

Note from Pastor Joel

During this trying time, what do you hear?

I hear the word “disciple,” and I hear the words “back to the sources.” (Or, as the Reformers and other Christian teachers put it in Latin: “*ad fontes.*”)

As I’ve shared with some of you, one evening as I thought about the virus and the many related conflicts at this time, I sensed the Holy Spirit leading me to listen to the prophet Joel. In chapter one of his book, Joel describes an attack from an “army” of locusts, and he hears the Lord saying: “Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.” (Joel 1:3) In other words, as the people of God pondered their trying time, they could help one another to learn from the Lord. They could open their hearts to the voice of the Lord. (See Joel 2:12-14)

On September 2, I plan to convene what I’m calling a “Discipleship Wednesday.” At 7:30 PM that evening, I will speak briefly about discipleship and the source from God that we call the Lord’s Prayer. Then I will listen to other members of Covenant share what they have been hearing from the Lord during this trying time. On the following Sunday, September 6, I will begin a sermon series on the Lord’s Prayer that I pray will help us listen and speak with our Father about how he is

teaching [discipling us] during this time of the virus. We invite you to participate in the September 2 Discipleship Wednesday. If you would prefer to participate via Zoom instead, please let me know. (Joelekok@gmail.com)

And as we worship together and take a closer look at discipleship and the prayer Jesus taught us, the worship planners will seek ways to engage and involve members of all generations. It is our goal also to provide Family Faith Formation Activities to supplement the sermon series.

-Pastor Joel



Do you ever wonder what “church at home” looks like for different members of our church family? Sometimes it looks like Pastor Joel in Minecraft Church (at least according to Will Henreckson). And if you’re wondering what Minecraft is, ask Will or another Covenant kid!

Serving at Covenant

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

In our community people often need help in a variety of ways. Other people respond. Later there will be a thank you: “I am grateful to God and to the members of Covenant....” I find myself both amazed and pleased with the words of the note of thanks, where members of Covenant are praised for being helpful, supportive, caring, thoughtful, generous with time and money, attentive to needs, eager to help, prayerful, and demonstrating Christ’s love. These words also apply to volunteers. Covenant is a church of volunteers.

After his retirement, Will’s primary work was to find volunteers to build, repair, and paint. Steve picked up for him with Habitat for Humanity and other construction projects and Adam heads workers on projects for the Christian school. Jo’s work with pictures and designs are seen all around town, especially in the hospital. We see quilts given for many occasions, the work of Nat and Laurey and many others. Ron works in Heritage Village and organizes the “look into the past” for school students every fall. We see the importance of Covenant singers to the Royale Meadows chorus—Eldon, Stan, and Marv, all from Covenant, are three of the six basses who regularly sing in the group.

When I needed to move from 6th St. to 5th Ave., I promised to give moving money to the Christian school if some people would volunteer to help me move. Someone coined the term “Coven-Ants” to describe volunteer laborers from Covenant. I realized the truth of

this new word when I saw the swarms that came out to help. The old house was empty in less than two hours.

The idea of giving the money that volunteers had saved me to the Christian school came from TenKredit Electric. When Royale Meadows was being built, Don did this with the electrical work. I’m sure he often checked the quality of the work of the volunteers, but I spent a lot of time in that building shortly after it was completed and I can testify that every wall socket I tried had electricity and every light switch actually turned the light on or off. A lot of people took part in the project.

Recently one volunteer project came to an end. For almost twenty-five years people from town have been bringing Mexicans to dialysis. At one point there were three Mexicans to whom we gave rides every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday: so we needed three people to get them to Hospers by 5 AM, and three to pick them up at 10. That’s six volunteers and four of them (Will, Len, Kurt, and Dal), are from Covenant. Because of the length of time this project lasted, death took two of them and for the last ten years we have dealt with only Maria. We also had changes in people who gave the rides and a host of substitutes: Howard Hall, Marv, Ron, John, Duane, Bernie, Paul, and Dave all did their share. This March the number of people who could participate was reduced because of Covid19. Then in May our fears were realized: Maria contracted the Corona virus and went to a hospital in Sioux City, where she passed from this life to her eternal home. I am certain that on their designated day many Covenant people think of Maria, thank God for her life, and are grateful to have been a part of her life—as a volunteer.

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What Does the Bible Say About Immigration?

Church Between Borders is a three-part interactive workshop from the CRC's Office of Social Justice that sparks thought and discussion for groups interested in engaging immigration from a Biblical perspective. Here at Covenant, our 5:00 Sunday gatherings on September 6, 13, & 20 will focus on the materials of this workshop. Jason Lief, our the NW IA Regional Organizer for the Office of Social Justice will lead us as we reflect on the Biblical mandate to welcome the stranger and consider what that means in our current context.

Why should my church participate?

The word immigrant, stranger, appears 92 times in the Old Testament and Scripture repeatedly reminds us of the blessing of the stranger, but most Christians report they never talk about immigration in their church. Together we can explore why immigrants are so close to the heart of God and help our congregations change the conversation. Opinions tend to run high about the issue of immigration, but often our shared set of facts runs low. If we're going to think faithfully about immigration, it's important that we share an understanding of how immigration works today and what the Bible has to say about how we think about immigrants.

Session 1: Immigration Simulation -

Stepping into the Shoes of an Immigrant

Part of thinking faithfully about immigration, means that we share an understanding of how immigration works today—and maybe dispel some myths or misunderstandings that we didn't even know we had. In this session we will discover together how a person can legally immigrate today. We often hear the question: "Why don't undocumented immigrants just get in line?" Together we will learn what

the lines are, who can get in them (and who can't), and how long it can take to get through those lines.

Session 2: Immigration Storyline - How Did We Get Here?

One thing that is important for moving forward together is having a common memory about the past. In the United States, as a result of the diversity we enjoy, it can be a challenge to cultivate a common memory about immigration. The purpose of this session is to work toward a shared understanding of immigration history and the values that have shaped our evolving laws. We'll take into account memories that different groups may have, and together we'll form a more holistic understanding. We often hear the statement: "My grandparents came legally, why can't others do the same?" This session will help explore the evolution of immigration policy throughout U.S. history, and reveal how it has prioritized some immigration seekers over others for hundreds of years.

Session 3: How Do We Think about Immigration as Christians?

How Can We Advocate for Change?

As we listen to the rhetoric and read today's headlines about immigration, we can see how our culture defines a person's worth based on economics (are they a plus or a minus?) or safety (are they a threat or a benefit?)—but that is not how Scripture defines the worth of human beings. In this session we'll consider how Scripture can inform our thinking and our conversation about the issue of immigration. We'll also consider how we are called to respond—using our time, talents, treasure, and the power that we have been given as citizens

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September Birthdays & Anniversaries

4	Rylan Brue Angela Hannigan Isaac Maletougou Val Zonnefeld Tim & Mimi Kamp	13	Laura De Kruyf	25	Rachel Hibma Becky Stevenson
		14	Shawna van Niejenhuis	27	Michael Ribbens
		15	Adam Kramer	28	Paul Clousing Aidan Vos
5	Marcia Westra	16	Kelly Crull	29	Levi Landman
7	Nate & Shawna van Niejenhuis	19	Charlie Wyenberg		
		20	Pam Adams Erik Hoekstra		
8	Shirley Taylor				
9	Doug DeBoer Micah Goslinga	22	Rockne McCarthy John Stevenson Viola Stiemsma		



Offering Schedule

September 27

AM Compassion/Tuition Assistance Fund

September 6

AM General/Building Fund

September 13

AM Christian Education Fund

September 20

AM Missions Fund

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, **September 21** for the October issue.

Giving To Date

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/20-8/23/20) \$177,451	\$155,752	-\$21,699
Missions	(1/1/20-8/23/20) \$15,470	\$11,912	-\$3,558
Christian Education	(8/1/20-8/23/20) \$14,975	\$13,364	-\$1,611

September Scheduling

Sunday Scheduling

None of our normal monthly volunteers will be needed for September. The nursery will remain closed as well this month, so nursery volunteers will not be needed.

Formation Sunday Evenings

Join us for our 5:00 PM gatherings this month! All gatherings will be in the fellowship hall unless we communicate otherwise.

September 6: Church Between Borders

September 13: Church Between Borders

September 20: Church Between Borders

September 27: Jake & Trena Van Wyk

September Worship Schedule

August 30: Pastoral Groups 1,2,3 (Friend/Eggebeen, Ploegstra/Janssen, DeSmith/Feikema)

September 6: Pastoral Groups 4,5,6 (Brue/Goslinga, Schaap/Rowe, Rhoda/Sybesma)

September 13: Outdoor Worship at Heritage Village with Good Fellowship Picnic following

September 20: Pastoral Groups 1,2,3 (Friend/Eggebeen, Ploegstra/Janssen, DeSmith/Feikema)

September 27: Pastoral Groups 4,5,6 (Brue/Goslinga, Schaap/Rowe, Rhoda/Sybesma)

Serving at Covenant

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These words of Jesus are recorded in Matthew 25:40, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Note: as I wrote this message I decided this had to be a look at volunteers from one person's perspective. I did not check the facts; I think the spirit of volunteering is more important than the details. Secondly, I gave only the first names of people. If you do not know to whom we are referring, ask someone. There are also many other volunteering projects and many volunteers that have not been mentioned. Talk about it.



The Wyenbergs, all ready to worship at home.

-Dallas Apol

Note from the Elders

At our meeting this week, the elders spent a good part of our meeting talking about how to be a community of support for each other during this time. We acknowledged that we all sorely miss the gathering of the body and long for the day when all of us can feel comfortable rubbing shoulders and giving hugs and greeting each other in our Lord's name in the same space. We acknowledged that the impact of social distancing is harder for some of us than others based on our living situations and our decisions about how to live with the coronavirus. We acknowledged that we are all eager to be done with this and wonder sometimes why God seems to "take so long to act."

We also acknowledged that we are trying to do our best to follow Covid protocols as recommended by the CDC and health professionals, as well as respect your responses to the survey conducted earlier. This creates tension in all of us: frustration and impatience from those who are healthy and wish to get back to normal, and stress and indecision by those who don't feel this is a wise choice for them. Social media often adds to this tension.

So, as Len Rhoda voiced for all of us, the elders wish you all to know that "we feel good about the thoughtful process we've followed and the conscious decisions we've made in response to the virus." We plan to continue to follow recommended guidelines and also be gracious and responsive to those who wish to include their voice in the process. If you wish to discuss anything related to Covenant's decisions, we encourage you to have a conversation with your pastoral elder. If you have needs or wishes or concerns that we can try to address, please do the same.

We're all tired and, for some, the fall and winter ahead seem daunting. We ask you to graciously join us in supporting one another and graciously consider and respect the needs and decisions of others as we continue to move ahead—whether the pace seems too slow or too fast. And we will earnestly pray for an end to the virus, for wisdom in how God calls us to be a body and a people in today's world, and for patience and love in difficult times.

For the Elders,
-Sally Jongsma

2020 Good Fellowship Picnic

September 13 was going to be our Sunday School Kick-Off Picnic, but now that our church education program is on hold for the fall, the Covenant church elders instead invite you to a Good Fellowship Picnic! Our Sunday worship that day will be at Heritage Village, so we would love for you to bring your own lunches, along with your chairs and blankets so that after the service we can visit with each other in a socially distanced way. If anyone needs assistance to make attendance possible, please call Barb Schaap (712-441-6431). (P.S. The rain date will be September 20.)



-Barb Schaap

Notes from the Deacons

Last month, I had the privilege of attending a Welcome Eric to SAM! Meeting. The existing Service and Missions committee members laid out a history of the responsibilities that I would be helping lead as the Chair for this next year. I received the binder with lists of minutes, procedures, and volunteer organization lists.

When reflecting on what service and missions activities I've done in the past, I realized that they are all in the past. The last time I did a short term serve was my senior year in college, a PLIA spring break trip. Growing up, I had a rhythm from my parents and home church of serving in community and summer vacation Bible schools and at Dordt, I made it a tradition to join others in weeklong service trip over the spring break on PLIA.

Giving your time to those who need help is an important part of church life. I had been given this rhythm through my upbringing. While sitting and listening to all of the service projects and missionaries that we support as a church, I realized that I previously hadn't been aware of even half of the programs. Ever since moving back to Sioux Center in 2017, I've been focusing more on my full time work and developing my adult life post-college and though I've been attending Covenant, I didn't reach out and seek any volunteer opportunities or ask what opportunities there were. I think that we tend to get sucked into the rhythms that we create in our lives and unless we intentionally reach out and look for ways to give our time, it won't happen.

As with any rhythms and habits, there can be great comfort in good routines and also a danger of getting locked into a pattern that isn't

really getting you where you want and are called to go. Though it's a weird time to be reaching out and initiating relationships, in my role as the SAM Committee chair, I have an extra incentive to be intentional as a leader to build those relationships.

One verse that always comes to my mind when I'm thinking of service or giving financially is Luke 12:48: "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required..." I think that it helps ground me in gratitude before giving either time or money. It is a requirement, but it's rooted in the gifts that we've been given first. I think this verse can speak to an intentionality that we can take into our church life whether we are growing a career that enables us to give more financially or taking that extra time and being intentional in how to serve others, we can intentionally create the habits and rhythms that are in line with how God calls us to act as his followers.

Anyway, these are a few reflections that I've been having these last few months as I'm transitioning into being a deacon at Covenant. If you would like to join in, I'd love to discuss how we can work together as a church to develop relationships between our church, community, missionaries, and the world.

-Eric Rowe

What Does the Bible Say about Immigration?

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of a democracy. We'll discuss how our voices and actions can bring about policies that are rooted in faithful thinking and aligned with Scripture's call on our lives and our leaders.

-Reprinted from the Office of Social Justice

2020 Kindergarten Quilts

The Covenant family is praying for Emma Haan, Alyda Mellema, Isabella Hannigan, and Emma Henreckson as they start kindergarten this year!

