

Covenant CRC: Stuck-at-Home Edition

Our Covenant family is currently physically separated, but in case you're wondering how members of our church family are handling this time of social distancing, here are a few things people are enjoying (and not enjoying) about the current situation...

Barb Hoekstra:

We've been doing some online training at Dorcht so that we can do a good job of teaching online. During these trainings, I've been able to see and chat with Dorcht professors I don't normally see. So while I am not seeing the people I normally would, I am seeing and enjoying the folks I wouldn't see on a day-to-day basis.

Jeri Schelhaas:

There is a strong sense of security having a warm house and plenty of food and supplies and knowing that all the kids and grandkids are safe and well in their homes. And for all that I am thankful. We are wisely warned not to take risks. So I worry a bit that "no risk" will come to feel right and become an acceptable choice when this thing has passed.

The Landmans:

Sadie: Favorite is sleeping in until 10:00, least favorite is missing her teacher and classmates.

Ava: Favorite is wearing PJs all day, least

favorite is not playing with anyone but her family.

Ezra: Favorite is being finished with school work by lunch, least favorite is when the weather is cold or rainy and no friends.

Levi: Favorite is having time for creative things, least favorite is not being able to see people.

Hannah: Favorite is having more flexibility in her schedule, least favorite is not seeing people and cancelled events.

Andy: Favorite is not having to travel for work meetings and having more meals together, least favorite is... hmm. I must be an introvert.

Rachel: Favorite is the sweet moments of kids working diligently in the same room, least favorite is not really having a set time or space for my own introvert needs.

Ron Oostra:

We are in self isolation after being in 9 states and sleeping in 5 states in 12 days. No people contact, but out of the back patio door I saw 5 Canadian geese, 14 wood ducks, blue jays, robins, juncos, downy woodpecker, cowbirds, red tailed hawk, rabbit, and squirrels this morning. It is spring—the season of hope!

let's stay
 HOME

Courier

April 2020

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

A Note from the Elders

Dear sisters and brothers at Covenant:

I would like to tell you a bit about the elders' first meeting via "Zoom" technology on Monday, March 23. I'm so grateful for this technology as well as the technology that allowed us to worship together Sunday, March 22, in Spirit and Truth, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and by the dedicated work of a number of individuals who worked so hard to set things up for both our worship and our elders' meeting.

As you might guess, our meeting covered much ground concerning keeping community alive and well in our congregation during this time of social isolation. You should know that your elders and deacons are thinking about how they can serve you. Please talk to us about this. I know some of you have talked to elders and/or deacons by phone and others have had emails. Your phone calls and communication with your elder and deacon team and/or also with your entire pastoral group are more than welcome; in fact, they serve as our connection, our community among each other. Let's make an effort to be in touch with each other!

At last night's meeting, I was greatly encouraged by the opening devotions and closing prayer that were offered by elders Rebecca De Smith and Deb Hibma. Rebecca's small group has been reading about building community and one of the ways the author emphasizes as a way to build community is by expressing gratitude. Rebecca shared that her past week as a teacher has been a stressful one—full of adjustments and many expectations by all parties involved—and that it has

been difficult for her to feel grateful. But motivated by her reading, she made an effort to realize that there are still so many things to be grateful for. Indeed as the apostle Paul advises us, we should give thanks in all circumstances because that's God's will for us in Jesus Christ. Jesus himself, knowing that he would soon endure the agony of separation from God for our sakes, still took the bread and wine of the Passover meal he had with his disciples and offered gratitude to his Father for these elements, which continue to feed us to this day.

We have all been reading or hearing on the news of the suffering and anxiety of so many during the social isolation we are practicing and by the economic effects social isolation is having on many individuals in service industries who cannot work and will not be paid at this time, and other individuals who must work in order to keep vital industries and services going, thus putting themselves at a greater risk of contact with the virus that's going around. All of our mental health is also more vulnerable under these circumstances. During her closing prayer, elder Deb prayed, no, pleaded with God, that just as he has rescued his beloved people from so many dangers in the past, he would now hear our urgent prayer for deliverance from this pandemic and for endurance and wisdom to remain faithful witnesses during this time of trial.

May God be with each one of you dear sisters and brothers of our church family and provide for all of your needs and those of your loved ones. We know he is faithful. Now that is a cause for gratitude!

-Sanneke Kok

Your Labor is Not in Vain

I want to share a song that's been meaningful to me, especially now as we work and learn in this new reality of social distancing. It's a song based on words from Isaiah 65 where God through Isaiah gives us a picture of what is to come—the new heaven and the new earth.

The song is called “Your Labor is Not in Vain.” And as you can imagine and relate, that's a promise I need to hear right now. My labors have changed drastically in the last week. All of ours have. I wake up and head to the Fruited Plain to make muffins and wonder, “Will anyone come through? Is it worth it?” I come

home to “teach” at the dining room table and ask “Are they actually learning things or are we just checking things off the list?” I plan an online worship service and wonder “Is anyone tuning in? Is this the best way to do this?”

And in each situation I just want to know how long things will be like this. I want so badly to know what life will look like tomorrow, and a week from now and this summer. “How long, O Lord?”

And we just don't know. Wouldn't it be nice to have a picture...a promise?

But we do! Read Isaiah 65:17-25. Listen to this song. Wendell Kimbrough, the songwriter, takes the picture and the promise and shows

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Grandma Alert! Grandpa Alert!

We have great news! Three precious children of God were added to our family in this year of 2020.

Lyla Grae (not Grace) Huizenga was born on February 3, the birthday of her mother, Shelley. She weighed 6 lbs. 7 oz. Father, Cody, and two-year-old sister, Harper, helped celebrate her arrival. The Huizengas live in Carlisle, IA, where Shelley works at home as a CPA and Cody is employed by the Better Business Bureau. Grandparents are Darren and Dawn Huizenga of Orange City.

In an exciting phone call on February 24, our grandson Brady announced that his wife, Emily, had given birth to Beau Garrett Rhoda. (10 lbs. 2 oz.). His middle name is a tribute to Great Grandpa Len who is Leonard Garrett. This is their first child; and they recently

moved to Temecula, CA, where Brady is a warden with the Department of Game and Wildlife. Scott and Becky Rhoda are thrilled to be grandparents.

Dawn and Darren were blessed with another grandchild on March 23. Heath and Cassie Baker have two girls, Ivy (5) and Lennon (2), who were eagerly awaiting the birth of a little brother. Ford Eric Baker (sharing his father's middle name) weighed 8 lbs. 4 oz. and brought joy during the uncertain days of the coronavirus pandemic. Father Heath is with Kroese and Kroese, and he and Cassie live right here in Sioux Center.

We are so grateful for technology which allows us to admire these beautiful great-grandchildren from a distance. It is our hope that the quarantine ends soon and we are able to travel as needed to hold these babies in our arms. Thank you, Covenant, for rejoicing with us; and praise God from whom all blessings flow.

-Len & Lee Rhoda

April Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Auden Mellema Marty Vander Plaats	15	Justin Bailey	29	Sarah Stiemsma
2	Brian & Barb Mellema	17	April Crull Eli Horstman Dylan Kramer	30	Jacob Van Tol
3	Rebecca DeVries	21	Ruben Crull Adam Fedders Jonas Fedders Nathan Maletoungou		
6	John Visser				
7	Megan Haan				
8	Sam Eppinga	22	Stella Ribbens		
9	Sharon Dykhuizen	25	Eden Hawley		
11	Sara Eppinga	26	Alejandro Castelan		



Offering Schedule

April 5	
AM	General/Building Fund
April 12	
AM	Christian Education Fund
April 19	
AM	Missions Fund
April 26	
AM	Compassion/Tuition Assistance Fund

Formation Sunday Evenings

During our time of social distancing, Pastor Joel will offer a study of Jeremiah via Zoom at 5:00 PM. For those wanting to participate, please let Pastor Joel know (if you have not already); and if you would like to do advance reading, here are the upcoming passages:

March 29: Jeremiah 1

April 5: Jeremiah 2-3

April 12: Easter evening: to be announced

April 19: Jeremiah 7

April 26: Jeremiah 8-9

Ways to Give During COVID-19:

- Drop a check in the mail to Covenant
 - Use the memo line to designate, undesignated checks will be used as needed.
- Online bill pay via your bank
- ACH Bank Transfer—talk to Adam Fedders to set it up

April Assignments

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

Nursery Scheduling

Because of the uncertainty of when we will resume meeting in our building, we will not be scheduling nursery volunteers for the month of April. We will put out a schedule before we begin meeting again.



Coffee Servers

Mark C, Cal J, Tricia K,
Andy L, Shirley M, Beth VB



Greeters

AM Jenni B, Robin F, Kurt V



Ushers

AM Chris G, Joan MC, Shaun S

Sunday Scheduling for April

With so much uncertainty regarding when we will worship together again in our building, we are leaving the March Sunday volunteers on the schedule for the month of April as well. If we begin worshiping together later in April, we hope that you will be willing to finish out that month.

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, **April 20** for the May issue.

Substitutes

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

Wil A, Duane B, Pam DJ,
George F, Dennis VP, Del VZ

Giving To Date

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/20-3/15/20) \$57,411	\$55,417	-\$1,994
Missions	(1/1/20-3/15/20) \$5,005	\$5,144	+\$139
Christian Education	(8/1/19-3/15/20) \$123,544	\$128,007	-\$4,463

Notes from the Deacons

As I sit down to write the deacons' article for April, I first had to deal with the closing of SCCS and what that means for our family. This morning at church, we still met, but we were very much spread out. Also, for the first time I'm aware of, our worship service was livestreamed on Facebook. We didn't have communion this morning, despite planning to have it every week for Lent. We didn't have Sunday School, Children in Worship, or nursery this morning. I know I missed seeing some people this morning, some of whom could be in serious trouble if they were to catch COVID-19. And I'm still not sure what this means for work yet, not for me or my wife or anyone else, really.

But while we are taking care of ourselves individually, as families, and as a church family, we need to not lose focus on other things, so I want to let you all know about what's going on with the building committee.

First, the huge silver maple outside of the main entrance will be coming down next month. It lost a large branch last fall, and upon inspection, large amounts of rot were discovered in the branch and main trunk. Given the size and location of the tree, it was decided that the tree had to come down, so Covenant will be having Schwebach Tree Service take that tree down. This will happen hopefully in the middle of April. A little homework for the congregation: what kind of landscaping should the church do to replace that silver maple—grass, flower garden, another tree?

Second, the sections of flat roof over the kitchen and the offices are going to be repaired by Four Way Roofing. This is a total

replacement and should take care of the dripping going on in the kitchen as well as the drip in the copier room. The building committee has been looking at these repairs for a while and the deacons have been saving up, so while these are significant repairs (\$13,145 for the kitchen roof and \$9,955 for the office roof), we are financially prepared to take on the cost.

Third, one of the older electrical boxes needs to be replaced. During the last insurance walk-through, one of the boxes inspected was noted to have issues. In fact, Underwriters Laboratories had stopped endorsing those boxes a number of years ago, and some boxes much like the one we use have started fires. I do not want to scare anyone or cause a panic; so far, our box has not shown any signs of damage or of failing yet. Still, we will need to replace that box, and this will not be cheap, like \$5000 not cheap. The building committee is looking at what it will take to replace the box and bring the electrical system up to code, though in 2021, the code will be updated. To meet the updated code, the cost could swell to \$7,500. This will continue to be a work in progress.

Fourth, in the worship space, there's a bit of work to be done. The drywall above the pulpit will need some attention, and once again we are looking at getting new and better speakers for the sound system. Also, we used a simple system to livestream one service already, but eventually we should get a better system set up to do that with better quality on a more regular basis. There are no definite plans as yet, but as we go forward, we will be working towards these goals.

-For the Deacons & Building Committee,

Joe Eggebeen

Your Labor Is Not in Vain

(Continued from page 3)

us how it is ours for right now. We are created to work, and because things have changed so much, our work is harder right now. But our work will bear fruit in this life and the next. I have to believe that each batch of muffins in the oven, each spelling game at the table, each song chosen for Sunday will bear fruit. You too! Each day spent home, each decision to distance, each washing of hands, each text sent to a friend, each lunch made, each.... One day, in the new earth, we will plant and build and it will not be hard. We will enjoy it all. Knowing what is to come can give us new joy for our labors right now.

So we work and we pray and we wait. And while we do so, we can sing because God promises us "I am with you, I am with you. For I have called you, called you by name. Your labor is not in vain."

Here it is: Your Labor is Not in Vain.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPj3Kf7Dorw>

*Your labor is not in vain
Though the ground underneath you is cursed
and stained*

*Your planting and reaping are never the same
Your labor is not in vain*

*Your labor is not unknown
Though the rocks they cry out and the sea
it may groan
The place of your toil may not seem like a home
But Your labor is not unknown*

*I am with you, I am with you
I am with you, I am with you
For I have called you, called you by name
Your labor is not in vain*

*The vineyards you plant will bear fruit
The fields will sing out and rejoice with the truth
For all that is old will at last be made new
The vineyards you plant will bear fruit*

*The houses you labored to build
Will finally with laughter and joy be filled
The serpent that hurts and destroys will be killed
And all that is broken be healed*

-Rebecca DeVries

Serving at Covenant

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

MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) was an important part of my life while I was a stay-at-home mom. It provided a time of learning and fellowship with other young moms and experienced mentor moms during what can be a lonely time. What a blessing to know our children were being well taken care of while we were nurtured too! When the time came for me to move on, I wanted to do my part to help other young moms, so I decided to volunteer in the 1 year old nursery. That was 9.5

years ago!

Volunteering at MOPS has been a blessing to me. It is such a joy to see how much the children grow and develop over the course of the year. It is also fun getting to know each of their personalities. I have made some good friendships with other nursery workers over the years as well.

MOPS meets the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month during the school year, except during the holidays. We meet at 1st Reformed Church at 8:45 AM and are finished around 11:15 AM. If you are interested in this opportunity as a regular caretaker or as a substitute, contact me at (712) 441-1260.

-Kris Vander Plaats



Here is a note from Sos & Kara Maletoungou, missionaries with Resonate Global Mission in West Africa.

Dear Friends and Prayer Partners,

Greetings from West Africa! We stand together with our brothers and sisters and all God's people from every corner of the world in prayer for his favor, healing, and hope in this trying moment.

We pray for you and thank our God for your lives and ongoing support and prayer towards our Christian education ministry in West Africa. It is certain that the news from around the world regarding the COVID-19 pandemic is increasingly concerning. Yet, we shall hold onto the truth that in the midst of all that, God our Lord reigns and He is in full control. Let us keep up hope for a better tomorrow as we dwell in Him (Psalm 91).

In terms of a specific update regarding the Covid-19 outbreak in our ministry context, there have been 2 confirmed cases so far. Like most of you, we have been taking precautionary measures by working more from home. On that end, the advisory board of the Teacher's Garden has decided to postpone workshops, meetings, and school visits for the foreseeable future. Also, we have postponed the Educational Care trainers' training planned for Easter break.

Yet in these challenging times, God continues to work and move! We have been making use

of the available time to pursue the design of supplemental material for teachers to use alongside their regular programs for reading, math, and science. We are also preparing a Bible curriculum for teachers that covers the story of the whole Bible which, God willing, we will introduce in the summer workshops with teachers. As Sosthene prepares to step into the role of regional mission leader for West & Central Africa (April 1st), he has been spending a lot of time studying the archives, praying, and preparing various videoconference meetings with the staff and ministry partners in the region.

Above all, we have been refreshed that God, and our God alone, is worthy of our trust and hope. The hymn, "On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand" has been on repeat in our hearts and minds over the past few weeks. We pray that God will use this time to turn the hearts of the world towards him.

May your hearts and spirits be refreshed in the dwelling of our Lord. Be assured that we are praying for you, and we ask that you would continue to pray for us. If you have any prayer needs in particular, please let us know.

In Christ we stand,
-Sos, Kara, & the Boys

