryan Smit, will lead us in a Candlelight Service on December 16. We invite all singers high school and up to sing in the choir. Rehearsals will be as follows:

Monday, November 26
(after the installation service)
Monday December 3, 7:30-8:45 PM
Monday December 10, 7:30-8:45 PM
Sunday December 16, 4:45 PM

We hope you will join us by attending or by singing in the choir. As is our recent custom, we will end the service celebrating the peace Christ brings us by singing "Peace, Peace" and "Silent Night."

Ryan will also direct us in singing "the Hallelujah Chorus" at our Christmas Day celebration.

-Rebecca DeVries

Evening Worship Schedule

December 2: No evening service
December 9: Children's Christmas program
December 16: Candlelight Service
December 23: No evening service
December 30: No evening service
December 31: New Year's Eve Worship

A Growing-Up Church

This was printed in the booklet of the Dedication Service held in February, 1982, at the celebration of the purchase of our current building. Even though we have now hit "middle-age," may we continue to "grow up."

There is a verb in Latin which means "to grow up." The past participle of that verb is *adultus* and means "one who has grown up." The present participle of the same word is *adolescens*, "one who is growing up." The obvious English derivations can be applied to institutions as well as individuals., but I hesitate to call Covenant an adolescent church for fear that the wrong conclusion could be drawn. However, since the church is showing signs of rapid growth, requiring new facilities, and looking forward to a new pastor with an enlarged program, it can well be called an adolescent church.

Sometimes the period of adolescence shows itself in a gangly, uncoordinated manner. It lacks some of the polish and social grace of

later periods. But it has the virtue of great potential and is a long way from the arthritic restrictions of adulthood.

Yes, as I look back from the perspective of a few months, I see in Covenant Christian Reformed Church all the excitement and potential of an adolescent. May your growing up be directed and regulated by the Word which gives us this advice, "Grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." Then, as Paul says, "we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth and blown here and there" but will "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

As the father of teenagers I can attest that the process of bringing to maturity is easier said than done. As with a family, so with the church, the whole-hearted cooperation of each one is necessary. God grant you his Spirit for such continued cooperation in growing up.

-Dr. Franklin Steen

(Covenant's first pastor)

Sunday School Christmas Program: A Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

This year for the Sunday school Christmas program, the children will lead us through a service of lessons and carols. Each class, from our young children in worship up to the high school students will present a lesson from scripture in a unique way. We plan to rehearse Sunday, November 25 at 9:00 AM, December 2 at 8:45 AM, and December 9 at both 8:45 AM and 4:00 PM. Thanks so much to the Sunday school teachers, Dani Wyenberg, Jeri Schelhaas, Rob Haan, Tom Clark, and Joya Breems for working with the children to make this a meaningful time of worship for the Christmas season. Contact Rebecca De Vries if you have any questions.

1st Grade through 8th Grade Musicians: If you take private music lessons and have been working on a Christmas song with your teacher, we would love for you to play for us during the Sunday School Christmas Program. Please contact Rebecca De Vries.

December Birthdays & Anniversaries

2	Logan H	16	Kathy DW Matt & Becky D	23	Ben L Ryan & Val Z
4	Bernie DW	17	Nico DV Lily W	25	Betty VP
6	Canaan Hawley Nico Ribbens	18	Kelly & April Crull	26	Dennis VP
7	Elia E	19	John K	27	George & Jo F Dave & Jeri S
8	Jason W	21	Ruth Cla Gianni & Georgina G	29	Emily K Reya T Jeff & Shirley T
11	Kara T	22	Amelia L Shirley M	30	Natalee D Kurt & Kayt F
12	Mike VB				
14	Megan Ribbens				



Offering Schedule

December 2

AM General/Building Fund
World Renew: Embrace AIDS

December 9

AM Christian Education Fund,
Compassion Fund
PM Bethesda Christian Counseling

December 16

AM Missions Fund
Bible League International

December 23

AM Tuition Assistance Fund
Hope Food Pantry

December 25

AM World Renew: Food Resource Bank

4

December 30

AM General Fund

Covenant Sunday Morning Schedule

December 2—Ethan Brue on Chapter 7:
“Echoes in a Strange Land” Mahatma Ghandi

December 9—Luke Hawley on Chapter 12: “A
Place for Traitors” Shushaku Endo

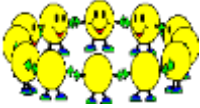
December 16—Barb Hoekstra on Chapter 13:
“The Wounded Healer” Henri Nouwen

December 23 & 30—No class

The January Series is coming to Covenant!
We will be livestreaming it each weekday
from January 3-23 from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM
as we have in past years. You can find the
schedule here: <https://calvin.edu/january-series>.
Watch for more details to come!

December Assignments

Here are the assignments for members to “practice hospitality” this month...
Remember to wear your name badges!



Nursery

Parents of the month: Merrill MC

December 2

AM INF Alejandro C, Rin G
TODDLER Isabel C, Chris G

December 9

AM INF John V, Lisa F
TODDLER Linda V, Ross F
PM Jake & Trena VW, Lee R

December 16

AM INF Rebecca DS, Luke H
TODDLER Bob DS, Sarah H
PM Dave & Luanne G, Laura J

December 23

AM INF Eldon W, Jan B
TODDLER Marcia W, Duane B

December 25—Christmas Day

AM INF Ryan Z, Deb H
TODDLER Val Z, Daryl H

December 30

AM INF Dave V, Erin E
TODDLER Jan V, Joe E

December 31—New Year’s Eve Worship

PM Marty & Kris VP, Barb T

January 6

AM INF Josue F, Cheri H
TODDLER Ana F, Mark H



Coffee Servers

Marge DB, Ana F, Rin G,
Cal J, Linda VH, Sharon V



Greeters

AM Ed B, Isabel C, Paul C
PM Wil A, Mark H, John K



Ushers

AM George F, Shirley T, Eldon W
PM Joan MC, Jake VW

Substitutes

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

Jenni B, Mark C, Rockne MC,
Les S, John V, Kurt 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, **December 17** for the January issue. (Note the earlier deadline this month!)

Notes from the Deacons

Christmas is about a month away and the Salvation Army bells are ringing to remind us to share with the needy. Your mailbox is probably filled with requests as well. In the business of the season it's hard to figure out what to give to which organization!

Again this year at Covenant, the SAM (Service And Missions) committee invites you to participate in the Mid-Sioux Holiday Families Program, which provides assistance to families by giving Christmas gifts within Sioux County. Families can fill out an application at the Mid-Sioux office and if they qualify (by income level)



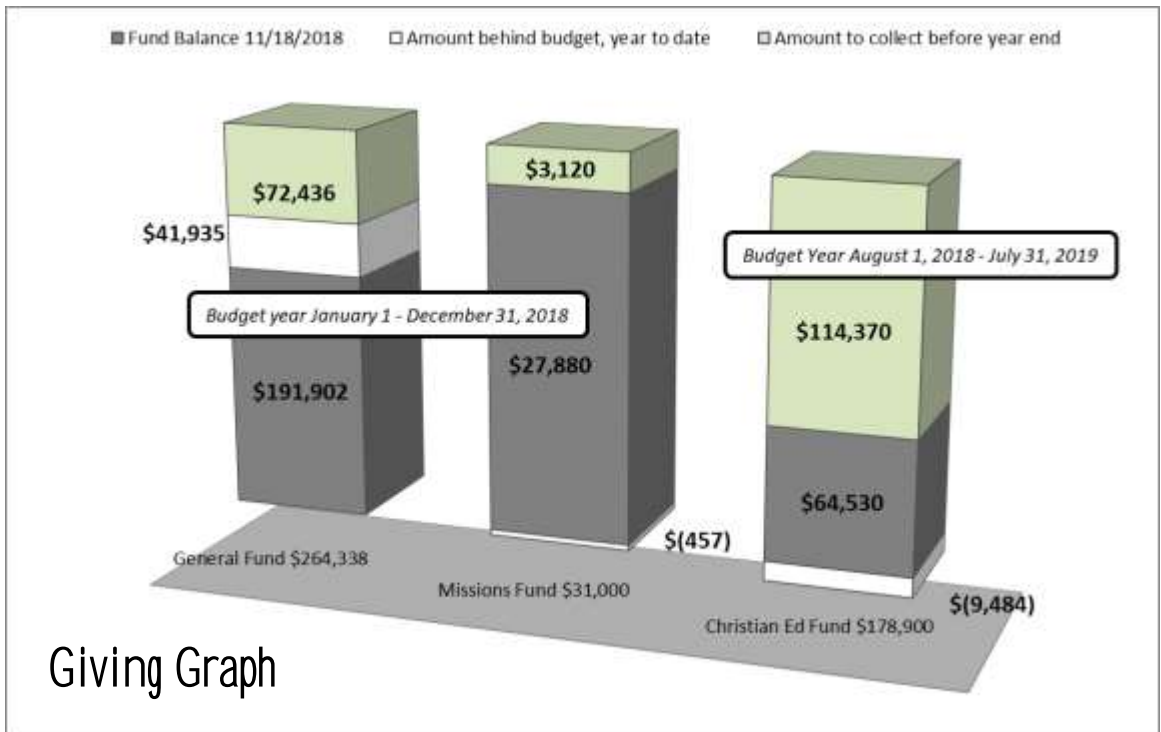
an application at the Mid-Sioux office and if they qualify (by income level)

the forms are distributed to various donors. There is specific information given like age, gender, sizes, color, as well as the interests of each person in the household.

Each pastoral group gets a household to bless with Christmas gifts. Your deacon will decide how to collect or buy items your household needs and will deliver it to church by December 11. Someone from SAM will deliver them all to Mid-Sioux. No names are given but we certainly will pray that the recipients of our gifts will be blessed.

And thanks to all of you and may God bless you as we all continue to give and serve in Christ's name.

-Carol Oostra



Serving at Covenant

This is part of an ongoing series about the many ways Covenant members serve in our church, our community, and beyond.

Do you know about the Hope Food Pantry in Sioux Center? Do you realize there are many families in Sioux Center that are food insecure? Would you have a few hours a week to volunteer to help them?

The volunteers at the Hope Food Pantry (located behind Culvers in the old Walmart building) come alongside hundreds of needy individuals each month. They demonstrate by word and deed that Christ and His followers love and care for their daily needs. Some Covenant members have been donating extra garden produce all summer.

This is an all volunteer organization and there are several other ways you or your small group could be involved. If you are interested, talk to Carol Oostra or call Marianne Sjaarda who is the coordinator at 712-540-9351.

-Carol Oostra



Saturday, December 15
at The All Seasons Center
Enjoy swimming from 4:00-5:00 PM
Enjoy pizza from 5:00-6:00 PM
Come for one or both!
(Freewill donation to cover expenses)

Thank You!

Dear congregation of Covenant CRC,
We praise God for the 2017-18 Legacy Plan gift of \$150,080 Sioux Center Christian School has received from your congregation for the last school year. We are so very grateful for your partnership as it helps fulfill our vision that every child is treasured, trained, and transformed as they learn and live God's Story. Thank you!

On behalf of the SCCS family,
-Josh Bowar, Head of School

Advent Practices

Advent begins on December 2. Is your family looking for ways to make this season more meaningful? Here are a few options:

Faith Formation Ministries has a toolkit for that! Find lots of ideas for Advent here: <https://www.crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits/family-faith-formation-toolkit/advent>

Here's a link to a free printable Advent calendar by Traci Smith, author of *Faithful Families* focusing on prayer, service, and mindfulness aimed toward families with school-aged children: <http://www.traci-smith.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/FaithfulFamiliesADVENTCALENDAR2018.pdf>

To help families anticipate the coming of Christ, the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship is offering a free download of the Advent section of the intergenerational prayer book *Teach Us to Pray*. Find it here: <https://network.crcna.org/faith-nurture/free-family-advent-resource-cicw>

Lord, You Have Been Our Dwelling Place

(Continued from page 1)

sun comes up and it's a new day dawning,
time to sing your praise again."

We praise you, O God, for years—for the Reformation in 1517, the founding of the CRC in 1857, the founding of Covenant in 1973. We thank you Lord for the special years we mark, our birthdays and wedding days and graduation days and profession days.

O God, a thousand ages in your sight are like an evening gone. Yet we praise you for ages—for the Golden Age and the Space Age, for the Age of Innocence and the Age of Understanding, for Teen Age and Middle Age and Old Age, for "In the beginning" and "It is finished." You were our help in ages past and are our hope for years to come.

We are so thankful, God, that you are not just the Dutch God or the Jewish God or the English God, but that in Christ "there is no east or west, in him no pride of birth, that the chosen ones that God has blessed now span the whole wide earth." We praise you that along with the Vissers and Voses and Vander



Participants of all ages singing together during the WE worship service.



Our panelists prepare to answer questions from the Sunday

Zees in our church directory are Themistols and Castelans and Felicianos, Buckinghamhs and Hawleys and Stevensons.

Over the past 45 years we have seen hundreds of Covenant member move on to serve and worship in other faith communities. We pray for your blessing upon them, and we ask that you will bless this current body of Covenant believers as we continue to labor in the vineyard where you have placed us. We thank you for generations past and those yet to come, for young men and women who dream dreams, and old men and women who see visions.

We beseech you that as so many of our children and grandchildren move to other places of work and worship, they may hear echoing in their ears our reminder that, "Our God is great and his hand is strong," and that they in turn may sing it out to their children, "Our God is great and his hand is strong." faithfulness to us.

-Dave Schelhaas