



Christmas Day Worship Service

Wednesday, December 25 ✦ 10:00 AM

John 1:1-18

All are welcome to join in singing
the "Hallelujah Chorus" at the close of the service.
Music will be provided.

A Note from Pastor Joel

During the summer of 2017, Tricia and I participated in a visit to Nazareth. In Jesus' day, Nazareth was a small town; today it is a rela-

tively good sized city. Amazingly, either the home of Jesus or a home much like it has been preserved for 2000 years, and we got to view it.

Beneath the Sisters of Nazareth Convent (which includes an inspiring church building, excellent lodging facilities, and various ministry settings) stands a cave that was formed into a home. For many centuries, the home was neglected and nearly forgotten, until a group of nuns arrived from France in 1884. As they constructed their convent, they also engaged in archaeological research and discovered a cave-home that stood right next to a burial site, which was known as the resting place of someone named "Joseph the Just." Among ancient Jews, homes and burial sites were usually kept separate, so the proximity of these entities led to further research and reflection. Could Joseph the Just be Joseph the earthly father of Jesus, whom Matthew tells us was a righteous (or just) man? Could the unique character of the holy family of Jesus have expressed itself in this unusual arrangement?

The nun who guided us superbly to view the site did not make dogmatic claims. Instead, she said that, given how few houses there were in Nazareth in Jesus' earthly days, along with the striking burial site and other details, the cave-home that we were visiting could have been the earthly home of Jesus, and almost certainly reveals what Jesus' earthly home was like. I can testify that visiting the site gave me a memorable sense of Jesus as both perfectly human and

(Continued on page 3)

Courier

January 2019

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

The January Series at Covenant

We will once again be livestreaming The January Series here at Covenant each weekday from January 8-28 from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Started in 1988, the January Series is an annual, award-winning, 15-day lecture series that exists to cultivate deep thought and conversations about important issues of the day in order to inspire cultural renewal and better equip global citizens in God's world. The series is free and open to the public. In 2020, 60 remote locations will carry the January Series—spanning 22 U.S. states, three Canadian provinces, and one site in Europe. You can find more information at www.calvin.edu/january-series.

Wednesday, January 8

Amber Warners: *The Fierce Humility of Winning*

Thursday, January 9

Todd Charles Wood & Darrel R. Falk: *Moving Beyond Labels to a Christian Dialogue about Creation and Evolution*

Friday, January 10

Sandra Postel: *Replenish: The Virtuous Cycle of Water and Prosperity*

Monday, January 13

Jonathan Haidt: *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*

Tuesday, January 14

Cathy O'Neil: *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*

Wednesday, January 15

Deborah & James Fallows: *Our Towns: A 100,000-Mile Journey into the Heart of America*

Thursday, January 16

The 5 Browns: *The 5 Browns in Concert*

Friday, January 17

Bob Fu: *When Caesar Demands to be God: Religious Freedom in China*

Monday, January 20

Alice Marie Johnson: *After Life: My Journey from Incarceration to Freedom*

Tuesday, January 21

Mitch Albom: *A Little Girl, an Earthquake, and the Making of a Family*

Wednesday, January 22

Ann Compton: *Up Close and Personal: My 41 Years in the White House Press Corps*

Thursday, January 23

Jeremy Everett: *Solving America's Hunger Crisis*

Friday, January 24

Johan Norberg: *Progress: 10 Reasons to Look Forward to the Future*

Monday, January 27

Karen Gonzalez: *The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong*

Tuesday, January 28

Najla Kassab: *The Reformed Church in the Middle East: Hopes and Challenges*

Note from Pastor Joel

(Continued from page 1)

perfectly divine. It was the highlight of my visit to the holy land. And recalling that visit leads my mind also to a poem by Denise Levertov called “The Annunciation.” The poem (with the pronoun below referring to Mary) concludes as follows:

She had been a child who played, ate, slept
like any other child—but unlike others,
wept only for pity, laughed
in joy not triumph.

Compassion and intelligence
fused in her, indivisible.

Called to a destiny more momentous
than any in all of Time,
she did not quail,

 only asked
a simple, ‘How can this be?’
and gravely, courteously,
took to heart the angel’s reply,
the astounding ministry she was offered:

to bear in her womb
Infinite weight and lightness; to carry
in hidden, finite inwardness,
nine months of Eternity; to contain
in slender vase of being,
the sum of power-
in narrow flesh,
the sum of light.

 Then bring to birth,
push out into air, a Man-child
needing, like any other,
milk and love-

but who was God.



Blessings,
-Pastor Joel

The Sunday School Christmas program brought joy to our whole church family! We are grateful for the work of the planners, teachers, and kids who helped us see the meaning behind many of the symbols of Christmas.

January Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Jenni Mellema	16	Peregrine Groenewold Rog Vanden Hoek	30	Amie Smit Jeff Taylor
2	Dallas Apol				
3	Jo Alberda Paola Gracia Josue & Ana F	17	Jaren Brue	31	Sos & Kara Maletougou
		20	Jenni Breems Tricia Kok Dave Kramer		
5	Andy & Rachel Landman	23	Stetsen Fedders		
9	Lois Vander Zee	25	Jasper Fedders		
10	Bryanna Castelan	26	Jonathan Breems		
12	Terry Friend	28	Trena Van Wyk		
14	Pastor Joel Kok Michael Vander Plaats	29	Josue Feliciano Don Ten Napel		



Offering Schedule

January 5

AM General Fund

January 12

AM Christian Education Fund

January 19

AM General Fund

January 26

AM World Renew

PM Cadets (National)

Formation Sunday Evenings

Our 5:00 PM Evening Formation Gatherings this month will include the following:

January 5: No gathering

January 12: Sheriff Dan Altena

January 19: Intergenerational Praying in Color (Curious about this? Here is a link with more information about what this is: prayingincolor.com)

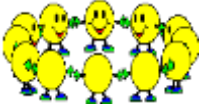
January 26: Cadet Sunday Service with Faith CRC & Bridge of Hope



January Communion Schedule: Pastor Joel will be taking December 29 and January 5 off. We will celebrate the Lord's Supper on January 12 when he is back at Covenant. Thanks to David Westfall and Justin Bailey for filling in while he's gone!

January Assignments

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



Nursery

Parents of the month:
Lee & Jenni M

January 5

AM Duane & Jan B, Barb T
PM (no gathering)

January 12

AM Ross & Lisa F, Laura J
PM Daryl & Deb H, Steve & Pat C

January 19

AM Dave & Luanne G, John & Linda V
PM (no nursery)

January 26

AM Ryan & Val Z, Emilyn S, Jo F
PM Mark & Cheri H, Ethan & Donna B

February 2

AM Luke & Sarah H, Rob & Megan H
PM Marty & Kris VP, Adam & Robin F



Coffee Servers

Isabel C, Jill F, Luke H,
Barb H, Shirley T, Marty VP



Greeters

AM Donna B, Ron O, Les S



Ushers

AM Dave G, Erik H, Rachel L

Substitutes

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

Ruth C, Mark H, Gidge M,
Dave S, Sharon V, Eldon W



New Year's Eve Worship Service
Tuesday, December 31 • 5:00 PM

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, **January 20** for the February issue.

Giving To Date

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/19-12/15/19) \$252,816	\$234,914	-\$17,902
Missions	(1/1/19-12/15/19) \$22,295	\$29,446	+\$7,151
Christian Education	(8/1/19-12/15/19) \$74,875	\$86,522	+\$11,647

Notes from the Deacons

Giving is worship. When we give, we are giving back to the One who first gave.

I would like to begin this end-of-the-year article by again thanking all of you who have made it a priority to give regularly to our offerings. Meeting your own personal financial obligations, along with helping to meet the financial obligations of our church family, can be challenging. But we realize there are other ways of giving, too. Thank you also to those who have willingly given of your time to help with cleaning and maintaining our building and grounds, to those who have served on committees or as teachers and mentors, to those who organized and helped with fund raisers, to those who have taken the time to welcome and enfold those who are new to Covenant, and... Each of you has been a blessing!

If you have not had the opportunity to fill out the Service, Participation, and Skills Questionnaire, we encourage you to do so. We also encourage you to read the SAM article in each Courier to learn about how some of our members are serving outside of Covenant. Maybe it's a way you would also like to serve.

Over the past year your offerings have made it possible to help some of our families with tuition assistance and other bills, provide support for our missionaries, help pay our monthly bills, help us maintain our building, and help make it possible for families to send their child(ren) to a Christian school.

As we look ahead to 2020, we are discussing ways to simplify our giving. We have three main accounts—the General Fund, the Christian Education Fund, and the Compassion/Tuition Assistance Fund. Most of our expenses come out of the General Fund, followed by the Christian Education Fund. Designating only these three funds allows us, as deacons, more flexibility to use your offerings where they are needed most. Or you can mark “use as needed” on the envelope or the memo line of your check. We ask that you will pray for us as we consider requests and discern how best to use the offerings that come in. We will try to keep you updated when we are running short in one of the Funds.

2 Corinthians 9:7-8 (from The Message):
 “I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting. God loves it when the giver delights in the

(Continued on page 7)

Note from the Deacons

(Continued from page 6)

giving. God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done."

Blessings to you in the coming year as you prayerfully consider how you are able to give!

-For the Deacons, Pat Crull

Serving at Covenant

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

Helping our Neighbor

Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc. in Sioux Center is a not-for-profit Community Action Agency to fight poverty at the local level by assisting low-income families to become self-sufficient. They offer lots of services and programs such as energy assistance, food pantry, health and nutrition, emergency crisis, and more.

Covenant's SAM (Service And Missions) Com-

mittee supported three programs in 2019. In May we collected food for the food pantry, in August we gave to the back-to-school Back-Pack program, and most recently we participated in the Christmas gift basket program. We were able to bless six local families with good quality and appropriate gifts.

There are always programs going on at Mid-Sioux and both volunteers and donations are an ongoing need. For more information on how to volunteer, you can call the Sioux Center Mid-Sioux office at 722-3311. And thank you for donating to their causes! Money given to Mid Sioux is giving to our neighbor in need.

-Covenant SAM Committee

Thank You!



Thank you for your donations of jackets/coats, hats, gloves, scarves, boots, tennis shoes, blankets, etc. We were able to pass on to our community over 350 jackets/coats and several hundred other winter gear items! Within 45 minutes there was little left on the racks & tables. Even with the high number of donations, we were not able to fill the need of all those who came to the distribution. We wrote down names, sizes, and phone numbers; Justice For All graciously donated items to help fill those needs. The schools were given items for students in need. Other local charities were also given donations to help with the ongoing need for winter gear. If you see Sara Dolieslager from Sewing by Sara please thank her for her gift of time to repair numerous items and help with the distribution. Thanks too for the translators who came to the distribution. And once again, thanks to all of you for being a part of blessing our community and those in need.

-The Bridge of Hope Outreach Team

Kids Coloring Page

AND THE WORD
BECAME FLESH
AND DWELT
AMONG US,
AND WE HAVE
SEEN HIS GLORY,
GLORY AS OF
THE ONLY SON
FROM THE
FATHER,
FULL OF GRACE
AND TRUTH.

JOHN 1:14



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