

Note from the Elders

As elders, we have agreed to invite the entire congregation to the sanctuary for our Easter service. Our plan is to provide additional seating in the fellowship hall and balcony. We will ask ushers to help facilitate seating so that we can maximize the number of people we can accommodate while still following our protocols of mask wearing and social distancing. We encourage people to socialize outside after the service and, weather permitting, plan to provide coffee and juice outdoors. As a church, we continue to respect and welcome any member or family that chooses to participate by livestream. We look forward to this special time to celebrate together our risen Lord.

For the elders, Len Rhoda



This Sunday, March 28, we will celebrate Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week. A year ago we were only inviting the worship participants and volunteers to be in the sanctuary. Our Maundy Thursday service was simple, somber, and virtual; we lamented that the typical elements of the service—communion, dramatic readings, extinguishing

of candles—could not be included; we lamented that we were not together.

This year, though we proceed still with caution, we are grateful to be opening our doors to the whole congregation. Our worship and celebration will still not be the same as it was pre-Covid. But we can be grateful to gather as a body in the house of our God, recalling Christ's love and sacrifice, celebrating his resurrection, and proclaiming together our new life in Him.

So, you're invited:

- Maundy Thursday, April 1 at 7:00 PM
- Good Friday, April 2 at 12:00 PM (noon)
- Easter Sunday, April 4, 10:00 AM

We will continue to practice our COVID protocols, and ushers will do their best to help everyone find a place.

-Rebecca DeVries

Courier

April 2021

COVENANT
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Compline and Sunday Nights in April

Each Thursday during Lent, we have held a Night Prayer service (or Compline). You might be wondering where this came from.

I first learned about Compline through the BBC drama, *Call the Midwife*. The Anglican sisters/nurse-midwives are often seen heading to the chapel at the end of the day to pray and chant the compline prayers. (There is even a playlist on YouTube of the sisters chanting psalms: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsvb6TIEsyx-uatxaH-ysnVqAmVCuFDR>)

Through seven seasons I've come to love and admire these sisters and their faith, fictional characters though they may be. And I've often imagined what it might be like to live a life with daily rituals like fixed prayer time. I was curious then when I got an email inviting me to listen to a nightly podcast called "Compline: Evening Liturgies for Anxious Souls" from Samford University's Center for Worship and the Arts. I listened a few times and did in fact find the prayers to calm my sometimes anxious soul.

Around that same time, Laremy mentioned to Pastor Joel that he wished he were Catholic. By that he really meant he wished he was part of that tradition where you could step into church at any time and find a quiet place to pray or think or ask questions. He wondered if Covenant could ever be some such church.

We haven't become Catholic or Anglican, but borrowing their traditions and the ancient prayers passed down for centuries, I think we have found space for silence and prayer and calm in a still hectic world, even if it's only

for a half hour and then we go out for ice cream.

Tish Harrison Warren's new book, *Prayers in the Night*, is framed around the prayers of Compline, specifically this prayer we repeat each time:

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

She describes these ancient prayers, liturgies and practices as cairns for believers—"massive, towering rock structures that plot the course." She writes, "When I could not pray, the church said, 'here are prayers.' When I could not believe, the church said, 'Come to the table and be fed.' When I could not worship, the church sang over me the language of faith."

For our Sunday evening gatherings starting on April 10 and going until the end of April, we plan to hold services similar to compline, using the service of evening prayer in *Lift Up Your Hearts*. We invite you to come. If you are anxious or weary, come. If you feel you are being blown off course, come. If you cannot pray or worship, or if you can and long for more, come.

-Rebecca DeVries

Water Softener Salt Sale Update

First of all, a big thanks to all of you who ordered water softener salt! We were able to sell 2700 bags of salt along with Bridge of Hope. The most exciting part of that number is that around 1/2 of those bags were sold to members of the greater SCCS and Sioux Center community. We have received a lot of support for this fundraiser which is very encouraging and a good indication that this may be something we continue to do in the future as a way to contribute to our Legacy Plan commitment.

Now we just have to deliver all those bags of salt! We have lined up quite a few trucks and trailers between our two churches, but we could always use a few more so if you know of anyone who could assist in this way, send them to me or Jenni Mellema! We will need plenty of workers on April 10 to help those truck drivers deliver the salt. I have personally hauled and delivered salt two years in a row so don't be afraid to give it a try! We will be asking you to sign up online, as we need to know how many people to expect and we use that information to plan our routes.

I thought it would be helpful if I gave you a general idea of how the salt delivery day has gone in the past. Some members of our congregation have already been a part of this day for SCCS so it will be very familiar to them. The first group of people to arrive at Water Werks on April 10 will be those of us responsible for setting up and coordinating the day. We will also be asking for volunteers to bring donuts and water/Gatorade, so those folks will be dropping off the goodies before the workers arrive. We will have coffee as well that morning! The first wave of trucks will

show up and get pallets loaded on their trailers and shortly after that, the first wave of volunteers will arrive. We will be trying to send you out in groups that you feel comfortable being in close quarters with due to Covid precautions. We will ask folks to wear masks, but you know how that goes! A second wave of trucks to be loaded and volunteers will arrive hopefully after the first group has headed out. We try our best to make good use of your time. How quickly we finish delivering salt that day directly correlates to how many volunteers we have! In the past we have finished between 12 and 1 PM. I hope we can do that again this year. Thank you to everyone for all the various ways you have contributed to this fundraiser. We know that many of you are not in the position to deliver the salt yourself, so you can certainly cover us with prayer that day—for safety on the roads and safety hauling 40lb bags of salt.

Thanks again!

-Emily Kramer



Grandma Alert! Grandpa Alert!

Eliana Joy Visser, was born February 24 to our son Ben and his wife Meghan. She weighed in at 7lbs 4oz., is doing well and is cherished by her parents and grandparents, John and Linda Visser.

April Birthdays & Anniversaries

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



Offering Schedule

- April 4**
AM General/Building Fund
- April 11**
AM Christian Education Fund
- April 18**
AM Missions Fund
- April 25**
AM Compassion/Tuition Assistance Fund

A Note About Giving

Beginning in March, if a check given to Covenant does not have a designation, the deacons will be handling it the same as we handle checks that say “use where needed most.” If there is a designation on the memo line, if it came in an envelope with designations, or if we have instructions on file, we will follow those designations.

If you have any questions about giving, don’t hesitate to contact the deacons!

-Kurt Vos, Treasurer



*Take your everyday, ordinary life—
your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—
and place it before God as an offering.*

-Romans 12:1b (The Message)-

April Scheduling

April Worship Schedule

Just a reminder, the pastoral group lists are located toward the back of your church directory and also on our website if you need a reminder about which group you are in!

March 28: Pastoral Groups 3,4,6 (DeSmith/ Feikema, Brue/Vos, Rhoda/Sybesma)

April 4: Easter Sunday—all invited

April 11: Pastoral Groups 1,2,5 (Friend/ Eggebeen, Ploegstra/Janssen, Schaap/ Rowe)

April 18: Pastoral Groups 3,4,6 (DeSmith/ Feikema, Brue/Vos, Rhoda/Sybesma)

April 25: Pastoral Groups 1,2,5 (Friend/ Eggebeen, Ploegstra/Janssen, Schaap/ Rowe)



Formation Sunday Evenings

Join us for our 5:00 PM gatherings this month! You can find more information about our Sunday evening plans for this month on page 2.

March 28: Making Resurrection Gardens

April 4: Compline

April 11: Compline

April 18: Compline

April 25: Compline

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 19** for the May issue.

Giving To Date

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/21-3/21/21) \$64,102	\$56,012	-\$8,090
Missions	(1/1/21-3/21/21) \$5,460	\$5,521	+\$61
Christian Education	(8/1/20-3/21/21) \$124,744	\$113,446	-\$11,299

Notes from the Deacons

It is almost time for our annual Spring Offering of Thanks. Look for envelopes and a list of causes in your mailboxes by mid-April. Offerings will be collected in the beginning of May.

The Spring Offering of Thanks came about when Covenant changed the format of our regular evening worship services. Because we were no longer taking evening offerings, many worthwhile causes were no longer on our offering schedule. These causes included ministries within our congregation, local ministries, regional ministries, and ministries farther away. Currently, we take offerings for the General/Building Fund, Christian Education

Fund, Missions Fund, Compassion/Tuition Assistance Fund, and World Renew.

How do we decide which causes to list on the envelopes? Most of the causes had been on our offering schedule or on our Thanksgiving envelopes. Recently, the giving amounts were tabulated for each cause and those that consistently received little or no contribution were removed. So, in essence, our congregation decided which causes would remain on the envelopes. Each member/family can still choose what causes are important to them. If there is a cause not listed that you would like to contribute to, feel free to write that in or you can send your donation directly to the organization.

-Kris Vander Plaats

Request for Prayer

Dear Friends and Ministry Partners-

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support towards the work and ministry of Christian education in West Africa! We are excited about what we see God doing and are writing to ask for your prayers for a few specific needs.

Next week, we will be leading a training for Advanced Educational Care facilitators to equip emerging Christian education leaders to run with the vision and train others in their school communities.

As part of that week, jointly with the association of Christian schools in West Africa, we will host a national convention for Christian school leaders. The theme will be "The Church, Christian Pedagogy, and Social Trans-

formation" and Sos has accepted the invitation of the national leaders to be the main speaker for that event. The convention will climax with the election of new board members for the national association of evangelical schools.

Tomorrow at 2pm (March 24), Sos will be presenting a paper via Zoom in an academic seminar at OCMS (Oxford Centre for Mission Studies) on the preliminary findings from his Ph.D. fieldwork.

Thank you for praying for God's special strength, favor and anointing as we serve these various ministry invitations and that the Lord will provide us with the servant leaders who will guide the movement of Christian education in the community!

In Christ,

-Sosthene and Kara Maletoungou

THE COLOSSIAN FORUM™



Covenant's initial Colossian Forum group plans to hold its first meeting on the first Thursday after Easter (April 8). We have a sense that additional Colossian Forum groups will form soon.

By way of brief review, we can recall that the Colossian Forum ministry seeks to transform issues of disagreement not into reasons for division but into means of discipleship. As we learn to listen to one another with humility and respect regarding controversial issues, we do not compromise our convictions; instead, we grow in Christlikeness.

We are still in the process of forming the initial group of twelve. We have settled on two conveners: Erin Eggebeen and Joel Kok. The Colossian Forum ministry advises that groups consist of members from several different generations and also different perspectives. A Colossian Forum group does not set policies for a congregation. Instead, they seek to equip members with tools and skills for healthy relationships.

The topic for the Colossian Forum group will be human sexuality. Congregational leaders recommend this topic for attention because it will be a central matter for deliberation and debate at Synod 2022 and therefore among Christian Reformed congregations as that time approaches. Also, in the past few decades, members of our society have come to understand, as the Colossian Forum Participant Workbook states, "LGBTQ persons are no longer distant. They are our friends, our family, and us."

The Forum group will hold ten sessions, and each session consists of five parts, which are called: Start, Unity, Prayer, Engage, and Godward. The section called "Engage" is the section in which we speak directly regarding sexuality. The other sections are designed to help us engage in that topic with the love of Christ. E.g. we pray in the middle of the meeting as a way to walk in step with the Holy Spirit.

If you would like additional information and thoughts about the Colossian Forum, you can view the Evening Formation Gathering from March 21 on Covenant's Facebook page. You can also share your interest or questions with Pastor Joel or your Elder. We can hope that the Colossian Forum ministry will help our whole congregation embody Christ Jesus, and reflect his love and light to everyone in our lives.

-Pastor Joel

Sunday School & Children's Worship

Offering for April



Tuna and Macaroni & Cheese

Kids' Coloring Page

