

# The January Series

In a pandemic year, some things change, and some things don't. Here's what is the same: The January Series will be taking place again this month and will be livestreamed here at Covenant each day. What's changed? There will be no live audience at Calvin and you are welcome to watch all of the lectures from the comfort of your own home as well. Join us either in person or at home from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM each weekday! If you'd like more information about the speakers or how to watch remotely, visit [www.calvin.edu/january-series](http://www.calvin.edu/january-series).

## Wednesday, January 6

Rebecca Konyndyk De Young: *Glittering Vices: Soul Care for Struggling Christians*

## Thursday, January 7

Matt de la Pena: *The Power of Story*

## Friday, January 8

William Garvelink: *The Future with Pandemics*

## Monday, January 11

Tara Westover: *Educated: A Conversation with Tara Westover*

## Tuesday, January 12

Flynn Coleman: *The Future of AI*

## Wednesday, January 13

Danielle Allen: *Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century*

## Thursday, January 14

Jeffrey Rosen: *The Future of the Supreme Court*

## Friday, January 15

Andy Crouch: *The Limits of Technology and the Hope for a More Personal World*

## Monday, January 18

Jemar Tisby: *What Is the Color of Compromise*

## Tuesday, January 19

Akbar Gbaja-Biamila: *Everyone Can Be a Ninja: Overcoming Obstacles*

## Wednesday, January 20

Peter O'Connor: *Arts: Healing Balms for a Sick World*

## Thursday, January 21

Bruce Feiler: *Life Is In the Transitions: Mastering Change at Any Age*

## Friday, January 22

Katharine Hayhoe: *Christians, Climate, and Culture*

## Monday, January 25

John Manzella: *Economic Trends, Globalization, and the Need to Improve American Capitalism*

## Tuesday, January 26

Scott Sauls: *Prophetic Fire and Persuasive Gentleness: Why We Must Have Both*

# Note from the Elders

The executive committee of the Council spent a good deal of time this week thinking about how our congregational life will look in relation to COVID as we head into the New year, realizing the different priorities and choices that individual members and families are making. The following decisions are a result of conversations with the Education Committee, Executive Council, and individual member feedback and concern that has been shared with Council:

1. We voted to continue rotating three pastoral groups each week until February 21st, the first Sunday of Lent. This decision was made in consideration of the current COVID levels and the desire to provide a safe worship space for Covenant members that will allow for social distancing and following the COVID protocol of wearing masks. If families and/or individuals would like to attend each week outside of this rotation, they are welcome to do so. Please continue to let either Sara or Melissa know so that we can monitor safe social distancing.
2. Due to ongoing high COVID rates in our area, we voted to delay the start of Sunday School and Children in Worship until February 21st, the first Sunday in Lent. We will continue to work with the Education Committee on creative ways for children of all ages to participate in worship and faith formation activities.
3. Executive Council also voted to delay Covenant Sunday Morning for the remainder of the school year. Our decision was influenced by the lack of those willing to lead at this time and the low interest in attending among past participants when surveyed by the Education Committee.

We will re-examine what CSM can look like in the fall.

4. Finally, beginning in January, we will open the nursery for parents with small children to use during Sunday morning worship. We will not be staffing the nursery with volunteers but will make sure the nursery is open for families as needed.

Thank you for your continued support of the Council as we face challenging circumstances and ongoing decision making in relationship to COVID. As always, if you have concerns that you would like Council to address, please share them with any member of Council and we will prayerfully consider.

Blessings,  
-Melissa Bailey, Council Chair



# Calvin Symposium on Worship 2021

Sometimes a global pandemic opens up opportunities we might otherwise not have had! Over the years, Covenant has sent a few worship planners and staff members to the Calvin Symposium on Worship in Grand Rapids occasionally, and it has been a wonderful time of learning and renewal for those who have attended. But not everyone is able to travel to Grand Rapids in January for this event. The good news is, thanks to the pandemic, this year the symposium is all free and online, so each of you has the opportunity to get a little taste of the experience from your own homes!

This online experience is designed for all kinds of learners: students, faculty, artists, musicians, pastors, preachers, scholars, teachers, worship leaders and planners, and all interested worshipers around the world. More than 90 contributors have added their wisdom and insights to this online experience. The online Symposium on Worship offers 20 livestream worship services and 20 webinar sessions weekdays from January 6-26 as well

as on-demand content that allows you to access material at your own pace and time. The symposium organizers encourage you to engage the content by posting your insights and wisdom on the content pages and to read and reflect on the responses posted by others. In doing so, we can look forward to being a global learning community.

The livestream worship services take us around the globe to a variety of worshipping communities. Six of these services feature texts from Romans 8 on "The Renewed Life of God."

There is no fee to register, but you must register in order to engage the material, made available on January 6, 2021. The access code will be emailed in early January to all registered participants. Registration remains open until January 26, the final day.

Go to [worship.calvin.edu/symposium/](http://worship.calvin.edu/symposium/) to register and to find more information.



*We are so grateful to our gifted Covenant woodworkers who made at-home worship more participative and meaningful through these beautiful Advent candleholders. Thank you, Duane, Steve, and Del!*



# 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	17	Jaren Brue	31	Sos & Kara Maletougou
5	Andy & Rachel Landman	20	Jenni Breems Tricia Kok Dave Kramer		
9	Lois Vander Zee	23	Stetsen Fedders		
10	Bryanna Castelan	25	Jasper Fedders		
12	Terry Friend	26	Jonathan Breems		
14	Pastor Joel Kok Michael Vander Plaats	28	Trena Van Wyk		
		29	Don Ten Napel		



## Offering Schedule

January 3

AM General/Building Fund

January 10

AM Christian Education Fund

January 17

AM Missions Fund

January 24

AM Compassion/Tuition Assistance Fund

January 31

AM Building 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, **January 25** for the February issue.

# January Scheduling

## January Worship Schedule

**December 27:** Pastoral Groups 1,3,5  
(Friend/Eggebeen, DeSmith/Feikema,  
Schaap/Rowe)  
Rev. Liz Moss preaching

**December 31:** New Year's Eve Worship  
(at home liturgy)

**January 3:** Pastoral Groups 1,4,6 (Friend/  
Eggebeen, Brue/Vos, Rhoda/Sybesma)  
Dr. David Westfall preaching

**January 10:** Pastoral Groups 2,3,5  
(Ploegstra/Janssen, DeSmith/  
Feikema, Schaap/Rowe)

**January 17:** Pastoral Groups 1,4,6 (Friend/  
Eggebeen, Brue/Vos, Rhoda/Sybesma)

**January 24:** Pastoral Groups 2,3,5  
(Ploegstra/Janssen, DeSmith/  
Feikema, Schaap/Rowe)

**January 31:** Pastoral Groups 1,4,6 (Friend/  
Eggebeen, Brue/Vos, Rhoda/Sybesma)

## Formation Sunday Evenings

Join us for our 5:00 PM gatherings this month!

**December 27:** No Gathering

**January 3:** No Gathering

On **January 10, 17, 24, and 31**, we will be including various speakers regarding the experience of trauma. Details to come.



*The bell choir brought great joy and enthusiasm to the Sunday School Christmas program!*

## Giving To Date

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/20-12/20/20) \$266,177	\$231,712	-\$34,465
Missions	(1/1/20-12/20/20) \$23,205	\$17,740	-\$5,465
Christian Education	(8/1/20-12/20/20) \$77,048	\$76,780	-\$268

# Notes from the Deacons

2020 is coming to a close and it has been a challenge for all of us. We, as deacons, struggled to know how to navigate these trying times—knowing what we can/cannot do and what we should/shouldn't do. We continued to meet together as best we could to continue with our duties. Sometimes we succeeded carrying out our duties, sometimes we failed. However, know that with God's leading, we always tried to do what we thought was best for Covenant.

Since 2020 was the year that it was, needs arose. We, with the financial support of our congregation, were able to meet some of

those needs. We were able to offer tuition assistance. We helped a family affected by COVID. We contributed to a fund set up by ATLAS and the local police department to assist transients who come through our area. We contributed monies to purchase diapers for an immigrant family in our community. We gave financial assistance to a family in our community struggling with medical bills. The deacons aren't the only ones who loved our neighbors. We saw first-hand and heard about members of Covenant stepping up to help when there was a need. Thank-you! We encourage you to continue to do good, and support those around us. And if you see a need that we, as deacons, can address please reach out to us.

-Kris Vander Plaats

## Greetings from Vicki Hall

Happy New Year! Dear Covenant family, Even though we are separated in miles, it's wonderful we can stay connected via e-mail. I appreciate having Sara keep me on the list as I like to know your news, prayer requests, new babies. etc. This has been quite a year with the pandemic, election, losing loved ones and more. It was a different Christmas without Howie; however it's comforting to know he doesn't have to struggle with physical issues and confusion. I am so grateful for the many cards I received from many of you and couldn't respond to each personally. It was greatly appreciated.

I am reading the "Decision" magazine, (a publication of the Billy Graham Association) and appreciate the articles each month. I would like to share a paragraph written by Mike Huckabee. The article is "A Wake-Up Call for the Church."

First, this election was monumental in terms of the number of people who came out to vote. ... A record number of Americans believed that their vote mattered and a record number took seriously their civic responsibility. We can celebrate that regardless of the outcome. The other thing is that God is sovereign. He's bigger than an American election. I never want to say, "We didn't elect the right people so now I'm doomed." A hundred years from now I'll be in eternity with Him, and there's nothing the government can do that can stop that. Even if they take my life, all that will do is accelerate my entrance to the Kingdom. I have an American passport that I treasure and value, but I have another passport—a passport for the Kingdom to which I belong eternally, no matter what happens in the United States of America.

-Vicki Hall



# Serving at Covenant

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

This is Eric with the SAM Committee! We wanted to give the congregation a heads up about an event that we can put together for mid to late January. The idea's inspired by the desire for some local outreach to the neighbors around church. This combined with the likely challenge of creating the structure for Warm Winter Wednesday style events after some brainstorming. But the brainstorming isn't over, so if this inspires anything get in touch with me or anyone of our SAM Members.

At this point, our plan is to give out plates of cookies to the neighbors close to church with a note of encouragement and some smiles and maybe a conversation from Covenant. We may also combine this with a fun baking contest to channel some chili bash vibes.



In order to pull this off, we'll need volunteers in three phases:

- **Baking:** If you're excited to pull out your classic cookie recipes and (maybe win something if we add that in), let us know. We should have some estimates put together by the next announcement so we know how much we need.
- **Assembling:** We'll have a crew that can receive cookies from bakers and mix them up onto various plates in a both socially distant and a sanitarily safe manner.
- **Distribution:** We'll need a few groups who can go door to door and drop off a cookie plate at each of our houses. Again, we'll estimate numbers and see how many people we'll need.

Because there's a lot of planning in the next month, just reach out to me and let us know how you can help and we'll keep you updated on the plan!

-Eric Rowe

## Sunday School & Children's Worship

Offering for January



Hot or Cold Cereal

# Worship Year in Review

This year especially, it feels like we all need to look back and remember what has happened. We often feel like we're doing little more than surviving, but as we looked back, some good things happened in worship at Covenant, despite the pandemic!

**January:** We kicked off what felt like a normal year with the season of Epiphany, studying the Isaiah lectionary passages.

**February:** We met on Ash Wednesday for a meal together and a time of worship with our traditional imposition of ashes.

**March:** Partway through March, we began to encourage more hand-washing and we avoided all hand-shaking and passing of the offering plate. March 15 was our last "normal" service before we ended the month scrambling to figure out how to livestream church services! And Marty saved the day!

**April:** Some of our little ones kicked off Holy Week with a joyful video full of "hosannas" on Palm Sunday, but we experienced a muted at-home Holy Week.

**May:** Pentecost was filled with spinning pinwheels for the little ones.

**June:** On June 21, we held our first outdoor worship service all together at Heritage Village! We also started worshiping in-person with 2 pastoral groups each week.

**July:** On July 5, we gathered for "Guess Who's Coming to the Backyard," a delightful, COVID-friendly version of our usual dinner gathering. At the end of July, we welcomed 3 pastoral groups each week to worship. And remember that Belhar Confession video? What

a wonderful way to bring current and former members together to profess our faith!

**August:** Four delightful little kindergartners got their quilts at another outdoor service at Heritage Village.

**September:** Jason Lief led us in a three-week session on the Church Between Borders on Sunday evenings. We had our last outdoor worship of the season with a picnic.

**October:** We continued to work our way through Pastor Joel's Lord's Prayer and discipleship series with members of the congregation contributing to weekly devotionals on the same topic.

**November:** Due to rising cases of COVID in the community, we opted for a stay-at-home Thanksgiving worship. On the first Sunday of Advent, the congregation was gifted with Advent Candle Holders for home worship. Del Vander Zee, Duane Bajema, and Steve Crull went above and beyond our expectations.

**December:** We were delighted with the Sunday School Children's program—the first ever program performed mostly by video. We enjoyed our first ever adult bell choir. We didn't sing the Hallelujah Chorus on Christmas Day for the first time in who knows how many years, but our intergenerational "Home for the Holidays" orchestra played a version which led us to lift our hearts in worship.

Who knows what the next few months will look like. Things change quickly and plans get adjusted, but the Lord has been faithful to us at Covenant, and he gives us strength for each day and bright hope for tomorrow. We can both say that we are grateful for the work God has given us this year.

-Rebecca DeVries & Sara Ploegstra